

Dr. Chamling

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**PAWAN KUMAR CHAMLING**

## Sikkim politics : A turning point

*By Jigme N. Kazi*

*"Today seeds of revolt are gathering  
In every vein of man, in his tears  
And in every fibre of his being,  
Fire of revolution is blazing  
And man's warm blood is bubbling".*

- Pawan Chamling

These lines from "Perennial Dreams", a book of poems in Nepali by the former Sikkim Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, if taken seriously and translated into reality and not just left as "dreams", could well change the political scenario of Sikkim and most parts of the Himalayan belt.

The English translation of the book was "released" two weeks before Mr Chamling was dropped from the Bhandari Cabinet for his alleged communal activities.

That Mr Chamling has a sizable following, particularly from south Sikkim, was quite apparent considering the reaction of the people to his dismissal. Posters, group meetings and even a public meeting held in Namchi, south district headquarters, reflected the mood of the people and the support Mr Chamling was getting. The State Government took great care not to overreact to the situation but was able to suppress the spontaneous show of strength of Mr Chamling's behalf.

While there can be no doubt that Mr Chamling is not just a sychophant but a leader in his own making, the question his critics as well as his own sympathisers and well-wishers are asking is - how long will Mr Chamling last? Can he sustain the momentum and convert it into a mass movement in the next elections which is still more than two years away?

The Chief Minister, Mr N.B. Bhandari, is quite confident that when Mr Chamling's "money finishes his politics will end". He describes Mr Chamling and his activities as "bubbles of water" which would soon evaporate when the sun comes out.

"Though my support is with him I feel that he started his move too early. He will not be able to last long", said an influential member of the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad.

But there are others who are looking towards Mr Chamling with great hope and expectation. Whether his politics lasts or not doesn't seem important to them. They seem to have been left with no choice but to risk everything "to attain freedom from fear, hunger and oppression" (lines from Mr Chamling's poem entitled - "Sparks of Revolution").

Though Mr Chamling who is seen by many as Mr Bhandari's successor is still in the ruling party, his open defiance and attack on the ruling party and Mr Bhandari in particular during his Namchi public address indicates that it is now only a matter of time when he would be expelled from the SSP.

This would naturally lead to the formation of a regional party in the State where Opposition parties like the Congress(I) exists only on letter pads.

Talks on formation of a genuine regional party in Sikkim have been on for more than a year now and the blame for the delay goes squarely to the Congress(I) which scuttled the move to put up an Opposition candidate for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Sikkim last year.

The Cong(I)'s "unholy alliance" with the SSP for the MP seat was seen as a great setback to all anti-Bhandari forces in the State. The incompetence of the Sikkim PCC(I) President, Mr A.K. Subba's leadership coupled with the Rising Sun Party President, Mr R.C. Poudyal's "betrayal" proved to be a stumbling block to forge a "united front" in the State where Mr Bhandari still reigns supreme.

With the Cong(I) organisation in the State still in its infancy and RSP leaders and supporters joining the SSP, all eyes are now focussed on Mr Chamling.

Will Mr Chamling emerge as an alternative to Mr Bhandari? Will he be able to capture the imagination of the people and get things organised? Or will he be just another of those poets- a dreamer?

If this Left-leaning politician with a Mandal-base is able to make the right moves and get the right response he could well be the coming messiah the people have been looking for.

Only time will tell whether Mr Chamling's "warm blood" bubbling in him is full of "fiery spirit of revolt" or, he too, will be just "bubbles of water" - full of life and frolic for a while but eventually to get evaporated into thin air.

# The Statesman

3 January 1993

## Sikkim leader's delay in forming new party

# distresses supporters

By JIGME N. KAZI

GANGTOK, Jan.7.- The much-awaited formation of a new political party in Sikkim by the former Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, did not take place last week and the delay is causing considerable concern to his supporters.

Even after being out of power for six months. Mr Chamling continues to be very popular. Ever since he was dropped from the Ministry in June last year and subsequently expelled from the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad, Mr Chamling's supporters, particularly from South and West Sikkim, have been supporting him despite various pressures from the ruling party. But it now seems that Mr Chamling's supporters are tired of waiting for him to launch a new party. Reportedly, his supporters have expressed the feeling that if Mr Chamling continues to be indecisive over the formation of a new regional party, they may draw up their own line of action.

Mr Chamling was expected to return to the State from New Delhi last week. He had reportedly called a meeting on January 1 in Namchi, headquarters of the South district. Unconfirmed reports say that Mr Chamling is seeking the help of the Lok Sabha member from Sikkim, Mrs Dil Kumari Bhandari, wife of the Chief Minister. This report has not been received well by his supporters who maintain that if Mr Chamling aligns with Mrs Bhandari it will be a political "suicide".

For the past six months, Mr Chamling has been actively leading an underground movement for the restoration of freedom and democracy in Sikkim. His appeal that the ruling party has failed to safeguard the rights and interests of the Sikkimese despite its "sons of the soil" policy, has found favour with the people.

Dismissed from the Cabinet and expelled from the SSP for his "communal politics". Mr Chamling's trump card against the Chief Minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, is his campaign to get the Mandal Commission report implemented in the State. The majority of the Nepalese in Sikkim, such as the Rais and Limbus, have been included in the list of the Other Backward Classes in Sikkim. Mr Chamling hails from the Rai community which is dominant in South Sikkim.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 March 1993

### New party launched in Sikkim

GANGTOK, March 6.(PTI)- A new regional political party-the Sikkim Democratic Front - has been launched in

the Himalayan border State.

Announcing the formation of the party, its president Mr P.K. Chamling, MLA, in a press release issued here today said although his organisation had no political ambition to form the Government, it would at present strive to start a political process with the sole aim of helping the Sikkimese people to attain their democratic rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

The State Government, he alleged, had thrown all democratic norms to the wind, resulting in the ever-increasing gap between the haves and have-nots. Despite what he called ruthless repression, the Front would ceaselessly work for the restoration of real democracy in the State, Mr Chamling added.

## Sikkim TELEGRAPH

7-13 March 1993

### S.D.F. To Let The Great Age Begin Anew

As expected for a long period of time, a regional political front has been formed on 4th March under the leadership of Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling who started his early career as a progressive poet and later converted to professional politician.

The new party as claimed by its founder president is dedicated to attain democratic rights for Sikkimese people as enjoyed in the Indian constitution.

Mr Chamling has given especial emphasize on mutual respect and trust among all Sikkimese people. It also said in the appeal "Let us make a fresh and vigours start, after years of dilemma and doubts to take the first step forward to mark an era of new hope and new horizen, that in pledged to forge an understanding of brotherhood amongst all Sikkimese from all walks of life".

As a guiding principle of the new party "Sikkim Democratic Front" Mr Chamling quotes the world famous phrase "of the people, for the people and by the people" written by former American president Abraham Lincoln.

Taking the present ruling SSP Government to criticiae it, the appeal further said, "while the gap between the haves and have nots has become an ever-yawning chasm that requires, more political will and determination to bridge than mere politicking for the sake of gaining high office and the material gains such an office ensures."

For the first time, Mr Chamling has so clearly stood in

favour of Congress (I) and openly appreciated it as a guard of democracy.

Mr Chamling said, his party had no any ambition to assume power instead, it will hoist the banner of democracy to oppose all the undemocratic measures imposed by the present Government to begin a healthy political process in this tiny state.

## The Statesman

9 March 1993

# Anti-Bhandari party launched in Sikkim

GANGTOK, March 9.- Mr Pawan K. Chamling, president of the newly formed Sikkim Democratic Front, has called on the people to work unitedly to put an end to the regime of Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari and restore faith in democracy and democratic values.

Mr Chamling, who has led an underground democratic movement in Sikkim in the past eight months since his expulsion from the Bhandari Cabinet in June last year, formed his own political outfit, the Sikkim Democratic Front, in Namchi, headquarters of the South District last week. A 15 member ad hoc executive committee has been formed with Mr Chamling as its founder president.

Launching the much-awaited party, Mr Chamling in a message to the people of Sikkim said his party would be the genuine "Sikkimese regional party" and would work against "anti-democratic forces", namely the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad. ....

People are now fed up with the politics of corruption, confrontation and division, Mr Chamling said and urged people to unite and revive democracy in the State. Lauding the role of the media in his fight for freedom and democracy in Sikkim Mr Chamling said the press "is the true champion of democracy" and hoped that it would continue to give him moral support for the formation of a new regional party.

In the recently concluded panchayat elections, Mr Chamling claimed, 60 per cent of the people voted against the ruling party. This miserable performance was a "clear verdict" of the people against Mr Bhandari, who was going downhill "politically".

The formation of the SDF comes at a time when leaders of two Opposition parties, the Congress(I) and the

Rising Sun Party, suffered a severe blow. While the Sikkim Pradesh Congress(I) Committee president, Mr Ashoke Kumar Subba, is allegedly involved in a multi-crore lottery scam in Tripura, the president of the Rising Sun Party, Mr Ram Chandra Poudyal, has suffered a serious setback when he lost a legal battle in the Supreme Court recently, relating to the Assembly seat arrangements.

With Mr Subba and Mr Poudyal facing political isolation, people in the State are now turning to another leader to oppose Mr Bhandari and pose a viable alternative to the ruling party which has been in power since 1979 and has 31 members in a House of 32 with the exception of Mr Chamling, who is legally an unattached member though he now represents the Sikkim Democratic Front. Mr Chamling made his appearance in the House yesterday, the first day of the Budget session.

## The Telegraph

20 May 1993

# 2 Sikkim Opp. parties merge

GANGTOK, May, 19.- In a significant political development, the Jan Mukti Morcha (JMM), headed by Mr Y.N. Bhandari, today formally merged with the nascent regional party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, the Sikkim Democratic Front, launched by Mr P. K. Chamling recently.

The morcha was formed in 1990 by Mr Y.N. Bhandari after he broke away from the Rising Sun Party following differences with its president, Mr Ram Chandra Poudyal. He announced his party's merger with the SDF at a public meeting at Pakyong, 28 km east of the state capital.

## The Statesman

22 June 1993

# Sikkim tense after political clash

GANGTOK, June, 21.- Growing political tension in the State was intensified by a clash between supporters of the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad and the Opposition Sikkim Democratic Front in Namchi, headquarters of the South district on Friday.

About 350 young SSP supporters had been campaigning in Namchi since last week. While the opposition viewed

this development as a move against SDF leader, Mr Pawan Chamling, who lives in Namchi, ruling party sources say the one-week-long youth camp had been organized to create social awareness on health and environment, and communal harmony.

Open clashes between the two parties broke out after a SDF party meeting near Namchi on June 18. According to sources SDF supporters "invaded" the SSP camp, sparking off a confrontation. In the ensuing violence, the camp was completely destroyed.

The police were reportedly unable to handle the situation and the violence spilled over to Namchi Bazar. Two vehicles were damaged and many people injured.

Attempts were made to arrest Mr Chamling but somehow he managed to escape, reportedly with the help of the police who gheraoed his residence in Namchi yesterday.

Four SDF youth leaders were brought here yesterday and put in jail custody.

## THE INDEPENDENT

20 October 1993

# Chamling Back In Gangtok

Armed with the anticipatory bail granted by India's Supreme Court in his favour, the leader of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) and sole Opposition MLA Pawan Chamling returned to Sikkim from Delhi later last month.

The *Sikkim Express* said, quoting SDF sources, that Chamling was accorded a befitting reception by party supporters and the public on his arrival at Rangpo checkpoint, from where he was brought in a cavalcade to Gangtok, where he addressed a public meeting. The day happened to be Chamling's birthday. It was observed as "poverty eradication day" by the party.

In the wake of a pending arrest warrant against him following the June 18 Namchi violence, Chamling had escaped by going underground and reached Delhi, seeking anticipatory bail from the Supreme Court. He had reportedly sought relief from the apex court, alleging that the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad Government "unleashed a reign of terror due to which he cannot even go the State to expose the falsity of the FIR filed against him."

According to a Delhi report, after hearing Chamling's counsel, Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah and Justice A.S. Anand granted him anticipatory bail, directing the Chief Minister, the Government of Sikkim, and the Director-General of Police of the State to "ensure adequate security for the life and limb of Chamling and his family members.

# The Telegraph

23 November 1993

## Sikkim Opp. plans stir

Darjeeling, Nov. 22 : With its three-month ultimatum ending on November 15, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), the mountain state's major Opposition party, is all set to launch the first phase of its movement against the Nar Bahadur Bhandari government from November 29.

The four-point charter of demands set before the government included restoration of democracy, end to the reign of terror, weeding out of corruption, implementation of the Mandal Commission report and reservation of Assembly seats.

This would be the first active anti-government stir to be faced by Mr Bhandari in his 14 years of virtual absolute rule. His party, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, has 31 legislators in the 32 member Assembly.

In spite of this, considering the recent happenings in the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom as well as the Opposition mood, it appears that the state Governor, Admiral (retd) R. Tahiliani, may also face as much criticism and opposition as the chief minister during the course of the agitation.

"The Governor has become Mr Bhandari's puppet. Instead of fulfilling his constitutional duties, he hires lawyers from Bombay to save the chief minister from the CBI," the SDF president and lone Opposition legislator, Mr Pawan Chamling, said in an interview to **The Telegraph** here. He added that one such Bombay-based pleader recently stayed as a state guest.

Early last month, the Supreme Court had issued an order on the resumption of CBI cases against Mr Bhandari.

Mr Chamling, who was dropped from the state Cabinet last year following differences with Mr Bhandari complained that the Governor does not meet Opposition leaders.

He also criticised the Governor's indifference towards serious law and order problems like the recent demonstration and a general strike called by state police personnel in the first week of this month. Besides, the policemen went on a rampage, attacking shops when one of their colleagues was stabbed by a civilian.

He also alleged that on November 16, the former minister and vice-president of the ruling party, Mr Thukchuk Lachungpa, and his "followers fired seven rounds on the house of an SDF member, Mr Nhedup Lachungpa.

The Opposition leader, who formed the SDF in February this year, said he would visit Delhi soon to apprise Union



ministers, Mr S.V. Chavan and Mr Rajesh Pilot, of the situation in the state.

As part of its proposed movement, the SDF will launch a mass awakening programme through marches, meetings and posters which will culminate in a rally at Singtam on December 30. The next phase of the agitation would begin the same day.

“Our basic objective is to make the people fearless so that they are able to end Mr Bhandari’s rule. He has no moral right to continue as the chief minister as he faces a host of corruption charges being probed by the CBI,” Mr Chamling said.

## The Telegraph

29 December 1993

**Two former CMs back Chamling against Bhandari**

### Biggest-ever Opp. rally in Sikkim

FROM KESHAV PRADHAN

Singtam (Sikkim), Dec. 28 : This erstwhile Himalayan kingdom today witnessed the biggest Opposition-sponsored rally as thousands of Sikkim Democratic Front supporters converged here at the end of their first phase of agitation against the Nar Bahadur Bhandari government.

During the past month, the SDF, led by its president, Mr Pawan Chamling, held statewide meetings and demonstrations demanding the ouster of the chief minister. The next phase of the SDF’s anti-government campaign, to be launched from January, will be more aggressive and confrontationist.

Since morning, SDF activists, including women, arrived here in trucks and other vehicles. The town was decked up with blue, yellow and red banners signifying the unity of the three dominant communities- the Nepalis, the Lepchas, and the Bhutias.

Today’s rally was significant for the SDF in more ways than one. The former Congress(I) chief minister, Mr Bhim Bahadur Gurung, formally joined the SDF. Another former Congress(I) chief minister, Mr Kazi Lhendop Dorjee, the architect of Sikkim’s merger with India, extended his moral support to the SDF. Although Mr Dorjee did not attend the meeting, he was present at the residence of a SDF supporter. Talking to this correspondent, he said, “I wonder why the Centre is not taking action against Mr Bhandari despite the fact that he is constantly opposing Sikkim’s merger with India.”

Over the past year, the SDF, headed by Mr Chamling

after he was unceremoniously expelled from the SSP, has worked its way up to emerge as an alternative to Mr Bhandari’s Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP). Of late it has even managed to wean key members of the ruling party. A beaming Mr Chamling said, “The entry of the former SSP MP, Mr Nandu Thapa, is almost certain. Besides, one SSP minister and four MLAs will also join us shortly.” He, however, refused to reveal their names till they crossed over to his party formally.

Bolstered by such unprecedented support, Mr Chamling, in his marathon three-and-half hour speech, repeatedly challenged the chief minister to face him in an election. “I will wipe out Bhandari and his corrupt associates in the elections,” he thundered. Mr Bhandari, in his 14-year rule, had “plundered Sikkim with the help of greedy businessmen from outside,” Mr Chamling alleged, adding “we will set up an inquiry commission to punish Bhandari and his associates when we come to power.”

The fiery leader complained that democracy had been “suppressed” under “Bhandari’s reign of terror” and urged people to join his party’s struggle to restore peace and harmony. He also focussed on how Mr Bhandari had “fooled the Sikkimese” on the citizenship issue. “How could he say that Sikkimese would have their own identity when they automatically became Indian citizens after the merger with India?”

Mr Chamling warned the people not to get swayed by the ruling party’s campaign that the SDF party’s campaign that the SDF would merge Sikkim with Darjeeling if it came to power. “Only Mr Bhandari and the congress can commit such a crime. The SDF fights for the rights of the Sikkimese only.” he said. He also denied launching a communal campaign as alleged by Mr Bhandari.

While the SDF enthralled this town, the SSP simultaneously held its meeting at Namchi, just a hour’s drive from here and hometown of none other than Mr Chamling. The SSP’s rally was part of its campaign to counter the ever-growing Opposition.

## Sikkim OBSERVER

26 January 1994

**‘Ruling party left with sycophants and hypocrites’**

### Chamling gets support from Sikkimese leaders

GANGTOK : The failure of the State unit of the Congress (1) to seriously oppose the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) in the State has not only

disillusioned many of its supporters but many Congressmen, including senior party leaders, have joined the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), to strengthen the hands of its President, Mr. Pawan Chamling, who is leading a movement for restoration of freedom and democracy in Sikkim.

Former Chief Minister and veteran Congressman, Mr. Bhim Bahadur Gurung, who joined the SDF last month, after quitting the Congress (I), is convinced that the Congress (I)'s prospects in the coming Assembly elections are bleak. In a letter to the AICC (I), Mr. Gurung has alleged that "intra party squabbles" within the Congress camp "have now come out in open".

Former Congress (I) MLA and another senior Congressman, Mr. Kalzang Gyatso, has also quit the Congress (I) and joined the SDF. Mr. Gyatso, a veteran Congressman and tribal leader, is likely to sway the support of the minority Bhutia Lepcha tribals towards the SDF. Mr. Gyatso, who has now become the Vice President of the SDF, was the Vice President of the SPCC (I) before he joined Mr. Chamling. Yet another Congressman, Mr. Sherab Palden, General Secretary of the SPCC (I), also joined the SDF at a mammoth public meeting of the party in Singtam on December 28. Mr. Palden will also influence a section of the tribals in favour of the SDF.

Ruling party stalwarts such as its advisors, Mr. Loden Tshering and M.M. Rasaily, along with SSP's former Lok Sabha MP, Mr. Nandu Thapa, joined the SDF at the Singtam meeting last month. Mr. Thapa, once a close confidant of the Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, has accused the Chief Minister of rampant corruption in the administration, violation of human rights and authoritarian rule in Sikkim.

A Press statement issued by Mr. Thapa stated: "Fear psychosis has been created to intimidate the people through money and muscle power. Voices of opposition and dissent in the ruling Sikkim Sangram party have been stifled. This party is now composed of sycophants and hypocrites".

## TAIWAN-SIKKIM CONTROVERSY

### Doubts persist despite denial

*Observer News Service*

GANGTOK : Despite a strongly-worded denial by the State Government, doubts still persist about the reported visit of a Taiwanese minister, Mr. Chen Li An, to Sikkim recently.

Reacting to Press reports in a national daily about the mysterious visit of Taiwan's PM to Sikkim, the statement described the report as "fallacious, malafide and misleading". The statement "strongly refuted" the reported visit of Taiwan's PM to Sikkim in the month of November-December last year.

It said the State Government had no information of the PM's visit to Sikkim as has been reported. It also said the

Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, did not host any lunch for the Taiwanese PM during this period. The State Government has also denied that Mr. Karma Topden, a Cabinet Minister and former Mr, met the Taiwanese PM during this period as reported.

Press reports on the Taiwan PM's visit to Sikkim provoked strong reactions in Gangtok, Delhi, and Taipei. Informed sources in New Delhi say Chen Li is a Cabinet Minister in Taiwan and not its PM. Mr. Ki An, as reported, visited Sikkim with a woman companion between November 28 and December 4 and met Mr. Bhandari and Mr. Topden in Ranipul and Martham in east Sikkim. Whether the Taiwanese minister actually visited Sikkim during this period and met the Chief Minister still remains a mystery.

The reported visit of the VIP comes at a time when the Rumtek Monastery is faced with a controversial situation regarding the identification and enthronement of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa. While a section of the Rumtek Monastery lamas headed by His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche has accepted the Tibet born boy lama, Ugen Thinley, as the reincarnation of the 16th Karmapa, others led by His Eminence Shamar Rinpoche allege that the recently discovered Karmapa is a Chinese 'puppet'. It is alleged that China has religious and political interest both in Tibet and Sikkim.

Informed sources in Delhi are of the opinion that Taiwan's interest prompted by its new policy of coming closer to China. It may be mentioned here that Taiwan considers Tibet to be part of the mainland.

It is significant that opposition leaders in Sikkim such as Mr. Pawan Chamling, MLA and President of the Sikkim Democratic Front, visited Delhi earlier this month and warned the Centre of an "international conspiracy" to "destabilise this highly sensitive area". Mr. Chamling cautioned the Centre on "anti-national" activities of the State Chief Minister.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

31 March 1994

### SDF chief denies charges

GANGTOK : March 30. The president of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), Mr. P.K. Chamling, has accused the state chief minister, Mr. N.B. Bhandari and his wife, Ms. D.K. Bhandari, MP, of spearheading a consistent slander campaign against him and his party in view of the SDF's growing popularity among the people of the state, reports PTI.

In a press statement here today, Mr. Chamling denied Mr. Bhandari's allegation that Samar Rinpoche of the Dharmachakra centre of Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim had

managed funds worth about Rs 1 er from Kathmandu to keep the SDF floating.

Criticising Mr Bhandari's brand of politicking, the SDF president held the former "solely responsible for engineering a vertical split in the religious order of the Centre to serve his own selfish interests."

The Union home ministry, Mr. Chamling said, had sent a fact finding team headed by the under secretary of the north eastern concil, Mr. B.N.Jha, to investigate into the Rumtek controversy and submit a report within a week.

"WHITE LIES" : This followed submission of a memorandum to the President of India and the Union ministers, apprising them of the developments in the monastery. Mr Bhandari's statement that the SDF members had failed to meet the President and the Union ministers was nothing but "white lies", Mr Chamling asserted.

The front president alleged that as part of his slander campaign, the chief minister had been resorting to all "sorts of gimmickry including foreign hand theory to malign the SDF".

On the contrary, the SDF president alleged that Mr Bhandari had connections with Nepal as the had agreed to accept the "Jagadamba award" exclusively meant for bonafide Nepali citizens.

Moreover, Mr Chamling said, the chief Minister possessed a huge estate covering hundreds of acres at jhiljhiley in eastern Nepal which he purchased by misappropriating public lunds meant for Sikkim's development.

It is intriguing how the chief minister could purchase landed property in that country where only bonafide Nepalese citizens were alloed to purchase immovable property, Mr Chamling wondered.

## The Statesman

4 April 1994

### Chamling seeks Bhandari's resignation

GANGTOK, April 3.- Mr P.K.Chamling, President of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has demanded the resignation of the Chief Minister, Mr.N.B. Bhandari on moral grounds following the Supreme Court's rulling in a case relating to CBI charges of corruption against Mr. Bhandari, reports PTI.

Mr. Chamling said that Mr. Bhandari had no legitimate right to continue in office in view of the apex court's clear verdict on the case and urged him to seek a fresh mandate of the people.

Replying to a question, he said that the corrupt practices

committed by Mr Bhandari during his first tenure from 1979 to 1984 revealed only the tip of an iceberg.

The SDF leader alleged that Mr Bhandari had amassed huge wealth during his subsequent tenures from 1985 to 1994 by misappropriating public money meant for the economic uplift of the poor people.

On the issue of Mr. Bhandari's recommendations to the Centre in respect of delimitation of constituencies and reservation of Assembly seats among different ethnic communities, Mr Chamling said that the Centre should not even look into these proposals submitted by a single political leader.

## Frontline

2-22 April 1994

### Sikkim Stirrings

BANDH was an unfamiliar word in Sikkim till last month, for none dared to protest against Nar Bahadur Bhandari ro his Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) Government for more than a decade. So, when a 72-hour bandh called by a new-born Opposition party, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), received a good response, the ruling party had reason to be perturbed, particularly when the Assembly election was expected later this year.

Till March 1993, when Pawan Chamling, once a close associate of Bhandari, formed the SDF after resigning from the Government unhappy with the Chief Minister's "autocratic style and rampant corruption," there was not a single Opposition member in the 32-strong Assmebly. Chamling, former Industries and Information Minister has within a year spread his organisational network throughout the State to challenge Bhandari (*Fortnline*, March 25).

The bandh, from March 22 was party against the Centre and partly against the State Government. SDF general secretary K. B. Chamling said it was to protest against the decision to impose direct income tax laws in Sikkim from April 1and the State Government solnvolvement in lottery and gift rackets. The SDF has demanded the dismissal of the Bhandari Government as the Supreme Court, in a verdict on March 29 has asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to renew its investigation into charges of corruption against Bhandari.

Bhandari, who came to power in October 1979, was forced to step down in May 1984 for alleged corruption. On becoming Chief Minister, B. B. Gurung of the Congress (I) ordered a CBI investigation against Bhandari, which was dropped mid-way by Bhandari himself after his return to power in 1987. Gurung and former Chief Minister Kazi Lhendup Dorji recently filed a petition in the court challenging this.

Sikkim has suddenly become a hotbed of Opposition



politics. In the last one year there have been rallies, demonstrations and sit-in protests. Significantly, all major Opposition parties, including the SDF, the Congress (I) and the CPI (M), have formed a Joint Action Committee (JAC) with Kazi Lhendup Dorji as chairman. If the JAC constituents finally come to an electoral alliance, it will send an ominous signal to Bhandari.

## The Statesman

10 April 1994

### Opposition urges speedy trial in Sikkim C. M. case

GANGTOK, April 9-The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front has demanded a speedy trial of the State Chief Minister Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, by the CBI on charges of corruption, reports UNI.

The SDF president, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, and the former Chief Minister, Mr. Bhim Bahadur Gurung, told a joint press conference here yesterday that a high-level delegation would soon visit New Delhi and request the Union Home Ministry to set up a special court for the day-to-day hearing of the case.

They demanded that Mr Bhandari resign following the Supreme Court's ruling on March 29, 1994, on the Chief Minister's attempt to party quash a State Government notification on January 7, 1987 stalling the CBI inquiry into corruption charges against him.

Mr. Chamling felt justice has already been delayed since Mr. Gurung had ordered the CBI probe on May 19, 1984. Mr. Bhandari, after assuming office for the second time in 1985, had withdrawn the CBI sanction against him on January 7, 1987.

Mr. Chamling threatened that his party would launch an agitation for removal of Mr. Bhandari if the Centre did nothing to speed up the inquiry.

## The Statesman

11 June 1994

### Chamling demands Central rule in Sikkim

Saying that Limboo had no moral right to govern, Chamling also

### demanded the Chief Minister's resignation

NEW DELHI, June 10 - The Sikkim Democratic Front Chief, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, today demanded the imposition of President's rule in the State saying that the Sanchaman Limboo Ministry was "a Government of defectors", reports PTI.

Mr Chamling, who was here for the past few days, said that the two factions of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, led by Mr. Limboo and the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, were responsible for "various acts of omission and commission" and, therefore, were answerable to the people.

Stating that Mr Limboo had "no moral right to govern" Mr. Chamling demanded the Chief Minister's resignation. He also said that Assembly elections, due in November, should be held soon.

Commenting on reports about the SSP factions trying to merge with the Congress (I), the SDF president said, "If the Congress (I) takes these elements into its fold, its position in Sikkim will further worsen".

Mr. Chamling is the lone non-SSP MLA in the 32 member Sikkim Assembly.

Mr. Chamling expressed confidence that his party would do well in the ensuing elections and said the SDF had already finalized most of its candidates. "All the candidates will be new faces", he added.

The SDF chief charged both Mr. Bhandari and Mr Limboo and their parties with playing the "communal and casteist cards, endangering the integrity of the country and playing havoc with normalcy and peace in the sensitive border State".

The SDF chief, during his stay here, presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister and other Central leaders on various issues concerning the State.

## Himalayan Guardian

30 September 1994

### Testing time for Chamling

*Himalayan News Network*

Gangtok: The time has finally come for the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) Chief, Mr. Pawan Chamling, to prove his mettle. Within a fortnight from now Mr. Chamling would have chosen his party candidates to fight the ensuing Assembly polls in November this year.

# Sikkim OBSERVER

29 October 1994

## RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY TOP PRIORITY : *CHAMLING*

### SDF emerges stronger after exit of ex-Sangramis

Gangtok: Despite a temporary setback the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has emerged stronger after the resignation of several ex-Sangramis from the party last week. The sudden exit of eight top-ranking party members, who were supposedly the think-tank of the SDF, has revived the initial zest and enthusiasm within the SDF fold. It is a good indicator of better things, observers feel.

The SDF chief, Mr. Pawan Chamling, who is playing his card close to his chest, himself told newsmen that the exit of some leaders belonging to the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, who joined his party later last year, had made the SDF more stronger. The SDF camp can now move freely and breathe fresh air after eight of its senior leaders resigned in protest against Mr. Chamling's alleged dictatorial and communal tendencies. Refuting allegations that he was undemocratic, Mr. Chamling said this party would continue to accord top priority to restoration of democracy in the State.

Apart from Mr. Sherab Palden and Mr. Sonam Tsering, who quit the SDF last week, others such as Mr. M. M. Rasaily, Mr. Nandu Thapa, Mr. J. B. Pradhan, and Mr. Loden Tshering were all former Sangramis belonging to the Sikkim Sangram Parishad led by Mr. N. B. Bhandari. Most of these partymen joined the SDF last year when Mr. Chamling and his party's popularity was at its height.

Those who abruptly left the SDF last week are now scattered in various directions. While Mr. Tsering has gone back to the Rising Sun Party. Others like Mr. Pradhan and Mr. Palden have been absorbed into the ruling Congress (I) Mr. Rasaily, Mr. Thapa and Mr. Tshering have adopted a wait-and watch attitude.

The inclusion of Mr. Karma Tempo Gyaltzen, a local candidate who hails from a respected family in Gangtok, in the list of its party candidates has further strengthened Mr. Chamling's bandwagon. In the face of much

The man who was dismissed from the Bhandari Cabinet two and half years ago for allegedly delving into "communal politics" is today the chief contender for the chief minister's gaddi. While the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, will fight a desperate battle to make a comeback, for the ruling Congress (I) Chief Minister, Mr. Sanchaman Limboo, this election is a prestigious issue for him and his party.

But much now depends on selection of candidates for any party to perform well in the forthcoming polls and beyond. While Mr. Bhandari will have a tough time in getting the right candidates the ruling party faces and inherent weakness as it will be forced to allot at least a sizable number of seats to the sitting MLAs. The Congress (I) also faces another major problem in choosing candidates from the original Congress (I) group. Most of the senior Congressmen have either left the party to join other parties or have formed their own political outfit.

For the past one and half years, most people in the State have looked with much hope and high expectation to Mr. Chamling's SDF. The feeling among the vast majority of the people is that they are fed up with both the past and present regime. The Sangrami culture of sycophancy, corruption and personalised politics based on communal line has not done any good for the State. The people want a clean sweep from the past. "If Mr. Bhandari's SSP is the head the present government while pointing out that the people of Sikkim now want a total change in the entire system.

Though the SDF is yet to formally declare its candidates some of those who have already been selected by the party consists of new faces with clean image. The SDF expects to win at least 25 of the 32 seats in the polls. Most of them are likely to be young, educated and dedicated to the cause of the Sikkimese people. There will however, be some old and experienced hands in Mr. Chamling's team.

Clean, capable and committed candidates who cannot be purchased are the only reliable assets for any party and the people at large. Both the ruling party and the SSP will try to ensure that they derive maximum benefit in the polls through money power. Both Mr. Bhandari and his former colleagues in the Congress (I) boast of being able to "purchase" MLAs after the Assembly polls are over. "Politics will only begin after the polls are over" said a ruling party leader. "If we get ten seats, we can purchase the other ten" he added.

More than anything what select a new brand of Sikkim really needs is a "total revolutionaries who can get revolution which the SDF is elected, formed the government and promising. The real test for lead Sikkim to the 21st century.

opposition, the SDF chief dropped Mr. Ugen Bhutia's name from the list and was replaced by Mr. Gyaltsen

From the Bhutia Lepcha reserved constituency of Rumtek in cast Sikkim. In place of Mr. Nandu Thapa, the SDF's candidate from the prestigious Gangtok constituency is Mr. S.B. Subedi. The two Scheduled Caste tickets which were earlier allotted to Mr. Rasaily and Mr. C. K. Mohra has now been given to Mr. Gopal Lamichancy (Khamdong) and Mr. Aita Singh Baraily (Ratepani West Pandern). Observers still rate SDF as the frontrunner in the polls. But much now depends on Mr. Chamling's ability to infuse the party with a new spirit of confidence and detemination to forge ahead. If Mr. Chamling is able to recapture and re-ignite the democratic spirit within the party which was evident when the party was first formed and if he is able to unite all anti-Bhandari and pro-democacy in the State as he had earlier intended the SDF still has an upper hand over other parties in the ensuing polls.

## The Telegraph

8 November 1994

# Stacking up run of the hill ballot boxes

*With elections only days away in Sikkim, intra-tribal strife if not countered could acquire explosive dimensions, writes -*  
**Mahendra P. Lama**

The fifth state assembly elections for Sikkim slated for November 16 will have quite a few critical distinctions from the past ones. It is definitely going to be the most fiercely contested election in the 20 year history of the state. Almost all the heavyweights in the fray representing different parties are a conglomerate of either one time lieutenants of Nar Bahadur Bhandari, the former chief minister, or his supposed political mentors.

Equally fascinating is the range of issues before this particular election. They are altogether new and far reaching. Unlike the past, Bhandari is locked in a real trangular contest with his Sikkim Sangram Parishad facing the newly formed Sikkim Democratic Front, led by Pawan chamling, and the Congress, led by chief minister Sanchaman Limbu.

The SSP had in fact no serious agenda, particularly after two of ist major demands were met by the Centre. One, the constitutional recognition of the Nepali language. Two, granting citizenship to about 80,000 Sikkimese. But human memory is short. Moreover, Bhandari became too complacent after the two achievements.

His party today faces a formidable challenge in three very crucial areas. The increasing caste cleavage, intra-tribal tension, and neglect of state infra structure. Interestingly, in all three frontss Bhandari's policy differs widely from that of Chamling and Limbu.

Sikkim today is grossly infested by the caste virus mainly due to the controversies inherent in the Mandal commission implementations. For the Sikkimese Nepali community, which always remained above caste disparities and politics, the present wave may turn out to be quite deleterious. On the one hand, there exists a sheer desperation on the part of the local leaders to uproot Bhandari's all prvasive regime. On the other hand, this speaks volumes about the vulnerability of an ethnic group within a society with a deep rooted feudal past.

When the Mandal commission visited Sikkim in 1978 to prepare the report, it had probably not been able to understand the caste structure in Sikkim. As a result, the final report showed glaring discrepancies in listing the backward classes. Bhandari's apprehension was that if he implemented the report as it was, not only would the Sikkimese society be terribly affected but so would the Sikkimese-Nepali.

Bhandari, who has so assiduously fought to project the Sikkimese as a strong unified race, considered this report, sans modifications, politically untenable. Be has been of the view that all Sikkimese Nepalis regardless of their caste and creed should be declared as backward classes. The ruling Congress categorically discards the popular views in Sikkim that class or caste determination should be purely based on larger social, economic and cultural issues involving the entire Indian Nepalese, and not on petty local politics.

However, the bitter truth is that caste politics will have a definite role in the forthcoming election. This is adequately reflected in the manner the tickets are being distributed. There has been a conscious effort by almost all parties to field a leader of a particular caste in an area with a significant number of voters belonging to the same caste as the candidate. This is a vicious frend in a border state.

Of the total number of voters, roughly 41 and 23 percent belong to the Mongoloid and Aryan variety of the indigenous sikkimese Nepalese respectively. Scheduled castes and tribes account for the residual 28 per cent. This election will determine to a large extent the shape of the future Sikkimese society. this shape could be anything between a consolidated and unified social structure to a fragmented cluster of ethnic groups.

Behind the ugly caste war of the indigenous Nepalese, an equally serious issue has been gradually brewing. That of a growing tension between the scheduled tribe population of Sikkim. Thirteen out of the 32 assembly seats are reserved for the scheduled tribes. They have so far been a formidable political force. But inter-tribe bickerings have

of late spawned an element of vulnerability.

The Lepcha-Bhutia tribal conglomerate is of late engaged in a tug of war. First, the assertive attitude adopted by the Lepchas with regard to their socio-political and economic rights have made them jittery. This, coupled with the fear that they may be evicted from their traditional habitat of the eastern Himalayas have made them sensitive about their political rights. Second, the yuppies among the Bhutia community have brought about a discrepancy within their lot. This has led to a clash of values among the traditional and the modern.

The original inhabitants of Sikkim, the Lepchas had been outnumbered by the 16th century with the influx of Nepalese and Tibetans. Gradually, the Lepchas were so engulfed by the respective cultures of the Bhutias and the Nepalese, they nearly lost their ethnic identity.

The presidential notification known as the Scheduled Caste Order, 1978, declared there are two tribal communities in Sikkim-Bhutia and Lepcha. The Bhutia community includes various subsections: Chumpida, Depthapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo. Thus, when it came to sharing political power, this kind of listing in effect meant that the 13 seats for the tribals will be divided equally between the Bhutias and the Lepchas.

Of late, some sections of the Bhutias have started challenging this arrangement because they feel other sections within this community are being represented far more strongly. This means the assembly seats run the risk of being further divided between the subsection within the Bhutias.

Using a tactful formula, in a memorandum submitted to the president of India in March 1994, the Denzong Lhomen Chodu—a tribal organisation of south Sikkim clearly sought a constitutional amendment to the presidential notification of 1978. The amendment will facilitate constitutional recognition to all Bhutia subgroups as opposed to being recognised as an integrated community.

The Lepchas immediately recognised the implications of the Lepchas who were so far cent of the facilities extended would now have to make do with 12.5 per cent. They reacted instantly. In a counter memorandum submitted to the president by the Renjyoung Mutanchi Rong Ong Shejum, Gangtok, in April 1994, it mentioned: "It has come to our knowledge that.....Denzong Chomen Chodu, a self styled tribal organisation of Sikkim (has been) seeking amendments....said organisation....is totally unrepresented by the Lepcha community....This amendment....will hamper not only our distinct identity which is maintained in the present order but it is an act of outlandish effort to hoodwink the Central government....we being the indigenous tribe of this area have our own culture.....and ancient historical background. We, therefore, appeal that the Sikkim Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Order of 1978 must remain status quo."

This intra-tribal strife, if not nipped in the bud, could acquire explosive dimensions. The fact that Sikkim is a border state renders this problem more significant.

Despite these social issues running over the ones related to the economy, the question of land reforms is becoming a frontline concern vis a vis the elections. Also, three other issues are being toyed with by the major political parties. That of the continuing siphoning off of the cream of development by the plainsmen, sectoral priorities, and environmental degradation.

Sikkim inherited a feudal and medieval structure both in terms of political culture and economic management. A democratic political system, as introduced later, ushered in a new development perspective. Bhandari, one must admit, masterminded this change.

It is in Sikkim where the fruits of economic development and social change have noticeably percolated down to the masses. Almost every household has drinking water, electricity and a decent education. This is why no political party in the state has dabbled over the issue of basic needs in its manifesto. So the real issue is who can deliver more.

Sikkim has registered an annual growth rate of 14.94 per cent in the last 12 years. The per capita income sometimes superseded the all India average. But the structural change generally reflected in the shift from the primary to the secondary sector is virtually absent. This is because industrial activity is still a low priority item in Sikkim's scheme of things.

In the last 12 years the annual food grain production almost doubled. In fact, the annual rate of increase in food grain production is 9.7 per cent. The all India growth rate is five per cent. Sikkim's cultivable land accounts for a meagre 16 per cent of its geographic area. Yet agriculture is the mainstay of 80 per cent of the population. Hence, the stress on land reforms is expected. The question of land reform has so far remained politically explosive. But it is yet to blow up. This is because of the highly skewed character of land distribution in favour of the tribals.

The conspicuously high degree of concentration on certain echelons of the tribals and an increasing alienation of the lowly placed among them have been widely debated in the bustees of Sikkim. Bhandari has promised to review the situation if elected to power.

Sikkim also faces a stagnation in terms of income and employment generation. The overwhelming presence of merchant capitalists are commonly blamed for this phenomenon. This business segment has traditionally played the role of economic anchor in Sikkim there by influencing the pattern of both resource allocation and mobilisation.

The net result has been the constant outflow of generated income from the state both as unaccounted money and investment. The siphoning off of the cream of development to the plains has made the additional



generation of income and employment in Sikkim virtually impossible. This is a phenomenon very few locals are consciously aware of.

For a state like Sikkim, a proper sector identification for both development thrust and strategies should top the economic agenda. In the wake of vast structural changes in the national economy, it is imperative Sikkim keeps pace with time. An agriculture based economy is no longer sufficient. But the agricultural sector by itself has been relatively modernised.

However, primordial sentiments in terms of land ownership remain intact. Nonfarming activities have not been able to strike firm roots. The pauperisation of landless, marginal and small farmers continue. Therefore, economic sustainability can only be ensured through a comprehensive review of the existing land distribution norms, farming technology, credit arrangement and rededication to micro level planning.

All said and done, the best bet in a hill state has always been the service sector and most importantly, tourism. With the national policy of glasnost in the services sector, a sensitive state like Sikkim cannot remain unaffected.

Though Sikkim's ecological status continues to be sufficiently protected, the destabilising forces are becoming ominously strong. Commercial deforestation has also been plaguing Sikkim. Social awareness, in the absence of voluntary or statutory organisations, is limited to the microscopic elite.

The mushrooming of high rise buildings in Gangtok has made the city unstable because of the changing critical angle and the nature of the soil slope. And the pace and politics of the construction boom have numbed the state authorities into silence.

The outcome of the forthcoming elections, its political ramifications notwithstanding, better be a palliative to Sikkim's woes.

## Himalayan Guardian

12 November 1994

*Coalition govt. forseen*

# Chamling confident of victory

*By Tshering T. Namgyal*

Gangtok: The man who was thrown out of the Bhandari Cabinet and the ruling party for allegedly cabbling in "communal politics" because of his insistence that the backward classes in the State must have a greater say in the decision making processes is now all set to enter

Mintokgang, the chief minister's official residence here.

The Sikkim Democratic Front President, Mr. Pawan Chamling, is now fully convinced that his message of restoration on democracy and freedom in the State and his fight for the rights and interests of the Sikkimese people, majority of whom are still poor and backward, have been well received by the people.

Unlike the AICC (I) General Secretary in-charge of Sikkim and the North-East, Mr. Sushil K. Shinde's claim that the Congress (I) would sweep the coming polls by winning all the 31 seats in the Assembly elections due next week (Nov 16), Mr. Chamling's claim that his party would get well above the needed seats (17), possibly around 22-25 seats, seems to be pretty accurate.

The SDF is confident of winning almost all the 8 seats in south Sikkim, the bastion of the party, mainly because this district is dominated by the Rais and other belonging to the OBC group. Mr. Chamling who belongs to the Rai community, is himself contesting from Damthang constituency in south Sikkim. ■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

10 December 1994

# SDF gets absolute majority in Assembly

## Bhandari elected, Limboo defeated

Gangtok: The Sikkim Democratic Front, which has secured an absolute majority (19 of the 32 seats) in the House, is now all set to form the new government. The party President and former MLA, Mr. Pawan Chamling, was returned to the House by a handsome margin from his home constituency of Damthang in south district.

The results of the Assembly polls reveal clean sweep by the SDF in west and south district which has a total of 16 seats. While the SDF won all the 7 seats in south Sikkim it secured six of the 9 seats in west district. The Congress (I) Chief Minister, Mr. S. M. Limboo, conceded defeat in his home constituency of Yuksam in west Sikkim. Mr. Limboo was defeated by his nearest rival, Mr. A. K. Subba, President, United Liberation Front, (ULF) by a margin of 145 votes.

In Soreong constituency, the former Chief Minister and Sikkim Sangram Parishad chief, Mr. N. B. Bhandari scraped through by 405 votes. Mr. Bhandari polled 3291 votes while the SDF candidate, Mr. M. B. Subba, received 2886 votes. Mr. Bhandari's wife and Sikkim Lok Sabha



M. P. Mrs. D.K. Bhandari, lost to SDF's Mr. Bhoj Raj Rai in Jorethang constituency in south Sikkim. The Congress (I) leader and former Minister, Mr. G. Kaleon, lost to his nearest rival, Mr. D. D. Bhutia of the SDF from Ralong.

The SSP performed exceptionally well in the east district which has a total of 12 seats. The SSP won 8 seats in this district. Among the former SSP Ministers, who have been re-elected, are Mr. K. N. Upreti and Mr. Ram Lepcha. Former SSP Minister, Mr. P. L. Gurung and Mr. P. B. Gurung, lost to SDF candidates in west Sikkim the SSP candidate, Mr. N. K. Pradhan, defeated the Cong (I) candidate, Mr. D. P. Sharma, from the prestigious Gangtok constituency by a margin of 728 votes.

The Congress (I) faced a humiliating defeat but managed to secure only one seat from the Dzongu constituency in north Sikkim. Congress (I) candidate and Minister, Mr. Sonam Chyoda Lepcha, won by a slender margin of only 47 votes. The SSP candidates, Mr. Sonam D. Lepcha polled 1503 while the Congress (I) leader secured 1550 votes. Former Minister and Congress (I) leader, Mr. T. Lachungpa, lost to the SDF candidate, Mr. Thinley Bhutia, by a narrow margin of 55 votes in Kabi-Tingda constituency. Mr. Hissay Lachungpa, the SDF candidate defeated the Cong (I) candidate, Mr. Tseten Lepcha, from the Lachen-Mangsilpa constituency in north Sikkim. ■

## The Statesman

11 December 1994

### Chamling to form new govt. in Sikkim

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Gangtok, Dec 10: The Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) is preparing to form a government under its president, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, by Tuesday, having routed the ruling Congress(I) and Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) in the Assembly elections.

According to the SDF's chief adviser and former chief minister, Mr Bhim Bahadur Gurung, the organisation's legislature party will elect Chamling as its leader by tonight. The legislature party's meeting has been called at Namchi, the SDF chief's native place, 90 km west to the state capital.

Mr Gurung, talking over the phone, said he and Mr Chamling would call on the state governor, Mr P. Shivshankar, either tomorrow or on Monday, to stake the party's claim to form a government. Asked whether the SDF still wanted to have the oath-taking function at the

Palzor stadium here as announced by Chamling on the eve of the elections, he said "We will talk to the governor about this."

The chief minister-in waiting had earlier said, "Our party belongs to the downtrodden and we will have the oath-taking ceremony at the stadium to let the deprived section witness the swearing -in of their own government."

With the result of one seat yet to come, the SDF has captured 19 out of 31 seats declared so far. The party, formed 22 months ago, has thus obtained an absolute majority in the 32 -member House. Counting of the last constituency was delayed due to non-arrival of the ballot boxes.

## The Telegraph

17 December 1994

### ONE-UP MAN

### Pawan Chamling has become chief minister of Sikkim by beating Nar Bahadur Bhandari at his own game

Basically, Pawan Kumar Chamling is a child of his mentor Nar Bahadur Bhandari's political mistakes. In 1989, when Sikkim was on the threshold of Assembly elections, the impulsive former chief minister, then at the pinnacle of his glory, put a sum on who will get the highest votes, confident that he himself would win it. Little did he realise then that he would be beaten at his own game by the man who would be instrumental in unseating him from power five years later.

Chamling a low profile follower, went home with the prize money, cornering 97 per cent of the votes cast in his Damthang constituency. Since then, the winner has never looked back. Rugged and robust, the 44. year-old Chamling is a romantic rebel to the core. As a young man, he penned a poem called Antaheen sapana: mero bipana (*The endless dream and my reality*). He has several collections of poems to his credit, their themes ranging from love to political discontentment). Now, after taking over the mantle of the state, he may tend to dream more.

A farmer's son, he tries to identify with the masses who, in his party jargon are *khali-kutlie* (the barefoot ones). Long ago, he discarded his three-piece suit, which he often donned as Bhandari's industry and information minister earlier, to distinguish himself from the suited and booted

elite of the semi-feudal Sikkimese society.”My party is not meant for the people who believe in five-star culture” he remarked dismissively when some of his affluent intellectual colleagues left the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) just before the recent polls.

Bhandari his master turned foe, calls him a fraud. “Pawan is the master of disguise and defections,” says the vanquished leader. To prove his point he relates a story about how the SDF chief escaped from a police party, when he was wanted in several cases of violence.

“When the police reached his residence at Namchi he deceived them by dressing himself in a sari,” he adds. On the other hand some of Chamling’s other opponents like former chief minister Sanchman Limboo and Rising Sun Party president Ramchandra Poudyal find him fickle-minded.

Yet the new chief minister, riding the crest of a popular wave at the moment, is least bothered by such outbursts. If he responds at all, he responds sarcastically. “Bhandari has not learnt his lesson. First, he made me leader by abusing me. Now, he will make me the permanent chief minister by abusing me again,” he says.

Often, the SDF President’s attempts to change society have the ingredients of a fullscale drama. Even before he stepped out of his teens, he scripted and acted in a play called Hija-aaja-bholi (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow) to highlight the repressive nature of the Chogyal’s autocratic regime. Two years ago, he lit two candles in the Assembly when it was still in session. Making a dig at Bhandari’s near absolute rule, he had said, “I am searching for democracy in the state with the help of the candlelight.” The jeers he drew from the house (he was the lone opposition member in the 32 member Assembly) have now turned into cheers for his victory in the recent polls.

Minutes after he assumed office as chief minister, he created a flutter by refusing to use the Mercedes, which is the chief minister’s official car. According to him, such a car suits only the rich, the Queen of England and the President of the United States.

Though he deserves full marks for single handedly taking on Bhandari, ‘Chamling could not always keep his crusade for democracy free from communalism. Opinion differs on why he parted company with him. His hardcore supporters point out that the former chief minister, despite his charm and total sway over the state politics, saw Chamling’s growing emergence as a threat to his own one-man show. In spite of this, the timing of Chamling’s revolt has made him suspect in the eyes of secular forces.

He raised his voice against Bhandari after the Mandal Commission report was made public. The commission recommended granting of OBC status to a host of Nepali ethnic groups (which generally belong to Mongoloid stock), but left out Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Newars. Fearing a split in the Nepali society, Bhandari vacillated for a long time on taking a decision on the issue. In contrast,

Pawan’s stand was clear: you support those who have been mentioned in the Mandal report and fight for those who have been left out. In a way, both wanted to avoid any division among the multi-ethnic Nepalis. Ironically, their divergent views sent wrong signals to the people; the Mongoloid Nepalis looked to Chamling as their saviour while the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Newars, moved close to Bhandari.

At this point, Chamling proved himself a better player. Despite the humiliation and insults heaped on him by his leader, he did not react but waited for his boss to sack him. Once thrown out of the government and the party, he became an instant hero among the Mongoloid Nepalis who form the majority in the state. Soon he was hounded out of Sikkim as the police instituted several criminal cases against him. He spent four months in self-exile in Darjeeling and Delhi till he got anticipatory bail from the Supreme Court.

His homecoming turned out to be a landmark in democratic Sikkim’s history. For the first time, thousands of people fearlessly and openly welcomed as opposition leader. To mark the occasion, Chamling wrote another poem, *Sikkim, my mother! I am coming back to you.*

Since then there has been no stopping him or his party. All its political programmes became instantly successful making the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) weaker and weaker. As a result, Bhandari could not rally his supporters when 19 of his legislators staged a coup against him.

Father of eight children, Chamling launched his political career by joining the movement for Sikkim’s merger with India. Later, he joined the Congress along with Nar Bahadur Khatiwada, who was his first political guru. In spite of such a background, Chamling is a staunch supporter of son of the soil policy. He has announced that his government would formulate certain acts to protect the interests of the indigenous Sikkimese people. At the same time he is highly critical of Bhandari of giving permission to the non-Sikkimese to run their businesses in the state.

However, his decision to promote certain dialects spoken by various Nepali ethnic groups as state languages may evoke resentment among a major section of Nepalis. But one advantage he has over his opponents is his Mr. Clean image. He was in the Bhandari ministry for a brief period and though Bhandari accused him of extracting money from businessmen while he was the industry minister, the former chief minister, has never been specific on his allegations. Chamling himself appears to be hellbent on punishing all those ministers who ruled Sikkim during and after the Bhandari era by setting up an inquiry commission and a special court.

As corruption is deep rooted in the state, Chamling may find it difficult to fight it. Even within his ministry, there were wranglings over the distribution of portfolios as some of his tribal colleagues pressed for juicy posts. He had to

make two changes in less than 24 hours of his government taking over. Only time will tell how far Chamling can translate his dream of making Sikkim rich and corruption free into a reality. So far, his efforts have been confined to limiting expenses of government officials and minister only.

■ KESHAV PRADHAN

## SUNDAY

AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION

18 December 1994

# Going regional

## The Sikkim Democratic Front is swept to power in Sikkim

With most of the attention focussed on the outcome of the Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the results of the polls in remote Sikkim had been relegated to the background in the initial stages. But when it became clear that it was neither the Congress(I) nor the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) but a third force - the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) led by Pawan Kumar Chamling - was being voted to power, everyone was forced to sit up and take note.

After ten years of SSP rule, and the brief interregnum of the Congress(I), the Sikkimese had opted for a new party. And Chamling, a former minister in the Nar Bahadur Bhandari ministry, has had his revenge, Sacked from the Cabinet by Bhandari in June 1992, Chamling bided his time and worked at cultivating the people to finally emerge a clear winner in the volatile politics of Sikkim.

The SDF ended up winning 19 of the 32 seats, while Bhandari's SSP came a distant second with ten MLAs. The Congress(I), which never had much of a presence in the state despite the Centre propping up the outgoing Sanchaman Limboo government in the past six months, fared poorly and managed to win just two seats.

Chamling had adopted a very simple strategy: he chosen to highlight the rampant corruption during Bhandari's decade-long regime and promised to usher in a clean government. The SDF supremo was also helped by the fact that the Congress(I) had a very weak presence in the state.

The huge turnout of 81 per cent, the highest in the state's history, during the polling also benefited the SDF as a three-way split in the votes allowed the party to emerge winner in many marginal seats. Even Bhandari's SSP managed to win more seats than it had expected because of the presence of three parties in the fray.

The Sikkim voters, tired of Bhandari's brand of strong-arm politics and the ineffectual Congress(I), sent a clear

message by defeating two heavyweights, one each from the SSP and the Congress(I). Sanchaman Limboo, the outgoing chief minister, lost the Yoksom seat by a slender margin of 145 votes while the SSP candidate, Dil Kumari Bhandari, wife of Nar Bahadur Bhandari, was defeated from Jorthong.

The SDF, formed barely 22 months ago, will however have a tough task on its hands as the SSP, with ten members in the Assembly, is unlikely to sit idle. Chamling, of course, has no worry at the moment. Speaking to SUNDAY over telephone from Namchi, he said: "I will form the government of the people and will make it corruption-free." Limboo, welcoming Chamling's victory, assured full support from the party's two MLAs to the new government.

Bhandari, used to running Sikkim like his personal fiefdom for the past ten years, reacted predictably. He said: "This will be a government run by proxy by the Congress(I)." For Bhandari, the inability to return to power must have been a bitter pill to swallow, since the man who is now the chief minister happens to be his one-time protege.

But after parting ways with Bhandari, Chamling, a former policeman turned-poet-turned-politician, had made it clear that he won't rest until Bhandari was ousted from power. In less than three years, the 44-year-old Chamling, who writes poetry under the name 'Kiran'(ray), has achieved his primary aim. Whether he actually brings in a ray of hope for the people of this tiny Himalayan state remains to be seen

### THE FINAL TALLY

Total number of seats:32
Sikkim Democratic Front:19
Sikkim Sangram Parishad:10
Congress(I):2
Independents:1

Nabendu Guha/Gangtok

## Sikkim OBSERVER

21 December 1994

## ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

How the others perceived it

*-a recap of what the leading national dailies, in their editorials, had to say about the turn of events in Sikkim on December 9, 1994, the date of counting of votes.*

*The month of December was a tense time for the three States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Sikkim as they awaited the results of the Assembly elections. It was a hectic time for the national dailies to as they tried to keep up with the pace of changing fortune. Since much more was at stake in the two larger States, Sikkim was predictably sidelined in their coverage. But the swerve in the polling pattern, which favoured the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), earned it a few respectable editorials.*

*What follows is what some of the leading dailies had to say about it :*

**THE TIMES OF INDIA.** Dec 13: Boldly titled, "Rejecting the Old", it compliments the maturity of the Sikkimese voter on their decision to elect the relative newcomer SDF into the office. It also delves into the frustration of the Sikkimese with the "dictatorial tendencies" of the SSP and the opportunism of the Congress, the obvious inexperience of Chamling and his legislators notwithstanding.

According to this editorial, the main problems facing the newly elected party would be to catch up with the lost time by previous regimes, in doing away with the "poverty and land hunger" situation and the process of Sikkim's integration into the "mainstream" Ethnic issues, a volatile tender box, have been foreseen as a trouble spot.

Trouble is expected by the editorial, in the Opposition too, because even though the Congress (I) has adopted a low key, Bhandari who declared himself as the "creator and destroyer" of Sikkim, would be a threat Chamling would have to constantly cross swords with.

**THE TELEGRAPH** Dec. 12: This editorial reading "Mandal Magic" tried to reach into the reasons behind SDF's victory, slotting it into three prime reasons. The trumpcard, according to it, was obviously the OBC factor which constitutes the majority of the vote bank. The fall out however is the new pattern of voting along castelines hitherto absent.

The second reason was put as the disenchantment of the electorate with the 15 year Bhandari tenure. The editorial goes so far as to accuse Mr. N. B. Bhandari of being "autocratic" and of turning Sikkim into his "personal fiefdom". A supporting factor which further boosted Chamling's performance was the Sikkimese was the Sikkimese district of the Centre's "arbitrary handling of Sikkimese issues". "Congress poor show must be examined", says the editorial as they themselves raised the stakes by inviting the PM to the campaign.

This editorial too prophesies a rough road ahead for Mr. Chamling as he surely would have trouble realising the pre-election promises made by his party. It would be an apparently impossible task without the Centre's support which would obviously come at a price which would compromise his stand and "undeniably risk his party's popular appeal".

**THE HINDUSTAN TIMES**, Dec. 12: The "Requiem for Bhandari" in this paper reads more like victory beat for Chamling" as, after a brief history of the Bhandari downfall and later Limboo's it lauds the "V. P. Singh of Sikkim" and surprisingly and quite contradictory comments on the setting aside of ethnic and caste divisions by the electorate.

It too ends with speculations of Mr. Chamling falling to Limboo's blandishments' since the State is so critically dependent on the Centre, foreseeing a Bhandari comeback should that happen.

**STATESMAN**, Dec. 12: "Mandate For Democracy" starts off with regarding the SDF win as a victory for democracy, human rights and rule of law. The Congress failure, according to it, was the electorate refusal to be taken in by their "rhetoric and homilies" and the Congress' mistake of reigning money supreme in their campaign.

The only editorial to comment on the irony of Mr. Limboo's defeat in the hands of Mr. A. K. Subba, the ousted PCC (I) chief, it suggests that Cong (I) should be happy with the seats they managed which is a lot better than their state in 1989.

While acknowledging that the SSP remains a force to reckon with, it rejects any speculation of comeback by Mr. Bhandari and ends with a prayer that Mr. Chamling lives up to his manifesto. ■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

31 December 1994

### Political Will at Work

The fact that the new Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has introduced some startling changes in the administration indicates that the ruling party is sincere in changing the "system of governance" in order to meet the various needs of the people. By adopting certain practical measures to instill a sense of discipline right from the top, the Chamling Administration seems to send a strong and effective signal to the lowest grade employees of the State Government. It is most unfortunate that even after two decades since Sikkim being absorbed in to the Union the State is still dependent on the Centre for even minor economic needs of the people. It will still take some time for the State to start generating its own revenue and in the meanwhile Mr. Chamling has done the right thing by checking wasteful expenditure. Curtailing the use of government vehicles by the elected members of the Assembly and government officials is one way of ensuring that the budget is



used wisely. It would be enlightening for the public if the administration makes an in depth study into expenditure incurred by government vehicles. Keen observers of the political scene in the State have for long helplessly observed how the financial resources of the State were misused by a few persons at the top, including senior bureaucrats. Countless number of villagers in the State are forced to travel in ramshackled busses owned by the government while the so-called "government servants" move around with their families in brand new gypsies all the time. That the new government should take bold steps to discard the false sense of security that has characterised the previous administrations is a steps in the right direction. What is needed now is to check misuse of public money at all levels and this can be effectively done by weeding out those who, for so long, fully participated in the economic exploitation of the people.

## The Telegraph

3 January 1995

### Cleaning up the stable

#### **Pawan Chamling's Sikkim needs to face problems squarely to resolve them**

The election results in Sikkim which have given a handsome majority to the two year old Sikkim Democratic Front led by Pawan Kumar Chamling reveal three significant dimensions of its fragile polity. There has been a total disenchantment with the Congress, caste politics has become supreme, and change of political administrators was demanded by the people.

In Sikkim, the disdain for the Congress is historically a well established fact. In post merger Sikkim, whenever the Congress has come into power, it has never been through the people's mandate but through their blatantly condemnable manipulations.

The Congress debacle comes more because of its repeated misdeeds rather than from any serious difference in ideological perceptions of the local elite. All the major political actors in the state stand together when it comes to targeting the Congress as the single most force behind the steady erosion in the spirit of the May 8, 1973 agreement which was the founding pillar of the 1975 merger.

The latest example of this misadventure was the May 1994 incident when the Congress sprang the income tax card a full one year before its effective date apparently to destabilise Bhandari's predominance. By this, the Congress earned the dirty distinction of effectively dividing the tribals

and the non-tribals in a state where socio-political harmony was critically needed.

Three political parties, including the SDF, Nar Bahadur Bhandari's the Sikkim Sangram Parishad and the Congress, tried their level best to capitalise on this incident. But the Congress's avarice to capture Bhandari's citadel was unabashedly exposed when under the shelter of the "quorum" provided by its central leadership it continued to rule the state even when more than half of the members in the state assembly had resigned.

The governor was not spared the Congress manoeuvings. In a farewell gathering after his resignation he disclosed that "when more than half the members of legislative assembly in June, we created a problem for ourselves without precedence." The governor suggested president's rule in the state as a way to tackle the increase in ethnic division taking place. The communalising of politics had disastrous consequences and led to the governor's resignation.

It is quite prudent on the part of the Sikkimese people to ask for an explanation to why the Centre declared the income tax imposition a year before scheduled. Did not the Centre know about the impending assembly election in November 1994? In the end, it turned out to be a calculated move of the Congress to first partially exempt the tribals naturally expecting protests from the Sikkimese Nepalese and then to drop the entire issue.

By doing so, the Congress killed five birds with one stone. It managed to oust arch enemy Bhandari, showed that the Centre with its feudal elements is still a strong force to reckon with, and completely disturbed communal harmony in Sikkim. The party also kept the income tax carrot dangling for all communities for the November elections. Most importantly, it gained a few months to organise its political tantrums. The Congress had to inevitably pay a heavy price for this shortsightedness.

The most remarkable victim of the caste cauldron which came into being during this election was Dil Kumari Bhandari, popularly seen as the prime custodian of communal harmony in the state.

The election results adequately indicated the people's desire to see a new set of political actors at the helm of affairs. The defeat of the so far dominant SSP could be largely attributed to its poor organisational machinery accompanied by a virtual breakdown of its feedback mechanism and its inability to present any popular package to the electorate.

This election has finally resolved a longstanding myth of Bhandari as the sole figure in Sikkimese politics. The incumbent chief minister, Chamling had left the establishment long ago which provided Bhandari a flexibility to announce lavish agenda before the electorate. His band of young soldiers were a dedicated lot always ready to follow the meticulously planned dictats of Chamling.



6 January 1995

## SIKKIM

## A very eventful year, indeed

THE year 1994 was a higgledy-piggledy one, without a hiatus, for Sikkim. Three governments, two Governors, new political formations and old, festering, sores scarred the State's polity in that election year. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, who ruled the State with an iron hand for 15 years, is out but not down. Sanchaman Limboo, who was a political non-entity, grabbed centre stage after the AICC(I) pundits in New Delhi made him Chief Minister through a constitutional coup.

In the hustings six months later, Pawan Chamling with his "man of the masses" image became the Chief Minister. In between, Admiral (Retd) R.H. Tahiliani, resigned as the Governor and yielded place to a Congress old hand, Mr P. Shiv Shanker.

Though the pace of events in Sikkim last year has been overwhelming for a people that has taken pride in placidity, indications are that the churning of the State's society will not yield a political *amrit manthan*. For, caste and parochial divisions have widened.

The roots of the discontent in Sikkim lie in simple aspirations. After 15 years of Mr Bhandari's rule, there was a yearning for greater freedom of expression. Also, there was a need to catch up with the rest of the country and graduate from an economy of dole to an economy of income generation especially at a time when a Finance Minister in New Delhi was talking of "globalisation".

As Chief Minister, Mr Bhandari made no bones about his political convictions. "I am a dictator just like anyone else", is one of his of repeated quotable quotes. Mr Bhandari implemented his theories in practice without adequately considering the damage that the backlash could cause. In November 1993, the police hit back and took to the streets. They withdrew their stir after the army moved in but rebelled again in March 1994 after the Bhandari administration victimised two constables. The agitating policemen earned some popular support but even in early 1994 there was little visible public opposition to Mr Bhandari in Gangtok. But in the countryside, Mr Chamling's Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF) gathered strength.

Since March, it has been a night without end for Mr Bhandari. After Dr Manmohan Singh moved the Finance Bill which proposed to withdraw the income-tax exemption granted to the Sikkimese, a schism was developing in the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP). The schism came out into the open in May 4-6. Even as Mr Bhandari's wife, Dil Kumari, was addressing Parliament urging exemption of

On the other hands, Bhandari being on the top of the state's administration for almost 15 years was equally cautious as he realised the huge effort required to actually translate electoral promises to realities.

Interestingly, post merger Sikkim has for the first time deservedly earned an assembly which has all the semblance of an effective democratic structure. The SDF's handsome majority of 19 seats in the house of 32 seats is well matched by an experienced lot of 10 members from the SSP and three from other parties. More than this, the level of standards in the assembly deliberations and the system of checks would be enhanced by the presence of a Bhandari-Ashok Subba combine in the opposition and Chamling on the treasury side.

For Chamling, serious issue like depoliticisation of bureaucracy, mobilisation of resources, the Rumtek controversy, opening of a trade route through the Chinese border, implementation of the Mandal commission report and economic liberalisation have to be addressed and resolved. His electoral victory has a clear underlining of the people's aspirations which need to be fulfilled urgently.

In the resource mobilisation front, although grants from the Centre have been increasing in the last decade (except in 1987-88 and 1989-90), its share in the total revenue of Sikkim has steadily fallen from as high as 77.3 per cent in 1983-84 to 60 per cent in 1992-93. This will look more absurd if the high rate of inflation witnessed during this period is taken to consideration. If this trend continues, then by the turn of the century, the Centre's grant contribution to Sikkim's total annual revenue would hardly be 45 per cent. And the remaining 55 per cent of the revenue has to come through a domestic resource mobilisation effort.

Some of the rural programmes as announced by the SDF's manifesto, if implemented effectively, could bring about a visible transformation in the agrarian structure in semi feudal rural Sikkim. But for this Chamling needs to completely debureaucratise the delivery mechanism and depend upon professionals for the monitoring and evaluation of these programmes.

One of the most glaring failures of previous regimes was their helpless reliance on the much truncated bureaucracy. As a result, particularly the SSP government, could not really gauge, evaluate and project the result of its pumping of so much of resources into the rural sector. Unless a parallel institution like the state planning commission is set up with the inductions of hardcore and polished professionals, there is bound to be a total disorientation of the Sikkimese economy vis a vis both changing profile of its economic and social needs and the Centre's liberalisation policies.

By **Mahendra P Lama.**

I-T for all Sikkimese, the 16 tribal MLAs of the ruling party decided to throw down the gauntlet and jettison Mr Bhandari as their leader.

They held him responsible for the withdrawal of exemption because the Chief Minister, an upper caste Nepali himself, was insisting along with several senior serving and former bureaucrats that if the tribals were granted a concession, the others deserved it to. The tribal MLAs left for New Delhi and were closeted together till 48 hours before a confidence motion in the Sikkim House on May 17 went against Mr Bhandari. The dissenters, then calling themselves the Sikkim Sangram Parishad(Sanchaman), elected Mr Limboo as their leader.

The operation was neatly planned but Mr Chamla Tsering, one of the MLAs and Finance Minister in Mr Bhandari's Cabinet, let the cat out of the bag when he admitted that the Congress High Command was actively encouraging them.

At the same time, the logistical support provided to the rebel MLAs by the SDF during the 24 hours immediately preceding Mr Limboo's swearing-in left little room for doubt that it left room for doubt that it was the party-in-waiting.

But the smoothness that marked the operation that resulted in Mr Limboo's installation was absent during his tenure. The Congressman clung to the chief ministership tenuously after Mr Bhandari engineered the resignation of half the members of the 32-member Sikkim House in June. Even Mr Pawan Chamling quit the House and turned his back on Mr Limboo after he found that the Congress was "hijacking" his issues- like reservation for OBCs and tribal status for some backward Nepali communities.

The en masse resignation of the Opposition prompted Government Tahiliani to recommend President's Rule because the Limboo Government was reduced to a minority though the quorum was maintained in the Assembly. In July, the Internal Security Minister was considering Central rule but others in New Delhi had not taken kindly to Adm. Tahiliani's recommendation- after all he was made Governor during the Janata Dal regime at the Centre and was seen as too "pro-Bhandari" for comfort. Adm. Tahiliani left in September and Mr Shiv Shankar was made Governor.

Electioneering really started in Sikkim around that time. Mr Chamling had already completed a round of the districts. Mr Bhandari was touring the constituencies while Mr Limboo was trying to guard his backyard. The campaign was one of the most decisive in the State.

The SDF triumphed, in the main, for three reasons. Mr Chamling was the first to rebel against Mr Bhandari. His party was a regional entity and not a "dhotiwalla" outfit like the Congress and he was the first to hit the election trail.

How far Chamling's tune will be music to the Sikkimese, so used to cacophony since the State's merger, will be known soon.

# Sikkim OBSERVER

7 January 1995

## CM promises 'White Paper' on corruption

# Govt. bent on providing clean administration

*By Tsering T. Namgyal*

Gangtok: The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front's decisions to bring out a "White Paper" on the present financial situation of the State and the Sikkim High Court's move to appoint a fulltime Registrar in the High Court all go to show that the Government is serious about cleaning the administration of corrupt practices.

Speaking to reporters at a Press meet here last Sunday, the Chief Minister said his Government is bent on releasing a "White Paper" on the manner in which the previous governments misused the State's financial resources. The "White Paper" to be released soon, would book the culprits who have amassed huge amount of wealth far beyond their means of income. Mr. Chamling said the "White Paper" would be his "New Year Gift" to the people of Sikkim.

He said various committees been set up to make the administration more accountable and efficient to carry out his Government's pro-poor policies. Already, the Government has saved several crores due to the stringent austerity drive after his party came to power a month back, Mr. Chamling pointed out.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to improve the economic condition of the poor and the underprivileged in the State. "People's purchasing power should increase during the tenure of my Government", Mr. Chamling said while also emphasising the need to go for more "productive schemes" in the State.

In keeping with his earlier promises, Mr. Chamling reiterated that he would not use imported cars for himself. Infact, the Chief Minister has gone one step further by ordering that the Mercedes and Tata Sierra used by his predecessor be auctioned in open market. He also pointed that no drinks would be served in any State Government functions from now on.

In keeping with the democratic tradition of free expression and exchange of views, the Chief Minister has met a number of Opposition leaders. He said he met several Congress (I) leaders recently at Mintokgong. He also met

the United Liberation Front chief, Mr. A. K. Subba, Last week. The Chief Minister also expressed his willingness to meet leaders of the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad.

Informed sources in the Sikkim High Court said the High Court would soon have a fullfledged Registrar to look after its work in the Court. Presently, Mr. A. P. Subba, the High Court Registrar, is partially engaged in looking after corruption cases of the CBI. Mr. Subba was recently appointed as a Special Judge to look after the cases.■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

14 January 1995

### Chamling goes to Delhi

#### SDF Govt. completes one month

*Gangtok: The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, leaves for Delhi tomorrow to discuss Sikkim's budget which comes up in March. Though many feel that he stands no chance in getting the budget sanctioned leave aside the extra amount that he plans to demand, his track record, given that SDF has now completed a month in power to date, convinces one that this time too he would prove the hypochondriacs wrong.*

Thwarting speculators who had given it a maximum of 15 days in power, the SDF Government has successfully completed a month in office. Though the deadline set by their doctractors has now been shifted a couple of months, going by the way SDF has managed to justify their victory all hopes of certain sections to see an early demise have scant chances of coming true.

The Government, which right since the begining impressed the Sikkimese with their people-oriented policy, also did well by strictly alridding to the austerity measures which to some extent eased the burden on the strained economy and also set an example for those who were used to misappropriating the funds. The announcement to and the Mercedes Benz and the Tata Sierra which graced the Mintokgang garage, endeared the party to many who finally started looking up to the SDF Government as one that was genuinely concerned with the people of Sikkim.

People who were skeptical of the stability of the SDF Government and sided with Mr. Bhandari's view of a premature collapse, expected fire-works when the special assembly session was called. But there, too, the confidence of the party outshone the speculators. The only attempt to create chink in the SDF armour was by the Opposition leader, Mr Bhandari, who accused the Centre of allowing a party whose Cabinet violated Article 37IF and was against the norms of the 8 May Tripartite Agreement and hence un-constitutional form the Government. This move was seen through by all as an attempt to create communal ten-

sion in the State by espousing commitment towards ethnic balance. Unfortunately for Mr. Bhandari, not many subscribed to this argument.

The sole reprieve the compulsive pessimist had was that at Mr. Chamling has no lobby in Delhi, which would mean no funds from the Centre, and when that happens, the iron would be hot for bringing about his party's collapse. But this straw that they were hanging on to soon sunk when the Centre released the Rs. 100 crores that they had sanctioned to Sikkim during the former Congress (I) Chief Minister, Mr. Sanchaman Limboo's short tenure. The allotment boosted SDF's morale and also to some extent cleared the Centre's stand regarding the new government in Sikkim.

As for the budget unless the Cong(I) Government at the Centre has lost all sense of reasoning due to their recent rout in the Assembly elections in various States, there is no way that they could commit another blunder like sitting on Sikkim's plea. Such an illogical move on the part of the Centre would immediately delay their prospects in the Himalayan State by another fifteen years, as this would be perceived by the Sikkimese electorate as yet another opportunistic move by the Cong(I) which has already tarnished image among the people, something they have to redeem before harbouring any hopes of establishing themselves in the State. Not setting up any obstacles for Mr. Chamling would be the first step in that direction.

Hence, unless Mr. Chamling does not commit a monumental is no reason why he should not return boasting of a successful stay there. And unless SDF does not go the SSP way there is no reason why they should not be in office five year hence.■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

21 January 1995

### Chamling holds talks with Central leaders

#### PM ASSURES FULL SUPPORT TO CM

New Delhi : The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V.Narasimha Rao, and Central leaders, including the Union Home Minister, Mr. S.B.Chavan, met the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, and have responded positively to the numerous problems of the State raised by him during his current visit to new Delhi. The manner in which the Centre has very enthusiastically assured all help to the new Government in Sikkim all go to show that, despite apprehension expressed by some critics of the SDF Government, Mr. Chamling has struck a good report with Union government and there is now every reason to believe that things should run smoothly for the new Government in the State.

The Prime Minister, during his meeting with the Chief

Minister on January 17, assured all help and Central assistance to the State. Official reports described Mr. Rao's reaction to Mr. Chamling's plea on Central assistance to the State as "extremely forthcoming". The Prime Minister, while assuring all help to solve the problems faced by the people of Sikkim, said "no efforts will be spared" to solve the problems as "effectively" and as "early" as possible.

Mr. Chamling, who was being accompanied by the Governor, Mr. P Shiv Shankar, during his visit with the Prime Minister, presented a memorandum on major economic problems of the State and sought full cooperation from the Centre. This is Mr. Chamling's first meeting with the Prime Minister since he assumed office last month after his Sikkim Democratic Front came to power in the November Assembly polls. This is also the Chief Minister's first visit to New Delhi. The Chief Minister is here to hold plan discussions with the planning commission Deputy commissioner, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee.

During the same day (Jan.17), the Chief Minister also met the Union Home Minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan, and the Union Commerce Minister and Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of India, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Raising of India Reserved Battalion and other aspects of Centre-State relations were taken up with Mr. Chavan.

The Chief Minister also met the Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension, Mrs. Margaret Alva, and the Union Minister of State for Programme Implementation, Mr. Girdhar Gomango. Talks regarding cadre management to All India Service and Sikkim Cadre and the construction of a mini-airport in Gangtok figured during the Chief Minister's talks with these leaders.

During his first day in Delhi on January 16, the Chief Minister met the Union Law Minister, Mr. H.R.Bhardwaj, the Union Power Minister, Mr. N.K.V.Salve, the Union Minister of State for Health, D.C.Salveria and the Union Minister of State for Surface Transport, Mr. Jagdish Tytler.

Mr. Chamling had fruitful discussion with the Central leaders, who assured full cooperation in all fields of development. The proposed Teesta Hydro Project and other matters relating to the power section figured during the Chief Minister's talks with the Union Power Minister. Mr. Salve assured the Chief Minister of all support and assistance for the development of power resources in the State.

Mr. Tytler assured the Chief Minister of all Central help to improve the surface transport and also to improve and widen the national highway which links the State with the country.

The Chief Minister is expected to hold Plan discussion with Mr. Mukherjee on January 24. The new Government has sought Rs. 191-87 crores as State plan outlay for the next financial year i.e. 1995-96. The outlay for the current financial year is Rs. 135 crores. The thrust for the next financial year will be on rural development, agriculture and animal husbandry. The Chief Minister, who left Sikkim in Jan. 15, is expected to return after the plan discussions. ■

## Himalayan Guardian

25 January 1995

Centre agrees to Chamling's Annual Plan Outlay

### Rs. 192 crores for Sikkim

New Delhi : Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling has thwarted all his speculators with a coup of sons. He has managed to wrangle Rs. 192 crores for Sikkim's Annual Plan outlay from the Centre.

When he left for Delhi on January 15, there were few who expected him to get an appointment with the PM, leave aside get the proposed outlay sanctioned by the Centre. "He has no lobby in Delhi", was what the speculators said. This of course translated, for them, as no money for Sikkim. Mr Chamling, however, had an extremely successful stay there with almost all Ministers of the Union extending full support to his projects. His final victory for his party's reputation as well as the people of Sikkim, came on January 24-the day he sat down with Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission of India, and discussed the Annual Plan outlay for Sikkim. The meeting went off well for Sikkim and it was finally decided that the outlay be set as Rs. 192 crores for the financial year 1995-96. Incidentally the current approved plan outlay was Rs 135 crores.

The meeting was also attended by Mr. P.T.Lepcha, Deputy Chief Minister, Mr.K.A.Varadhan, Chief Secretary, Mr Sonam Wandi, Development Commissioner, Mr. Tashi Topden, Finance Secretary, and other Government officers.

With the passing of the Annual Plan outlay the date for the Working Group discussion between officers of Sikkim Government on one hand and the officers of the Planning commission on the other hand has been set for February 15. During this discussion the sectoral allocation of the Plan Outlay for the next fiscal year will be decided. ■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

28 January 1995

CHAMLING CLAIMS "VICTORY"  
ON PLAN OUTLAY

### SDF-Cong merger reports baseless: CM

Gangtok: The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling,



who has just returned from his two-week stay in Delhi, said his ruling Sikkim Democratic Front has no intentions of joining the Congress (I) and added that reports on SDF-Congress merger were "baseless" and ill-motivated.

Speaking to reporters at a Press conference here on Friday, Mr. Chamling said "rumours" that he would be joining the Congress (I) were the "propaganda" works of some Oppositions leaders in the State who have been telling the people that the new Government would not be able to secure the plan outlay from the Centre for the new financial year.

Asked how he was able to get his demand of Rs. 191 crores met, Mr. Chamling said the Centre was convinced of "my honesty and sincerity" in making such a demand. "The Centre knows that ours is a democratically elected government and does not want to disturb us by trying to form the government through the backdoor", Mr. Chamling said.

While stating that the merger between the SDF and the Congress (I) was out of the question, Mr. Chamling added that his Government will always maintain cordial relations with the Centre. "I want to work in close cooperation with Central leaders. What we now need in the State is proper economic development and political stability", the Chief Minister pointed out while emphasising the need to improve State-Central relations.

During his two-week stay in Delhi, the Chief Minister met a host of Central leaders, including the Prime Minister, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, Union Home Minister, Mr. S. B. Chavan, Union Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Mr. Madhav Rao Scindia, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mrs. Margaret Alva, Mr. Kamal Nath, Mr. Jagdish Tytler and Mr. Rajesh Pilot. The Chief Minister also met the President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, and the AICCI (I) General Secretary, Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde.

Mr. Chamling said his talks with the Central leaders were "fruitful and successful". The fact that the SDF Government was able to get Rs. 200 crores plan outlay, including an additional Rs 8 crores, met was a "victory" for the new Government, Mr. Chamling pointed out. He added that the increase of 42 per cent in the plan outlay was a "new record which no one will be able to break it".

Explaining the people-oriented economic policy of his government, Mr. Chamling said, "We will not allow the people to earn easy money. They should work to improve their living standard. My Government will do its best to improve the purchasing power of the people". He added, "The era of *chors* have gone. The era of sincerity and honesty has begun." ■

# The Statesman

4 March 1995

## SDF 'White Paper' reveals black deeds

By JIGME N. KAZI

Legislators of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front never fail to surprise. Barely two years ago, the lone Opposition member of the House, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, lit a candle and walked around with it inside the House during one of its sessions. He said he was "searching for democracy" in the State which, he said, was ruled by a dictator, the then Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

The House witnessed another surprise last week when the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Pur Tshering Lepcha, sang a Nepali song while tabling a "White paper" on "black deeds". Citizens thronged the visitors' gallery in the visitors gallery, many of them were ushered into the Press gallery which too was jampacked.

The 28-page report on financial liabilities inherited from the alleged corrupt regime of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad led by Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari-who ruled Sikkim for 14 years-was presented by the Deputy Chief Minister during the last hour of the last day of the Budget session. Very few copies of the report, commonly referred to as the "White Paper", were available.

The Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, who said that he wanted to provide a clean and efficient administration in the State to ensure that his party's pro-poor policies and programmes reached the people, added that it was important for the people to know the financial position of the State. He said the main purpose of bringing out the report was to encourage "positive discussion" among those who had the interest of the people in mind.

One Senior civil servant said that the report was supposed to act as a "bird's-eye view" of the financial condition that had prevailed in the State for the past several years. he supported the Chief Minister's contention that the main purpose of the report was to evoke public reaction and debate on issues raised in the paper.

Prepared by the State Finance Department and Messrs. Price Waterhouse, a professional group of chartered accountants, the report covers a 15-year period starting from 1979-when Mr Bhandari first came to power-and ends in 1994-when he was ousted from the Chief Ministership by dissident SSP legislators.

The report does not blame anyone for the poor financial condition and dismal performance of some State Government departments. Those who awaited the disclosure of names of particular politicians or bureaucrats in the list-as those responsible for the "black deeds"-were probably disappointed.

In view of the "recurring and massive losses" suffered by the Power Department, the State Government may be forced



to seek private participation in improving generation of hydel-power in the State, the report said. It adds that the massive investment made on power till date has generated negative returns and the cumulative amount of losses suffered till 1993-94, is estimated at Rs 41.17 crore, excluding an amount of Rs 15.01 crore as interest on borrowings.

The report also observed the factors that led to the growth of non-Plan expenditure, which, it stated, "far surpassed" the Plan expenditure over years. The total amount of non-Plan expenditure since 1979 till date is Rs 1,048.13 crore whereas the Plan expenditure for the same period is Rs 1,132.42 crore.

The report also confirmed the payment of Rs 511.50 crore to Messrs. Himal Laboratories Ltd.-reportedly owned by Mr B.K.Shreshta, a Nepalese national said to have close connexions with the erstwhile Bhandari Government.■

## Himalayan Guardian

25 March 1995

### I want to bring Sikkim into the mainstream : Chamling

Gangtok : Contrary to claims made by State Congress (I) leaders here last week, the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, said he was not making any move to merge his Sikkim Democratic Front with the Congress (I).

Disclosing this to reporters here, Mr. Chamling said he had not discussed anything on the merger issue with Central leaders during his recent visit to Delhi and added that such reports were baseless. He said during his meeting with the Union Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, and Mr. Buta Singh, issues relating to Central income tax exemption and declaration of Sikkim as a designated hill area were taken up.

Stating that "My aim is to bring Sikkim into the mainstream". Mr. Chamling said his first duty is to serve the people of Sikkim, and maintain "cordial relations" with the Centre.

At a Press conference here last week, Congress leaders, including the former Chief Minister, Mr. Sanchaman Limboo, said Mr. Chamling wanted to join the Congress (I) and merge his party with the Congress (I). They said they had been asked by Central leaders to 'confirm' this with the Chief Minister. According to them, the Chief Minister indicated his intentions of joining the Congress (I) during the meeting with him recently. The Congress leaders are expected to go to Delhi to apprise Central leaders over the issue, it is learnt.■

### Dissident MLAs given separate seating in Assembly

*By a Staff Reporter*

Gangtok : The allotment of separate seatings for the

six dissident tribal MLAs, who recently resigned from the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad, in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly during the current Budget session, which began here on Wednesday, has cast doubts about the status of these legislators.

While the six legislators - Mr. Menlom Lepcha, Mr. Ram Lepcha, Mr. D. T. Lepcha, Mr. Tsoton Bhutia, Mr. Thutop Bhutia and Mrs. R. Ongmu - recently resigned from the SSP and expressed their willingness to join the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, it appears that there is some technical hitch over their entry into the ruling party.

As they have not been legally and formally accepted into the ruling party the dissident MLAs have been forced to request the House to allot separate seatings for them. The SSP has reportedly lodged complaints to the Speaker of the House over the manner in which its six MLAs deserted the party and defected to the ruling party.

According to reports, the dissident MLAs will be accepted into the ruling party once the Budget session is over. They are expected to vote for the Budget as a pre-condition for joining the ruling party. In the meanwhile, the six MLAs may form a split group and complete all legal procedures for their entry into the ruling party.

At least two of them, one from each community, are expected to be made ministers. It is the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling's prerogative to choose his Cabinet members. Presently, a section of the minority Bhutia-Lepchas are not too happy over the disbalanced ethnic composition in the Cabinet which has favoured the majority community. While there are pressures on the Chief Minister to select young and fresh talents into the Cabinet there are indications that seniority and woman candidate may also be preferred.■

### Chamling ready to move ahead decisively

Gangtok : The resignation of the six tribal legislators from the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) and their eagerness to join the ruling party has not only brought some degree of political stability in the State but has also strengthened the hands of the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, in ensuring that the new government now concentrates all its effort in economic development of the state.

The ruling party expected to get around 25 seats during the recent Assembly but due to extreme polarisation of political forces on communal lines the SSP managed to get ten seats, eight of which come from the upper-caste Nepali dominated district of east Sikkim. The defection of six tribal legislators from the SSP camp into the ruling party has come at time when the SDF was about to complete 100 days in office. The new government, which was formed in on December 12, completed 100 days on March 21.

The political scenario after the polls placed the ruling party in an insecure position. With only 19 MLAs on its

side many people, particularly the supporters of the SSP, felt that the former Chief Minister, Mr. N. B. Bhandari, would topple the new government at a given time.

Both Mr. Bhandari and the President of the United Liberation Front, Mr. A. K. Subba, MLA, declared that Mr. Chamling would not last for even three months, 'Opposition leaders made various attempts in the past few months to destabilise the Chamling Government. Mr. Bhandari is believed to have contacted his former SSP colleagues in the Congress (I) with a view to getting their support to form a Congress (I) Government without Mr. Chamling as the Chief Minister.

The strength of the SSP in the Assembly has now been reduced to 4 from 10. Both the Congress (I) members in the House, Mr. Sonam C. Lepcha and Mr. Namkha Gyaltzen, have expressed their willingness to support the ruling party provided it did not discriminate the people for political reasons. Being an associate member of the Congress (I) there is not much that Mr. Subba can do against the ruling party in the House where it really matters.

Central leaders have not only been impressed by Mr. Chamling's pro-poor policy but are also kept in good humour by the Chief Minister's willingness to maintain cordial relations with the Centre and to bring the people of the State closer to the mainstream.

For a while the new Government seemed to be facing some opposition from the pro-SSP faction in the bureaucracy now having second thoughts on Mr. Bhandari there is no reason why Mr. Chamling cannot move ahead confidently after the budget session. ■

## The Statesman

29 March 1995

### CHAMLING PONDERERS

THE Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, has taken a large number, of austerity measures aimed at reducing the State's financial burdens. But drastic curbs on the issue of supply orders and suspension of appointments and promotions can be continued only at the expense of efficiency and good government. It will not be enough. Unless Delhi comes to his rescue with immediate financial assistance the prediction of his detractors, that he will be driven to bankruptcy within three months, is not unfounded. He claims to have inherited from his predecessors a burden of Rs 500 crores, including servicing of loans. The Chief Minister's hope of a comprehensive economic package will depend upon how convincingly the State argues its case in a white paper, now being prepared for him to carry to New Delhi, when he visits this month for the first time since assuming office. Mr Chamling faces an uphill task as he seeks to redeem his electoral promise to

enhance the daily minimum wage to Rs 50, which, according to his opponents, will cost the exchequer an additional Rs 59 crores annually. There is no way the State will be able to cope on its own. Another of his promises is to set up a commission of inquiry, to be headed by a retired High Court judge, to probe alleged corruption charges against persons in high places. It is being hoped that such an exercise will help to reduce the appalling levels of corruption and not become a ploy in political gamesmanship. The decision to appoint a Lokayukta with adequate powers to inquire into complaints of corruption and misuse of authority should help.

Despite the disadvantages of a regional party in government, the former Chief Minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, did not face such difficulties and he was probably right in his claim that this was because he had more friends in New Delhi than Congress(I) leaders in Sikkim. Mr Chamling does not have the charisma of Mr Bhandari, but his somewhat subdued utterances of late suggest that he has hoped of wooing the Centre as a way out of his predicament. A not unwelcome development in Delhi which will examine very carefully what the Chief Minister has to offer.

## The Telegraph

29 March 1995

### May Day

### to be Sikkim holiday

KESHAV PRADHAN

Gangtok : March 29: The three month-old Pawan Kumar Chamling government in Sikkim has decided to declare May Day a public holiday, in a bid to improve the status of the working class in this semi-feudal society.

"We are doing this to honour the working class, the true builders, of our society, our nation," said Mr. Chamling, who has always tried to project himself as the leader of the downtrodden or *khalikhuttes* (barefoot ones), as they are called in his language.

"But we are not working under the influence of any known ism or political ideology. As an individual, I am always touched by the sufferings of the people. Most of my poems are about their trials and tribulations," he added.

Earlier, Mr. Chamling had given a serious jolt to the feudalistic system existing in the state by banning the serving of liquor at government functions. "Even Mintokgang (the chief minister's official residence) used to spend about Rs. 30 lakhs on drinks every year," he said. "Now, the state can save at least Rs 9 crores following the ban on drinks and purchase of furniture for government offices."

Asked whether his ministerial colleagues would follow him, the policeman-turned-politician said, "I myself

am an teetotaller and I do hope they will follow suit. But I will not interfere with their basic rights.”

This apart, Mr. Chamling is now planning to stop the practice of offering *khadas* (holy scarves) and garlands at government functions. “Flowers look more beautiful in gardens than around the neck of a man,” he said.

The new Sikkim government has recently hiked wages of daily labourers by about 100 per cent and initiated a programme to distribute land among the landless. So far, about 200 landless families have been given a half-acre plot each for building homes. Most of this land is located in the South and West districts where the ruling party has a solid base.

Major portions of land in this erstwhile kingdom, which became a part of democratic India 20 years ago, are owned by about 90 landlord families. Political parties like the CPI (M) and Sikkim Sangram Parishad, led by Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, are seeking land reforms, but Mr. Chamling sees no problem in the existing system. The government has ample land for the poor, he said.

Keeping in line with the party’s pro-poor image, the Chamling government has allotted 70 per cent of its annual Budget for schemes for the rural poor. It has begun distribution of ginger, flower seeds, cattle, goats and piglets to encourage self employment in the rural belt.

To cut down extra expenses, the government has restricted use of vehicles by officials. Even the chief minister’s Mercedes Benz will be sold off and the authorities have already advertised for its auction.

However optimistic the chief minister may sound, his major opponents feel that his “tall talks” will boomerang on him.

Mr. Chamling is facing problems everywhere. His party nearly split over the distribution of ginger among the rural poor. “Everybody in the new government wants to make a fast buck as they invested a lot in the elections,” said Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

His party colleague and former law minister, Mr. Kharanand Uprety, said, “Mr. Chamling will be exposed once the people realise that he has made a number of impossible promises to them.” ■

## The Statesman

17 April 1995

# Chamling trains guns on administration

WITH the Sikkim Government having seen the Budget session of the Assembly through without much ado though Mr Pawan Chamling was making his first appear-

ance in the House as Chief Minister, its guns are now trained on the State administration which is in the process of being thoroughly overhauled.

Heads have already started rolling, even as leaders of the Opposition cringe in the face of the onslaught and attempt to close ranks in their moment of adversity.

Speaking to The Statesman over the telephone in an exclusive interview on Sunday, Mr Chamling said that the former Chief Minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, was desperately “looking for a place under the umbrella of the Congress(I)” in an attempt to shield himself from the charges of corruption being investigated by the CBI.

“No interference with the law will be tolerated, despite the efforts of Mr Bhandari’s Sikkim Sangram Parishad to take shelter in the Congress(I) fold which had already opened its doors to the riff-raff,” he added.

“The only stumbling blocks to the return of democracy in the State were Mr Bhandari and the goons who had taken over the Congress(I)”, the Chief Minister said. The SSP had been virtually decimated.

“Two more members of the party are expected to join the Sikkim Democratic Front (Mr Chamling’s party) shortly,” Mr Chamling claimed. With six legislators of the SSP having joined the SDF ranks some months ago, the strength of the former in the House has already been reduced to six members.

Mr Chamling denied that overtures were being made by the former Chief Minister and Congress(I) leader, Mr Sanchaman Limboo, for a merger. “We are already an effective party by ourselves; there is no question of any merger with the Congress(I),” he remarked.

“The idea is to work in co-operation with the Centre,” he added.

The Chief Minister is aware, though, that “to live up to its promises made earlier to the people, the Sikkim Government will have to take the battle from the political arena to the administrative.”

The administration, according to him had become a hot-bed of “casteist politics and intrigue,” primarily because of Mr Bhandari’s policies over the past 14 years. “Sycophants had been given posts in the administration. We shall have to undo the wrong committed,” Mr Chamling said.

The wrongs, believes the Chief Minister, have been many. “The main purpose of the shake-up of the administration which I have initiated is to replace incompetence with sincerity.

“The changes being brought about will affect the highest and lowest levels. The manner in which the administration had been functioning all this time will no longer be allowed to continue,” the Chief Minister said.

The changes expected in the administration are also likely to bring to an end the hegemony of the upper castes who largely constituted Mr Bhandari’s support base.

Mr Chamling hopes to give ample representation to

those from the pre-dominant backward classes and the tribals- ethnic communities which were principally responsible for his victory in the last elections. The charges being planned are, of course, bound to have an effect in Sikkim's caste-dominated politics in the future.

According to sources in Gangtok, more than 50 per cent of the present officials will be affected in the reshuffle. Changes have already been brought about in the two crucial departments of Transport and Tourism.

Senior officials have also been transferred in the Housing, Industries and Agriculture departments. Changes in the Power department are also in the offing.

The Power department along with those of Transport and Tourism, has been singled out as the most inefficient in the White Paper detailing the financial irregularities committed during Mr Bhandari's regime.

Tabled in the House during the recently-concluded Budget session, it points out that the total losses incurred in these three departments alone amounted to more than Rs 65 crores.

The Chief Minister expressed the view that while the State Government would have to ensure a cut in the burgeoning non-Plan expenditure, there should also be effective controls in all departments.

A thorough scrutiny of the viability of proposed projects would also have to be made before they were sanctioned he added.

Mr Chamling is also keen to rope in private investors for joint sector projects in the future.

## The Statesman

1 June 1995

### Chamling takes exception to de-merger talk

By *MARCUS DAM*

THE Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has taken exception to talk of the demerger of the State from the Indian union by the former Chief Minister, Kazi Lendhup Dorjee. "This is bad for the integrity of the country," he told **The Statesman** over the telephone from Gangtok on Wednesday.

Kazi Lendhup Dorjee's demand earlier this month for the demerger of Sikkim and the restoration of its earlier status as a Protectorate of India, has surprised political circles in Gangtok, particularly in view of the role he played during the merger of the State with India in 1975.

"It is unfortunate that the Kazi has raised such a demand", the Chief Minister said. "More so since he is a senior statesman and was an architect in the merger of the State", he added.

The question of Sikkim's merger with the rest of the country touches a raw nerve in the State whenever raised. Politicians of different parties have stoked up the issue to extract political mileage in the past with varying success. But with the Kazi who was a signatory to the May 1973 Treaty that paved the way for the merger now backing the demand, neither the Centre nor the Sikkim Government can be expected to feel very comfortable with the developments. The Kazi, the State's first Chief Minister, was in office for about five years.

Though the Kazi's remarks are being described in certain political quarters as anti-national, Mr. Chamling's Government prefers "to keep a watch on the situation", at least for now. But his party is not silent on the matter. "The Sikkim Democratic Front (the ruling party) is the only party which had openly condemned the Kazi's statement. Neither has the Sikkim Sangram Parishad nor the Congress (I) come up with a condemnation", the Chief Minister said.

Mr. Chamling believes that "the Opposition has a hand in the whole affair. The "Opposition leader and former Chief Minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, however, is bent on raising his objections to the Kazi's remarks on the floor of the Assembly.

The two former Chief Ministers - the Kazi and Mr Bhandari - are now engaged in a battle of wits sparked off by the former's contention that Sikkim has been ignored and that the Centre has failed to abide by the terms of the agreement signed during the merger. And while the Kazi has expressed his bitterness over the Centre's reluctance to initiate action against Mr. Bhandari who faces charges of corruption and nepotism, Mr Chamling, too, is unhappy over the delay in the progress of CBI investigations into these charges.

"We have told the Centre to expedite the inquiry process," the Chief Minister said. "The delay in initiating action against Mr Bhandari is unfortunate", he added.

The Chief Minister was also critical of Mr. Bhandari for "fabricating" a letter allegedly sent to him by the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, - a letter which Mr Bhandari claims reflects a close political, relation between Mr. Chamling and the CPI (M) leadership. "I have received no letter from Mr. Basu. The entire story has been concocted to malign my party. It is also derogatory to Mr. Basu. He should take up the matter", the Chief Minister said.

"The Sikkim Government does not function in accordance with anyone's diktats", Mr. Chamling said, scotching rumours that his party had any clandestine relations with the CPI (M) as was alleged by Mr. Bhandari. "But we have good relations with West Bengal, our neighbouring State," he added.

While party leaders have been speculating about the political fall-out of the Kazi's demand for de-merger. Mr. Chamling had been meeting Central leaders in New Delhi for discussions regarding the future of development in the



State. "The talks were satisfying," he said.

"The Centre has been urged to maintain status-quo-ante in the matter of the extension of Income-tax and to preserve the status of Sikkim as an Income Tax free State", the Chief Minister said. The matter had been brought up at a meeting with the Prime Minister.

Like the merger issue, that related to exemption from Income-tax is of considerable importance in the State. It was this issue that led to the downfall of Mr Bhandari's Government less than two years ago.

The Prime Minister was requested to accord the status of a "designated hill area" to Sikkim and the complete dismantling of the Restrictive Area Permit and Protected Area Permit scheme for the promotion of tourism in the State. "We have been assured the co-operation of the Centre on matters both economic and political. After all we are a part of the Indian union", Mr Chamling said. ■

## The Telegraph

1 June 1995

### Nar Bahadur letter a fake, says Buddhadev

CALCUTTA, May, 31- The West Bengal minister for information and cultural affairs, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, today accused the former chief minister of Sikkim, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, of using a "fictitious letter" to malign Mr Jyoti Basu and the CPI(M).

He also said that the state government would take legal action against Mr Bhandari for adopting unfair means to malign Mr Basu and the CPI(M).

Yesterday, Mr Bhandari had distributed a letter to newsmen which was reportedly written by Mr Basu to his Sikkim counterpart, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, on March 4. In the letter, Mr Bhandari told newsmen that Mr Basu had addressed Mr Chamling as "comrade" and urged him to meet two Sikkim based CPI(M) leaders to discuss present political affairs.

Mr Bhattacharya today said that the letter handed over to newsmen by Mr Bhandari was fictitious. He said that there was no confidential cell in the Sikkim CPI(M) as mentioned in the letter.

Mr Bhattacharya also said that they had welcomed Mr Chamling when he formed the government in Sikkim. "We also believe that Mr Chamling's government is more pro-people and trying to restore democracy in Sikkim" he said.

Mr Bhattacharya also mentioned that they would try to identify two Sikkimese whose names were referred in the letter for holding talks with Mr Chamling, to prove that the letter was fake. ■

## THE PIONEER

8 June 1995

### Call for demerger of Sikkim criticised

Most political parties and leaders in Sikkim have criticised former Chief Minister and the chief architect of the state's merger with India, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangsarpa for calling for demerger and restoration of protectorate state status for the state.

The Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, said it was an 'anti-national' statement and that he had apprised the Prime Minister and the Home Minister about the development.

"We are awaiting a signal from the Centre to take action against him," Mr. Chamling told a Press conference here last week. Mr Khangsarpa had in a recent press statement urged the Centre to restore the protectorate state status for Sikkim as per the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950.

He charged successive union governments with "belying the hopes and aspirations of the Sikkimese people by willy nilly violating the historic tripartite agreement of May 8, 1973", that was the precursor to the state's merger with the Indian union.

Mr Khangsarpa was a signatory to the accord and later became the first Chief Minister of Sikkim after the merger. The Sikkim Sangram Parishad President and leader of the opposition in the state Assembly, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, said the statement was "purely anti-national" and added that Mr Khangsarpa should be arrested under the National Security Act.

"Foreign powers might use the controversy as a handle against India," he said. He alleged that Mr Chamling and his political adviser, Mr. BB Gurung, were masterminding the campaign for demerger from behind the scenes.

But Mr Gurung pointed out that he himself had moved the resolution in the Sikkim Assembly for the Himalayan kingdom's merger with India and asserted that the people here had now accepted the merger as a 'fait accompli'.

Mr Gurung said the statement (by Mr. Khangsarpa) was made by a "frustrated and disillusioned politician" who did not have any mass base now. "Mr. Bhandari should in fact be happy with Mr. Khangsarpa's statement as the former had captured power in the 1979 Assembly polls by strongly advocating for demerger thus fanning the people's emotions," he said.

Blaming the then union government for not putting Mr Bhandari behind bars then for his anti-national rhetoric and allowing him to form the government, Mr Gurung asked, "Why should Mr Khangsarpa be arrested today why

Mr. Bhandari went scot-free 1979 after winning the polls this issue?" The state Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. PT Lepcha, said Khangsarpa's call for demerger at this stage was uncalled for as the people were happy to become a part of India.

Echoing similar sentiment former Chief Minister and Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee (I) spokesman, Mr. Sanchaman Limboo, felt Mr. Khangsarpa should not make such "anational" statements now especially when he was the architect behind Sikkim's merger with the Indian union.

He said the state government should view the matter seriously and seek clarifications from Mr. Khangsarpa as to what grounds were for the call for demerger. ■



16 June 1995

## I want to make Sikkim a model state: CM

Basav Bhattacharya

Calcutta 15 June

THE PAWAN Kumar Chamling government of Sikkim is in the process of adding final touches to an industrial policy for the state. The main thrust of the policy is to make the state self-sufficient economically in the long run.

This follows the discussions between the chief minister, Mr. P.K. Chamling, the Prime Minister and a number of Cabinet ministers in the capital recently.

Talking to The Economic Times, the chief minister said the central government has agreed in principle to assist the state in implementing developmental projects both in the short and long term.

"I believe that the state can only grow when there is a growth of capital in the state and the purchasing power of the people increases", said Mr. Chamling. "We became a part of India for the last 20 years, but have yet to become an economically viable state. I want Sikkim to get all its dues as enjoyed by the other states in the country."

Mr. Chamling emphasised the need for the development of industry in the state "provided they are environment-friendly and beneficial to the state. We are open to joint ventures in such projects and have no objections in inviting entrepreneurs from the plains".

Describing the past 20 years of the state as that "of oppression, where freedom was in theory but never practiced", the chief minister said the past government had

"made a mockery of democracy, where no regard was paid for development activities of the masses. I want to change this as much as possible and make Sikkim a model state", said Mr. Chamling.

The proposed industrial policy will be implemented under two broad parameters- short and the long term. Under the long term development strategy, tourism and hydel power projects will get top priority.

"With a view to making the state self-reliant in terms of power generation, we have decided to start work at the Rathong Chu Hydel Project. The third phase of the Teesta hydel project will also be taken up shortly", said Mr. Chamling, adding that it is expected to begin by another two to three months.

Adequate power generation will be the key factor to the economic development of the state. The chief minister said despite having the potential of becoming a power surplus state, Sikkim at present generates around 30MW of power from a number of mini hydel power projects. Once the three phases of the Teesta Hydel power project and the Rathong Chu project are complete, the state will be a position to generate as much as 10,000 MW in the near future.

A global tender for the third phase of the Teesta project had been floated in which nine parties, both from abroad and within the country have participated. The state is expected to earn Rs 300 crore every year once the project begins generation. Tenders for the phase one and two are expected to be called shortly.

2 September 1995

## Reopen trade route to China: Chamling

NEW DELHI, Sept. 1 (PTI) The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has requested the Centre to take up with China the issue of reopening of the old trade route to Tibet through Nathula Pass so that the State may increase its commercial activities.

Mr. Chamling has also demanded inclusion of the State on the air map of the country and maintenance of status quo ante on the issue of imposition of income tax in Sikkim. The Sikkim Chief Minister led a large delegation, which included the Assembly Speaker, Mr. C. B. Subba, the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. P. T. Lepcha, and many other Ministers and MLAs to the Capital, and presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, and held a meeting with the Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, on various issues relating to the State.

Addressing newsmen here yesterday, Mr. Chamling said the people of Sikkim had been looking forward to the reopening of the old trade route to Tibet with the improve-

ment of India's relations with China. He said it was the shortest possible route to carry out trade between the two countries, and added the Prime Minister had assured him that the matter would be looked into.

Several areas in Sikkim have already been earmarked for the setting up of warehouses for use in the proposed trade activities, he said. Referring to the demand for maintenance of status quo ante on the issue of imposition of income tax in the State, Mr Chamling said Sikkim was a very poor State with 80 per cent of its population living below the line of poverty.

"We came into India 28 years late. Therefore, the Centre should grant us income tax exemption for at least 28 years", he said referring to integration of the State to India in 1975. During the meeting with the Finance Minister, Mr. Chamling had pointed the need for the maintenance of status quo ante as "the issue had the potential of harming the amity of the State given the sensitivity of the people about the issue".

He expressed regret that even after 20 years of integration with India, the State was yet to have any airport or rail connections. "Our State has remained cut off from rest of the country for more than two months now because of landslides in the only highway. There is an urgent need of linking Sikkim by air and also of opening of another surface route," he said. He said talks had been held with the Mesco Group for the operation of private air taxis in the State. Stressing that while his duty was to put forward the developmental agenda of the State, it was for the Centre to implement them, Mr. Chamling said the power potential of the State was "tremendous" about - 8000 MW - and he had requested the Prime Minister for technical and financial assistance to set up mini and micro-hydel projects.

He also appealed to the Centre to develop the tourism industry in the State, with special stress on ecotourism keeping in view the unparalleled scenic beauty, flora and fauna there. On the economic front, Mr Chamling said he had also requested the Finance Minister to channelise more and more grants-in aid coming in from external sources like the European Economic Community and bilateral assistances from countries like Japan and Canada.

He said stress of the aided developmental work should be in the fields of women and child welfare soil conservation, preservation of environment and ecology, horticulture and tourism. He said in all Centrally-sponsored projects in the State, the interest obligations should be waived in the short term and subsequently the loans should be written off so that the financial burden on the State was reduced.

The Chief Minister also demanded the reservation of seats in the Assembly for the Nepali-speaking people of Sikkim, "which was taken away violating the historic May 8, 1973 agreement, the precursor to Sikkim's merger with India, as the Nepali seats were there during the Chogyal's regime."

**MERGER RULED OUT:** Chief Minister Pawan Chamling also ruled out the possibility of merging the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front with the Congress, saying such a move will not be in the interest of the people who overthrew one of the worst despotic rules in the State headed by Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

Mr. Chamling said no proposal was being discussed for his joining the Congress. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 September 1995

### Sikkim wants trade route to Tibet

NEW DELHI. September 1: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling has reiterated the old demand for reopening trade route to Tibet via Nathu La and wants the Centre to take up the matter with China. A large delegation from Sikkim met Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and finance minister Manmohan Singh to submit a memorandum which demands among other things, air links between Gangtok and the rest of the country.

The State has also been demanding status quo in the income tax concessions it has been enjoying for the last two decades. Mr. Chamling told newsmen that the trade route, income-tax and other facilities were needed to help the state expand its economic activities. The delegation included assembly Speaker C. P. Subba, and Deputy chief minister P. T. Lepcha.

## Business & Stock Invest

16-30 September 1995

### Sikkim Reeling Under Heavy Financial Debt

Sikkim became a part of India in May 1975 after an elected state Assembly opted for merger with the Indian Union. Since then the Centre has paid special attention to the economic development needs of the state in order to raise the standard of living of the Sikkimese people.

According to estimates since 1975 large amounts have been sanctioned for development works in the state. These increased substantially from 1979-80, increasing from a mere Rs. 39.64 crore in the five years of the Fifth Plan to Rs. 135 crore for the 1994-95 Annual Plan. Despite the massive infusion of funds the lots of the commonman in the state has not improved. The state does not have a single revenue earning asset which can generate financial resources to meet its plan and non plan expenditures. Speak-

ing to *Business & Stock Invest* the Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, revealed that funds were misused for personal gains. He said a survey by the Calcutta based Price Waterhouse has shown that funds were wasted in project of doubtful nature.

The Chief Minister has said that previous governments have created an unduly elaborate administrative infrastructure which is neither in keeping with its population nor its resources. A bloated bureaucracy and wasteful unproductive investments in state undertakings have resulted in heavy interest burden on the state.

According to the study during the 14 years under review the state government had receipts worth Rs. 1946.44 crores against which actual disbursements were Rs. 2167.31 crore. Total disbursements, according to the study were 220.87 crore more than the total receipts of the government.

Of the total revenue receipts of the state government, during the same period, Rs 1505.63 crore were accounted for grants in aid. States tax revenues Rs 270.36 crore. The study has indicated that the growth in tax and non tax revenues never commensurated the growth in revenue expenditure.

The study has indicated that revenue generation in the state is difficult because over 90 per cent of the people live in the rural areas. It says that while revenue expenditure was up by 626 per cent during the period under review it was up 805 per cent in the case of capital expenditure.

Since 1974-75, the Fifth Plan Period, plan allocations for the state have been progressively increasing. From Rs. 39.64 crore in 1974-75 it increased to Rs. 135 crore for the 1994-95 annual plan. For 1995-96 the Centre has enhanced the outlay by 42 per cent to Rs. 192 crore. The total amount allotted till the current year is Rs. 1172.64 crore.

The state has been financing its plans through central assistance block loans and other borrowings. Non plan expenditure has been financed from its own tax and non tax sources and grants recommended by the Finance Commission. On an average the monthly requirements of the state government is Rs 23 crore. Of this Rs. 18 crore comes from the centre and Rs. 5 crore needs to come from the state's own resources. The study says that the state has been able to generate only Rs 2 crore from its own sources leaving a gap of Rs. 3 crore every month.

To finance its expenditures the state government has had to increase its borrowing over the years. Starting with Rs. 9.03 crore in 1979-80 liabilities have increased to Rs. 239.37 crore. The heavy borrowings have increased the interest burden on the government from Rs. 1.12 crore in 1979-80 to Rs. 33.94 crore in 1994-95. The study reveals that the outflow on account of payment of interest and repayment of loans has gone up from 3.78 per cent to 14.74 per cent in 1994-95.

Over the past decade and a half the state government

has not be able to create adequate revenue generating assets. All state government enterprises, 20 in number, have turned out to be white elephants. Till 1994 the government has invested Rs. 20.68 crore in its various undertakings. On an annualised basis these investments have generated a return of merely 5.5 per cent per annum.

Revenue earning departments like the Power, State Transport, the State Bank of Sikkim and Tourism have earned more losses than profits. The Power Department which has received Rs. 211.41 crore over the past 14 years has generated negative revenues returns with the accumulated losses as on March 1994 amounting to Rs. 41.17 crore.

The state has been suffering a fiscal deficit for the past several years. The fiscal deficit has increased from Rs. 38.54 crore in 1992-93 to Rs. 49.54 crore. The following year it went down to Rs 30.73 crore. In 1992-93 the GDP for the state was Rs. 261 crore. Based on this the fiscal deficit for the year was 14.76 per cent, well above 5 per cent which is considered to be a reasonable limit.

The State government has not been able to devote adequate funds for development activities even though these have increase from Rs. 20.33 crore in 1979-80 to Rs 138.42 crore in 1979-95 Price Water House has found that over the past few years non plan expenditure of the state has been outpacing plan expenditure. While plan expenditure increased by 579 per cent between 1979-80 to 1994-95 non plan expenditure is up by 767 per cent during the same period. Though the Centre has been allotting increasing funds annually loan repayment and interest charges have been eating into much of the outlays. Of the total non plan revenue expenditure in 1994-95 total loan repayment and interest payment works out to almost 30 per cent of the loans and advanced received from the Central Government.

At the end of the Seventh Plan this figure was merely 18 per cent. Debt servicing charges in 1994-95 averaged 22.6 per cent in 1994-95 of the total non plan revenue expenditure. According to the Chief Minister the Price Water House study was undertaken to help the government to draw up its future development plans. Chamling says the study has offered sound advise in several areas which the state government is to consider seriously in preparing plans for the future.

He said one of the suggestions is that they power sector should be opened to the private sector. The state government has decided to open up the power sector to private participation. He said he would welcome private entrepreneurs to prepare feasibility reports and make their offers to the state government.

The state government was presently concentrating on the Teesta Phase three project. He said global tenders had already been floated for the project. He felt that the project when completed will generate substantial revenues for the state. The Chief Minister said that greater attention was to be paid to the development of tourism the state government would be willing to accept the help of the private



sector to strengthen its existing tourist infrastructure. He said the government has already invited an international company involved in tourism promotion to prepare a master plan.

The state government has requested the Centre to put on hold the implementation of the various provisions of the Income Tax Act in the state the Chief Minister has informed the Finance Minister that the implementation could harm communal amity in the state. Chamling has informed the Central authorities that the revenue yield from income tax would be far less than the money spent in its collection. Since the issue became an emotional one for the state it was necessary to create a conducive for its acceptance.

According to Chamling the state government was drawing up plans to reorganise the various state enterprises as also the State Bank of Sikkim. Started by the former ruler of Sikkim the Bank functions as the state treasury.

Mismanagement had led to major problems in the Bank. Its liquidity had been almost completely exhausted. The State government has asked the Central Government to make a one time grant of Rs. 25 crore to revive the bank.

According to the Price Water House Study almost 70 per cent of the loans and overdrafts made by the Bank over the past years are in the category of bad debts. The Bank has failed to recover past loans since a major part of these have been made without any security.

The overdues against the Bank have mounted. Overdue debt to the United Commercial Bank amounts to Rs. 4 crore. Outstanding dues on account of public deposits adds up to Rs. 15 crore. Even though the government has offered interest rebate recoveries have not been very good.

## The Statesman

17 October 1995

### Are the rumours about Chamling mere red herrings ?

JIGME N. KAZI

His detractors are going all-out to paint him red. But the poet-turned-politician does not seem perturbed by allegations that his 10-month-old Government is run by mandarins at Writers' Buildings.

The fifth Chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr. Pawan Chamling (45), has just won a temporary reprieve. He has succeeded in shelving the merger of the two main Opposition parties the Sikkim Sangram Parishad and the Congress (I).

A united Opposition under the Congress (I) is the greatest threat to Mr. Chamling. If this happens, not only will

the upper-caste Nepalese and the Bhutia-Lepcha tribals be united but a substantial section of the majority Nepalese, clubbed together as the Other Backward Classes in the State, will plump for the Congress (I).

More significant than this kind of political polarization on ethnic lines is the immediate threat to the Chamling Government.

A united Opposition, under the leadership of the former Chief Minister and SSP chief Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, may well bag 11 of the 32 Assembly seats.

"We will then need only six more MLAs from the ruling party to form our own Government", says a Congress (I) leader "However, we want the Chamling Government to die a natural death", he adds.

Mr. Bhandari, who is gradually becoming Mr. Chamling's bitterest critic, says the present Government is a "photocopy" of the left Front Government in West Bengal. He has even gone to the extent of calling the Chief Minister a "Naxalite".

Referring to a recent controversial letter, Mr. Bhandari said, "Why is Chamling hiding? Why doesn't he come out in the open and deny that he is a communist? I will then come out with concrete evidence.

"Mere allegations that I have fabricated a letter written to him by Mr Jyoti Basu will not do. If he has the guts, let him go to court and I will prove him guilty".

Mr Chamling, however, has his own version of why his opponents are projecting him as a Communist.

"They are making baseless statements for their own survival", is his cryptic remark when asked to comment on such allegations.

According to the Chief Minister, the pro-Bhandari faction in the Congress (I) is keen on SSP's merger with the party. They want Mr. Bhandari to lead the party in the State with a view to capturing power in the near future.

At present, the ruling party seems to be enjoying a good rapport with the Rao Government. "Central leaders are convinced that my Government is doing well in Sikkim. They want to preserve status quo, not to disturb us", Mr Chamling claims.

He says it is only a handful of SSP members-turned-Congress (I) leaders who are raising a storm, adding, "They can't even sit in the Opposition for nine months, how can they claim to be leaders of the people? They are not interested in the people's welfare. They only want power and position."

Mr Chamling says by convincing Central leaders of his alleged links with leftist parties in the region, his rivals are trying to make trouble between him and the Centre. The present political development in the State, he says, stems from a bid by frustrated politicians to come to power by the backdoor.

"Corrupt criminals and antinationals are coming together to take shelter under the Congress (I)", Mr. Chamling claims.

Mr. Bhandari has said that despite his claims otherwise. Mr. Chamling is actually running a "Communist" Government in this strategic border State surrounded by Communist regimes.

Mr. Chamling's links with leftist parties in Nepal and West Bengal, the former Chief Minister has said, are through Siliguri, a vital trading and commercial centre for Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal and the North-East.

He says a printing Press in Siliguri, run by a Bengali, does the printing and publication for the State Government and the ruling party.

Some Congress leaders in the State say a leftist journalist in Siliguri, who has connexions in Sikkim and Nepal, is the main link between Mr. Chamling and the former Communist Government in Nepal led by Mr. Manmohan Adhikari.

Mr Chamling is also reported to share a good relationship with the anti-Ghising Leftist forces in the hills of Darjeeling. The Gorkha League leader, Mr. Chetan Sherpa, is believed to have met him here just before Dusserah. Mr. Chamling denies having any links, with the West Bengal Left. "I have never met Mr. Jyoti Basu; I haven't even had a telephone conversation with him".

Referring to reports that Mr. Basu might become the next Prime Minister if the National Front does well in the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls, Mr Chamling says, "If Mr Jyoti Babu becomest the Prime Minister, will Opposition leaders in the State still call me a "Communist"? adding in the same breath, "What's wrong in being a Communist"?

He is surprised that his critics are accusing him of being a "casteist and a Communist" at the same time. If he is a believer in a creed that calls for a classless society, his Government cannot be based on casteism he agrues. For a man whose political base are the OBC Nepalis, "casteism" and "Communism are poles apart. "I'm for the poor and downtrodden. They have no caste" Mr Chamling says. ■

## The Statesman

3 November 1995

### Sikkim's drive against corruption

CALCUTTA, Nov. 2- In a significant move aimed at weeding out corruption among Ministers and within the State administration, the Sikkim Government has recently imposed a ban on legislators and bureaucrats in "directly or indirectly" taking up contractual work in any future development projects in the State, involving a cost of upto Rs. 11 lakhs.

Limited tenders will be invited from a list of eligible contractors which is to be prepared for each gram panchayat

of the State. Speaking to **The Statesman** recently, the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, said the decision was taken to prevent legislators and State officials from grabbing contractual assignments with an eye on raking in profits at the cost of the State exchequer. The financial liabilities confronting the State Government over the past few years have far surpassed the State's annual budgetary outlays mainly through the drainage of funds earmarked for development.

Mr Chamling has even drawn the Centre's attention to the misappropriation of large amounts of money even as a number of planned schemes drawn up by past Governments in the State have "been implemented only on paper".

The Chief Minister's move to prevent legislators and the bureaucracy from exerting control over the award for contracts of proposed projects is likely to meet with stiff opposition from those within the Government and administration who have benefitted from "laxity in rules over the past years". In a State where the bureaucrats continue to enjoy the patronage of political parties, the decision could cause some embarassment to the ruling party, but Mr. Chamling seems determined to "ensure that the new rules are not violated".

In a note to the Centre, he has pointed out a series of "ghost projects" sanctioned by the previous Government over the past few years "while the sanctioned funds have been siphoned off to fill the bottomless coffers of Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari (his predecessor) and his followers." According to him, these called projects "include a Centrally-sponsored scheme of the integrated wasteland development project for the Manpurchu watershed in Sikkim's South district for which the State Government has sanctioned Rs. 46 lakhs.

Even three years after the money was sanctioned the project is yet to come up. Another similar scheme to have been implemented at Yangang Lingmoo in the same district, for which Rs. 21.20 lakhs had been sanctioned awaits implementation. ■

## SUNDAY

AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION

2 December 1995

### A break from the past

*Chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling's rule is a marked departure from that of his predecessor*

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling's style

of functioning, as opposed to his predecessor Nar Bahadur Bhandari's is characterised by a singular lack of hype. Realising that a small and financially weak state like Sikkim cannot afford to be profligate, Chamling has ordered a crackdown on corrupt bureaucrats and launched an austerity drive. The clamp-down is expected to translate into savings to the tune of Rs. 10 crore annually for the state government, feels Chamling.

And the CM is clearly going to lead by example. Among several measures aimed at cutting down on the cost being incurred for state affairs is the number of cars being used by the ministers, including the CM. As against the normal three cars each for a minister, only one car is now being allotted to each neta. Chamling, himself, has reduced the fleet of seven cars, that former CM Nar Bahadur Bhandari used, to just three "This cost-cutting itself will save us something like Rs. 30 to 4 crore annually," Chamling said.

And this is not all that he is doing to put the brakes on his extravagant ministerial colleagues. "I have also reduced the number of parties that the bureaucrats used to give. By stopping the practice of serving these parties, we have saved several crores of rupees." Along with the austerity measures, the Chamling government has also ordered raids on several bureaucrats and politicians suspected of amassing wealth through improper means. The raids have revealed huge, disproportionate assets owned by officials and former minister in the Bhandari Cabinet.

Predictably, the raids and the subsequent investigation have evoked a strong reaction from Bhandari, who has described them as "vindictive". "It is a desperate attempt on the part of a panicky government to create a fear psychosis among officials and politicians," ringed by "communist regimes in China and West Bengal. Chamling who successfully ended the 15-year uninterrupted rule of Bhandari last year, is unperturbed by these charges. "First, he called me a casterist now he call me a communist," the chief minister said while referring to Bhandari's allegations. "Since he does not have any political programme of his own, he has to depend upon criticising others."

With his government about to complete a year, Chamling is hopeful that "given the people's trust in us, we will be able to provide a good government in the years to come". And the fact that for the first time, the Centre has accorded an increase of 42 per cent in the state's annual plan allocation, should help matters.

According to the locals here, the most significant feature of Chamling's rule-as opposed to Bhandari's-has been the creation of an atmosphere where varied opinions are freely expressed. Perhaps, therein lies Chamling's greatest contribution so far. But now that the initial groundwork has been done, the chief minister enters a new phase of his tenure which will determine how much he is actually able to do for the state of Sikkim. ■

# The Statesman

January 1996

## Chamling rewarded for tie-up with Cong

MARCUS DAM

SIKKIM's ruling party the Sikkim Democratic Front's decision to forge an alliance with the Congress (I) for the coming Lok Sabha elections has come as no surprise. For even though the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, has denied more than once rumours that his party is seeking to merge with the Congress (I), his frequent forays to New Delhi suggest a close relationship with the Prime Minister.

As if in response, the Centre has recently rewarded Mr. Chamling with an additional allocation of Rs. 16 crores, raising its total budgetary assistance to the State for the current financial year to a record Rs. 208 crores.

By agreeing to an electoral alliance with the Congress (I) which was all but decimated in the last Assembly polls in Sikkim, Mr. Chamling has put paid to the hopes of his principal adversary, the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, of joining the Congress (I).

Mr. Bhandari has described the SDF's decision to arrive at an electoral understanding with the Congress (I) as an attempt by the State's ruling party to cover up the Government's failure to keep its promises made to the people during last year's Assembly polls.

But even as the Congress (I) seems to have found a political ally in the SDF, the party is in the throes of a fresh crisis with four of its senior leaders-all Ministers during Mr. Sanchaman Limboo's brief stint as Chief Minister-quitting the Congress (I) and joining Mr. Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad.

Also joining the SSP is the vice-president of the Congress (I) Mr. Chamla Tshering. The president of the State Congress (I) Mr Leonarad Saring has been replaced following reports that he lent a hand to the deserters joining the SSP. Taking over as party chief is Mr. Thukchuk Lachungpa, a prominent tribal leader.

Although there is only one Lok Sabha seat in Sikkim, the coming elections will be a litmus test for Mr. Chamling who completed one year as Chief Minister only last month.

By coming to an electoral understanding with the Congress (I), he hopes to win over the support of the State's tribals who constitute about 20 per cent of the electorate and have traditionally backed the party at the hustings. The party however suffered a debacle in the Assembly elections.

Moreover, the SDF's image as a party dominated by those from the Other Backward Classes has alienated a substantial section of the tribal community from the party.

Mr. Chamling would obviously try especially hard to win over the loyalties of the aggrieved lot.

In his effort to appease them, Mr. Chamling only recently urged the Prime Minister to consider granting constitutional recognition of the Bhutia and Lepcha languages. He reiterated the demand for giving tribal status for the Limboo, Tamang and Gurung communities of the State.

Though the Chief Minister has said that the candidate nominated by the SDF-Congress (I) alliance for the coming Lok Sabha polls could belong to either party, it is most likely that the nominee will be from the State's ruling party.

The name of Mr. Chamling's political adviser and former Chief Minister, Mr B.B. Gurung, is being bandied about but there is also talk in political circles in Gangtok that the Congress (I) leader, Mr. Limboo, has a chance to make it to the fray. Interestingly, both the aspirants belong to the Other Backward Classes social category.

The SSP is expected to field a candidate, now that its hopes of an alliance with the Congress (I) have been dashed. Whether the upper castes among the Nepalese who have been its traditional vote-bank will throw their weight behind Mr. Bhandari remains to be seen. He recently saw his petition, challenging the lower court's decision to chargesheet him for corruption during his tenure as Chief Minister, being rejected by Sikkim High Court. ■

## The Statesman

2 July 1996

### GUESTS IN SIKKIM

THERE are obvious political overtones in the Sikkim Government's order to limit ration cards to those holding Sikkim Subject residence or identity certificates. The first to comply was the East District where Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has little support among upper caste Newar-Bahun-Chhetri communities. His determination to give the NBC the status of Other Backward Classes is well known. The seemingly populist measure, however, may cause consternation among those who do not possess the certificates and whose names do not figure in relevant registers. Since the term Sikkim Subject encompasses the majority of the original inhabitants like Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalese, and the documents were issued by the Durbar under the Chogyal, many will be deprived of existing privileges. Such certificates will also be needed for admissions to schools from the next academic session. The children of permanent State Government employees have been excluded. Locals will benefit in respect of Licences for taxis and hotels. Ostensibly a commitment of the Chief Minis-

ter to bring a "real change", the underlining idea seems to be protect the interests of the indigenous population from economic exploitation by outsiders. A well-meaning step perhaps, but the authorities must see that genuine citizens are not harassed in the process. It is worth recall that, taking advantages of Sikkim's tax laws of 1948, many outside businessmen in collusion with the locals laundered black money worth Rs 25,000 crores through the infamous "gift tax" racket, busted in 1987.

Mr Chamling is determined to see the State make rapid strides in developing the rural economy and spread a little prosperity around. With 60 percent of the budget outlay thus earmarked, it may not be impossible. The recent administrative reshuffles notwithstanding the Chief Minister seems wary of shaking up uncooperative bureaucrats and cobble together a dedicated team with the sole objective of eradicating corruption, a major election pledge of the ruling SDF. It was unedifying to watch SDF youths react angrily to the Sikkim High Court ruling last August that all allotments of contracts worth Rs 5 lakhs apiece must go through open tenders. The Chief Minister must take precautions against the potential for mischief by those opposed to his pro-local policies.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 July 1996

### Rail Services to be expanded in North-East

NEW DELHI, July 2 (HTC) Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling today made Railways Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan commit to expand rail services in the north-eastern region including a rail link with Sikkim.

Similarly, Kerala Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar secured an assurance from the Railways Minister that all trains running in Kerala and through Kerala would be properly maintained.

As to Mr Nayanar's demand for early completion of the Konkan Railway Project (KRP), Mr Paswan said that the extended term of Konkan Railway Corporation's Chairman E. Sreedharan was extended.

## DECCAN HERALD

4 July 1996

### Sikkim wants special status to continue



NEW DELHI, July 3(UNI) The Sikkim government has urged the Centre to ensure that the distinct identity of the former Himalayan kingdom is maintained as provided under Article 371(F) of the Constitution.

The special provision of the Article have been ignored over the years and the special status of the State has eroded steadily "much to the detriment of the people", a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister Deve Gowda by State Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling noted.

"This has not only imposed tremendous administrative problems due to conflict with local laws and customs but also brought about considerable ethnic tension, political uncertainty and social discord," the memorandum said.

Mr. Chamling, during his meeting with the prime minister last night, apprised him of the situation in the State and placed the State's demand for more central funds for speedier implementation of the various welfare schemes.

The memorandum said that maintaining the special status of Sikkim was a sacred commitment on the part of the Government of India as well as all the political parties of the State at the time of the former kingdom's merger with the India Union in 1975.

Of the 32 seats, twelve are reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha (tribal) population, one for the monasteries and two are reserved for the Scheduled Castes, leaving a balance of 17 seats in the general category.

What the memorandum is trying to seek is that the remaining 17 seats be reserved for the people of Nepalese origin, thus making it clear that any other category of people did not have the right to contest for the assembly.

During the regime of the Chogyal, the 32 assembly seats were divided in such a manner that the Bhutia-Lepcha community and the Nepalese were equally represented in the House, irrespective of the fact that the Nepalese had been a majority community in the State.

The Article provides that the existing laws of the State will continue to be in force till they are amended or repealed.

The memorandum said that many of the problems faced by the State governments must be tackled at the local level keeping in mind the varying factors from States to State.

**INFLUX OF PEOPLE :** The ever growing influx of people into the State from outside is creating serious demographic changes and severely affecting the way of life of the people of the State. There was added strain on the economy because of people entering in search of employment and other facilities and the gradual marginalisation of the local population.

# THE ASIAN AGE

4 July 1996

## Chamling urges Gowda to maintain Sikkim's identity and special status

New Delhi: The Sikkim government has urged the Centre to ensure that the distinct identity of the former Himalayan kingdom is maintained as provided under Article 371f of the Constitution. The special provision of the article have been ignored over the years and the special status of the state has eroded steadily "much to the detriment of the people", a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister Deve Gowda by state chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling noted.

"This has not only imposed tremendous administrative problems due to conflict with local laws and customs but also brought about considerable ethnic tensions, political uncertainty and social discord," the memorandum said. Mr Chamling, during his meeting with the Prime Minister on Tuesday night, apprised him of the situation in the state. (UNI)

# The Statesman

6 July 1996

## HIMALAYAN STORY

It is possible to build a sequence of events to suggest that Mr H.D. Deve Gowda cancelled a visit to Sikkim because history has been unkind to Prime Ministers who have set foot on the Himalayan kingdom after the rather disharmonious merger with the Indian Union in 1975. The list includes Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Mr V.P Singh and even Mr Narasimha Rao who, overzealous observers contend, regretted having visited the newly born State only to discover that the presiding deities have not forgiven them. It is a wild conjecture that the resulted from divine wrath; the fact remains that the lone M.P. from the Sikkim Democratic Front has Congress support and Mr Rao's sympathy for Mr Pawan Chamling has never been in doubt. Nor does it follow logically that that Morarji Desai's apologetic stance during a campaign tour in 1979 merely served to eject his own Janata Party in the Assembly poll that followed. Fortune tellers and ardent worshippers do not claim infallibility; all they do is to generate fear in the interests of their trade.

Acceptable reasons have been offered for the cancella-

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 August 1996

### Chamling: No role in Gorkhaland demand

CALCUTTA, Sept. 2 Chamling now on a visit to Calcutta, has made it clear that Sikkim would have nothing to do win the demand for a separate Gorkhaland State, being raised by the hill based political parties in Darjeeling hill areas, which adjoins Sikkim.

Mr Chamling said the issue rested with the people of Darjeeling, West Bengal Government and the Centre, with Sikkim having no role in this regard. He had also conveyed his mind to Jyoti Basu and West Bengal Police Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharyya during meeting yesterday and today.

Mr Chamling, who had come to West Bengal to seek greater interaction with the West Bengal Government primarily for promotion trade and business opportunities, said that the biggest task before him is to usher in the economic development of the backward Sikkim. He said he had no intention to hold talks about Gorkhaland with Gorkha National Liberation Front(GNLF) chief Subhas Ghising or the Gorkha People's Front(GPF) a loosely - knit group of 18 parties recently formed to mobilise people's support for Gorkhaland.

Despite the firm stand of the Sikkim Government on the sensitive issue. Yet another former Sikkim Chief Minister Narbahadur Bhandari is reportedly making efforts to cash on the Gorkhaland demand to ensure a bounceback in the political arena. Mr Bhandari, who once tried to emerge as a serious thread to Mr Ghising as a leader of the Nepalese -speaking people, has now retreated into the background following his defeat in the last Assembly polls in Sikkim.

With a large number of Nepalese-speaking people settled in Sikkim and in view of its contiguity to Darjeeling, it is natural that the Gorkhaland issue would strike a chord in the minds of a section of Sikkimese as well. Despite his sincere efforts, Mr Ghising has so far failed to strike any roots in Sikkim even though a GNLF unit had also been opened in the State. Mr Ghising has till the present decided not to go to path of confrontation with the State Government and the Centre on the Gorkhaland issue, even though he has lent support to the demand. He has also so far spurned the offers of the GPF to hold talks on the issue and conducting agitations under his leadership. He looks to be more intent now to ensure speedy release of official grants from both the Centre and the State Government for the development of Darjeeling, holding talks with several West Bengal Ministers on the issue in Darjeeling last week.

## The Telegraph

13 August 1996

### When the outsiders comes in

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Sikkim is struggling to balance the demand of indigenous and settler groups, write **Bijay Bantawa**

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In a recent visit to New Delhi, the chief minister of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling, urged the Central government to recognise and remember Sikkim's special position under Article 371 of the Constitution. The memorandum submitted to the prime minister, H.D. Deve Gowda, pointed out that despite the pledge to respect the special privileges of ethnic people in the state under the article, successive governments at the Centre had ignored these rights.

The chief minister demanded the restoration of assembly seats for Nepalis and Tsongs that were abolished during the Janata Dal regime at the Centre. Chamling also urged the government to restore other privileges, particularly those once enjoyed by the subjects of the former chogyal.

The present state government feels the continuous influx of the people into this tiny Himalayan state is threatening the identity and heritage of Sikkim's original inhabitants. Chamling recently tried to grant special privileges to the tribes in the form of easier access to ration cards and admission to state government run schools. The plan was put on hold following severe criticism from the opposition and appeals by the business community and Central government employees in the state.

Non-indigenous inhabitants fear the consequences of any special privileges to indigenous groups. Recently, Prem Goyal, chief coordinator of the Nagarik Sangharsha Samity, sent a memorandum to the chief minister reminding him of the home ministry's 1989 order stating that the rights of all Indian citizens must be protected.

T. Lachungpa, vice president of the state congress committee, likes to maintain that both the indigenous people and settler residing in the state for years should live in harmony. But even he acknowledges the influx will, in the years of come, have an adversely affect. Generally politicians and intellectual feel that the identity of the indigenous population needs to be maintained without infringing on the fundamental rights of other Indian citizens.

An extreme view is that of an organisation called Survival Sikkim. It claims only Bhutias and Lepchas are the aboriginal people of Sikkim. The rest are 'neo-colonists'. But there is ample evidence that the Sikkimese Nepalis who were formerly subjects of the former chogyal were

absorbed into the ethnic population. They now make up about 75 percent of the population. The Nepalese Language serves as the *Lingua franca* in the state.

Survival Sikkim recently condemned Nepalis on the eve of anniversary celebrations of birth of the poet Bhanubhakta, considered a symbol of unity among the Nepali community. But the tribals probably should balm themselves most of all for the steady erosion of language, literature and culture. Their leaders have done little to promote the viability of any of them. Survival Sikkim is nevertheless right in pointing out that in many cultural programmes, popular participation is often coerced or otherwise involuntary.

Chamling's socialist approach, whereby he intends to give equal opportunity to all communities for their development, could be successful in maintaining communal harmony in Sikkim. After assuming office Chamling granted the status of official state languages to the languages of the Gurung, Newar, Tamang, Rai, Magar and other tribal groups. Though this move has been interpreted by some as a way to divide the Nepali community, Chamling strongly believes that unless the language and culture of each community is not well protected and given equal status, emotional unity can never be achieved.

Despite speaking several different languages, and having separated categories of non-backward classes and other backward classes, the Nepali community remains strongly united, as the success of the celebration on Bhanubhakta's birthday demonstrated.

Ethnic tension in the region is often created by rumours and false allegations. Such a situation built up recently when the Rajya Sabha member, Karma Tobden, a Bhutia, was reported to have made derogatory comments about the Nepali community. Tobden later denied having made such a comment and reminded people of the contribution generations of Nepalis had made to the progress and development of Sikkim. In a show of harmony the Sikkim Lepcha Association, along with some influential people from the other tribes, participated in the anniversary celebrations for Bhanubhakta.

With the objective of promoting peace and amity among the population, an organisation called Nebhola has been formed. As its composite name implies it will have representation from Sikkim main three ethnic groups: Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas. The move has been lauded unanimously in the state.

Chamling has warned the Central government that unless the special rights of the state's three main ethnic groups as provided in Article 371 are restored, Sikkim could follow in the footsteps of Kashmir. With its international boundaries with Nepal, China and Bhutan, Sikkim is stra-

tegitically very important to India. Trouble here would jeopardise India's strategic interests.

Sikkim is looking for reforms in all spheres to ensure the preservation of its age old culture and tradition. The people of the state have also pinned their hopes on the present Sikkim Democratic Front government. Its political survival depends in large part on finding a successful solution. The question remains as to whether Chamling will be able to deliver of goods.

## The Statesman

2 September 1996

### Chamling calls on Basu

CALCUTTA, Sept. 1.-Mr Pawan Chamling, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, called on Mr. Jyoti Basu at his Salt Lake residence today.

They discussed matters related to tourism, transport and setting up of a national highway that could improve communication between Sikkim and West Bengal. Mr. Chamling is open to ideas of joint venture projects in tourism, transport and industry. ■

## Business Line

3 September 1996

### Chamling seeks Basu's help for new highway

CALCUTTA, Sept. 2 -The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, has met his West Bengal counterpart, Mr. Jyoti Basu, here and discussed with him a number of subjects including the development of tourism jointly by the two neighbouring States.

Mr. Chamling said that Sikkim has only one national highway, NH No. 31a, and the State wanted another route entirely through West Bengal from Kurseong via Darjeeling-Singla-Zorethang.

He sought the help of Mr. Basu on the proposed new route. Engineers of both the States had discussed the highway proposed and the officers of the Union Government held a meeting on this subject, he said.

Mr. Chamling told Mr. Basu that both the States could work together for the development of tourism and transport. Other issues which figured in the discussion included training of officers of Sikkim in West Bengal, rationalisation of taxes and encroachment of Sikkim Government land at Siliguri.

Mr. Chamling said that he was satisfied with the talks and Mr. Basu's positive response. ■

## Chamling to improve ties with state

CALCUTTA, Aug. 2: In an ambitious move to provide better incentive for investment by multi-national companies, Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling expressed his wish to adapt old laws of the state in keeping with the present liberalisation trends that have swept the country.

"An industrial belt already been identified and although the issue has not yet been raised in the state Assembly, it will not be long before plans get underway to usher in several establishments," said Mr. Chamling, adding: "Despite the fact that agro-based industries flourish the most, there is scope for those engaged in cottage industries, electronic goods or jewellery production." The stretch between Rampur, Singtam, Malli and Jorhang has so far been marked as sites for establishing a prosperous industrial belt, the chief minister said.

On a three-day visit to West Bengal, on Monday the chief minister from Sikkim, accompanied with his wife, deputy chief minister P. T. Lucksom, political advisor B. B. Gurung and several other dignitaries, visited Mother Teresa at the Woodlands Nursing Home. "She looked happy and well," Mr. Chamling said after his meeting with her. Mr. Chamling initiated talks with chief minister Jyoti Basu in a bid to solve mutual problems. He also forwarded several proposals in the interest of both states. Problems relating to road communication in Sikkim were discussed in detail. "Mr Basu assured that construction of the Kurseong-Darjeeling-Singla NayaBazar-Jorehang route, for which the Centre has already sanctioned Rs 10,00,000, will soon begin.

By way of another alternate route, construction of a road stretching across Melli-Teesta via the Champa Bridge is also in the pipeline. The cost could be shared by the two states, Mr. Chamling suggested and added that the Sikkim road and bridges department had already written to the West Bengal public works department in this regard. He said the National Highway 31A, the lifeline of Sikkim, was also susceptible to damages and forced closures during monsoons. Mr. Chamling pointed out that whenever there was any disruption in the movement of traffic on the Sevoke-Gangtok National Highway 31A, his state faced immense problems as supply of essentials got cut off. The visiting chief minister expressed the need for imparting proper training to officers of the Sikkim government. ■

## Chamling, Basu discuss inter-state issues

CALCUTTA, Sept. 2. SIKKIM has initiated dialogues with West Bengal to solve mutual problems and has forwarded various proposals in the interest of the two states.

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, who is here on a three-day visit to the state, met his West Bengal counterpart Jyoti Basu and discussed with him various problems Sikkim was facing including road communication as the North-Eastern state's only conduct passed through the politically volatile Darjeeling subdivision of West Bengal.

Chamling pointed out that whenever there was any disruption in traffic movement on the Sevoke-Gangtok NH-31A, his state faced immense problems as supply of essentials got cut off, an official release said. He cited the Gorkhaland agitation as an instance when Sikkim had suffered.

The release quoted Chamling as saying that NH-31A, the lifeline of Sikkim, was also susceptible to damages and forced closures during monsoons.

He gave a proposal for construction of a bridge over the Rangeet river at Champa and a road from Champa bridge to Teesta bridge as these could benefit not only Sikkim but also the people of West Bengal.

The cost could be shared by the two states, Chamling suggested and added that the Sikkim road and bridges department has already written to the West Bengal Public Works Department in this regard.

Chamling said that it was necessary for imparting proper training to officers of the Sikkim government. For this, he proposed, that the training institutions under the West Bengal government could be utilised, the release said.

The Sikkim Chief Minister also felt the need to consider rationalisation of sales tax and other taxes levied by the two governments and for exchange of vital information between the concerned departments of the two governments with the common objective of curtailing loss of tax revenue.

Emphasising the tourism prospects, Chamling suggested that the two governments join hands in promoting it.



# The Statesman

3 September 1996

## 'Darjeeling-Sikkim merger absurd'

### Bhandari symbol of evil: Chamling

MARCUS DAM

CALCUTTA, Sept. 2. - Talk of merger of the Darjeeling hills with Sikkim are the rantings of man from political Limbo", the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, said here today "The concept is absurd; the question does not arise."

Mr. Chamling was commenting on certain statements reportedly made by the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, whose recent meeting with the Gorkha National Liberation Front chief, Mr Subash Ghisingh, in Darjeeling, has generated speculation in local political circles.

The meeting was held at a time when various political forces in the region are regrouping in support of a renewed demand for a separate Gorkhaland state.

The demand may be a cause of concern for the West Bengal Government, but Mr. Chamling is not unduly worried.

Speaking to **The Statesman** in an exclusive interview, Mr. Chamling said there was little reason for alarm. He also dismissed reports that Mr. Ghisingh had expressed his intention to discuss the demand for Gorkhaland with him.

Such reports had reached Writers' Buildings but, according to the Sikkim Chief Minister, they were unfounded.

"Anyone is free to meet me", Mr. Chamling said. As for Mr Ghisingh, "I have a personal relationship with him. And there is little doubt that he is a leader."

What appears more annoying for Mr. Chamling is the way Mr. Chamling is the way Mr. Bhandari is trying to stoke ethnic sentiments in an attempt to stage a political comeback. "He is running out of issues and is now raking up old ones in search of new allies", he said.

But why should a Chief Minister who is well into the second year of his tenure pay so much attention to a leader swept out of power years ago ? "Because Mr. Bhandari has become a symbol of evil and the people are not likely to forget him in a hurry", explains Mr. Chamling.

"Of course, he is no longer my enemy no. 1. What worth is an enemy who has no issue, no ideology, no values, no morals ?" Mr. Chamling asks, adding, "It is because Mr.

Bhandari lacks any support or conviction that he is raising such ridiculous demands for the merger of Sikkim and Darjeeling."

On Mr. Bhandari's allegations that the Sikkim Government is steeped in corruption-and the Chief Minister is largely responsible-Mr. Chamling says, "A thief is apt to believe that every other person is also a thief." But traces of the previous corrupt Government remain, he says, and they need to be weeded out.

Many of the people's grievances, too, remain unresolved.

"My first priority has been to ensure Sikkim's emotional integration with the rest of the country. It is a border State with typical sensitive problems. And it is the Centre's responsibility to meet our major demands", he says.

One of the demands is the adoption of provisions of Section 371 F of the Indian Constitution, which grants special privileges to Sikkim.

"These provisions continue to be ignored. A long-standing demand is for reservation of Assembly seats for the Nepalis and tribes such as the Limboos. Another is safeguarding the State's interests over Income-Tax exemption", Mr Chamling says. ■

# The Indian EXPRESS

3 September 1996

## CBI accused of delaying probe against Bhandari

BY ASHIS CHAKRAVARTI

SIKKIM Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has accused the CBI of dragging its feet about the inquiries into corruption scandals against his predecessor, Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

At a time when the CBI has been forced to act tough against high ranking politicians, Chamling suspects there must be "some good reason" behind the agency taking to "dilatatory tactics" about the probe against Bhandari.

Although the CBI is supposed to be probing these charges for the past 12 years, Chamling hoped the probe would pick up speed after Bhandari lost his 15-year-long chief ministership last year.

In an interview to *The Indian Express* here this afternoon, Chamling said that of the numerous corruption cases against Bhandari, the CBI had chargesheeted him in only one so far.

The charge related to the former Chief Minister's property worth Rs 70 lakh, which was found to have been disproportionate to his known sources of income.

In another case relating to the award of PWD contracts worth Rs 3 crore during Bhandari's term as Chief Minister,

the hearing is scheduled to begin at the designated court at Gangtok on September 21.

Other than the charges beings probed by the CBI, Chamling's government furnished to it the cases of 15 other properties "illegally" bought and owned by Bhandari in Sikkim.

Besides, Bhandari is alleged to be "owning benami properties even in neighbouring countries".

A Sikkim government note also alleges that Bhandari and his family hold shares worth Rs 15 lakh in the Sikkim Film Corporation Private Limited, Rs 5 lakh in the Trinetra International Private Limited, Rs 30 lakh in Sayapatri Pvt Ltd and Rs 20 lakh in M/S Leela Tea Company Pvt Ltd.

Chamling said he had not initiated action against Bhandari by the State Vigilance Commission because he did not want to duplicate the CBI probe.

In fact, his government has forwarded many new cases to the CBI. Disappointed with the slow pace of the CBI investigation, he was considering to start separate probes by the State Government.

Chamling's Sikkim Democratic Front had mauled Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad in the last Assembly elections in the State, promising to end the "corrupt and dictatorial rule" of his predecessor. "I'm honourbound to my people to fulfill the promise".

He complained that he still faced some opposition from the "communalised" section of the bureaucracy in his fight against corruption.

He was obviously referring to those bureaucrats who sided with Bhandari because of the caste factor of Sikkimese politics. While Chamling won the last poll mainly on the support of other backward classes and the Bhutia Lepchas, Bhandari still enjoyed the confidence of the upper-class NBC (Newars, Bauns and Chhetris).

According to a White Paper issued by Chamling's Government, his predecessor had left him with a huge public debt burden of Rs 239.37 crore and another Rs 112.7 crore as loans and advances from the Centre.

The result is a bankrupt State economy, whose debt servicing cost for 1994-95 constituted 22.6% of the total non-plan revenue expenditure. ■



4 September 1996

## Chamling backs PM's plans for constitution of smaller states

THE SIKKIM chief minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, on Tuesday endorsed the views of the Prime Minister, Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda and the former Prime Minister, Mr. V. P. Singh, favouring constitution of smaller

states. Interestingly, however, he does not subscribe to the GNLFF supremo Subash Ghising's demand for a separated Gorkhaland.

Addressing a meet at the Calcutta Press Club here on Tuesday, the Sikkim chief minister said it is much easier to run the administration of smaller states than that of larger ones.

"These are my personal views and I am sure the United Front leadership must have unanimously decided to advocate for this," he said.

Discussing the issue of separate Gorkhaland, Mr. Chamling said he was aware of the GNLFF supremo's long-pending demand. "But I don't subscribe to this view," he added.

He urged the Centre to release more funds for the development of the state, adding that he would take up the issue of economic hardship of the state with the Union finance minister, Mr. P. Chidambaram and the Planning Commission shortly.

"Sikkim should not be compared with other states in terms of release of central funds as the former came to the mainstream 28 years later than any other state," Mr. Chamling said.

Coming down heavily on his predecessor, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, Mr. Chamling said the former chief minister had taken loan from different financial institutions and the Centre to the tune of Rs. 342 crore against which the state has to pay an interest of Rs. 50 crore every year out of a central government budget provisioning of Rs. 150 crore.

In reply to a question, Mr. Chamling said his predecessor had been chargesheeted by the CBI in one case while investigations were on for nearly 12 years in some other cases.

He also castigated the former Sikkim chief minister for amassing huge public wealth and said a white paper in this regard had already been made public. He described Mr. Bhandari's charges of corruption against him as totally baseless.

Asked whether the border trade between India and China would start through Nathula Pass, Mr. Chamling replied that to the Centre in this regard. But so far trade has not started. Stating that Sikkim was dependent on central assistance.

Mr. Chamling, who met the West Bengal chief minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, during the course of his visit to the city, called the latter as one of the greatest statemen of the country and ranked him with Mahatma Gandhi and Bidhan Chandra Roy. ■



4 September 1996

## Sikkim seeks more central assistance

Chief Minister of Sikkim Pawan Kumar Chamling, is dissatisfied with the Central allocation of Rs. 150 crore for Sikkim. He thinks that for the State to function properly

as an integral part of the country. This allocation has to be increased.

“Sikkim is one of the most backward States of the country and it will be wrong to compare it with the others,” he said, at a meeting with the media here on Tuesday.

Chamling added that a reason for this state had entered the Indian union 28 years after Independence. Thus, the benefits from the initial 5-year plans has been bypassed.

Chamling met industrialists in Calcutta and earnestly requested them to invest in the hill State. But he was clear that Sikkim can “offer any incentive as the State itself is dependent on Central aid”.

As an afterthought he added that the real incentives that industrialists look forward to in today’s world-absence of labour problems, peace and a pollution-free atmosphere-are abundantly available in Sikkim.

Chamling also said that the previous Sikkim Sangram Parishad Government headed by Nar Bahadur Bhandari has taken loans of Rs 342 crore on which the State now has an annual interest burden of Rs. 50 crore.

Stating that “Bhandari, who was facing an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), had amassed huge wealth”, the Chief Minister said that the loans were taken from various financial institutions and the Central Government. It is very difficult for Sikkim, the smallest State in the country, to bear such a huge interest burden every year.

Asked if he would request the Centre for a waiver on the loan, the Chief Minister said that he had informed the Union Finance Minister, P Chidambaram, and the Planning Commission faced by the tiny State. Now it is for the Central Government to take a decision. ■

## The Telegraph

4 September 1996

### Chamling sees idol in Basu

Calcutta, Sept. 3: The Sikkim chief minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, wishes he could be an eloquent statesman and a good human being like Mr. Jyoti Basu, instead of just another seasoned politician and head of government.

Speaking at Calcutta Press Club today, Mr. Chamling avoided queries on “delicate” subjects. He said he wanted posterity to remember him along with the likes of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B. C. Roy.

He chastened a reporter for addressing him as “honourable” chief minister. “At a programme a few months back, I was referred to as “Paramadarniya.” Who respects Prime Ministers and chief ministers? Besides, I am only a humble servant of the people, who are the real

kings,” he said.

Mr Chamling said he called on Mr. Basu to seek his blessings, and equated his talks with Mr. Basu with “a father’s exchange of views with his son.”

Mr Basu, however, was more forthcoming on the meeting of the two chief ministers. Referring to the talks while inaugurating the second bridge Number IV at Park Circus, he said Mr Chamling had suggested making Calcutta the economic gateway to the Northeast. “I assured him my government would do its best.”

Mr Basu said he would place the proposal before the Planning Commission on Thursday. The Centre should look into the matter, he added.

Asked if Mr. Basu wanted Mr. Chamling’s Sikkim Democratic Front to join the United Front government, he said: “Mr. Basu advised me to work for the people and be happy with what I am doing now.” Regulation of traffic between the two states on National Highway 31 figured in the discussions, he added.

The Sikkim chief minister did not divulge if the lone MP from the state would vote against the Centre in a “no confidence motion.”

Mr. Chamling had “nothing much” to say on Gorkhaland. It is for Mr. Basu to decide, he added.

Referring to his *bete noire* and predecessor, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, he said: “He has alleged my party is misappropriating Central funds. His charges are false.” He said Mr. Bhandari had taken a loan of Rs. 342 crore from various agencies, for which his government is coughing up annual interest of Rs. 50 crore, which Sikkim could scarcely afford. ■

## The Statesman

6 September 1996

### A SYMBOL OF EVIL

The one person the former Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, loves to hate is Mr Pawan Chamling. There is ample evidence in the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad mouthpiece - Sikkim Bolchha. Revived after 14 years to mount attacks on the ruling Sikkim Ministry as a “barefoot government”. The reason is simple. Mr. Bhandari is not reconciled to the fact that the man he dismissed from his Ministry now occupies Mintokgang, the official residence of the Chief Minister, with his amour-propre bruised and he himself reduced to political impotence - mudslinging is part of his game to detract attention from the ruling party’s achievements. The SDF has generally been ignoring them. What has brought Mr. Chamling to his feet is the accusation that he has amassed wealth far in excess of known incomes. Coming from Mr. Bhandari, who faces a CBI inquiry into corruption

charges, the allegation is unlikely to be taken at face value. But fearing that the stigma might stick, Mr. Chamling is overreacting, encouraging his detractor to further excesses.

However, in an interview to this newspaper, Mr Chamling sees Mr. Bhandari in different light. He no longer considers him enemy number one, raising the question "What worth is an enemy who has no issue, no ideology, no values, no morals ?" He is not entirely wrong in arguing that Mr. Bhandari has become a "symbol of evil, as the people will not forget him in a hurry". Mr. Chamling has promised to free the State of corruption. One thing is certain: unless he shakes up the Power Department, where the "Bhandari culture" is said to prevail, he should be prepared for a shock. ■

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 September 1996

# New industrial policy for Sikkim

Calcutta, Sept.5. Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling says that the State would have a new industrial policy from October 1, Providing a number of attractive incentives for industries set up in some thrust areas including agro based units, hydel power, floriculture, fruit processing, animal husbandry and dairy products, electronics and software and tea. The State, which has some unique tourist spots, will also give tourism the status of an industry with all concomitant benefits, he added.

In an exclusive interview to *The Hindustan Times*, Mr Chamling disclosed that being one of the least industrially developed states despite having a rich untapped potential of forest and mineral resources, Sikkim "would endeavour for achieving the twin objective of speedy industrial development and for generation of adequate employment opportunities. With merely 225 registered industrial units functioning properly in this economically weak State with a population of 4.6 lakh (90 per cent of whom live in villages) living only on 20 per cent of the total area that is habitable there is acute need for agro and forestry based and tourism related industries which can provide employment opportunities to a large number of unskilled job seekers, he pointed out.

The Chief Minister went onto say that creation of processing facilities and value addition to such abundantly produced goods and items like large cardamom, ginger fruits, exotic flowers, honey and tea can be of immense benefit to the State as these have already found lucrative markets in the Middle East, Pakistan and Singapore. Enterprising businessmen who take out the goods in raw

form from Sikkim and undertake the imperative value addition outside the State are earning very large margins. The absence of a profitable marketing network is also causing huge losses with regard to agro based and dairy products, he lamented.

Mr. Chamling revealed while an additional 5 per cent subsidy would be given to industries set up in thrust areas after commencement of production, subsidies on capital investments for tiny, small scale and medium large units would vary from 15 to 5 per cent. There would also be provisions for State subsidies on interest on working capital besides state and central tax exemptions upto 7 years. Special substantial subsidies of upto 30 per cent would also be provided towards the cost of transformer power line and on captive power generation. Exemption would also be given in payment of security deposits in respect of tenders for purchased by Sikkim Government departments, he stated.

The Chief Minister, being fully conscious of the fact that only a vast improvement of the State's infrastructural facilities can create a conducive climate for speedy industrial and economic development, has taken up in right earnest certain projects including the construction of an airstrip near the capital, Gangtok, at a cost of Rs 30 crore with the Central Government's assistance.

The cash strapped State would also soon begin efforts for privatisation of as many loss making State units as possible while at the same time thoroughly revamping the Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation. A new statutory body, the Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation, will be set up for the development of infrastructural projects on priority basis, he said.

The Chief Minister himself would head a high-powered Sikkim 'investment promotion committee' which will undertake projects worth more than Rs. 75 lakh for speedy clearance and time bound implementation, he said. ■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

7 September 1996

### CHAMLING MEETS BASU IN CALCUTTA

## Road links with WB to improve

### CM DENOUNCES DARJEELING- SIKKIM MERGER MOVES

Observer News service

Calcutta: *The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has asked the West Bengal Government to take up the con-*



*struction of the Kurseong-Darjeeling-Singla -Naya Bazar-Jorethang road to facilitate an alternative route to Sikkim.*

The Chief Minister, who left Sikkim on Sunday for a three-day visit to West Bengal, called on the Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, at his Lake residence here and impressed him on this matter. The Central Government had earlier sanctioned a sum of Rs. 10 crores for this purpose, it is learnt.

At the meeting, Mr. Chamling is said to have discussed with his counterpart the necessity of keeping the 31-A National Highway open during strikes and bandhs in North Bengal and Darjeeling district. According to an official release, Mr Chamling, pointed out that apart from the bandhs, the highway which is the lifeline of Sikkim with the rest of the country, was also susceptible to damages like landslides and forced closure during monsoons. The Chief Minister also discussed opening of another route to pass through Melli-Teesta via Champa bridge. He is said to have given a proposal for construction of a bridge over the Rangeet river at Champa and also suggested that the cost be shared by two States Government. Mr. Chamling added that the State Road and Bridges Department had already written to the West Bengal Public Works Department in relation to the construction of this route. Mr. Basu has promised to convene a Secretarial level meet to discuss about the construction of this route.

The two Chief Minister discussed about imparting training to State and Government officials, Panchayats, Cooperative Inspectors at various training institutes in West Bengal. They also discussed about the loss of revenue at both the State Governments due to tax evasion and have decided to rationalise sales tax and other taxes to curtail the evasion. In order to develop certain infrastructure to boost tourism in the two States, Mr. Chamling, suggested that the two Government join hands in promoting and projecting tourist destinations within Sikkim and West Bengal under one package. The Chief Ministers, initiated dialogues to solve mutual problems and decided to have greater interaction between the two States primarily for promotion of trade and business opportunities.

While talking to newsmen, Mr. Chamling hinted on adapting old laws of the State in keeping with the present liberalisation policy that is prevalent elsewhere in the nation. Agro-based industries, cottage industries, electronic goods and jewellery production will flourish the most and there is a lot of scope for this business in the State, he told the gathered newsmen. The Rangpo, Singtam, Melli and Jorethang areas along the national and State highway have been earmarked as the industrial belt of the State, he added.

Mr. Chamling, who is on his maiden visit to West Bengal, is accompanied by Mrs. Chamling, the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. P. T. Lucksom, Lok Sabha MP, Mr, Bhim

Dahal, Political Advisor to the Chief Minister, Mr B.B.Gooroong, Chairmam, STCS, Mr. Bhojraj Rai and the Secretary to the Chief Minister, Mr. P. T. Gyatso. Mr. Chamling also called on Mother Teresa at Woodland Nursing home on Monday. Mother Teresa, who has been ailing from cardiac problems, has been undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit of the nursing home. The Chief Minister, conveyed best wishes and prayer for the speedy recovery of Mother on behalf of the people of Sikkim.

Talking to newsmen at the Calcutta Press Club on Tuesday, Mr. Chamling said Sikkim would have nothing to do with the demand for a separate Gorkhaland State being raised by the hill-based political parties in Darjeeling district. He said the issue rested with the people of Darjeeling, West Bengal Government and the Centre with Sikkim having no role in this regard. He is also said to have conveyed this message to Mr. Basu and Mr. Buddhadev Bhattacharya, the West Bengal Home Minister.

Mr. Chamling also dismissed the recent statement reportedly made by the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, as 'rantings of a man from political limbo'. Mr. Bhandari is said to have met the Gorkha National Liberation Front Chief Mr. Subash Ghising recently and held talks on the merger of Darjeeling hills with Sikkim, which generated speculation in local political circles. Mr. Chamling said, "The concept is absurd and the question does not arise."

**THE  PIONEER**

13 September 1996

## *Debt trap hampers Sikkim growth*

*S Ray*

SIKKIM IS in the throes of a debt trap and Chief Minister. Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, blames the erstwhile Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government squarely for the Rs 342-crore debt burden.

This imposes an annual debt servicing obligation of Rs 48.45 crore on the state, which places Sikkim in dire straits.

Considering the development of a gulf between the backward people of the state and the mainstream of the country, there is an enormous amount of work to be done with very meagre funds.

Sikkim annually receives Rs 150 crore from the centre, mainly under plan heads. The net receivable, given the Rs 48.45-crore forced outflow comes down to a partly Rs 100 crore, which is hardly sufficient to meet the development needs of the hilly state.

Sikkim's development endeavour is seriously hindered by the hangover of this debt trap, according to Mr. Chamling. "Nevertheless we are continuing with our development programme", he said.

Of the total loan of Rs 341.48 crore, a sum of Rs 117.03 crore was received from financial institutions such as the Life Insurance Corporation of India (Rs 3.62 crore in 1976-77), General Insurance Corporation (Rs 1.22 crore in 1978-79), National Insurance Corporation (Rs 98 lakhs in 1981-82), Rural Electrification Corporation Rs 34.43 crore in 1980-81), National Co-operative, Development Corporation (Rs 1.48 crore in 1983-84) and Power Finance Corporation (Rs 12.50 crore in 1989-90).

The state also borrowed Rs 62.80 crore from the market in 1989-90. This has accounted for an annual debt servicing amount of Rs 16.68 crore.

Besides, Sikkim took a larger loan of Rs 167.66 crore from the government of India under different heads, imposing an annual payment obligation of Rs 19.96 crore.

Of these, the major ones under the aegis of the Ninth Finance Commission (consolidated loan) amounted to Rs 28.59 crore, while there was another consolidated loan of Rs 17.91 crore. Besides, there was a Rs 30.08 crore loan from the small savings and another block loan of Rs 73.51 crore.

The use to which these funds were placed is suspect, because Sikkim continues to be among the most backward states. More than 70 per cent of the Sikkimes live below the subsistence level.

The Sikkim Sangram Parishad regime, under Mr Bhandari, kept thousands of impecunious people out of sight, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front alleges.

To set the balance right, the SDF government has earmarked 70 per cent of total outlay for the development of rural areas which are particularly backward in Sikkim.

Among the steps adopted are increase of daily wages by 100 percent at Rs 55. Besides, Mr Chamling's government will focus on education at the grassroots level with free uniform, text books and exercise books to every student up to class v.

Alongside, every landless house-hold will be given half-an-acre of land for farming, quite a large number of whom having already got the rights.

"It is a fact, that even after two decades of accession of Sikkim into the Indian Union, the average Sikkimese is to be in the national mainstream. Economic under-development is one of the main reasons. Our government and the SDF have taken upon itself the task of accomplishing this", Mr Chamling said.

*ARG Syndication*

NORTH EAST  
**SUN**

15-30 September 1996

## Chamling's Reply To Bhandari

**Sikkim: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling gives the former CM Nar Bahadur Bhandari a dose of his own medicine in reply to the latter's corruption charges against the former.**

The Charges that I have built palatial buildings worth lakhs of rupees in different parts of the State are not only untrue but are the product of his wild figment of imagination.

I was a 1st class contractor for about 10 years before I was elected as a member of Legislative Assembly in 1985. Whatever property or assets I have acquired are out of my income from contracts as well as my ancestral property. I lay emphasis that I have not added even a brick after assuming the charge of Chief Minister.

With regard to the so-called allegation that I have increased the Chief Minister's discretionary fund from Rs. 1.5 lakh per year to Rs. 25.00 lakh a year is correct. Though Mr. Bhandari had fixed the limit to Rs. 1.5 lakh per year but he never spent less than Rs. 15 to 20 lakh per year. I have disciplined myself by raising the limit to Rs. 25 lakh per year taking into consideration inflationary measures and the value of money in today's context and I have always bound myself down to Rs. 25 lakh. Not a single penny has been distributed amongst my supporters and that every penny has been spent towards the genuine need of the poor to take care of their medical expenses and the expenses which were required to meet their urgent needs arising out of natural calamity, such as excessive rain, drought, etc.

That it is wrong to allege that I have donated Rs. 20.00 lakh to the policemen and my supporters. The fact is that I contributed a sum of Rs. 5.00 lakh towards the Sikkim Armed Police Welfare Fund. I have not contributed even a penny to any individual police personnel.

The allegation that I have spent lakhs of rupees on liquor and tea leaves is not only baseless but preposterous. I am a teetotalter and I have prohibited serving of drinks in all Government functions either in Sikkim or in Sikkim House, New Delhi.

On the contrary during Shri Bhandari's regime liquor used to flow like water in Mintokgang and Sikkim House, New Delhi. Mr. Bhandari is a fashionable drinker and only loved scotch whiskies. To substantiate this point it is to be stated that my Government has cleared a pending bill of

Rs. 72 lakh of which cost of P. T.C. India alone is Rs. 24, 59,24/- on drinks, besides clearing hotel bill of Rs. 4,14,851/- and for Temi Tea of Rs. 2,71,684/-.

Lastly the allegation is that a sum of Rs. 14.00 crore set aside for Rural Development Programme under J.R.Y. was misappropriated. There is not an iota of truth in this allegation and every penny has been spent for the project only.

My Government has taken many public welfare schemes such as distribution of free text and exercise books and uniforms to the children below poverty line, free distribution of ginger and potatoe seeds, milch cows, piglets, etc. which have completely unnerved Mr. Bhandari and finding no way out to take on me and my Government on issue based politics has resorted to hurling abuses on me and popular Govt.

The index of the conduct of my Government lies in the last Parliamentary election where Mr. Bhandari himself being the candidate for the S.S.P. almost drew a flak in almost all 32 assembly segments inasmuch as Mr. Bhandari was mauled badly in his own assembly constituency namely Soreng (West Sikkim)

The people being the sole judge of the efficiency of the Government ultimately decided my Government's fate as well as Mr. Bhandari's and having full faith in the wisdom of the people, I have it to the people of this State to come to their own logical conclusion.■

## *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

1 October 1996

### **They also served - and prospered**

"They drive in Ranipool at nightfall, carrying copies of the entries and orders and conspire to destabilise my government. But they will not succeed." Bhandari's successor, Pawan Kumar Chamling, told The Indian Express in Gangtok recently. "They are planning to raise communal and casteist bogeys. But that will lead to bloodshed," adds as aide to the Chief Minister.

While Bhandari acquired property, floated companies and generally prospered at the cost of the exchequer, he had company in his Cabinet and bureaucracy.

So when Bhandari visited Kathmandu between May 30 to June 12, 1991, supposedly for medical treatment, his minions, who included a secretary, also had it good at State expense. Bhandari's travel bill amounted to Rs3,40,971.25, as against his tour advance of Rs300,000. Hardly surprising if just he telephone call by him from Kathmandu's Hotel Yak and Yeti to a Gangtok number -22859 - lasted 87 minutes and cost him - or the State- Rs.4,371. His unpaid

enter-tainment bills with the Sikkim Breweries provide yet another clue to his taste for the good thing of life.

But he was not alone. At least five ministerial colleagues took a leaf out of his book and went on building sprees in Gangtok, among other Sikkim towns. One of the lesser worthies built as many as 10 buildings, three of these in Gangtok, in the space of two years.

Another's mansion at the 6th Mile near Gangtok is no less a wonder than Bhandari's Ranipool palace. This former minister registered seven sites in and around the capital town in his own name and in the names of his relatives.

Another minister got himself a loan of Rs 17 lakh from the Sikkim Industrial Development Corporation when he was Industry Minister. Yet another's new multi-storeyed house close to the diesel power house is said to have cost Rs. 2 crore.

Of the worthies in the bureaucracy, the most notables was the one who reached the top but later got the sack. His possessions include two buildings at Sichey Bustee, Gangtok, two buildings in Siliguri in West Bengal, one flat in Bombay in the same of his daughter and another in his native village of Soreng. Yet another official headed the State Bank of Sikkim for some time and is believed to be worth several crore.

Up against a bureaucracy which made hay while Bhandari shone and which has not accepted the people's mandate to throw out their mentor, the Chamling government has had a difficult time over the past 22 months. His government has been able to initiate vigilance cases against only two secretaries and three other officers. But the most powerful of the bureaucrats, who has now become a rallying point for Bhandari loyalists, remains firmly in the saddle in his department in which he has been the secretary for the past 13 years.

Chamling knows he will have to strike soon if he wants to make a difference to the State.■

## **Himalayan** **Guardian**

2 October 1996

### **Talks held on release of army land**

GANGTOK : Talks between the Union Minister of State for defence, Mr N.V.M Somu, and the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, last Friday, were ironically spurred more by economics than defence. In line with his plans of taking Sikkim to higher economic achievement the Chief Minister discussed issues on which the Minister of State could help Sikkim in this respect. Return of land acquisitioned by the army at Bhusuk and Chandmari figured prominently during last week's meeting.

According to an official Press release, Mr Chamling urged the Minister of State to return the land in question to the State Government which requires them for extension of Gangtok town and other economic activities. The Chief Minister pointed out that the land not been utilised by the army for nearly twenty years since it was acquired from the State Government and added that its release "would be a great boon for the people of Sikkim".

The State's prospects in tourism also figured during the meeting when Mr Chamling requested the Minister of State to direct the armed personnel stationed here to restrain tourist movement in restricted areas in such a manner that the locals don't resent army presence there. The Chief Minister called for a softer approach from the army so as not to harm the tourism prospects of the State.

The release further added that the Chief Minister stressed the need to shift the bulk petroleum installation at Deorali. The growing rate at which people were setting around the installation was making the area hazardous, the Chief Minister is reported to have stated.

Mr Somu is learnt to have taken the points raised by the Chief Minister well and assured that he would depute a Joint Secretary of his Ministry to Gangtok next month to hold official level talks with the State Government on these issues. Senior army officers present during the meeting also assured the Chief Minister that the army always endeavoured to maintain the best of relations with the civilians. They also informed Mr Chamling that alternative arrangements on the relocation of the bulk petroleum installation were already under way and would be completed within two years.

## The Statesman

10 October 1996

# Sikkim medical scam to be probed

**EQUIPMENT WORTH RS 3  
CRORE LIES UNUSED**

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GANGTOK, Oct. 9- Investigation into the alleged multi-crore scandal in the State Health Department here is likely to take a new turn with the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, taking a firm stand on exposing those involved in the dubious deal.

During the recent Budget session, Mr Chamling told the Assembly that "gross irregularities" were committed by the previous Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government over the purchase of medical equipment worth about Rs 3 crore.

He said the matter was being investigated by the Vigilance Department.

Replying to a question in the House, the Health Minister, Dr D.P.Kharel, said the irregularities confirmed earlier report that medical equipment purchased the Health Department was lying in the local Government hospital. Dr. Kharel said that due to lack of basic infrastructure and skilled manpower, this equipment was not being used.

The Health Department purchased the equipment from a U.K. firm, Health Care Equipment and Supplies. The Department was supposed to pay for this over a seven-year period, at an interest of eight per cent per annum.

The equipment was meant to be used at the multi-crore, 500-bed Central Referral Hospital (CRH) at Tadong, located below Gangtok. Till such time as the hospital was completed, the sophisticated equipment was to be used at the Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial (STNM) Hospital.

It is learnt that some of the equipment has already become obsolete. The CRH, whose construction is estimated to cost Rs 22.7 crore, is nowhere near completion. The Health Department expected the hospital to be completed by 1994, but at the current rate of progress, it will take another two years to be constructed.

The original contractors, Larsen and Toubro, which had undertaken the construction, have reportedly pulled out of the project. The work is now being looked after by the Manipal Pai Foundation. Officials say the foundation's president, Mr Ramdas M. Pai, is likely to arrive here any day for talks on the construction work with the State Government.

According to the agreement signed between the State Government and the Manipal Education and Medical Group of Karnataka on March 12, 1992, a provision of Rs 8 crore has been made for procuring medical equipment.

Critics feel that purchase of medical equipment worth Rs 3 crore in advance by the Health Department is unnecessary in the light of the Rs 8-crore provision made with the Manipal Group.

The former Chief Secretary of the Sikkim Government, Mr Sonam Wangdi, had advised against the procurement of medical equipment from a foreign company in 1990 when he was the Development Commissioner. Mr Wangdi contended that the equipment, if purchased in advance, "may become obsolete by the time the building is completed."

However, the then Chief Minister, Mr Bhandari, brushed aside Mr Wangdi's objections.

Four days later, the Cabinet decided on May 30, 1990, that "the State Government intends to procure the required equipment well in advance and use it in the STNM Hospital, to be shifted to the CRH, to enable it to start functioning immediately on completion of construction, which is likely to take three or four years."

In 1993, Mr Chamling, as president of the Opposition Sikkim Democratic Front, had submitted a memorandum



to the former Union Minister of State for Internal Security, Mr Rajesh Pilot. In the Memorandum dated July 14, 1993, Mr Chamling alleged that irregularities amounting to Rs 10 crore had been committed.

The memorandum alleged: "The full complement of equipment as given in the proforma invoice has not been supplied and those that have been supplied are either second-hand or obsolete models purchased in Delhi" by a regular medical equipment supplier to the State Government.

The memorandum further alleged that the Bhandari Government had tried to purchase medical equipment worth Rs 28 crore for the Namchi Hospital in south Sikkim.

Interestingly, the former Chief Secretary, Mr K.A. Varadan, who retired recently, ensured that the Foundation was not bound to the Rs 5-crore bank guarantee commitment made to the Government by the Foundation on construction of the 500-bedded hospital.

A six-page bank guarantee, drawn between the State Government and the Foundation with the Lord Krishna Bank Ltd, states that the bank would pay the State Government a sum of Rs 5 crore "against any loss or damage caused to or suffered by..the Government by reason of any breach by the said Trust(Manipal Foundation)of any of the terms of condition contained in the said agreement.



15 October 1996

## Chamling ridicules Bhandari

**Sikkim: Though CM Pawan Chamling denies N. B. Bhandari's allegations against him, he still has to prove his worth.**

Accusations and counter accusations are the order of the present day politics and Sikkim is no exception. The political scenario of this tiny Himalayan State at the moment is witnessing verba! duel as Chief minister Pawan Chamling and former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari are at loggerheads and are washing their dirty linen in public.

"Bhandari, himself in the CBI net, is trying to malign me and my Government by falsely accusing me to have misappropriated public funds", Mr. Chamling told N.E. Sun. "However, after becoming the Chief Minister, I have not purchased a single brick to construct my house. Everybody knows that I have built a house at Namchi out of the money that I earned as a first class government contractor before joining politics", he said. He strongly refuted all the allegations levelled by Mr. Bhandari.

Soon after assuming the office of Chief Minister, Mr.

Chamling declared the austerity measures in all the departments and urged for the financial discipline. Himself a teetotaler, he banned use of alcohol in all official functions of the State and declared home for homeless and poorest section of social distributed Rs. 10,000 each to 6000 families with women member as the head of the family and diverted 80 per cent of total State budget from Plan outlay for the development of village, a laudable step taken by the Government for the first time in the State which even his hardcore critics appreciated. Besides these, he initiated many development schemes for the benefit of the poor people at the grass-root level.

But despite all these there are some lapses one can see in the administration. There is urgent need to revamp and streamline the administration in order to effectively and administratively translate all his words and decisions into actions. The general feeling during his crucial 20-month regime is that something is wrong in the administration as his all plans and schemes are not being properly implemented or not reaching to the needy in many cases. In the distribution of funds for the construction of houses to the poor family too, some genuine families could not avail the facility. It is alleged by the Opposition that by means of misrepresentation, some well-to-do families also took the benefit. "The Chief Minister and the party president is all in all" theory may still jeopardise Mr. Chamling's ideology and socialistic approach in many respects. Hence, he must not accept the theory of "everything is right and C.M. must not worry about it" like his predecessors. The rank and file is finding it tough time to get the work done in time because of red-tapism and bureaucratic style of functioning in various Government departments on one hand and there is the criticism of the role of some ministers on the other hand who seem to have least concern for the problems of the people. Some time ago, Mr. Chamling strongly directed the Ministers, MLAs and Panchayats to respond positively and take active participation for the development of the people at grass-root level.

Like in other states, unemployment problem in Sikkim is rising at an alarming rate and the Government is finding it an upheaval task to cope with this problem. Every day, the department receives hundreds of applications seeking employment despite the display of notice board written "No Vacancy" in front of the office. An organisation under the banner of Sikkim Unemployed Educated Youths Association is recently formed which is posing threat to the state administration when it recently filed a writ petition in the court challenging the State Government's decision to reinstate four officers who had joined politics and participated in the last assembly election after duly resigning from the service.

However, in the changing scenario of Sikkim, after the regime of Mr. Bhandari who ruled for almost 14 years, an era of radical changes in the social and administrative sep-

up has ushered in. Despite heavy odds, his 20 months old Government has shown signs of hopes. There is general opinion among the people that at least at this juncture the charge of corruption against him and the SDF Government does not seem credible, when it comes from former Chief Minister, Mr. Bhandari who was defeated with a big margin in the last parliamentary election. And who is also accused of amassing the wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income is under trial of CBI. There is widespread condemnation of the charges leveled by Mr. Bhandari.

The SDF Government is in the power for 20 months only and a lot of activities have yet to be seen and judged by the people. "The rumours of toppling the SDF Government and Mr. Bhandari allegedly hatching the conspiracy are always there, but Mr. Chamling claims to be fully dedicated and determined by giving top priority to the service of the people. He says, "I may die but I never mistrust the poor and during my term, I shall leave no stone unturned to give them justice." ■

## People's Review

21 November 1996

### Chamling leadership in Sikkim

by Pushpa Raj Pradhan

Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim, India and Chairman of the Sikkim Democratic Front holds 20 seats out of 26 seats in the Parliament. Remaining 3 seats go to the Sikkim Shangram Parishad led by Narbahadur Bhandari and 3 seats to the Congress I party.

The general election held on 12 December, 1994, badly defeated NB Bhandari and had empowered Chamling as the Chief Minister of Sikkim.

Chamling a thorough gentle and straight-forward person, however, doesn't know any political conspiracy and he is a popular leader among the lower class of society.

Luckily, those people suppressed and jailed by the then chief minister, are now appreciating and supporting Chamling.

They praise the Sikkim United Front saying that the present government has reestablished democracy in Sikkim. The lower class of people are happy with the government because of the present leadership is dedicated for the economic, educational and cultural development of Sikkim. Chamling's populist programme of reducing unnecessary expenses of the government and reducing loan burden taken by the then government have been highly appreciated by local people.

Chamling's programme to eliminate poverty has also

been appreciated. People will get cattle, ginger seeds etc. for farming and generate income from that. Besides, the government is providing land and cash to the landless and homeless for them to construct a house.

With the purpose of empowering the people with education the government is providing free education with tiffin and school dress to the students from class 1 up to class 5. Every student from six upto 12 classes get stipend worth 200 rupees per month.

Those students willing to get Master degree or Phd., will get 1500 as stipend per month.

When we asked a government official how the Chamling leadership is working in Sikkim, he replied, "This government is doing very good for the people and the country." Later on, he commented, "I doubt whether Chamling will remain the same, if he is reelected!" He gave a logic that NB Bhandari, who ruled for 14 years in Sikkim as a powerful CM was dedicated towards people and the state in his first term. He was a popular leader at that time and he was elected for the next term. His next term was a little different. He wanted to be a dictator after all. Corruption, nepotism and conspiracy against the citizen took place in Sikkim and there was a terror in the state. That is the result of Bhandari's defeat in 1994's general election.

Political observers say Bhandari is a clever politician, and thus, was continuously creating issues. Demand of recognising Nepalese language was one of those vital issues in which he made a tremendous success. The history of Sikkim won't forget his contribution for Sikkim and Indian Nepalese residing in Sikkim.

About Chamling, local observers express their view that he doesn't know conspiracy and cunning political strategies. He is very simple and straight forward. He has a real feeling of developing Sikkim and boosting economically upward the people of Sikkim.

So far, Chamling is facing difficulties for implementing his policy properly due to some sort of bureaucratic red tapism. Though, obviously, he has a strong support of the people which has become for NB Bhandari a hard thing to chew. ■

## THE PIONEER

21 December 1996

### Chamling against Central taxes

Anirudh Bhattacharyya

Though Sikkim has been a part of India for nearly 22 years, its Chief Minister has a problem with the central taxation laws being enforced in the State.

Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, who heads the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) Government, said he

disapproved of the central laws, especially the income tax laws.

He said Article 371 (F) of the Constitution made a provision "Wherein the old laws of Sikkim would be protected."

In the context, he said the Chogyals, the erstwhile rulers of the State, had specific income tax collection norms for the Sikkimese population and they should not be undermined.

"The Central Income Tax Act is not required here. Why double (what already exists)?," he said especially since the old laws were well within the parameters of the Constitution.

Mr. Chamling has already given a memorandum to Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda on this. But this time around he has come seeking greater Central assistance to the State given its "strategic status. The list of demands include, among other things, Rs. 3,000 crore for development, with focus on providing an airstrip at Pakyong, located 20 km from the State Capital of Gangtok (the nearest airport now is at Bagdogra in West Bengal); rail link; tapping of the hydro-electric potential; and accentuating industrialisation. The 13-page memorandum, containing the demands, was submitted to the Prime Minister on Thursday.

He had told West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu and State Home Minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya in Calcutta recently that he was for a statehood of Gorkhaland. He told the Pioneer Personally I feel that if Uttarakhand is being created, why not Gorkhaland? If the Centre has said it will form Uttarakhand, it is also its responsibility to see that Gorkhaland also comes into existence.

Also, having ruled a small State, he feels that smaller states are ".....easier to administer." Mr. Chamling also said he was not concerned with China disregarding Sikkim's status as an Indian State. He said: "I say in response that we are Indians." He also said he was concerned about the slow pace of investigations into the allegations of corruption against his bete noire and predecessor, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari. ■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

21 December 1996

*Sombre celebrations at Singtam takes*

*SDF into its third year in power*

### **Two Down, Three To Go**

**Gangtok:** *Although an estimated 10,000 people gathered at Singtam, east Sikkim, on Thursday to celebrate the completion of Sikkim Democratic Front's second year*

*in power, the festivities were notably sombre compared to the gaudy party meetings of the previous regimes. With party supporters from all over the State cheering him on, the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, presented a confident picture as he was flanked by his Cabinet colleagues, MLAs and senior party functionaries. The celebrations were well deserved since the party, when it first came into power in 1994, was given a maximum life-span of six-months by its detractors of which there were many.*

While there is no denying the fact that SDF was rather precariously poised when it came to power in 1994, it can be stated without contradiction that it stands on firm ground at present. Although the toppling figures quoted then are still the same, the past two years have confirmed that they remain but statistics. If anything, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front has only strengthened its position since then.

Despite some allegations on the contrary and the fact that its youth have at times taken undue benefit of their party being power, the various welfare schemes launched by the SDF in the past years have had a notable effect on the people. A clear indicator of this sway was made evident during the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year when a relatively green SDF candidate, Mr. Bhim Dahal, trounced the veteran Mr. N. B. Bhandari to the lone Lok Sabha seat for Sikkim.

In fact, SDF's appeal lies essentially with the rural and poorer folk of Sikkim and the Chief Minister was quick to address them yet again during the anniversary celebrations. He reiterated that "the most cherished dream" of the SDF Government was to "ensure that every Sikkimese has a roof over his head, clothes to cover his body, and square meals for his family." Amidst cheers from the crowd, he further committed himself to continue with the land for landless, and housing loan schemes for the poor and downtrodden of the State.

Mr. Chamling further assured the people of providing a clean administration in Sikkim so that the genuine problems of the people don't go unheard and the welfare schemes percolate to the grassroots.

While promising that he would endeavour to extract a commitment from the Centre on the long-ignored and genuine demands of the Sikkimese, the Chief Minister guaranteed the Sikkimese of a place in society where they could "live with honour and dignity." It might be added here that Mr. Chamling was scheduled to leave for Delhi on Friday. He is expected to meet with the Prime Minister, Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda, and some important Union Ministers during his stay there.

Mr. Chamling also alluded to the most serious concern among the locals regarding their legal protection. He said the Government was presently undertaking a state-wide census to determine the number of permanent settlers in

the State to facilitate the Government to frame policies which would ensure protection for every local. ■

## **Chamling accuses M. K. Subba of trying to violate Revenue Order No. 1**

**By a Staff Reporter**

Singtam: The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, accused the lottery baron and Assam MLA, Mr. Mani Kumar Subba, of attempting to violate the Revenue Order No. 1, which disallows sale of Bhutia-Lepcha land in Sikkim to other communities. At a massive public meeting held at Singtam on Thursday to celebrate the completion of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front's second year in power, Mr. Chamling minced no words as he lashed out against Mr. Subba accusing him of "hatching" plans to purchase BL land to build a hotel in Gantok.

While assuring the 10,000 strong gathering that the Revenue Order No. 1 will not be violated till the time that he was in power, Mr. Chamling accused Mr. Subba of having no principles in trying to force through such a violation.

Mr. Chamling maintained that Mr. Subba, in connivance with a section of Opposition leaders of the State, had laid elaborate plans to try and dislodge his party from power. This, he added, was an attempt to facilitate his acquisition of tribal land once the leaders he financed managed to wrangle control in the State. These plans, Mr. Chamling said, had failed to materialise, but were no guarantee that Mr. Subba would not try the "trick" again.

It was while warning the people of the handiwork of a section of leaders "out of power" that the Chief Minister urged them not to fall for the constant spate of rumours circulated by these leaders and their "henchmen" Mr. Chamling's allegations sound relevant when viewed in the light of some recent developments in the State. Rumours of the SDF Government trying to evict Nepali labourers from the State had so worried the community that they sought an appointment with the Chief Minister recently. During this meeting, Mr. Chamling is reported to have assured them that the Government had no such plans.

Similarly, as reports of a "toppling bid" started filtering in, the situation in the capital was tense with both civic and administrative wings of the government threatening to rebel. First there was the taxi drivers strike and then there was the distinct possibility of State Civil Services offers launching a protest in support of their demands.

Although the situation soon reverted to normal, there is ample to suggest that both the development were essentially fuelled from the out side with a not so tacit support of some local politicians. ■

## **CM holds talks with Dandavate on special economic package for Sikkim**

Gangtok: The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, who is presently in New Delhi is reported to have met with the Deputy Chairman, National Planning Commission, Mr. Madhu Dandavate, and held detailed talks with him on the State Government's proposal for a Rs. 2,000 crore Special Economic Package for Sikkim.

According to an official Press release. The Chief Minister called on the Deputy Chairman on Wednesday and held talks on various demands raised by the State. It might be mentioned here that the Chief Minister is also expected to submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Mr. H. D. Gowda, outlining the Nations demands of the State from a Rs. 2,000 crore Special Economic Package for Sikkim to Rs. 71 crores more for next year's Plan Outlay to a Rs. 20 crores Central assistance for flood control. Mr. Chamling's meeting with the Deputy Chairman is expected to lay the ground work for a favourable response from the Centre to these demands.

Mr. Chamling is reported have urged the Deputy Chairman to include Sikkim in the terms of reference of the high-level expert committee appointed by the Prime Minister to examine the developmental aspects of the seven northeastern States in the Ninth Plan.

While explaining the importance of a positive response from the Centre to their demands, Mr. Chamling urged the Deputy Chairman to give the proposals his personal consideration and also advise the Prime Minister to announce a package of measures for Sikkim soon.

Mr. Dandavate is reported to have assured the Chief Minister of full cooperation from his side and also informed him that the State's proposal for flood control, which was presently being examined by the Planning Commission and Ministry of Water Resources, was likely to be cleared soon. ■

## **Singtam-Gangtok ropeway soon**

New Delhi : The Ministry of Railways will soon be conducting a survey work to look into the possibility of constructing a ropeway from Singtam to Gangtok the Minister of State for Railways. Mr. Satpal Maharaj informed Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling during their meeting held at the Rail Bhavan here on Wednesday.

The Minister of State further assured Mr. Chamling that the rail-link. He is reported to have informed the Chief Minister that the survey for the rail-link up to Ghaelkhola had already been taken up and that further survey work for rail connection from Ghelkhola to Singtam will be taken up in due course of time" Mr. Satpal further assured the Chief Minister that the Railway Protection Force recruitment in Sikkim will be taken up soon an that locals will be given first preference in the recruitment drive. ■



## SDF consolidated its position in '96

Gangtok: The completion of two years in rule by the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) government and the consolidation of its position in the state assembly was the main political development, in Sikkim during the year gone by.

The fledgling SDF, which came to power in 1994, completed its second year in office on December 14 last. While speaking at a rally organised at Singtam on the occasion, chief minister and party president Pawan Kumar Chamling said his government would carry on the pro-poor policies.

The ruling party got a shot in the arm when its nominee Bhim Prasad Dahal trounced his nearest rival Nar Bahadur Bhandari of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad by over 82,000 votes in a multi-corner contest to win the May 8 election to the only Lok Sabha seat for Sikkim.

The Sikkim Democratic Front further consolidated its position during the year when six former Sikkim Sangram Parishad MLAs formally joined its ranks. In a House of 32, the ruling party's strength has now gone up to 25. Earlier, the MLAs-Ram Lepcha, Thutop Bhutia, Dorjee Tshering Lepcha, Menlom Lepcha, Tseten Tashi and Rinzing Ongmu-had been declared as an unattached group by Speaker Chakra Bahadur Subba and allotted separate seats in the House.

Moreover, the Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee general secretary Damber Basnet and around 100 Pradesh Mahila Congress workers led by its president Diki Choden also joined the ruling party.

A notable feature of the year was the visit of several dignitaries to the state. Among them were vice-president K. R. Narayanan, Union minister of state for defence NVN Sohu, Union cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian and Maharashtra deputy chief minister Gopinath Munde.

Mr. Chamling urged the central leaders to meet the long standing demands of Sikkim like bringing it on the air map of the country and constructing a rail headquarter and an alternate highway. Mr. Munde, during his parleys with Mr. Chamling, expressed his state's willingness to undertake joint venture with Sikkim in power and tourism sector.

A change of guard was effected in the Raj Bhavan here during the year with veteran parliamentarian Chaudhury Randhir Singh succeeding K. V. Raghunath Reddy as the governor. ■

## Chamling seeks Rs. 3000-cr. package for Sikkim

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI: Dec. 25 - The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling has submitted a memorandum to Mr H. D. Deve Gowda demanding a Rs. 3,000-crore special economic package for development work in the State.

Mr. Chamling who returned here today after an eight-day visit to Delhi, said besides the special package he has requested an additional Rs. 71 crore in the State Budget for the next financial year and Rs. 22 crore for flood control in Sikkim.

The Chief Minister said he had received a positive response from the Prime Minister, who he said, will announce the package during his visit to Gangtok after January 26.

His Government will emphasize on available natural resources to encourage industry in the State, Mr. Chamling said.

While power, tourism and agro-based industries have been earmarked for this purpose, priority should be given to establishing air and rail links, he said. Mr. Chamling hoped that work will soon begin on the proposed rail link between New Jalpaiguri and Gantok as had been announced by the Railway minister. The Chief Minister said a number of NRI businessmen had expressed interest in investing in Sikkim provided communication facilities improved.

Speaking on the Gorkhaland: "There is no reason to reject the Gorkhaland demand if Uttarakhand can become a reality." He had high regards for Mr. Jyoti Basu as a statesman, Mr. Chamling said, but differed with the West Bengal Chief Minister's views on the demand for a hill state. He, however, added that he did not wish to interfere in political matters of West Bengal.

Though his party, the Sikkim Democratic Front is yet to make its stand clear on the newly formed Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists, Mr. Chamling personally welcomed the formation of the new party. ■

## Chamling denies being disgraced at airport

SILIGURI, Dec. 25 - The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, today denied reports that he was stopped from entering the VIP lounge at Bagdogra airport on December 16 because his West Bengal counterpart, Mr. Jyoti Basu was present there.

Mr. Basu, who was in the town a day earlier, was leaving for Calcutta while Mr. Chamling had gone to the airport to receive the Tibetan spiritual leader, Dalai Lama.

Mr. Chamling said that he preferred to stay in the airport's general lounge with members of his family as the small VIP lounge was crowded. "It did not affect my dignity or my status. It was my duty to make space for a very senior leader like Mr. Jyoti Basu and I did it". he said. ■

## Himalayan Guardian

26 December 1996

CM leaves for Delhi

# CHAMLING TO DEMAND Rs.2,000 Crore Special Economic Package for Sikkim

Gangtok: *The State Government will be submitting a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding Rs. 2,000 crore Special Economic Package for Sikkim, the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, said before he left for New Delhi on Sunday.*

While divulging further details on the State Government's demand for a Special Economic Package, Mr. Chamling told *Himalayan Guardian* that the United Front Government at the Centre had already announced a similar package for the north eastern States and since Sikkim too had not received the desired central assistance for developmental activities, it was only natural that such a fund be set aside for it too. It might be recalled that a couple of months back a Rs. 6,100 crore economic package was announced for the seven hill-States in the North-East. Mr. Chamling maintained that Sikkim lagged behind other States of the Union by 28 years and had a lot to make up before it became a part of the main stream.

Although details on this Special Package are still sketch at the time being, it is expected to be formulated on the same lines as the package for North Eastern State with the funds earmarked for each developmental activity. Although the Chief Minister is also expected to attend a co-ordinating committee meeting to discuss the nationwide celebration of the country's 50th Independence Day celebrations, it appears that his present trip will focus primarily on lobbying for greater financial assistance from the Centre for Sikkim.

The Chief Minister disclosed that he would be meeting several Union Ministers during his tour to five day stay in Delhi and will also seek an additional Rs. 71 crores over this year's Plan Outlay for the annual budget for the forthcoming year.

Apart from the two demands mentioned above, the Chief Minister is also armed with a memorandum demanding Rs. 20 crores for flood control in the State. Mr. Chamling appears optimistic about getting a positive response from the Centre to all his demands and part of this attitude is justified as recently the Centre agreed to some of his earlier demands like a rail head for Sikkim at Ghel Khola near Singtam. The fact that the United Front Government has a soft corner for the north-eastern States is an added advantage since with the announcement of the economic package for the seven north-eastern States, Sikkim is the only State in the region left out without such a deal. ■

## The Statesman

6 January 1997

# Disappointed but determined

*Two years into the job, Sikkim's Chief Minister realizes the task of running the Government is a lot more arduous than he had assumed. There is a sense of disillusionment, which is faintly perceptible, but there is no question of throwing in the towel, he tells MARCUS DAM in an Interview.*

PAWAN CHAMLING will stop at nothing to clean up his Government, even if it entails a Cabinet reshuffle. Having completed two years in office, he admits there is a lack of sincerity among a few Ministers who have been found wanting when it comes to backing his efforts to live up to the expectations of the people.

Sikkim's Chief Minister realizes today that the task of running the Government is a lot more arduous than he thought when he assumed office. There is a sense of disillusionment, which is faintly perceptible, but there is no question of throwing in the towel. "The job at hand is formidable; yet the dreams are still alive."

In a no-holds-barred interview from Gangtok, Mr. Chamling confesses his disappointment with many who were close to him in the days preceding his assuming stewardship. They include "colleagues in Government, party" workers and even my supporters who have long remained steadfast". And then there is the bureaucracy" which, often, has been a stumbling block in my efforts to reform the administration", he ruefully adds.

His anxieties stem not only from a "non-cooperative

Opposition” but from a section within his own camp “which is less interested in serving the people and mainly preoccupied with making money, now that their own partymen are in the helm of power. This has been increasingly evident over the past two years - a major problem that has to be dealt with,” Mr Chamling says.

A cabinet reshuffle, the Chief Minister believes, could be one way to resolve the problem. “But what does one do with people long used to privileges at the cost of the public - a legacy carried over from more than a decade of the despotic rule of Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari (form Chief Minister and Mr Chamling’s mentor-turned-adversary)?” Mr Chamling wonders. “I am happy with my work; but my committment is sadly not reflected in the Cabinet.”

Mr Bhandari, Chief Minister for about 14 years, may now be down and out but his ghost still haunts officialdom. Mr Chamling agrees readily. The fact that the former Chief Minister’s party weilds little clout in the State Assembly and is in no position to pose any threat worth the name to the ruling Sikkim Democratic Party does not seem to change matters.

“Over the past two years a major difficulty in running the Government is having to contend with the collective psyche of the people shaped by the vices of the autocratic rule of Mr Bhandari,” Mr Chamling observes. “Wrongly acquired wealth, underhand dealings in the scramble for Government tenders, unchallenged corruption have all been the spinoffs to such a reign. Even those from my party succumb to such temptations. What is worse is that the expectations of those in power to grab these privileges remain as high as ever,” he adds.

There is resentment which often snowballs into brazen opposition when checks to these expectations are introduced. “Attempts to weed out corruption from the administration have caused heartburn within both the bureaucracy and technocracy. Scores of officials have been transferred over the past two years, a dozen belonging to the State’s Finance and Forest Departments have been suspended on charges of corruption. Nevertheless, the success rate in my drive against administrative malpractices is not as high as I would like it to be,” Mr Chamling regrets.

Soon after assuming power, the Chief Minister had promised a total revamp of both the civil and police administrations, steeped in casteism and heavily dependant on political patronage. Today, his critics point out that the much-vaunted changes have yet to be made. Mr Chamling ‘too’ now realizes discretion is the better part of valour.

“Ever since the times of the Chogyal, and more so during the tenures of the past Chief Ministers, higher-ups in Government have been used to extra-constitutional power. They are now pitted against me. The paranoia of a witchhunt is being perpetuated by certain vested interests. But yet, a shake-up is imperative,” the Chief Minister says.

The very small size of the Himalayan State has been

one reason “Why for so long Sikkim has been ignored by the Centre,” Mr Chamling points out. “We are yet to receive a response from New Delhi to our recent request for Rs 3,000 crore as special assistance; Central cooperation is not quite satisfactory,” he adds.

Moreoever, the liabilities inherited by his Government, of about Rs342 crores, is still to be wiped out, even though there has been a 20 per cent increase in the mobilization of State resources and the exhequer has earned Rs 30 crores after the austerity drive initiated by the authorities. A ban on the purchase of expensive carpets and curtains for State offices has been imposed. The number of vehicles allowed to Government Ministers and officials has been reduced and the serving of liquor at Government functions discontinued as part of the drive.

“Previous Chief Ministers had been used to travelling around in Toyotas and Mercedes Benzs. I have opted for the indigenous Maruti Gypsy. An example, after all, has to be set by someone,” says Mr Chamling. But more important is the business of Governance. “Even today, I still have much to learn.”■

# The Telegraph

13 January 1997

## NRI interest raises hopes of progress: Sikkim CM

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Bagdogra, Jan 12 : The Sikkim chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, today said he was pleased to see non-resident Indians (NRIs) and foreign investors taking keen interest in the Northeast.

He was speaking at the airport on his way back after attending the Confederation of Indian Industry partnership meet in Calcutta. He was one of the four chief minister invited to the meet.

Besides the chief minister of West Bengal and Sikkim, the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh attended the summit.

Commenting on development projects in Sikkim, Mr Chamling said a survey to construct an airstrip at Pakyong has been completed. The Planning Commission has promised Rs 100 crore for the project. A proposed toy train link between Siliguri and Gangtok is also in the offing.

The chief minister, who was accompanied by several members of his party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, is scheduled to visit New Delhi on Wednesday.

The Centre has promised Sikkim an aid of Rs 3,000 crore, said some SDF members.

Power, health, education and tourism are the thrust areas earmarked for infrastructural development and capital investment, they said.

Mr Chamling said he will urge the Prime Minister, Mr H.D. Deve Gowda, for an early release of the grant when he visit New Delhi for the National Development Council meet.

## New town to take heat off Gangtok

FROM JAYANTA ROY CHOWDHURY

Gangtok, Jan. 12: The tiny Himalayan state of Sikkim has plans to build a "new" Gangtok at Rangka, 13 km north of here, to ease the pressure on its overcrowded capital.

Architects are busy drawing up the blueprint for a Rs 200-crore township, which will house parts of Tashiling, the state secretariat, bureaucrats' families and new hotels.

With time, the township may grow into the administrative capital of the former kingdom. Gangtok might then become like the walled city of Delhi, the older bazaar area of the extended capital.

Gangtok, which was planned for a population of 20,000, is now bursting at its seams with an estimated permanent

population of 35,000 and a floating tourist population of one lakh.

The increase in population is a strain on the town's limited water and power supply. Making matters worse, the town has further expanded to absorb satellite bustees at Ranipul and Tadong.

"Unplanned growth in the 1980s turned Gangtok into a concrete jungle," admits the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, who has ordered the building of the new town.

Urban planners say some of the multi-storeyed match-box-like residential buildings and motels which have mushroomed in Gangtok are unsafe and might collapse if an earthquake or rockslide hits the town.

A blanket ban has been imposed on allotment of fresh construction sites in Gangtok, a hill town which the Chogyals, former rulers of Sikkim, developed into the state capital in the 17th century. Short-term measures to help ease the pressure on the town include building a ropeway from downtown Deorali to Tashiling, the secretariat area, and a massive plan to widen roads.

Planners, however, say remedial measures should also target houses and motels in a precarious condition. They feel the state administration should order their demolition, a move sure to be opposed by townsmen.

To link the new town at Rangka and ease the pressure on the National Highway which links Sikkim with Jalpaiguri, the nearest railhead in West Bengal, the government has planned another highway from Siliguri through Darjeeling and Kalimpong. The new highway will pass through south Sikkim tea gardens, Single and Jorthang, and link up with Gangtok and Rangka.

But for middle-class visitors from Calcutta, who comprise about 80 per cent of tourists to the state, Rangka might just be out of reach. The state's tourism secretary, Mr Tashi Desapa, says infrastructure will be further development and modernised to lure five-star tourists.

"Ours is a fragile eco-system. We can ill-afford mass tourism, we want fewer but higher paying tourists. It is not a question of class bias but one of survival for us," says Desapa.

Urban planners say the "tourist invasion" from the plains is one of the main reasons for transforming Gangtok into an urban nightmare, forcing the move to uphill Rangka.

## Himalayan Guardian

25-31 January 1997

## HILL LEADERS OPTIMISTIC ON 'GORKHALAND'

GANGTOK : Despite the Centre and West Bengal Government's negative attitude towards the demand for a



separate State of Gorkhaland, hill leaders in the region are optimistic about the formation of their 'homeland'.

The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, who has expressed his desire to lead a delegation of pro-Gorkhaland leaders to press the demand at the Central level, has challenged the Prime Minister, Mr H.D. Deve Gowda's discriminatory attitude towards the formation of smaller States.

Of late, Mr Chamling has been giving Press statements questioning the Centre's decision to reject the Gorkhaland demand. "There is no reason to reject the Gorkhaland demand if Uttarakhand can become a reality," he points out.

Referring to the Prime Minister's commitment to creation of a separate State of Uttarakhand, Mr Chamling told reporters in Siliguri recently. "I don't find any logic or ground for him to oppose the creation of Gorkhaland." Mr Chamling further said his ruling Sikkim Democratic Front would extend support to pro-Gorkhaland forces in the Darjeeling hills.

Mr Chamling has admitted that while he had great respect for the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, he had differences with him on the Gorkhaland issue. Mr Chamling, however, maintains that he would not get involved in internal politics of West Bengal. He feels that the creation of Gorkhaland State is upto the Centre and the State Government.

When the Prime Minister visited Calcutta last month, he categorically rejected the demand for Gorkhaland: "Don't compare demands for smaller States with Uttarakhand. Besides, there is no question of considering the demand for smaller State."

Meanwhile, the Gorkha National Liberation Front supremo, Mr Subhash Ghising, seems confident of achieving the ultimate goal. Says he "I am pretty sure that between November '96 to June '97, we will get our Gorkhaland, which is necessary in the interest of the nation."

Adds the CPI(M), Mr Ratna Bahadur Rai, "Hill people are determined to get their own land," Presently, there is a move to form a joint committee of like-minded parties to chalk out future strategies to pursue the Gorkhaland demand. According to reports, Mr Rai, who has been suspended by his party for his stand on Gorkhaland, is likely to become the coordinator of the proposed all-party committee. ■

## Business India

27 February 1997

### An ignored land

Believe it or not, Sikkim, the tiny Himalayan state and one of the smallest of the Indian Union, can turn out to be a powerhouse of the country. And that too, of clean pollu-

tion-free electricity. The mighty Teesta flows in a winding course through the state and its waters are being proposed to be harnessed for generating electricity. The state government has chosen five locations where the river can be used for setting up hydel stations. The state is presenting a detailed power development programme to the Union government. This is only one of a series of proposals the state government is pursuing to bring in a new era for a state that otherwise looks trapped in time.

Of all its programmes, the one for development of commercial power generation is the most ambitious because it has immense potential. Indeed, Sikkim has identified hydel power projects with a potential of generating as much as 8,000 MW. The state's chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, has presented a blueprint of the state's economic development to the prime minister. H.D. Deve Gowda, at a meeting late in December.

Chamling met the prime minister close on the heels of the latter's announcement of a massive Rs 6,100- crore development package for the north-eastern region. Chamling has now placed his plea: if the north east could get such massive assistance, why should Sikkim be denied the support of the Centre? He has asked for assistance to the tune of over Rs 3,100 crore, and is confident of pulling off a coup.

His logic: "We were integrated with the mainstream of national life 28 years later than other states. We have thus lost four plans. Hence, we need more to make up for the lost time," said Chamling while speaking to *Business India* in the state capital, Gangtok, last week.

The components of his plan are simple. He has asked for Rs.2,500 crore for development of power projects in the state and also for an outlay of Rs100 crore to build an airstrip for the state. Chamling is seeking an alternate road to link Gangtok with Siliguri in West Bengal. He has asked for a rail link to the country's railway network. The state is seeking funds for building a network of roads connecting different centres in the mountainous terrain.

In view of the state's meagre resources, the Chamling government has now agreed to hand over identified power projects to public sector giants like National Hydel Power Corporation (NHPC), or to private sector companies which are interested in such projects.

As a signal to potential investors, his cabinet has decided to hand over the 510-MW Teesta stage-five project to the NHPC. This is the most advanced hydel power project in the state, in the sense that its location and logistics have also been tied up. Another hydel power project on the same river, Teesta stage-three, is supposed to generate 1,200 MW and the government has invited global tenders for the project, Notwithstanding the fact that Sikkim is located deep within the world's longest and one of the most inaccessible mountain ranges, its tenders have elicited responses from at least four major hydel power com-

panies from Canada, Portugal, France and America. The deadline for the tender expires on 31 January and the state power department is expecting a couple of more bids.

The power secretary, L.P. Tiwari, one of the most powerful bureaucrats in the state, agrees that Sikkim's best bet lies in developing the string of power projects which have already been identified for development. Tiwari, of course, agrees that for these projects to be meaningful, their generation must flow into the regional and national grids. Sikkim can hardly be expected to use even a significant portion of the power generated by the new stations.

The state's own power consumption is also set to increase marginally in the course of the next couple of years, going by the calculation of its industry secretary, Karmapa Gyatso, who earlier handled the power portfolio. The state has worked out what Gyatso claims is "A green image industrial policy." The new policy announced in the middle of last month, seeks to promote 'clean industries', in keeping with the delicate Himalayan eco-system. The thrust areas for industrialisation are: are units, floriculture, animal husbandry and dairy products, minor forest-based products, handloom and handicraft (including carpets, which are woven all over the state), tourism, precision industries (like watch and chips making), electronic and software and tea cultivation. One of Sikkim's success stories has been its watch factory close to the capital Gangtok, which is nudging up to a turnover of around Rs 10 crore by another year.

The state government is also taking a major initiative in promoting tea cultivation and inviting private sector tea companies to set up plantations, apart from setting up small tea gardens over a widely dispersed area of the state. Faced with a shortage of land in the plains and the traditional tea-growing areas, major tea conglomerates are said to be eyeing the Sikkim government's proposals for establishing tea gardens in the state.

Taking the cue from the experience of United Planters Association of South India (UPASI), the Sikkim industry ministry has identified small farmers who are being encouraged to form growers' associations. These farmers have been asked to devote just a quarter of their land holdings to tea cultivation, for which the government provided incentives and financial aid. Once successful, these growers are now devoting more land for tea plantation. Encouraged by the responses that Sikkim tea, grown and marketed by the state government's own tea development corporation, is getting at the Calcutta auctions, Gyatso said that the company would make a bid to capture a larger slice of the overseas markets. It is making efforts to improve quality and establish its name.

If you are visiting the Sikkim government secretariat atop one of the hills on which the state capital is perched, you are in for a surprise. The waves of globalisation have reached the remote Sikkim hills. The senior officials of

the state government are actually aware of global development and are trying to forge their policies to take advantage of the latest developments.

One of the strident demands being made by the Sikkim government is to let the state open up to the wide world. The government is demanding that the old trade links with Tibet should be opened up so that goods could pass through the Nathu La pass on its border with Tibet. Now that the relation with China are once again getting normal, one of the demands voiced by the state government is to liberalise border trade. This correspondent met several old traders who used to regularly visit Tibet with their merchandise and conducted brisk business. They are looking forward to renewed opportunities.

Indeed, seniormost officials of the state government regret that the old mindset of the Union government to security concerns have not changed despite globalisation, opening up of the economy and the advent of high-power spy satellites in the sky. "What security problems could be created by allowing foreigners to come freely into the state or opening up free trade through its borders?" they ask, without wanting to be quoted. Citing the problems faced by the state while trying to bring in some of the foreign experts for one of its Indo-Swiss dairy joint venture, some of the senior bureaucrats feel that the exercise is 'frustrating'.

In fact, there is an all-pervasive feeling among top bureaucrats as well as lower level functionaries that the entire development initiatives in the country are taken away by the mainline states, leaving the outlying states like Sikkim with 'crumbs'. "Has a single major institution been awarded to any of these states, let alone Sikkim?" posed a senior secretary to this correspondent.

One of the areas where the security-oriented approach of the Centre virtually throttled the development of the state is tourism. Despite being endowed with virgin resources which could turn it into a major international destination for special kinds of high-value tourism, the state remains in the backwoods of such activities, said a senior official. "The state of the main highway linking Sikkim to Siliguri is such that in stretches it puts the moon-surface to shame. In places it is so narrow that hardly a single car can pass. Do you expect international tourism given these kinds of infrastructure facilities?" he pointed out.

Sikkim is also facing severe ecological threats, which need to be tackled with urgency. The state is faced with large scale soil erosion and landslides, denudation of forests and floods. Sikkim, being deep within the Himalayan belt, is witnessing the same problems thrown up by the fragile eco-system of the Himalayan region. However, there is hardly any sense of urgency in the Centre to help tackle these emerging issues.

Notwithstanding the brave new steps being taken by the state government to telescope its process of develop-

ment, there is an undercurrent of feeling that the rest of the country is yet to take full cognisance of one of its newest states. That needs to be changed with more supportive actions, failing which the state may be engulfed in uncertainties all too common in the neighbouring areas.

ANJAN ROY



6 March 1997

## Shiromani award presented

**From Our Staff Reporter**

NEW DELHI, March 5. At a simple function at his residence at 6, Maulana Azad road here this evening, the Vice President Mr. K.R. Narayanan presented the Bharat Shiromani award for 1996-97 to Mr. Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim.

Mr. Narayanan honoured Mr. Chamling for his contribution in integrating -the people of Sikkim with the rest of the country, thus endeavoring to make them feel proud of being part of The Vice-President hailed Mr. Chamling as a leader who has successfully reinforced the democratic system in the State.

The first Shiromani award for 1992-93 was presented to Mother Teresa, and the destitute children in India. Second, in 1994-95, was awarded to the late Hiteswar Saikia.

Mr. Chamling thanked the Vice-President and said he felt honoured to have been presented the award.

*The Indian* **EXPRESS**

7 March 1997

## Bharat Shiromani award for Chamling

GANGTOK : Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has been awarded this year's Bharat Shiromani award for outstanding efforts to emotionally integrate the people of Sikkim with the rest of the country and for accelerating the economic development of the state. The award was given by Vice-President K R Narayanan at a simple function held at his residence in Delhi on Wednesday, a press released issued by P Thondup, joint secretary to the Chief Minister said.

# THE ASIAN AGE

10 March 1997

## Chamling wants more focus on smaller states

By Yudhijit Bhattacharjee

Gangtok, March 9: The chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr Pawan Chamling, has called for a constitutional amendment to ensure that small states like his own find appropriate representation at the Centre. Speaking to reporters a day before he was conferred the Bharat Shiromani award at New Delhi, Mr Chamling regretted the near-absence of Sikkimese people in the country's mainstream.

"Governments at the Centre irrespective of their political complexion, do not have any time for small states like Sikkim," he said. "they are preoccupied with politics in Delhi."

Mr Chamling, who heads the 28 month-old Sikkim Democratic Front government, also urged the introduction of a constitutional guarantee providing for five years of continuous rule by any party or alliance which comes to power at the Centre. "Otherwise the government's attention remains confined to the task of keeping itself in power," he said, adding that frequent changes at the capital had an adverse effect on Centre-state relations, especially in the context of smaller states.

With socio-economic development its primary slogan, the SDF government hopes to consolidate its position by conducting the first-ever panchayat election in the state later this year. The format will be similar to the one in West Bengal, with 33 per cent reservation for women, apart from SC/ST quotas.

The SDF now has 25 seats in the 32 member Assembly, including six MLAs who defected from the Sikkim Sangram Parishad last year, The ruling party received a shot in the arm last week when the Sikkim high court dismissed a petition, filed by former chief minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari, levelling corruption charges against the government.

Aware of the political instability at the Centre, Mr Chamling is keen to maintain friendly relations with all major national parties. "I do not have any bias towards any party," he said, adding that his government was satisfied with the Union Budget. " We have not severed ties with the Congress either," he said.

Asked if he supported the Gorkhaland stir, Mr Chamling chose not to comment. He admitted that Sikkim was concerned about the unrest in Darjeeling, particularly because the national highway connecting it to the rest of India would be affected if the movement gathered momentum. ■

# The Telegraph

10 March 1997

## Sikkim isolated from Centre, says Chamling

FROM SHONA BAGAI

Gangtok, March 9: Sikkim is a small state but has big dreams and bigger problems, says the chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling.

"Refugees from Tibet and Nepal are a financial burden on the state. It is up to the Centre to decide on the issue," said Mr Chamling while discussing problems of the state with a group of visiting newsmen.

However, the distance between Delhi and Sikkim appears too great for the Centre to be unduly burdened. And, Sikkim is already beginning to feel isolated.

"the Centre does not have time for small states like ours. They are a busy lot there," said Mr Chamling. "Not a single Sikkimese occupies a ministerial position and none has been appointed Ambassador. How can we have emotional integration without full representation," he complained.

Incidentally, Mr Chamling was awarded the Bharat Shriomani Award at New Delhi on March 5 for national and emotional refused to comment on the Gorkhaland demand. "I want the issue solved peacefully because in case of trouble we are the first victims," he said.

The Chamling government recently submitted a memorandum to the Centre, seeking a Rs 3,000-crore package for Sikkim.

He sought assistance for communication infrastructure, construction of an airstrip at Pakyong, urged revival of the helicopter service, a rail link and construction of a ropeway from Deorali to Gangtok at an estimated cost of Rs50 crore.

Technology, tea and tourism have been identified as the major thrust areas. The state government is also keen on exploiting its natural resources.

Sikkim has an estimated potential of generating 8,000 MW of hydel power, of which only 35 MW has been harnessed so far. So far, six power stations have been identified on the Teesta river and four stages of power development on the Rangit river. A satellite township at Reshithang below Sichey bustee in East Sikkim is also being planned. It is expected to ease congestion in Gangtok.

"Investors will hesitate to come to Sikkim if we do not have the infrastructure. We welcome change but anything detrimental to our culture will not be allowed to come in," said the chief minister. ■

# THE ASIAN AGE

12 March 1997

## Hydel power tops Sikkim agenda

By Yudhijit Bhattacharjee

Gangtok, March 11: Sikkim banks mainly on tourism and hydel power as it endeavours to cut down its dependence on the Centre, and generate its own funds for development. Currently, more than 90 per cent of Sikkim's plan outlay, fixed at Rs 220 crores for '97-'98, is granted by the Planning Commission.

The Sikkim government has, submitted a memorandum to the Centre, asking for a Rs 3,000 crore-economic package, similar to the one announced for the Northeast. According to the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, the package will accelerate development and make up for the period before 1975. When Sikkim was yet to become a part of India. "Sikkim lags behind the rest of the country by 28 years," says Mr Chamling.

One of the demands listed in the memorandum is the immediate implementation of the 500 MW Teesta state V project through the National Hydel Power Commission. The project involves investment to the tune of Rs 2,500 crores, Sikkim generates 35 MW of power, a mere fraction of its estimated hydel power potential of 8,000 MW. Chief secretary K.S. Rao told reports last week that the state is expected to generate 150 MW by the year 2000.

The projects being developed include the 60 MW Rangit hydel project and the 30 MW Rathongchuk project. Global tenders have been invited to develop the 1,200 MW Teesta stage III project, which will be implemented under the private sector.

For promoting tourism in the state, the Sikkim government has asked the Centre to improve facilities at the Bagdogra airport. It has also requisitioned the consultancy services for preparing a Tourism Master Plan for overall development of tourism in the state without damaging the environment.

The government plans to develop a satellite township across 740 hectares in the Rangka area near Gangtok, to provide relief to the congested state capital. The township, to be connected to Gangtok by ropeway, will be set up at an estimated cost of Rs.300 crore.

In its memorandum, the Sikkim government has proposed the opening up of border trade with China through Tibet. The state has also urged the development of an airstrip at Pakyong in East Sikkim and revival of the helicopter service which was previously in operation. ■



## Sikkim E X P R E S S

12 March 1997

# Bharat Shiromani award for Chamling

Gangtok, March: The Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling has been conferred the Bharat Shiromani Award this year for his outstanding contribution to emotionally integrate the people of Sikkim with the rest of the country and for accelerating economic development of the State inspite of its difficult terrain, inclement weather and impregnable interiors.

The Award was conferred by the Vice President of India, Mr K.R. Narayanan at a simple ceremony held at his residence on 5th March, 1997. The Award carries a cash award of Rs.1,00,000/- besides a memento and citation. Mr Chamling was chosen for this award by a panel of judges headed by Justice (Rtd.) R.S. Narula, Present on the occasion were the Political Advisor to the Chief Minister, Mr B.B. Goroong, Mr Karma Topden, M.P., Mr B.P. Dahal, M.P., OSD to the Chief Minister, Mr. Sonam Dorjee and a host of well wishers from Sikkim and Delhi. ■

Both the Vice-President of India and the Chief Minister of Sikkim spoke on the occasion.

Prior to this, Shiromani institute had honoured only two distinguished personalities i.e. Her Holiness Mother Teresa (in 1992), for her most devoted and prolonged humane services to the lepers and destitute children of India and late Hiteshwar Saikia, the then Chief Minister of Assam for adding economic prosperity to the rather slow-moving progress of Assam, with India's most coveted non-Government Bharat Shiromani Award. ■

## Gangtok T I M E S

14 March 1997

# Vice President K.R. Narayanan Presents Bharat Shiromani Award to Chief Minister Chamling

In an impressive function organised by Shiromani Institute, New Delhi, the Vice President of India, Mr K.R. Narayanan presented BHARAT SHIROMANI AWARD to the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr Pawan Kumar

Chamling on 5 March at New Delhi. The Award carries a befitting memento, a citation and a cheque of rupees one lakh.

The panel of judges, headed by Justice R.S. Narula, the retired Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, had unanimously selected the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, for this rare honour, in recognition of his most valued contribution for bringing the people of Sikkim into the national mainstream, for discharging the duty of trying to bring Sikkim at par with the rest of India in the sphere of economic progress and for reinforcing democratic values despite heavy odds and adverse conditions prevailing in the State of Sikkim.

Bharat Shiromani Award is India's most coveted award and it has hitherto been conferred upon only two most belowed and highly progressive persons. Her Holiness Mother Teresa of an international fame was honoured in the year 1992, in recognition of her most consistent and committed humane services to the lepers and the destitute children. In the year 1994 it was Mr Hiteswar Saikia (now late), the then Chief Minister of Assam, who received this award for bringing peace and prosperity in a strife-ridden Assam. ■

# Sikkim Governor Congratulates Chief Minister Chamling for Receiving Bharat Shiromani Award

The Governor of Sikkim, Chaudhary Randhir Singh, in a message congratulated the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, who received Bharat Shiromani Award from the hands of the Vice President, Mr K.R. Narayanan on 5th March at New Delhi. In his congratulatory message, the Governor said, the people of Sikkim were happy when they heard that the Chief Minister Chamling was being honoured with the coveted award. He also expressed the hopw that this prestigious award would continue to inspire Mr Chamling to work vigorously for the betterment of the Sikkimese people as well as the emotional integretion of Sikkimese people with great Indian family.

According to informations received here, Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee members and Sikkim Chamber of Commerce also passed resolutions congratulating Chief Minister Chamling for this rare honour.

Meanwhile, the President of Indian Federation of Small and Medium Newspapers, Sikkim Unit Mr Bijay Bantawa, issued a press release congratulating Chief Minister Chamling for being awardee of this rare honour. The release further stated, "This national award will not only inspire the awardee to work more vigorously for all round

welfare of the people, it will also inspire him to work with unflagging enthusiasm for nation building and national integration.

On his way back to Gangtok, the Chief Minister Chamling was given a rousing reception by the people and business community of Rangpo and Singtam on 7th March for receiving Bharat Shiromani Award. ■

## WICHAR WEEKLY

15-21 March 1997

### Chamling : One step ahead

Mr Pawan Chamling has rightly said that governments at the Centre, irrespective of their political complexion and because of their preoccupation with politics in the national Capital Delhi, do not have any time for smaller state like Sikkim. This is perhaps for the first time that Centre's attention has been drawn regarding this vital issue. Keeping in view the prevailing political instability in the country Mr Chamling's suggestion regarding the 'introduction of a constitutional guarantee providing for five years of continuous rule by any party or alliance which comes to power at the Centre' is a constructive suggestion, 'otherwise', according to him, 'the government's attention remains confined to the task of keeping itself in power because frequent changes at the Centre have an adverse effect on Centre-state relations especially in the context of smaller State'.

The time has come for the Centre to respond positively to the aspirations of the people of Sikkim, address the long-standing issues and demands of this strategic border State which is forging ahead to contribute its mite for the national cause. ■

### High Court dismisses Bhandari's Petition

GANGTOK: The Sikkim High Court on 5th March dismissed a writ petition against the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling filed by former Chief Minister, Mr N.B. Bhandari.

A single-member High Court Bench comprising of Chief Justice Malay Sengupta dismissed the petition filed by Mr Bhandari accusing the Chamling led SDF government of large-scale financial irregularities, stating that the petitioner has no locus stand to press charges in the manner it has been done.

Mr Bhandari in his petition had pleaded with the Court that the Governor, Chaudhary Randhir Singh use his discretionary powers to prosecute Mr Chamling and ask CBI

to probe into the alleged financial irregularities. Dismissing the case as untenable, Justice Sengupta observed that "this is the first of its kind where a mandate on the Governor has been asked for".

Later, addressing a press conference, Mr K.T. Gyaltsen, Gen. Secretary of SDF, Legal Cell, said that Mr. Bhandari's petition was "politically motivated".

Earlier, Mr Bhandari had told mediapersons that he would move the Supreme Court in case the High Court dismissed his writ petition against the Chamling government. ■

## THE ASIAN AGE

16 March 1997

### *Sikkim drives cautiously into 21st century*

**BY YUDHIJIT BHATTACHARJEE**

Gangtok: Despite its breathtaking landscape, Sikkim has yet to find its rightful place on India's tourism map. The absence of an airport coupled with the lack of train services has robbed the state of its share of tourist traffic, with its attendant perks such as more jobs.

The Sikkim government has consciously opted out of the fast lane to tourism development, deliberately choosing to keep tourist traffic within control. Of course, it has asked the Centre to establish the necessary communication links between Sikkim and the rest of the country- an airstrip at Pakyong in East Sikkim and speedy implementation of a rail-link project proposed in the past. While promoting tourist sites, however, it has adopted a policy of caution in order to preserve its ecosystem, and to prevent the kind of environmental damage that nearby Darjeeling has suffered of late.

In fact, the "cautious" is a noticeable feature of the government's development policy in general. The primary slogan of the Sikkim Democratic Front- social upliftment explains, to a certain extent, the government's wariness against rapid economic growth. Issues like health, family welfare and education are higher up on its priority list than industrial development or setting up of new townships.

"We are conscious about the need to protect the identity of the Sikkimese people," says the chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling. "Our government is not just aiming at material progress, it is giving special attention to social development as well."

Seventy per cent of the total plan outlay has been ear-

marked for the development of rural areas, and a host of poverty alleviation programmes. Toll tax on all indigenous products has been abolished. The government claims to have started distributing cows and pigs to poor farmers so as to increase their purchasing power and eventually make them self-reliant.

"Maintaining the social balance is very important," says the chief secretary, Mr K.S. Rao. "We therefore need to monitor our economic growth in a manner that guards the fragile social fabric from a sudden impact of any kind."

The government has also undertaken a special programme of housing for the homeless. Six thousand families are to be covered under this scheme every year. This is apart from the ongoing Indira Avas Yojana, a central government programme.

The chief minister recently inaugurated a 500-bed super-speciality hospital at Tadong. The Central Referral Hospital, which will take another year to become fully functional, promises to provide the best of healthcare services to the people at a low cost. An engineering college, jointly set up by the Manipal Pai Foundation and the Sikkim government, will be opened in the hospital building in the second week of April. Discussions with the central government are in progress for acquiring permission to set up a medical college at the hospital.

"The interests of the local people will be kept in mind while running the engineering college," the chief secretary told journalists at the hospitals inaugural ceremony. A percentage of seats have been reserved for Sikkimese students, who will be charged a comparatively lower fee than outstation students. The government is treading cautiously while exploiting the state's tourism potential. For example, the charges payable for adventure tourism packages like mountaineering and river rafting have been nearly doubled to ensure that tourist traffic does not reach level which could be destructive for the economy.

## The Statesman

2 April 1997

# Sikkim panchayat polls on party basis

MARCUS DAM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, April 1. - For the first time in Sikkim panchayat elections will be fought on a party basis. Municipalities will also, for the first time, be set up in the state for which elections will be held.

Both the polls are scheduled for September.

The last panchayat elections were held four years ago

but contested on a non-party basis. A resolution passed by the state Assembly recently has called for dissolution of the panchayat bodies and fresh elections on a three-tier basis.

There are 143 gram panchayats in the state comprising five members each, and four zilla parishads. The state government has appointed an election commissioner to prepare for the polls.

Work for the de-limitation of municipal bodies has also begun. It is expected that seven municipalities will be set up in the state.

In an interview to The Statesman over the telephone from Gangtok, the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, said the decisions to hold the panchayat polls on a party basis and that to set up municipalities in the state were aimed "at strengthening democracy at the grassroots levels".

The re-constitution of the panchayat bodies and the setting up of the new municipalities were also included in the state government's policy of devolution of powers, the chief minister said.

The panchayat polls would ensure the presence of women in the political process because there would be reservation of seats for women in the elections.

The tribals, too, some of whom feel marginalized, would be ensured of greater representation in the process through their share of reserved seats," Mr Chamling said.

"This empowerment of the people with added political power would go a long way in integrating them into the mainstream of society. Through the process of strengthening local democratic traditions, the state government hopes to bring about the intergration of Sikkim with the rest of the country," Mr Chamling said.

The "emotional integration" of the Sikkimese with the rest of the country has been the core of the chief minister's political philosophy. Recently, it won him the 1996 Bharat Shiromani award for national integration, presented by the Vice President, Mr K R Narayanan.

The decision to involve political parties in the panchayat polls for the first time in the state was preceded by a series of debates on the subject culminating in a walk-out by the Opposition from the Assembly.

Opposition leader and former Chief Minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, has opposed the idea of the polls being fought on a party basis.

Those in the government say that Mr Bhandari's opposition to the move stems from his apprehension of the ruling party further consolidating its hegemony in the state.

"Leaders like Mr Bhandari have never spared efforts to stifle democracy in the state. Their manipulative politics aimed at stoking public resentment against the state's merger with the country has led to social and political alienation of the people," Mr Chamling said.

"But all our attempts at strengthening democracy would come to nought if the Centre does not respond to the de-

velopment needs of Sikkim," the chief minister warned.

Though his government has been able to bargain for an annual state plan outlay of Rs 220 crore as against Rs 192 crore last year, "the immediate need for development of the communication network ought to be considered by the Centre if our state is to shed its legacy of isolation from the rest of the country," he said.

Among the demands Mr Chamling mentioned were the setting up of an air-strip in the state, introduction of a railway network, the setting up of a satellite township near Gangtok.

"There is tendency to ride rough-shod over the demands of the state because of its very size - being one of the smallest states in the country," Mr Chamling said.

"Such a perception should be removed in the thinking of the Centre. Development ensures greater economic power to the people. The strengthening of democratic traditions by holding panchayat and municipal polls only serves to ensure political power to the people," he said.

## The Statesman

7 May 1997

### Chamling to induct four new ministers

**CHINMOY THAKURTA**

GANGTOK, May 6.- The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front Cabinet will be expanded this month with the induction of four ministers.

All the new faces will be from among the tribal community and one of them a woman.

This was disclosed by the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, while talking to a team of visiting journalists here.

This sets at rest speculation about the Cabinet reshuffle which had been going on since the six dissident MLAs of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad were inducted into the ruling SDF.

Four of them will now get berths in the council of ministers.

Although the Cabinet expansion was on the anvil, it had been shelved for one reason or other.

With the defection of six SSP MLAs, expectation from the state's Bhutia-Lepcha community had been very high to see a Cabinet with adequate representation from their community.

Four of the former SSP MLAs are being accommodated understandably with an eye on the coming panchayat polls in the state.

Asked whether the SDF had decided on the Cabinet expansion because of the persistent pressure from within,

Mr Chamling said: "It is not being expanded under any pressure. I want to ensure justice and balance".

The chief minister, however, admitted that the Cabinet's size would now be big but added that the tribal community should be given proper representation.

All the four new Ministers will be chosen from among the six former SSP MLAs. They are: Mr Ram Lepcha, Mr Thutop Bhutia, Ms Rinzing Ongmu, Mr Menlom Lepcha, Mr TT Bhutia and Mr D T Lepcha.

Ms Ongmu is sure to get a berth. But the chief minister did not disclose the names of three others who would be inducted as the ministers.

With the expansion, the size of the Cabinet will be 17 in the House of 32. The chief minister claimed the present Cabinet, unlike the previous regimes, represents different sections of the people of Sikkim.

For the first time, the state has a deputy chief minister from the Scheduled Tribe community.

Referring to the panchayat poll in the state slated for September, Mr Chamling said it will be held on party basis and he is confident of the SDF's victory in the hustings.

"We will sweep the poll as the Opposition in the state is non-existent".

Expressing his ire against the former chief minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, Mr Chamling said the SDF would file a case against Mr Bhandari if he continues to misinterpret the Supreme Court verdict and carries out a covert campaign in his favour to befool the people at the grass root level.

The Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Bill has already been passed by the Assembly and Mr Chamling is determined to hold the elections in September.

Commenting on the Gangtok Municipal Corporation election, the chief minister said it had been long over-due and the GMC would also go to the polls in September with 143 gram panchayat elections.

Coming at the time they do after two years' of the SDF government in power, these elections are being viewed as a significant trial of strength for any party aspiring to consolidate its position among the masses.

During his meeting with Mr H D Deve Gowda and other central leaders, Mr Chamling reminded them of the commitment made by the government of India at the time of Sikkim's merger with the Indian Union. The government of India had committed that Sikkim's special status should be maintained duly protecting the existing laws and customs of Sikkim as provided in Article 371 F of the constitution.

Restoration of reservation of seats in the state assembly for different sections of the population (Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese), non-enforcement of the Direct Tax laws in the state and matters relating to unemployment were some of the other subjects Mr Chamling discussed with the former Prime Minister.



# The Statesman

10 May 1997

## CBI, Chamling lists of Bhandari's *benami* property

MARCUS DAM

CALCUTTA, MAY 9.- When he was Sikkim Chief Minister between 1985 and 1994. Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari apparently earned only Rs 44 lakh but bought property worth more than Rs 1.8 crore, the CBI has said.

From 6 May, the Central Bureau of Investigation has been raiding houses Mr Bhandari and his family own in Gangtok and Delhi.

The charge against Mr Bhandari is of amassing "immovable and movable assets in his own name or in the name of his family as *benami*, substantially disproportionate to his known sources of income".

The immovable assets alone are worth Rs1,81,56,000.

Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, present Chief Minister and a political opponent of Mr Bhandari, says the latter and his family own *benami* property other than those the bureau FIR lists.

The CBI says: "The total income of Mr Bhandari and his wife from all known sources during the 10 years was only Rs44 lakh, which includes salary, house-rent and income from their printing press and disposable assets."

These findings reveal an offence "punishable under section 13 (2) R/W 13 (1) (E) of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988".

A case has been registered in the office of the Delhi Special Police Establishment A CU (V) branch. The deputy superintendent of the branch. Mr G. Verma, will investigate the charges further.

The suddenness of the CBI move after the tardiness of the past few years took even Mr Chamling by surprise. He was told only after the CBI team had arrived in Gangtok. The next day, the raids began.

The first house the sleuths swooped on, the bureau's FIR says, was "the palatial building worth about Rs90 lakh on a plot of land at Ranipool, built in May 1992 in the name of his (Mr Bhandari's) son who was fully dependent on Mr Bhandari".

Mr Chamling has described the building as one "with a magnificently maintained garden, and outhouses built on about 5.6 hectares held on lease". He put the house's market value at Rs 7 crore.

The other assets the FIR mentions are :

A 4,485 sq. feet plot at Namdong, Gangtok, bought for Rs50,000 in January 1992 in the name of Mr Bhandari's daughter and son.

A plot at Tadong bought for Rs 30,000 in May 1989 in

daughter Primula's name.

Farm land at 6th Mile, Tadong block, worth Rs45,000 and bought in his wife's name.

A flat near Paljor stadium, Gangtok, bought for Rs1.5 lakh in July 1989.

Two shops at a shopping centre in Gangtok; market value Rs 4 lakh.

A Rs 3 lakh farmhouse on a 2.71 hectare stretch of farm land at Samdur block, Tadong, bought for Rs 7.56 lakh in 1992.

A Rs 1.25 lakh plot of land held in *benami* at Kapil Bihar, Delhi.

The movable property under the CBI scanner includes a Maruti Gypsy bought for Rs3 lakh in 1993.

To this, Mr Chamling adds *benami* property worth Rs 5 crore in Siliguri, & Rs. 70 lakh cottage in Gangtok, and a *benami* building at Singtam Bazar worth Rs 25 lakh.

Mr Chamling says that Mr Bhandari and family members also own *benami* property in neighbouring countries and hold shares worth about Rs70 lakh in four companies.

Mr Chamling's government has had to clear liquor bills of Rs22.59 lakh incurred by earlier chief ministers, including Mr Bhandari, during 1993-94 and 1994-95. It also had to fork out the Rs41.09 lakh they ran up in hospitality and entertainment expenses.

A consolidated statement of payments for 1990-91 to 1992-93, drawn up by the state home department, puts Mr Bhandari's pending liquor bills at Rs25.17 lakh for that period, and hospitality and entertainment expenses at Rs60.42 lakh. ■

NORTH EAST  
**SUN**

14 May 1997

## Row over Panchayat polls

BIJAY BANTAWA

With the passing of the Bill on Panchayat Act. (Amendment of 1997 in the recent assembly session, the Panchayati elections are round the corner in Sikkim and hectic political activities are going on since it is to be held on political party basis for the first time in the State.

According to the new amendment of the Panchayat Act, 33 per cent of seats has been reserved for women which is welcomed by the various women organisations in the State, including the SDF Cheli Morcha. However, there is severe criticism by the opposition about the decision the Government in holding the election on party basis. The State Youth Congress (I) Committee has strongly criticised the move of the Government and in a press statement, presi-

dent of the Committee Bharat Banseet has openly challenged the decision.

On the other hand, there was heated discussion in the recently concluded budget session about the new amendment of Panchayati Bill. President and member of the Legislative Assembly Nar Bahadur Bhandari and former minister and MLA K.N. Upreti, while taking part in the discussion expressed their opposition to the government's decision of holding election on party basis and the four SSP members walked out from the house in protest of the bill.

While replying to the member and emphasising the need for the passing of Bill, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling stated boldly, "the earth may crack and the sky may fall down but we are fully determined to hold the Panchayati elections on party basis". Meanwhile, speaking to the correspondent, Chamling declared that the existing Panchayatis would be dissolved on May 1, 1997 and fresh election held on the month of September 1997.

the Opposition and some Panchayat members expressed their discontentment over the early dissolution of the existing Panchayat. "The act is undemocratic and a violation of political right of Panchayats is due upto 1998", told one of the anguished Panchayat members to this correspondent.

Lok Sabha MP Bhim Dahal maintained that the objective of holding election was to make the Panchayati Raj institution more effective and functional by means of decentralisation of power. "There has been no Panchayati election as per 73rd and 74th amendments of the Indian Constitution and hence the need of holding election is felt in the interest of the people", observed Chief Minister Chamling, who is also the minister-in-charge of Panchayats. Advocating the importance of the election, the CM said, "We want to make this institution more democratic at grass root level and wish to give representation to women by providing 33 per cent reservation.

SSP leader Nar Bahadur Bhandari and K.N. Upreti however clarified their stands that they had not walked out and protested the content of the Bill for giving 33 per cent reservation to women. What they had opposed was the decision of the Government to hold election on party basis. Meanwhile, the SSP has decided to launch the *Sikkim Bachao* (Save Sikkim) campaign throughout the state in the wake of the decision on Panchayati election.

On the other hand, the SDF leadership believes that by holding election on political line there will be active participation of the people in development activities at grass root level which helps to build up the democratic process in the nook and corner of the State, making the people politically conscious about their democratic rights and responsibility. Chamling maintained that there must be institutionalisation of democracy, and the Panchayats, must act without prejudice and favouritism and in democratic set-up and fair politics, the people can work as check and

balance.

However, the political observer is of the opinion that most of the political parties in the State are playing/ gameplans on the Panchayati poll is sue ignoring most of the vital issues of the State in order to achieve their narrow political gain. There are many burning issues which the rank and file expects to be taken up by the political leaders at this juncture to establish a healthy political culture and precedent in Sikkim. It seems that most of the political parties are at logger heads now with 'no-issue' or issueless matters just for the sake of capturing power. Since Panchayat and municipal election in Sikkim may jeopardise the system. The prime concern of the Panchayati Raj institution instead, must be for the larger interest of the people at grass root level and the locus of the political parties must be diverted towards observing the development activities and interest of the people. ■



8 July 1997

## Sikkim demands more PDS quota

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, July 7: The Sikkim Government is up in arms against the much-touted, revamped Public Distribution System (PDS), saying slashed quota of rice and wheat is inadequate to meet the needs of the people. Under the revamped PDS, the State's quota of rice was reduced from 5,300 tonnes to 3,300 tonnes per month, and the monthly quota of wheat was brought down to 100 tonnes. The paucity of rice which happens to be the staple diet of the Sikkimese people prompted the State Government to seek replenishment from the open market and then subsidise it.

"We had no other alternative but to go to the open market, purchase rice at a higher price and then subsidise it so that the people could afford it. Is this how the United Front Government going to launch its ambitious PDS programme?," asked the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, in an interview with *The Hindu* today.

Mr Chamling warned that shortage of food grain in Sikkim was threatening to snowball into a major agitation and pose a serious problem for the State Government. However, official sources maintain that quotas under the revamped PDS were fixed after taking into account the actual figures of lifting of foodgrains by the respective State Governments over the past decade.

Cautioning against possibility of "psychological alienation" of the people of Sikkim owing to inadequate supply of foodgrains, he stressed the need for "kindhearted" attitude from the Central Government towards the peace-lov-

ing people of his State at this crucial juncture.

The Chief Minister who called on the Prime Minister, Mr Inder Kumar Gujral here today, apprised him of the latest developments on the PDS front and sought the Centre's help to tide over the situation. He also informed the Prime Minister about difficulties faced by the State in opening a new university and compensation of Rs.100 crores to carry on the repair work in the aftermath of the last month's massive landslide near Gangtok in which 51 people had died.

Mr Chamling said that Mr Gujral gave a "positive assurance" to extend all possible help and told him that the Centre would adopt a sympathetic attitude in solving problems being faced by the people in Sikkim. He said that he told the Prime Minister that trade route with China should be opened at Nathula borderpost which would boost the business activities in the State.

The issue of granting of innerline permits to the foreign tourists in all the four districts of Sikkim by the State Government also came up during discussions with the Prime Minister. Mr Chamling said that the step would promote tourism in the State which had not been tapped to its full potential.

He also told the Prime Minister that there was no need to go ahead with the enforcement of the Central Income Tax and Wealth Tax laws as Article 371 (F) of the Constitution stipulates that all old laws of Sikkim would be protected. He demanded that Sikkim should also be included in the North-East Council.

Expressing anguish over exclusion of Sikkim from the ambitious Rs 6,1000 crore economic package announced by the former Prime Minister, Mr H.D. Deve Gowda, the Chief Minister said that he had submitted Rs 3,000 crore proposal in last December for development of the economy and infrastructure in the State which is accessible only through one national highway. "Nothing has been done in this regard. The Central Government has not taken any decision on the package prepared by us. This indifferent attitude will send wrong signals to the people," he said.

Citing other examples of the Centre's uncaring disposition towards Sikkim, the Chief Minister said that a proposal for setting up a State University in collaboration with the Manipal Group of Karnataka was still to be cleared by the Human Resources Development Ministry.

He said that Sikkim-Manipal University Act had been passed by the State Assembly and the proposal to set up a medical college and an engineering college in Gangtok with 50 seats each was also hanging fire. As a first requirement, the Union Health Ministry had failed to clear the file relating to inspection of the facilities at the 500 bedded hospital and the medical college by the Medical Council of India.

Mr Chamling will submit his demand on Thursday to the Planning Commission for an allocation of Rs1,600 crores to the State in the Ninth Five Year Plan.■

## *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

15 July 1997

# Parties to figure in Sikkim panchayats

GANGTOK, JULY 14 : In a BID to institutionalise democracy in the State, the Sikkim Government has, for the first time, decided to introduce "party-based polls" in the forthcoming panchayat elections, Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling said today.

"We have decided to make the panchayat elections party-based to let the people know how much power they have with them to sort out their own problems. It is to institutionalise democracy in the State," the Chief Minister said.

The panchayat polls, with various political parties as contestants, would enable them (the parties) to function in a democratic set-up, he added. However, many Opposition parties are against the panchayat polls in the State, scheduled to be held in September.

On the question of an alliance, Chamling, who is the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) president, said: "My party is confident enough to win all the seats in the poll on its own. But my door is open to the Congress."

On the recent landslide in the State, he said the calamity was more "a man-made one than a natural disaster". He blamed the people for disturbing the ecological balance by constructing highrise buildings in the town which, according to him, had caused severe damage.

Refuting allegations that construction of VIP bungalows at Chandmari was the main reason for the natural disaster, he said the catastrophe occurred also at other places. He, however, said his Government has stopped giving permissions for constructing buildings having more than three-storeys.

Chamling demanded opening up of the Nathula Pass for initiating border trade with China. He expressed the hope that the chronic unemployment problem in the hilly State could be solved after opening up border trade with China, "thus accelerating the development process in Sikkim".

"Our demand is lying with the Centre for long and former Prime Minister P.V. Narashimha Rao had told me that they are considering the proposal," he said. Justifying his demand for a "better deal" for Sikkim, the Chief Minister demanded inclusion of the State in the North Eastern Council.

On inviting foreign investments in the State, he said, "One Swiss company and one Canadian company have

already agreed to our proposal for an eco-tourism hotel, fruit preservation unit and the Teesta project's third phase," adding necessary formalities would be completed very soon. ■

## The Telegraph

31 July 1997

### Govt stable, asserts Chamling

*FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT*

Gangtok, July 30: The Sikkim chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, today said the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) was united and there was no threat to the government. His statement came in the wake of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad chief, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari's demand that the state should come under President's Rule so that a new government could be elected within six months.

Reacting to Mr Bhandari's demand, he said, "This is the height of his desperation," Mr Chamling said only four members has resigned from his party, and not nine. "The other five were not even our party members," he said. Mr Bhandari had said, "Chamling has no right to rule." The former chief minister also accused the SDF ministry of insincerity and misuse of funds in the construction of VIP residential complexes for ministers and a new High Court building. "The SSP wants not only the dismissal of the present government but also the dissolution of the state Assembly as well to conduct a free and fair election within six months," Mr Bhandari said.

On the removal of the deputy chief minister, Mr P.T. Lucksom, Mr Chamling said he had called himself a "political prostitute" at a legislative party meeting. "I do not want to comment on anything he says," the chief minister said. Mr Chamling also hinted at a Cabinet reshuffle soon.

He said, "Where is the law and order problem in Sikkim? There is no problem with the majority of the party, so Article 356 would not be applicable. Sikkim is still the most peaceful state in the country." Meanwhile a Raj Bhawan release yesterday said, "The Governor is pleased to order that Mr P.T. Lepcha (Lucksom) shall cease to be a member of the council of ministers with effect from July 29."

## The Statesman

4 August 1997

### UPBEAT CHAMLING

The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, sees no threat to his position following the removal of his first tribal deputy, Mr P.T. Lucksom, for anti-party activities. He enjoys a comfortable majority. His Ministers and MLAs

signed a statement supporting him in his fight to preserve and strengthen democracy. Of course there was discontent and nine ruling Sikkim Democratic Party members, including a political secretary to the Chief Minister resigned. But this is of no deep import, though the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad leader, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, has demanded imposition of President's Rule. He is understood to have told party workers there was no need to trouble the Chamling government because it would fall on its own. He hopes to form a government following a mid-term poll, assuming there will be one, without any electoral alliances. There are no signs yet of upsetting Mr Chamling's appellation with just four MLAs in the 32-member Assembly. His mood is upbeat following the dismissal of cases against him by a Special Court under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but he may still be hauled before other "competent courts" under the general criminal law.

A rumour is afloat that Mr L.P. Tewari, Power Secretary, who resigned last month after holding the post for about 14 years, is forming a Nepali-Bhutia-Lepcha-based third force. He is said to enjoy popular support. Not that Mr Chamling is keeping quiet; he seems to be gaining ground. After stoutly defending the construction of the ongoing Rathong Chu hydel project in west Sikkim, he is said to have decided to scrap it, bowing to the wishes of the locals. An apparent measure to checkmate the influence of Mr Tewari as he hailed from the area. Installation of the Chamling government raised expectations and aspirations but even after 30 months in office he has not been able to fulfil the promise to decentralise the administration. The bureaucracy continues to be indifferent and there are elements bent on rupturing communal harmony. The Chamling administration must be on its guard. ■

## The Statesman

5 August 1997

### Lucksom's dismissal may signal fresh purge

CALCUTTA, Aug. 4: - The recent dismissal of the Mr P.T. Lucksom, from the Sikkim Deputy Chief Minister's post may be the beginning in a fresh drive by Mr Pawan Chamling "to purge the state government of disgruntled elements".

"I will not hesitate to expel other ministers or any senior leader of the Sikkim Democratic Front if they are found to be impediments to the implementation of government



policies," the Chief Minister told **The Statesman** over telephone from Gangtok today.

Mr Chamling recently divested Mr Lucksom, of his post in the Cabinet and expelled some senior party leaders, including its vice president. The move threatens to change considerably the local political landscape.

The Chief Minister said that he would soon expand his 18-member Cabinet. "The expulsion of Mr Lucksom has necessitated a reshuffle and the induction of at least two more ministers from the Lepcha tribe (to which the former Deputy Chief Minister belongs)," the Chief Minister said.

Differences between Mr Chamling and his former deputy had been simmering since long. But things came to a head when it was realised that Mr Lucksom was openly indulging in anti-party activities and inciting a section of the Lepcha community to oppose the party's interests, the Chief Minister said.

"I should have dropped him earlier, but was hoping that he would mend his ways. He was given the number-two post in government to make up for the imbalances between the different tribal communities in the Cabinet. But his refusal to toe the party line could no longer be tolerated," he said.

Having inducted Mr Lucksom into the Cabinet about two-and-a-half years ago, Mr Chamling had hoped to silence critics contending that the Chief Minister's was favouring the backward castes among Nepalis -- his principal support-base.

In a state where nearly 30 per cent of the electorate is tribal -- mainly Lepchas and Bhutias -- no political leader can risk ignoring the tribal leadership's political aspirations.

With Mr Lucksom no longer in government, the Sikkim Cabinet is left with only one Lepcha representative - Finance Minister, Mr Ram Lepcha. This may have prompted Mr Chamling to consider expanding his Cabinet to include more Lepchas in the Cabinet.

Dismissing suggestions that his decision to expel Mr Lucksom and senior party leaders, including Mr Biraj Adhikary and SDF general secretary, Mr Sonam Dorjee, has precipitated a crisis in the party and government, Mr Chamling said: "On the contrary, the SDF is now stronger because the disgruntled have been removed; the diseased portions of the body have been amputated to bring the body back to health."

Another reason which led to the souring of relations between Mr Chamling and his former deputy was Mr Lucksom's covert attempt to outsmart the Chief Minister in appeasing sections of the Nepalese community.

Mr Lucksom had at a recent meeting of Law ministers in New Delhi raised the demand for delimitation of Assembly seats and restoration of reserved seats for Sikkimese of Nepalese origin. "Mr Lucksom was desperately trying to drive a wedge in the Nepalese community," the Chief Minister alleged.

The chances of a third party emerging on the local political spectrum, with those recently expelled rallying around the former power secretary, Mr L.P. Tewar, who sought pre-mature retirement late last month, appear bright. ■

# The Telegraph

9 August 1997

## Sikkim rurals poll to be held on party basis

*FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT*

Gangtok, Aug. 8: Panchayat polls in Sikkim will be held in October, the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, he said.

Addressing a public meeting near Rumtek in East Sikkim on Wednesday, he said the elections will be held on a party basis "for the first time in the state."

The elections have assumed special significance chiefly because of the decision to hold it on a party basis, according to a Bill passed in the state Assembly during the last Budget session.

The former chief minister and Opposition leader, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, and his three Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) MLAs had opposed the Bill, which was passed with support of ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) MLAs who number 25 in the 32 member Assembly. The Congress, which has three MLAs, is yet to take a decision on the matter.

Mr Bhandari has criticised the Chamling government for an "undemocratic termination" of the existing "elected" panchayat bodies before they completed their tenure upto February 1998. He questioned the "political motive of the SDF" on holding panchayat elections "on a party basis."

Sources in the SDF said the government's efforts to better the plight of the poor in villages was scuttled over the past three years by gram panchayats owing allegiance to the SSP. They said the government had apportioned "70 per cent of the state Budget" for rural development schemes, most of which remained a non-starter "due to non-cooperation of the SSP influenced panchayats."

Such a situation could not be allowed to continue as it could lead to erosion in the SDF votebank in rural Sikkim. In such an eventuality, elections could favour the SSP, merely by their trumpeting the "non-performance" of the SDF, the observers felt. The ongoing anti-Chamling campaign by Mr Bhandari, saying "there are hospitals and doctors, but no medicines for the poor," and results in schools have touched rock bottom because "textbooks are not given in time," vindicate the SDF apprehension.

Observers said results of the panchayat polls will have

a direct impact on state politics. Firstly, in case of massive victory for the SDF, the party will turn out more confident than before and would be able to dare the SSP in its urban Sikkim strongholds.

Secondly, a defeat for the SDF will embolden the SSP to demand mid-term polls. And thirdly, the plausibility of emergence of a "third force" will become clear after the panchayat poll results are known, observers said.

## *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

26 August 1997

### **Decision to scrap Chu hydel project welcomed in Sikkim**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
GANGTOK, AUG 25:**

THE Sikkim Government's decision to scrap the Chu Hydel Project after having spent Rs 14 crore has been welcomed by the Concerned Citizens of Sikkim (CCS)- a non-government organisation which had highlighted the issue. We are happy that the Government took the historic decision and we got what we fought for, an elated Pema Namgyal, a CCS activist said.

The decision, taken to honour the sentiments, religion and culture of the people of Sikkim, was announced by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Wednesday at a public meeting attended by tribals and Lamas from different monasteries.

The resolution evoked varying reactions from the political parties in the State. Though some parties welcomed it, others questioned the delay in the decision and its declaration before the panchayat elections. Public resentment had built up against the hydel project on the sacred river Rathong Chu, believed to have 109 "hidden" lakes, which were sacred according to religious leaders.

In its crusade, the CCS had the backing of the people and also support from a body of monks and two tribal organisations. Rimpoches and other religious heads had said that a hydel project such as this would adversely affect the basic tenets on which the Sikkimese Buddhist beliefs are based." Yoksum is the core of the sacred land and no meaningful performance of Buddhist rituals are possible if this land and water is desecrated." Disturbing the river water and diverting it through the canal system of the project would disturb the ruling deities of these hidden lakes, they said.

Public resentment began to build as the first tender was called for by the Sanchaman Limboo Government.

## Eastern Panorama

August 1997

### **Chamling pleads for OBC, ST listing of Backward communities**

GANGTOK: Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling called on the Union Minister for Welfare Mr. Ramoowalia on July 9 and requested him to include the Bahuns, Chhetris, Jogis, Sanyasis and Newars in the OBC category so as to bring these communities at par with the rest of their brethren in the State. He also requested the Minister to take up immediate action for inclusion of Limboos, Tamangs, Gurung, Mangar and Sunwar communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes. It was pointed out that they are all distinct ethnic groups and have their own languages recognised as State languages in the State of Sikkim. They have their own dialects, customs, traditions and ways of life as distinct from other communities. They fulfill all the criteria to be notified as Scheduled Tribes and as such their demands are genuine and legitimate. The Government of Sikkim has been consistently urging the Central Government to accede to the above demands of the State Government in the interest of fair play and justice. He requested the Union Minister to use his good office in fulfilling these two demands at the earliest.

The Minister assured the Chief Minister that he would re-examine this issue in the light of strong arguments advanced by the Chief Minister for fulfilling these two demands.

Earlier when the Chief Minister called on the Prime Minister Mr. I.K. Gujral on July 7 he reiterated the above demands besides the restoration of reserved seats for the Nepalese and the Tsongs in the Assembly and stressed that his efforts to bring about emotional integration of the people of Sikkim with those of the rest of India would be strengthened if reciprocated in ample measure by the Union government promptly meeting the genuine aspirations and demands of the people.

On the Centre's proposal for extension of direct taxes to Sikkim, Mr Chamling pleaded for status quo in view of the fact that the State has an Income Tax Act of its own the continuance of which was protected by Article 371 (k) of the Constitution.

He urged for restoration of original allocation of 5300 MT of rice and 3300 MT of wheat per month at earlier prices so that the Public Distribution System could be extended to the whole of the State.

In view of similar remoteness and economic backwardness of Sikkim, the Chief Minister advocated inclusion of

the State in North Eastern Council and an economic package of Rs 3000 crore as sought for in a memorandum to the earlier Prime Minister in December, 1996 considering the fact the Sikkim joined the mainstream 28 years later than the other north eastern States.

If the announcement of an economic package was not feasible, Mr Chamling suggested that Sikkim's debt burden of Rs. 500 crore may be written off.

He also urged the introduction of a helicopter service to Sikkim with 75% subsidy as available to north eastern State.

While stressing the need for establishing a medical and an engineering college the Chief Minister said the State government was considering setting up a university to be named after Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation.

While stressing the need for an alternative national highway to Sikkim, Mr Chamling requested the Centre to come in a big way to boost tourism industry in Sikkim.

The Chief Minister talked about the inclusion of Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo languages in the 8th Schedule to the Constitution. He also sought Central assistance for implementation of mini and micro hydel projects which he said would help development of small-scale and cottage industries besides generating much needed revenue to the State.

*E.P.Desk.*



26 August 1997

## Sikkim scraps on hydel power unit, plans another

THE Sikkim Government has decided to commission a new 18-mw hydel project, to be constructed in phased manner, at Rolep in the East district.

State Chief Minister Pawan Chamling told a public meeting about 30 km from Gangtok on Sunday that his cabinet has already given the green signal for the project which would have six mw capacity in each of the three phases.

He informed the Government has earmarked Rs 45 crore for the first phase. The State Government's decision to commission a new project assumes significance in the wake of the scrapping of the 30-mw hydel project at Rathong Chu in the West district.

Mr Chamling said there would be no controversy and "no sentiments would be hurt." He said the site at Rathong

Chu would be converted into a tourist spot and buildings already constructed would be turned into schools.

The Chief Minister, who is also the president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, said, on Opposition parties have decided to field independent candidates for the forthcoming panchayat polls as they were scared of the Sikkim Democratic Front landslide victory.

Earlier, he laid the foundation stone of a community centre here. The centre, with a 250-seat auditorium and a library, would be constructed at the cost of Rs 89 lakh. It will be completed in 18 months and would be the first of its kind at the sub-division level.

Meanwhile, the decision of scrapping of the proposed 30-mw hydel power project at Rathong Chu evoked wide-ranging reaction in the State with almost all political parties welcoming it. But some also questioned the delay in the decision and its declaration before the ensuing panchayat elections.

Public resentment had built up against the hydel project on the sacred river Rathong, Chu, believed to have 109 'hidden' lakes which, religious leaders said, were abode to presiding deities, both good and evil.

Work on the project commenced in 1991 and since then a total of Rs 14 crore was invested till it was scrapped by the Chief Minister on Wednesday to "honour the sentiments, religion, culture of the Sikkimese people."

This announcement came at a public meeting attended by tribals and lamas from different monasteries and was greeted with bursting of crackers and raising of slogans.

CCS' crusade against implementation of the project had the backing of the people as also support from a body of monks and two tribal organisations.

Rimpoches and other religious heads had said that a hydel project such as this would adversely affect the basic tenets on which the Sikkimese buddhist beliefs are based.

"Yoksum is the core of the sacred land and no meaningful performance of the Buddhist rituals are possible if this land and water is desecrated," they said.

The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs of Sikkim, recommended its withdrawal because of the religious sentiment of people.

Earlier, the Sikkim Tribal Women Welfare Association together with other organisations submitted memoranda to the then Chief Minister, the Prime Minister, the Union Environment and Forest Minister and the President urging them not to go ahead with it.

A one-man commission, headed by Prof SP Ramakrishnan of the School of Environmental Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in its report in October, 1995 also recommended scrapping of the project.

The CCS took up the cudgels and resorted to a hunger strike. Mr Sonam Paljor of the CCS, now in the United States, went on a fast-unto-death for 28 consecutive days in June 1995.

The Court ordered the Government not to invite any

new tenders and said, "if they have invited tenders, they shall not execute the contract till the next hearing," which was fixed for November.

But, Ms Tobden, nongovernmental organisation activist said, "We were not happy with High Court decision. So we went to the Supreme Court with a special leave petition."

The Supreme Court granted a stay for another four weeks after a hearing on February 19, 1996 in the Court of Justice M M Punchhi and Justice M K Mukherjee.

"Although the apex court verdict seems to be tricky, as no one can put back the ecology to its own original position, but we are happy that the government took the historic decision and we got what we fought for," an elated CCS activist Pema Namgyal said.

## The Telegraph

26 August 1997

### New hydel power project for Sikkim

PAKYONG: The Sikkim government had decided to commission a new 18-MW hydel power project, to be constructed in a phased manner, at Rolep in the East district, reports PTI. The government has earmarked Rs 45 crore for the first phase he said.

The chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, told a public meeting here, about 30 km from Gangtok, on Sunday his Cabinet has already given the green signal for the project which would have six MW capacity in each of the three phases .

The government's decision to commission a new project assumed significance in the wake of the scrapping of the 30-MW hydel power project at Rathongchu in the west district on August 20. Chamling said there would be no controversy and "no sentiment would be hurt" this time.

He said the site at Rathongchu would be converted into a tourist spot and buildings already constructed would be turned into schools. There would be parks and gardens also, he added.

Mr Chamling who is also the president for the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), said the Opposition parties have decided to field Independent candidates for the forthcoming panchayat elections as they were scared at the prospect of a landslide victory of the SDF candidates.

Earlier, the chief minister laid the foundation stone of a community centre here. The centre, which would have a 250-seat auditorium and a library, would cost Rs 89 lakh. The two-storied building, to be completed in 18 months would be the first of its kind at the sub-division level.

## Assam Tribune

10 September 1997

### Sikkim yet to decide on Central Act

GANGTOK, Sept 9 - The Sikkim Government was yet to take any final decision to extend the Employment Exchange (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959 in the State.

The Government has so far "just deliberated the pros and cons of the Act" and will not implement any work "without consulting the public", official sources said here today.

An emergent meeting, chaired by the Chief Minister, Sri Pawan Chamling and attended by all ministers and ruling party MLAs, discussed recently the extension of the Central Act to the State.

The meeting assumed significance following criticism and apprehensions from different quarters in the State that if the Act was extended, the prospect of people from the State getting jobs would further diminish.

The meeting decided that the extension of the Act will facilitate the administration to ascertain the total number of educated unemployed youth in the State and maintain a proper record.

Sources said one of the officers of the State Personnel Department would be in charge of the Employment Exchange who would register the names of the Sikkim subject certificate holders and those possessing the certificate of identification for employments as empowered under Rule(44) of the Sikkim Government Establishment Rules, 1974.

In absence of an Employment Exchange in the State, the Central Government offices and various other bodies based in Sikkim have hitherto been filling up vacancies of various posts with people from outside the State "without the knowledge of the Government".

With the extension of the Act, the Employment Exchange will register the names of Sikkim subject certificate holders and the influx of people from outside the State "will automatically be checked and thus the interest of the local people will be fully protected," source claimed.-PTI





11 September 1997

## Sikkim to reconsider its stand on Employment Act

GANGTOK, Sept. 10 Faced with flak from the opposition, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front government has announced to re-examine its decision to cover the state under the Employment Exchanges (compulsory) Notification of Vacancies Act, 1959.

The SDF government has also urged the Centre not to act on its request for extension of the Act to Sikkim. The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling had maintained that the setting up of a Central Employment Exchange in the state would be good for the state.

Detractors of the Act, the opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP), the Sikkim Ekta Manch, the Sikkim Pradesh Congress and a host of opposition leaders claimed that the "local" and the "non-local" differentiation would be lost with the extension of the Act to Sikkim, where the existing laws provided protection to locals in employment

Mr Chamling had dismissed the fears as "unfounded", saying that the Act would protect the "local" interests better. He said the Act had already been extended to all north-eastern states with provisions to protect the locals.

Citing the example of Assam, the Chief Minister had pointed out the only locals in Assam were allowed to register themselves in the employment exchange. "In Sikkim too, we propose to allow only Sikkim subject certificate holders to get themselves registered in the exchange," he added.

Meanwhile, the opposition camp maintained that the extension of the Central Act to the Sikkim would take away the little protection that the locals had to secure jobs within the state.

Replying to a question on the Act raised in the Assembly recently by SSP member, Mr, N.K. Pradhan, Mr Chamling had disclosed that although his government had taken up the matter with the Centre, it was, however, being re-examined taking note of the apprehension expressed by certain quarters.

Subsequently at an emergent cabinet meeting held at the official residence of the Chief Minister on September 5, the cabinet deliberated on the merits and demerits of the extension of the Employment Exchange Act, 1959, to the state.

According to an official release, the cabinet was of the opinion that the extension of the Act would facilitate the state government in ascertaining the numbers of educated unemployed youth and also bound all state, central and semi-government and public and private sector establishments and other financial institutions based in Sikkim to provided jobs to the educated youth in the state.

The cabinet also dispelled the fears that local interest would not be protected.-UNI

## Assam Tribune

11 September 1997

## Sikkim govt to review Employment Act, 1959

GANGTOK, Sept 10- Faced with serious flak from the opposition, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) Government has announced to re-examine its decision to cover the State under the Employment Exchanges(Compulsory Notification of Vacancies ) Act 1959.

The SDF Government has also urged the Central not to act on its request for extension of the Act to Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling believes that the setting up of a Central Employment Exchange in the State would be good for the State,

Detractors of the Act, the opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP), the Sikkim Ekta Manch, Sikkim Pradesh Congress and a host of opposition leaders claimed that the 'local' land the 'non-local' differentiation would be lost with the extension of the Act to Sikkim, where the existing laws provided protection to locals in employment.

Sri Chamling dismissed the fears as 'unfounded' saying that the Act would protect the 'local' interest better. He said "the Act had already been extended to all the North Eastern States with provisions to protect the locals."

Citing the example of Assam, the Chief Minister pointed out the only locals in Assam were allowed to register themselves in the Employment Exchange. "In Sikkim too, we propose to allow only Sikkim subject certificate holders to get themselves registered in the Exchange," he added.

Meanwhile, the opposition camp maintained that the extension of the Central Act to the Sikkim would take away the little protection that the locals had to secure jobs within the State,

Replying to a question raised in the Assembly recently by SSP member N K Pradhan on whether the State Government had recommended to the Centre to extend the Act to the State and how it would benefit the locals, Sri Chamling had disclosed that although his Government had taken up the matter with the Centre, it was, however, be-

ing re-examined taking note of the apprehension expressed by certain quarters.

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According to an official release, the Cabinet was of the opinion that the extension of the Act would facilitate the State Government in ascertaining the numbers of educated unemployed youths and also bound all States, Central and semi- Government and Public and Private Sector establishments, bank and other financial institutions based in Sikkim to provide jobs to the educated youths in the State.

The Cabinet also dispelled the fears that local interest would not be protected. The release added that the proposed Employment Exchange would only register the name of those possessing Sikkim subject certificates and certificate of identification for employment within brackets four of the Sikkim Government Establishment Rule of 1974.-

UNI

## Rajasthan Patrika

27 September 1997

# Seeking emotional integration with Indian union: Sikkim

Gangtok, Sep 21: Integrated with the union only in the mid 70's, mountaineous Sikkim, with an enormous tourism potential and 41 per cent of its people living below the poverty line, has set itself an annual 10 per cent growth target.

The primary task now, says Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, is an emotional integration of Sikkim the only Indian state with three countries surrounding it— with the rest of the country.

“I have been trying to create a feeling that we are one with the remaining part of the country,” Chamling, who is heading the Sikkim-Democratic Front government, said.

Soothed by a large number of perennial rivers and with annual rainfall from 650 Mm to 2500 Mm, Sikkim's power prospects are excellent . Especially, the Teesta's 175Km course makes the river an ideal source of hydel power generation.

Of the projected six-stage power generation scheme, the construction of the biggest with 510 mega watt (MW) capacity has been entrusted for execution to the National Hydro-Electric Power Corporation (NHPC).

Sikkim's greatest economic strength, however, is its

tourism potential and adventure sports ensconced in the majestic peaks of the Himalayas .

The major components of the state's growth plan are emphasis on self reliance in various sectors, improvement of productivity standards, efficient utilisation of human and capital resources, stress on application of science and technology and privatisation.

Exploration of private investment in power sector, specific reduction in population growth rate by promoting strategies to restrict families, improving the health status of women and children and effecting corrective measures to rectify the current imbalance in male-female ratio are also included as objectives in the current plan.

Nearly one-fourth of the state population is living below the poverty line as the economy, despite low productivity, is predominantly agrarian. Nevertheless , the area under cultivation has nearly doubled from 47,00 HA to 73,000 HA in the last two decades.

With literacy level in the state hovering around 56 per cent and high rate of unemployment— five per 1000 in rural areas and 10 per 1000 in urban areas — the state is hard pressed in the face of poor industrialisation .

Though the state is not rich in industrial raw materials and skilled man power, the policy of industrial development seeks to encourage smallscale industries capable of bearing high transportation costs both for the inflow of raw materials and outflow of finished goods.

The state has some established industrial units like Sikkim Distillery Ltd, Sikkim Mining Corporation, Sikkim Time Corporation, Yoksum Brewries Ltd.

The establishment of manufacturing units for cattle feed, television assembly, galvanised iron ore, talcum powder, silica chips, ayurvedic medicine preparation, readymade garments and washing soaps have come up during recent years.

To motivate the local entrepreneur, the department of industry conducts entrepreneur development programmes from time to time and assists the units in terms of infrastructure as trained manpower developments. The Sikkim Industrial and Investment Corporation Ltd (Sidico) is the only state institute to finance the industrial units including hotels and taxi operators.

While one Swiss company and a Canadian concern have already submitted proposals for eco-tourism hotel and fruit preservation units, necessary formalities for Teesta project phase-three would be completed soon according to the Chief Minister. The state is also exploring the idea of gold mining after the Geological Survey of India spotted some metallic minerals in the hilly terrains of the state.

GSI has already found copper, zinc and lead here and is now trying for gold. Among the non-metallic minerals talc, quartzite, dolomite, limestone, asbestos, coal and marble have been found. The state is now pinning its hopes on its scenic natural beauty and ideal climatic conditions to boost tourism and promote it as a destination among the

domestic and foreign travellers.

The growth of tourist traffic during the 1994-95 over the previous year was an encouraging 21.62 per cent and 4.46 per cent was in respect of domestic tourists.

In 1995 altogether 96,555 domestic tourists visited the state as compared to 5646 foreign tourists.

Despite having a hilly terrain, it has carved a niche among the sports connoisseurs in the country by hosting the All India Governor's God Cup in soccer since 18 years.

The venue of the gold cup, Paljor stadium, is the only stadium in the state, helping the youths to carry on their activities.

Sikkim thus is coming up steadily to compete with other states and "the feeling that Sikkim is one with the rest of the country can be strengthened if there is a reciprocation of the same in ample measure from the union government, "Chamling is supposed to have told the Prime Minister recently.

## THE ASIAN AGE

27 September 1997

### Demands of Sikkim JAC are rejected by Cabinet

Gangtok, Sept.26: - The indefinite strike called by the joint action committee in Sikkim began on Friday with minor skirmishes reported from some places. No major incidents, however, have been reported so far, the director general of police, Mr P.C. Sharma, said, adding that the state police was 'totally prepared' to tackle the situation.

The government had declared closure of educational institutions till October 7 and declared Section 144 of the CrPc in and around Gangtok and Singtam areas. The administration requisitioned one company of the RAF on Thursday.

The strike has been called by the JAC, comprising of the opposition parties, social organisations, government employees and students, who are demanding the dismissal of the Chamling government, the scrapping of the Sikkim subject certificate and extension of the Employment Exchange (compulsory notification of vacancies) Act of 1959. However, in a Cabinet meeting held here on Thursday evening, the government decided not to extend the Act in Sikkim.

The Cabinet also inducted the "vicious and false propaganda" being carried on by the Opposition, claiming that Article 371(f) of the Indian Constitution and the Sikkim subject regulation have been repealed. ■

## The Telegraph

28 September 1997

### Governor intervenes in Sikkim

Gangtok, Sept.27: - The Sikkim Governor, Chaudhury Randhir Singh, has intervened to end the present impasse in the government. In a message over the All India Radio, the Governor said his powers under Article 371 F(g) of the Constitution was to maintain peace. He urged the people to restore normalcy.

The chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, has appealed to the state government employees, transporters and traders "to restore normalcy." Meanwhile, life remained paralysed as all government employees, including Class III and IV staff, continued boycotting the state secretariat and all other government offices. Some shops opened this evening after five days of bandh. This morning, the Sikkim Democratic Front mobilised its supporters from the districts to Gangtok and held a huge rally at Paljor stadium. The participants were mostly from backward classes.

Mr Loden Ptsering, convener of the Joint Action Committee termed the SDF move to play the OBC card as a provocation for communal disharmony and caste conflict. The leaders said the government with the support of the police, had unleashed terror. ■

## The Statesman

28 September 1997

### Bandh enters fifth day Opp. misleading people : Chamling

Gangtok, Sept.27: - The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, today alleged that the Opposition parties were "misleading and fooling" the people, reports PTI.

He was speaking at a meeting organised by the apex OBC body of the state at the Paljor stadium here, during the bandh.

"Despite my government's reiteration that Sikkim subject certificate was not scrapped and the employment exchange Act not extended, the simple public was befooled by those with vested interests to dislodge the government," Mr Chamling said.

Urging the Centre to take note of it, the chief minister told the meeting that raising issues on caste and communal lines was dangerous in a border state like Sikkim.

Mr Chamling claimed that it was his government which allowed the public to exercise its democratic right by ob-

serving bandh.

Voicing protest against the government and ruling party during the previous regime was "unthinkable," he said.

Earlier, the Agriculture and Tourism Minister, Mr G.M. Gurung, PWD Minister, Mr D.D. Bhutia and the Health Minister Mr D.P. Kharel, explained how the government had chalked out policies for the OBC and the poor.

**Bandh :** Normal life was paralysed in Sikkim for the fifth consecutive day after the indefinite bandh called by the All-Sikkim Joint Action Committee demanding the dismissal of the Pawan Chamling government.

the bandh was called in protest against the alleged extension of Employment Exchange (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act 1959 in the state and scrapping of the Sikkim subject certificate though the government had denied doing so.

Two companies of the RAF have already been deployed here. Two more will be deployed tomorrow.

The situation in the state was tense but under control, he said.

The various associations of taxi, jeep and truck drivers in the state would not withdraw from the bandh in spite of the huge loss incurred by them during the peak tourist season.

"Tourist seasons will come and go but once our local protection under the Sikkim subject certificate is gone, it will never come", the president of the Gangtok Local Taxi Associatio, Mr Karma Namgyal Bhutia, told reporters. ■

## DECCAN HERALD

12 October 1997

### Cake-walk for Chamling

The ruling party has secured a decisive victory in Sikkim's first-based panchayat polls.

THE two-tier party-based Panchyat polls, held for the first time in Sikkim since the Himalayan state's merger with India in 1975, went in favour of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF) led by Pawan Kumar Chamling, the man Nar Bahadur Bhandari of the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) dismissed from his Cabinet in 1972.

In the wake of winning a handsome majority in the last Assembly elections in December, 1994(19 out of 32 seats at stake), the panchayat polls turned out to be sort of litmus test for the SDF government. And by cornering around 70 per cent seats in both gram panchayat wards and zilla parishad territorial constituencies , Mr Chamling demonstrated that his promise of restoration of democracy proved that the delegation of power to the grassroot will boost the developmental process in this backward state.

The high turnout of voters, about 80 per cent, showed

that people in general, rejected the allegation of the Opposition combine comprising SSP, Congress and the newly-floated Sikkim Ekta Manch (SEM) that the party-based panchayat poll would drive a wedge in the ethnic harmony prevailing in then peaceful border state. Without kowtowing to a number of Opposition threats, Mr Chamling went ahead with the polls, an exercise Mr Subhas Ghishing, chairman of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC), Sikkim's next-door neighbour, was so hesitant to implement. This was for the first time in the history of this strategic border state that women would be represented at the grassroots. Mr Chamling had earlier ensured a smooth passage of the panchayat poll legislation in the Assembly that approved 33 per cent reservation for women, as many for the OBC, 25 per cent for the tribals and 6 per cent for scheduled castes.

Says the chief minister, "We will make Ms Bharati Sharma the zilla parishad chief in east district and the government will delegate 30 per cent fiscal power to the parishads." The Opposition spared no efforts to scuttle the chief minister's move to hold the panchayat poll on a party basis. Not surprising in the context of Sikkim where governments had been toppled in the last decade just on a drop of a hat in exchange for allegedly huge financial deals. SSP leader Bhandari who ruled the state for 14 years at a stretch , suffered a serious set back when the High Court on a revision petition by the state quashed the order of the Special Court, under Prevention of Corruption Act, absolving Mr Chamling of involvement in two criminals cases.

Secondly, the newly-floated Sikkim Ekta Manch lost the case challenging the validity of the state government notification declaring reservation for listed classes and OBCs in the panchayats. As a last resort, the Opposition formed a Joint Action Committee to resort to general strike. But all this failed miserably.

So, there was a late burst of activity in the combine which initially decided to boycott the polls, and it fielded independents backed by the respective parties at their strongholds. It naturally paved ground for the ruling party. The SDF, though heavily banking on its leader Mr Chamling, won 176 out of 870 gram panchayat wards and 12 out of 92 zilla parishad constituencies uncontested. However, SDF's inability to field nominees in 17 GP wards in North Sikkim, an SDF stronghold, indicated that the party could not reconcile with a huge number of aspiring contenders.

The dissension though denied by the chief minister, had taken a toll in the party's performance in the polls; barring north district, the SDF made a clean sweep in three other districts both in the GP and ZP seats.

In the North, out of 49 GP wards where elections were held, the SDF won 23, yielding 26 to independents while out of 11 ZP seats SDF bagged five against six by the independent nominees. However, in east, west and south



districts, the Front had clearly established its writ, winning 171, 193 and 184 GP wards against independents' 98, 68 and 56.

In Zilla Parishad, the SDF bagged 19, 21 and 18 in east, west and south districts against independents' eight, one and five. According to SDF insiders, the party would have fared better if the party could effectively counter the propaganda launched by the Opposition on the extension of the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notifications of Vacancies) Act, 1959 in Sikkim.

"The SDF had to pay for being a bit complacent on tackling the Opposition-sponsored strike that paralysed the state for nearly a week," observed a party legislator who declined to be identified.

Obviously, egged on an impressive performance, an elated Chamling claims that "Sikkim ka janata" has given a fitting rebuff to the disinformation campaign undertaken by the Opposition. Branding the Opposition as anti-national and casteist, he said the SSP-SEM Congress combine was hell bent on destroying the process of emotional integration of the people, started by his government.

Reliable sources say the Opposition might revive the agitation once the festival season is over. But the chief minister is unfazed and ready to take it head on.

**Prasanta Paul**  
in Gangtok

## The Statesman

14 October 1997

### CHAMLING SCORES

Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, has belatedly realised that faint hearts do not win a fair battle. If he had not taken strong measures to break the recent indefinite bandh by the Joint Action Committee, his detractors would have gained the upper hand, comprising the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad, the Congress, the newly-formed Sikkim Ekta Manch and Sikkim United Front and non-political organisations, the JAC agitation, to say the least, was unwarranted and uncalled for. It supported the 48-hour bandh by the Educated Unemployed and Self-Employed Association of Sikkim in protest against the Government's "decision" to extend the Employment Exchanges (compulsory notifications of vacancies) Act, 1959, but from the third day onward converted it into an agitation for the dismissal of Mr Chamling and the Chief Secretary for his alleged move to repeal the system of Sikkim Citizenship Certificates, a charge he has denied. The fact that the bandh went ahead despite government assurances that the Act would not be made applicable suggests the JAC but would have the public believe that they did so "as its purpose of ensuring peaceful democratic pro-

tests was served". The public has no difficulty in judging whether it was a retreat or a victory for the trouble makers.

The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front has added another feather in its cap by sweeping the panchayat polls, strengthening the grassroots base. The results were a foregone conclusion after the Opposition refused to participate and instead supported Independent candidates. A redemption of election promises, vesting more power with local bodies will help cut procedural delays and make sense of the SDF earmarking 70 per cent of the budget for development of the rural economy. Mr Chamling is still to cleanse the administration. There have been rumblings among SDF youth that they were deprived of their share of the Opposition, exposing their patently opportunistic support to Mr Chamling. Such manouvres have resulted in instability in all hill states of the North-east. Upcoming politicians must shun such cynicism. ■

DECCAN HERALD

4 November 1997

## CM has promises to keep

By PRASANTA PAUL

THE Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, has a delicate task ahead in the wake of the recently-held first two-tier panchayat polls in the State that saw him consolidating his position, that of his party, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), and the Government he has been at the helm of, for the last couple of years.

He has to redeem his election pledges, one of the crucial vows being to cleanse the system. Shortly after assuming the office, he had undertaken one shake-up of the bureaucracy, expected of any new chief minister who would wish to steer the ship of state with his own set of men.

But his second administrative reshuffle effected middle of this year, which raised lot of hopes, ended somewhat in despair owing to his apparent inability to touch a couple of secretaries one of whom has been continuing in the same post for the last 13 years, a feat that put in the shadow even Mr Chamling himself.

This has given ample scope to the Opposition, comprising the Sikkim Sangram Parishad had the Congress, to cry hoarse about the honest intentions of the Chief Minister. The Opposition has demanded that Mr Chamling should step down for his alleged favouritism to a select coterie of bureaucrats.

"Let the elected representatives in the State Assembly form a government minus Mr Chamling and we will lend

all support to that government”, was what the Opposition had been trying to convey to the Sikkimese people.

Faced with a lot of flak, Mr Chamling decided to act; but the moment he was about to give orders for a thorough probe, the bureaucrat tendered his resignation and floated a new party in the State, the Sikkim Ekta Manch.

What preceded his resignation was equally interesting. At a time when the Chief Minister was away on a visit to New Delhi, the dissident group led by the Deputy Chief Minister of the SDF Government, Mr P T Luksom, was on the verge of ousting Mr Chamling from his post and forming a new ministry that was supposed to be supported from outside by the SSP and the Congress.

But somewhere, calculations went wrong and Mr Chamling flew to Gangtok. One of the first things that he did on his arrival was to dismiss Mr Luksom from the post of Vice-President of SDF as well as the executive committee.

A meeting of the committee members and party legislators chaired by Mr Chamling decided that Mr Luksom would remain an ordinary member which he (Luksom) later, declined. Other heads to roll immediately were those of SDF General Secretary, Mr Sonam Dorji and the founder-member and party Vice-President, Mr Biraj Adhikari.

The duo who resigned promptly from the party, were expelled for anti-party activities. Mr Chamling, instead, announced new appointments: Mr Ram Lepcha, the Finance Minister, was named as the Vice-President and Mr Mohan Dungmali as the General Secretary (Administration) and Mr Dorji Namgyal as the Assistant General Secretary.

The Power Secretary, Mr L P Tewari, who resigned (“after making lot of money”, as alleged by Mr Chamling) has already formed a new outfit in the his State, the Sikkim Ekta Manch. “I have already put in my papers for voluntary retirement and I am awaiting the Government’s nod in this regard. Only then, would I announce my future course of action”, said Mr Tewari. But his actions boomeranged as the SDF Government which dithered on accepting his resignation strategically, did everything to make his life miserable; first, the vigilance sleuths were asked to raid his residence to probe how in the last decade or so, the Secretary could manage to build houses in Calcutta, Delhi Mumbai and some other places apart from Gangtok and Siliguri.

Secondly, Mr Tewari has been asked to show cause why disciplinary actions should not be initiated against him for floating a political party, himself being at the helm when his resignation letter as a government servant is yet to be accepted.

In fact, Mr Tewari had no answer so far. Political observers feel the urgency of forming a new party might be due to the fact that the SSP party chief Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, was gaining lost ground.

## Sikkim E X P R E S S

15 November 1997

# INTERPLAST, German team performed a “noble deed”: Pawan Chamling

By A Staff Reporter

GANGTOK: At the conclusion of the 10-day free of cost reconstructive plastic surgery camp, which began on November 3, a valedictory function was held on November 12 at Hotel Tashi Delek here, with the INTERPLAST, Germany, team of doctors and nurses, which was addressed, as the chief guest, by the chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling. The state department of health and family welfare organised the function.

Highlighting the “sincerity and sacrifice” of the visiting doctors and nurses in their “humanitarian work”, the chief minister warmly appreciated the “noble deed” done by the INTERPLAST team for the Sikkimese poor. The benefited “patients and their families are indebted” to the team, Mr. Chamling said. He invited the team to hold another camp here next year for the “needy thousands” to benefit from it. Dr. Henry Borsche, plastic surgeon and leader of the team, instantly accepted the invitation.

In accordance with the expressed-view of the Chief Minister, the director of health services, Dr. T.R. Gyasto said, a formal invitation for the next year’s camp will be sent soon to INTERPLAST, Germany. Dr. Gyatso described Mr. Chamling as the “Champion of the poor and the down trodden”, while mentioning the sympathy and support received from the chief minister to make the camp a success.

Dr. S.K. Pradhan, Additional Medical Superintendent of the STNM hospital and chief coordinator of the camp, spoke of “untiring work” done by the INTERPLAST team. He also mentioned the hospital role in organising several international camps in the recent past.

Dr. Passang Dorjee, one of the STNM surgeons actively associated with their German counterparts, narrated how the “German machine (meaning the operating team) worked.” While noting how the visitors valued “human relation”, Dr. Passang described their behaviour as “epitome of joy and happiness”.

The reconstructive plastic surgery camp, in which 74 poor patients, including children got back a smile in their faces, "was a grand success", the health minister Dr. D.P. Kharel said. The camp experience "would help the Sikkim doctors to expand their field of activities", Dr. Kharel felt.

In a reciprocative spirit, the INTERPLAST team leader Dr. Borsche appreciatively stated "how well everything was organised" medically and administratively, paving the path for the camp success. In this connection he observed "Germany's organisational efficiency is known to the world, but it is still better is Sikkim."

The visitors were felicitated with "khada" by the chief minister and also given some mementos. They, in turn, gave some mementos for the STNM hospital.

At the end of the function, the state Cultural Department artists performed Chya Rum Faat, Tamang Selo and Tashi Yangthe folk dances, and also a Yak dance, which the Germans and other guests thoroughly enjoyed with cheers and applause. "Frankness of the Germans I liked most", a Hotel Tashi Delek staff, Kundan Singh Koranga remarked to this reporter.

## Assam Tribune

16 November 1997

### Chamling hails SC verdict

GANGTOK, Nov. 15: The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court judgement upholding the Kerala High Court verdict declaring bandhs as 'illegal and unconstitutional'.

Sri Chamling in a statement here said in a democracy, there were many avenues to redress the genuine grievances of the people. "There is no need to bring personal hardship to people as also destroying Government property".

The Apex Court in its order delivered on Wednesday last said bandhs organised by trade unions, political parties and other organisations were illegal and unconstitutional and violative of rights to free expression and life.

**Decried :** The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, on Friday condemned the leakage of the Jain Commission report to the media saying it was a 'deliberate' attempt to 'destabilise' the Central Government.

Expressing concern over the incident, Sri Chamling, the President of ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, which enjoyed an electoral alliance with the Congress in the State, said in a statement here that 'people are trying to capitalise on the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi'.

The Chief Minister said it would only be fair to react after the report has been placed in Parliament and after fully understanding its implication. ■

## The Statesman

17 November 1997

### THOUGHTS ON SIKKIM

Nar Bahadur Bhandari is determined to put Pawan Chamling in the dock. Having feathered his nest for 14 years, one expected the former Chief Minister to retire gracefully, but on the contrary he seems unusually active. He was undaunted when the Sikkim High Court dismissed his writ petition to direct the Governor to give permission to prosecute the Chief Minister and approached the Supreme Court but his special leave petition was rejected. Last month a fresh one, charging Mr Chamling with "misappropriating Central funds meant for development work", was also dismissed by the Supreme Court. Earlier, he received a serious setback when the High Court, on a revision petition by the State Government, quashed the order of the special court, under the Prevention of Corruption Act, absolving him of involvement in two criminal cases. He already faces a CBI inquiry. With the erosion of the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad's credibility and his isolation, Bhandari wants to make his presence felt. He is reportedly toying with the idea of joining the Congress which he describes as the only party to ensure "political stability" and put an end to politics of "communalism and casteism". How he will go about this remains to be seen as the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front is already an ally of the Congress.

That the SSP and the newly-floated Sikkim Ekta Manch are bent on formenting trouble was evident from their support of the 48-hour bandh in September. Called by the Educated Unemployed and Self-Employed Association to protest against the move to extend the Employment Exchanges (compulsory notification of vacancies) Act, 1959, it culminated in an indefinite bandh and ended only when the authorities intervened following violence. Mr Chamling is apprehensive, not without justification, that the Opposition will whip up "anti-national sentiments" and has asked for central forces. It hardly needs to be said that grievances cannot be suppressed by force. A lesson must be learnt from the North-east where the continued presence of central forces has only alienated the local people. ■

## SENTINAL

21 November 1997

### Chamling seeks balance

GANGTOK, Nov.20 (PTI): The pressures of ever-rising population and demands of development have increased the necessity to preserve natural resources, Sikkim Chief

Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, said here today.

Inaugurating a seminar on 'Environmental situation in Sikkim -- reflections over the, past 50 years and planning for the next century,' Mr Chamling said "The right kind of balance has to be struck between unavoidable development work and limited natural resources."■

## SENTINAL

24 November 1997

### Chamling for a national Govt.

GANGTOK, Nov.23 (PTI): The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, was suggested a national Government at the Centre with representatives from every State. "The situation warrants a national Government as parliamentary form of Government has become unstable," he told a press conference at his official residence here last evening.

The present happenings in Delhi was 'unfortunate,' Mr Chamling said adding it would not help the people at large. "Neither it could affect Sikkim also," the Chief Minister emphasised. Mr Chamling said he favoured a presidential form of Government like the one in the USA than the parliamentary form.■

## Assam Tribune

4 December 1997

### Chamling refutes Bhandari's charge

GANGTOK, Dec. 3: The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr P.K. Chamling, on Tuesday denied the opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad President, Sri N.B. Bhandari's charge that he had paid a compensation of Rs2 lakh to the kins of a man who died while in police custody at Jorethang in south district.

Sri Chamling's denial came through his Political Advisor, Sri B.B. Gooroong, who contacted the Chief Minister at his official residence when asked to clarify.

Sri Bhandari had charged Sri Chamling with having compensated Rs 2 lakh to the kins of the victim when the Chief Minister visited the place, about 80 km from here, last Saturday.

Replying to another question, Sri Gooroong admitted that some ruling party supporters were there among the 'frenzied' mob which ransacked the police station and

damaged Government vehicles after hearing the news of the custodial death on November 27. Twentyfive people were so far arrested in connection with the incident and all remanded to judicial custody, the DGP, Sri P C Sharma, said.

Sikkim bandh : The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front on Tuesday called a 24-hour State-widebandh on December 4 "to make the people aware on the fallout of central direct taxes, if enforced in the State."

Central direct taxes comprise income tax, wealth and gift taxes.

A case on the implementation of direct taxes in Sikkim is presently pending before the Supreme Court as Narbahadur Bhandari Government in 1989 challenged the presidential notification on the issue.

People of Sikkim under Article 371 (F) of the Constitution only pay State Income Tax.

Party President and Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling told reporters that he welcomed the Supreme Court ban on bandh but "this bandh is necessary to make the common public aware of the issue."■

## Assam Tribune

1 January 1998

### SDF Withstood many an onslaught from opposition

GANGTOK , Dec 31- The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) Government withstood many an onslaught from the opposition to complete three years in office and swept the State's first ever party -based panchayat polls to consolidate its position as the year drew to a close.

The year was also marked by devastating landslides, which claimed more than 50 lives, and a series of opposition -sponsored bandhs.

With political confrontation at a low ebb during the first half of the year, Chief Minister and SDF President Pawan Chamling implemented several welfare and developmental schemes. In his efforts to tap the State's enormous potential in power generation, the public sector National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) was authorised to take up the fifth stage of the 510 MW Teesta Hydel Project .

However, the multi-crore 30 MW Rathung-Chu Hydel Project in west Sikkim had to be scrapped mid- way following strong protests from the State's various religious and social organisations in August as the site houses some of the most important Buddhist religious monuments and relics .

The Government also implemented several welfare schemes for the benefit of women. Delayed marriage and



limiting the number of children would entitle her for monetary benefits. They also got 33 per cent seat reservation in panchayat bodies and Government jobs. For the first time, a woman was elected to the zilla president's post in the October panchayat polls. The panchayats will also be allotted 30 per cent of the State's budget. In August, the ruling SDF was plunged into a crisis when several senior party leaders rose up in revolt against Sri Chamling's "autocratic functioning." The rebels, who resigned from the primary membership of the party included Biraj Adhikari, its founder -member and Vice-President, Sonam Dorjee, General Secretary and officer on special duty on Chief Minister, and Tara Man Rai, Political Secretary to the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister, who was in Delhi, rushed back to the State capital to stem the rot. He sacked his Deputy in the Cabinet, Phur Tshering Lucksom, from both the ministerial post and vice-presidency of the party.

Coinciding with the dissent within the SDF came the formation of the much talked about "third force" in State politics, namely, the Sikkim Ekta Manch. Former State Power Secretary Laxmi Prasad Tewari floated the new party after his request for voluntary retirement was turned down and he was suspended for alleged violation of service rules. Several dissident SDF leaders and members of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress and others joined the new party.

The Chamling Cabinet was expanded to accommodate three former opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) legislators who had joined the SDF. Along with Sri KB Chamling, Former SSP legislators Rinzing Ongmu, the only woman in the State Assembly, Sri Tsenten Tashi Bhutia and Sri Ram Lepcha were inducted into ministry.

Following a cloudburst on June 8, a devastating landslide claimed 40 lives and caused widespread damage. Army and paramilitary help was sought for rescue and relief operations and normalcy could be restored only after a fortnight. The calamity prompted the State Government to formulate a comprehensive integrated disaster management plan for the future.

The State witnessed a series of bandhs in the last week of September. Initially the Sikkim Educated Unemployed and Self-Employed Association called a 48 - hour bandh in protest against the State Government decision to bring Sikkim under the purview of the Employment Exchange (Company Notification of Vacancies) Act 1959.

Seizing the opportunity, the opposition SSP, SEM, Congress, Sikkim National Front (SNF), the Nepali-Bhutia-Lepcha Association and a host of other organisations promptly formed a Joint Action Committee (JAC) and took the battle on to the streets. The authorities clamped prohibitory orders under Section 144 in Gangtok and other towns.

Finally, the central Rapid Action Force were deployed to quell the agitation. The police lathi-charged JAC sup-

porters for alleged stone throwing and violating prohibitory orders at the Paljor stadium, which left several JAC and police personnel injured. The Government then cracked down on the JAC and arrested several leaders and supporters, while others went into hiding. The JAC was dissolved.

The matter was resolved only when the Centre withdrew the extension of the Act on September 30.

October saw the ruling SDF sweeping the State's first ever party based panchayat polls comfortably. The opposition did not field any candidate protesting "politicisation of the grassroots."

The proposed implementation of direct tax laws in Sikkim led to an uproar. The ruling SDF party called for a 48-hour statewide bandh in protest.

Sri Chamling blamed the "double standards" of the previous Bhandari Government for the possible extension of direct central tax laws in Sikkim. An all-party meeting resolved to oppose the extension politically as well as by legal means. The Apex Court has deferred the case till January next.

The Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai lama paid a four-day State visit in October to lay the foundation-stone for the 60-foot tall statue of the great Buddhist teacher Guru Rimpoche at Namchi in south Sikkim.

The request of former Chief Minister and SSP President of Nar Bahadur Bhandari to prosecute Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was first turned down by Governor Choudhury Singh in June. The Supreme Court also rejected his writ petition on the same issue in November.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of India's independence, the State Government felicitated 60 persons for their contribution to the establishment and growth of democracy.

The year ended with the State Government accepting the Pay Commission's recommendations with several modifications. The new pay structure has enhanced the salaries of Group C and D staff. Teachers and police personnel will also get a much better pay than their central Government counterparts.-UNI.

DECCAN HERALD

15 March 1998

## Chamling tightens hold

The resounding victory of the SDF candidate in Sikkim's lone Lok Sabha seat has put Chamling in a happy position

PEOPLE of Gangtok jokingly refer to him as the 'Havildar Chief Minister'; the rhythmic regularity with which Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling had to resort to crisis manage-

ment in his three years-old Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF) and retain his chair in the SDF government, has made him realise rather belatedly that faint hearts do not win a fair battle.

The resounding victory of the ruling SDF nominee Mr Bhim Prasad Dahal in the state's lone Lok Sabha seat has put Mr Chamling firm on the saddle; and the defeat of the Congress candidate Mr Sanchaman Limboo who was being supported by the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) and other opposition parties sent the SSP supremo Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari into a tizzy.

Like all good politicians, Mr Chamling has credited the win to his government's pro-people programmes, saying that the victory had bestowed additional responsibility on the SDF nominee in presenting this strategic border state's typical problems before the central government.

Mr Dahal's margin of victory was around 50,829,31,000 less than the figure he registered in the 1996 LS poll. The third candidate Mr O M Prakash Bhandari had polled only 1,820 votes and lost his deposit.

Mr Dahal had a lead in 29 out of the 31 assembly segments while Mr Limboo led in the rest- Dzongu in North Sikkim and Gangtok, the state capital in East Sikkim. In the last poll, Mr Dahal had defeated the SSP chief by over 82,000 votes.

Even though the state assembly elections are to take place after two years, the lead by the opposition candidate in Gangtok has become slightly uncomfortable for the SDF supremo. That the chief minister's popularity in the capital has been eroding among the NBC (Newars, Brahmins and Chettris) voters is well-known.

Mr Chamling who had earlier admitted while talking to a group of journalists that the SDF government would accord priority to better the lot of the 'have-nots', has denied that the surge in the opposition vote in the capital has plunged the party into a panic.

He said about 70 per cent of the state's total plan outlay had been earmarked for rural development and the government was steadfast in its course; there might be some facilities lacking for the capital town's elite class. But Mr Chamling has his priorities well charted out.

It was also evident from a shift in the SDF's standpoint in extending support to the proposed BJP-led coalition government at the centre. The SDF steering committee which met at Gangtok early this week, has authorised its president and chief minister to decide on the question of support at the Centre. Mr Chamling who is the founder-president of the party, was re-elected as the chief for another five-year term. Interestingly, the SDF which extended its support to the P V Narashima Rao government at the Centre in the wake of an alliance between the SDF and the Congress at the state level, declined to support a Congress-led coalition as the pact 'does not exist any more', Mr Chamling maintained.

According to him, after the 1996 poll, the Congress

has unilaterally broken the alliance by fielding its candidate against the SDF in the recent LS poll. However, he did not make it absolutely categorical in extending an unequivocal support to the BJP government in New Delhi except maintaining 'our options are clear.' While it is true that the SDF has never taken any stand opposing the BJP, the latter has not yet expressed any reservation in accepting the SDF support. For Mr Chamling, the choice is limited; either the SDF does not ally with the BJP and face the music, or extend issued-based support to the Saffron clan while putting riders which would inevitably be linked to the release of central funds for the state's development.

**Prasanta Paul**  
in Calcutta

## The Statesman

1 April 1998

### Chamling urges PM to waive Central loans

NEW DELHI March 31,- The Sikkim government has urged the Central to waive the Central loans of Rs 400 crore to help the state balance its economy, reports UNI.

The state chief minister, in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, said that the interest on the Central loans stood at Rs 70 crore per annum.

Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling met Mr Vajpayee last evening and informed him of the state of development activity. He sought additional Central allocation to meet the cost of development projects in the state.

"The debt burden has become unbearable. We request the Union government write off, as one-time measure, the loans and interest payment considering the state of the economy and the need for accelerating economic development of the state," the memorandum said.

This is Mr Chamling's first visit to Delhi since the installation of the BJP - led coalition at the Centre. Mr Chamling's ruling party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, has one member in the Lok Sabha.

Mr Bhim Bahadur Dahal, the MP, is with the BJP alliance and voted for it during the confidence motion in the Lok Sabha.

Mr Chamling told the Prime Minister that that state government needed special assistance from the Central to implement the recommendations of the state pay commission for its employees.

The chief minister also met the finance minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha.

Mr Sinha informed Mr Chamling that the government would consider sympathetically the recommendations of

the North-eastern Council for the state's inclusion.

It was also brought to the notice of the finance minister that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs was yet to clear the 500 MW Teesta Stage Five Project. Mr Sinha assured Mr Chamling that he would look into the matter.

Mr Chamling sought Central subsidy for running a helicopter service between Bagdogra and Gangtok for the benefit of tourist, as was being done in the case of Arunachal Pradesh.

The chief minister will meet the Home Minister, Mr LK Advani, and Railway Minister, Mr Nitish Kumar tomorrow.

## The Statesman

2 April 1998

### SDF joins N-E parties' forum

NEW DELHI, April 1 - The Sikkim Democratic Front, led by Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, was admitted today to the North-east Regional Political Parties' Forum by its chairman and Assam chief minister, Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta.

With the SDF joining it, the forum now has nine regional parties. All these parties are opposed to the Congress in their respective states. Apart from the SDF, the other members are: Asom Gana Parishad, Arunachal Congress, Manipur People's Party, United Democratic Front of Meghalaya, Nagaland People's Council, Mizo National Front, Mizo People's Conference and united People's Party, Assam.

Nearly all members have extended support to the BJP-led government at the Centre. The AGP, however, though still claiming to be in the United Front, has shown its inclination to support the Vajpayee government.

Mr Chamling, the Sikkim chief minister, had reportedly applied for membership of the forum because "special needs of smaller states can be projected at the national level through this forum".

In a memorandum submitted by Mr Chamling to the Prime Minister yesterday, the Sikkim government urged the Centre to waive the Central loans of Rs400 crore to help the state balance its economy. Interest on the Central loans stand at Rs70 crore per annum. "The debt burden has become unbearable," Mr Chamling reportedly told Mr Vajpayee.

The forum's main objective is to help members fight the Congress in their respective states, a forum member said. He accused the Congress for the "increasing militant activities in the North-eastern states." The member, however, added that there have been innumerable demands of the forum pending with successive Central governments.

He hoped now that the BJP has come to power, it would

work for the development of the region. The member added that the support to the BJP government would also depend the "Vajpayee government's approach to the North-eastern states."

The Assam chief minister has already submitted a 14 point charter of demands to the Vajpayee government. The demands include initiating dialogues with the insurgent outfits, implementation of the Shukla Commission report and reimbursement of security-related expenditure.

Fernandes to arrive in Guwahati: The Defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, will be leaving for Assam tomorrow. Mr Mahanta said the state government will brief the Defence minister of militant groups operating from neighbouring countries. ■



## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

3 April 1998

### New bloc in House: Mamata to lead NE MPs, says Chamling

*Our Political Bureau*

Moves are afoot to form a separate bloc in the Lok Sabha comprising seven members of Trinamool Congress and six others belonging to the regional outfits from the Northeast.

Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee is likely to lead the group which will have members belonging to the Sikkim Democratic Front, Manipur Congress and Arunachal Congress as its leaders.

Disclosing this, Mr P K Chamling, SDF leader and the chief minister of Sikkim, said that the modalities regarding the formation of the proposed bloc have more or less been worked out. Mr Chamling, who was in the Capital to meet the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee, also confirmed that members of the parties from the north-east have offered the leadership to Ms Banerjee.

The Sikkim chief minister explained the decision of the parties from the north-east to join hands with the Trinamool Congress(I) has been taken with a view to gaining some leverage with the Centre. "We -- because of our small size -- find it difficult to make our voice heard and secure the redressal of our grievances," he said.

For Ms Banerjee who just led her fledgeling outfit to a spectacular performance in West Bengal, the move, if it

fructifies, will mean a major boost. Besides getting her the leadership of a 13-strong group in the Lok Sabha, it can help her graduate from being just the leader of a West Bengal-based outfit to one with acceptability among the adjoining states to the north-east also.

Briefing presspersons about his deliberations with the prime minister, Mr Chamling whose SDF is supporting the BJP-led government, said that the prime minister assured him of a sympathetic consideration of the demand for waiving off loans worth Rs400 crore. The chief minister justified his demand saying that the state was having to divert a shopping Rs 70 crore every year to repay the interest to the Centre. He said that Sikkim had go without the benefits of the first three 5-year plans since it joined the Union much later and needs extra push from the Centre if it has to overcome backwardness.

He also confirmed that he had urged Mr Vajpayee to accommodate the lone member of the SDF in the Lok Sabha. This, according to him, will help bring Sikkim into the national mainstream.

Mr Chamling, who surprised political observers when he humbled political heavyweight, Mr Narbahadur Bhandari, in the last assembly election in the state, met several members of the Union Cabinet for pressing long-pending demands of Sikkim like construction of an airstrip and an infrastructure for promoting tourism, extension of rail network to Sikkim, and Sikkim's inclusion in the North-East Council. He demanded that the entire population of the state should be given reservation benefits. He also argued against the extension of Income-Tax act to the state, saying that income-tax laws of the Chogyal era were still in force. ■

## The Statesman

3 April 1998

### More representation from Sikkim sought

NEW DELHI, April 2, - The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, has a grudge. Ever since the merger of the state 24 years ago, not a single person from Sikkim has held a constitutional post in the Union of India.

Mr Chamling, who was in the Capital today, would not disclose if he was claiming for ministership in the BJP-led government which his Sikkim Democratic Front is supporting unconditionally.

"It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister. If it happens it will be good for the state as well as for national integration", Mr Chamling told a Press conference here tonight.

He said the Centre has not appointed a single Governor or Ambassador from Sikkim. And in the case of a Union

Minister "even an account has not been opened".

Mr Chamling's party was one of the first in the North-East to announce support to the BJP-led government.

He wants the north-eastern parties along with the Trinamool Congress to form a front in the Parliament. It would not be a pressure group but would strengthen the government and also give a combined voice to the problems of the region, he added. The Arunachal Chief Minister, Mr Gegong Apang, has already done some ground work in this field.

The Sikkim Chief Minister is upset that the Congress ignored his party during the elections. The Congress combined with "anti-national forces", he said. "It is not a good sign. During the elections the Congress just ignored us altogether", he said.

During his five-day stay in the Capital he met the ministers of the new government and the Prime Minister. He presented a 12-page memorandum to Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee for an economic package for the state.

He said that Sikkim was the most peaceful state in the North-East but, there was a possibility that the atmosphere could be spoiled. He said urgent steps need to be taken to check unemployment among the youth. The Centre has to help in establishing industry as well as improve the tourism potential of the state, he declared.

He said that the Centre should waive the Rs400 crore loan outstanding against the state from various institutions. This has created economic problems for them since it has to pay Rs70 crores as interest. The Centre should waive it in the same manner as had been done in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Chamling said the Prime Minister had assured him that he would look into the problem.

He has also demanded that implementation of Income-Tax in Sikkim should be kept in abeyance. The state government is of the view that imposition of the Income-Tax Act.1989, went against the safeguards guaranteed in the Constitution's Article 371 F. He said the old Income-Tax laws were applicable in the state. ■

## THE HINDU

3 April 1998

### Mamata may head bloc of 13 MPs

A group of 13 MPs from West Bengal and the north-eastern States led by the Trinamul Congress leader, Ms Mamata Banerji, would soon be formed to provide constructive support to the BJP-led Government at the Centre, the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, said



today.

Mr Chamling told reporters here that Sikkim had not been represented in the Union Cabinet since it joined the Indian Union over two decades ago and demanded that the lone Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) MP be given a Ministerial berth.

The 13 MPs would include seven from the Trinamul Congress, two from the Arunachal Congress and one each from Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Sikkim, he said. "Two rounds of talks had already been held to form the group of MPs and I have given full support to Mamata Banerji becoming its leader."

He also demanded waiving of the Rs.400-crore Central loan of Sikkim in line with waivers granted to Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. ■

## THE ASIAN AGE

4 April 1998

### Sikkim seeks special package

*By Our Correspondent*

New Delhi, April 3: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling, has demanded a Rs.3,000-crore economic package for his state on the lines of the special package announced for the Northeast by former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda in 1996.

Mr Chamling told reporters on Thursday that the additional funds were required for the development of infrastructure so that the gap between Sikkim and the advanced states could be bridged.

"Despite its proximity to the insurgency-affected Northeast, Sikkim has remained peaceful ever since it joined the Indian Union. Only the speedy development of Sikkim will ensure that the peaceful situation is not disturbed," he said.

The chief minister, in a memorandum submitted to Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, has urged the Centre to withdraw the Indian Income Tax Act from the state as Article 371 (f) of the Constitution allowed it implement its own tax laws. It has also sought the waiver of loans from financial institutions amounting to about Rs400 crore. "the interest on these loans amounts to about Rs70 crore every year, and this has crippled the economy of Sikkim," Mr Chamling said. Other demands include funding to implement pay panel recommendations.

"I am hopeful that Mr Vajpayee will act positively on these demands," he said. The lone MP in the Lok Sabha from the Sikkim Democratic Front headed by Mr Chamling is supporting the BJP-led government at the Centre. ■

## THE HINDU

6 April 1998

### Chamling seeks Rs.3,000 cr. economic package

NEW DELHI, April, 5- The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, has demanded an economic package of Rs.3,000 crores for his State, besides waiving off loans as was done for Punjab.

In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Mr A.B. Vajpayee, Mr Chamling has urged the Centre to waive off loans of Rs.400 crores drawn from various Central agencies, saying the State has to pay back Rs.70 crores annually as interest on the amount. "This could be a one time goodwill gesture to the people of Sikkim."

Mr Chamling, president of the Sikkim Democratic Front, whose lone MP is supporting the BJP Government at the Centre, says he is against the enforcement of the Income Tax Act in the State, but favours the continuance of the laws of the erstwhile Chogyal regime.

"One of the most important provisions of the article 371(f) of the Constitution is the protection that has been afforded with respect to the laws and acts that were in existence in the State prior to its merger.

"Sikkim had its own income tax laws and it was expected that with the Constitutional guarantees provided, all these laws would remain in force. However, in 1989, the Indian Income Tax laws were sought to be enforced in the State which in our opinion goes contrary to the safeguards enshrined in article 371(f) of the Constitution," the memorandum says.

Mr Chamling, during his visit to Delhi this week, the first since the installation of the BJP-led Government at the Centre, met several Union Ministers, including the Home Minister, Mr L.K. Advani, and the Finance Minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha.

Mr Chamling has welcomed the assurance contained in the national agenda on the creation of a separate Ministry for the North Eastern States which "we believe reflects the anxiety of the Government to tackle in an effective manner the serious problems that the smaller and backward States of the region face."

Mr Chamling said he had received a positive response from the Centre on the long-pending demand for inclusion of Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council, for which resolutions have been passed more than once.

He said the inclusion of Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council will help the State in its planned development. "This would also help us to coordinate the developmental activities with the neighbouring States."

The Chief Minister urged the need for reviving the rail link that connected Siliguri with a point near Teesta in West Bengal and extending it further to the State. A survey in this regard has already been initiated by the north east frontier Railway. The mines and geology department of the State Government had declared that the project is geo-technically feasible, he said. ■

## The Telegraph

6 April 1998

### Sikkim seeks Rs 3000-cr aid

New Delhi, April, 5 (UNI) : Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling has sought a its 3,000-crore economic package for his state and waiver of loans taken from various Central.

In a memorandum to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajapayee, the chief minister asked the Centre to waive off loans to the tune of Rs400 crore. He said the state had to pay Rs 70 crore per annum as interest on the amount, adding that a waiver could be “a one-time goodwill gesture.”

Mr Chamling, heads the Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF), whose lone MP is supporting the BJP Government at the Centre.

The chief minister said he was in favour of continuing with the tax laws of the erstwhile Chogyal regime rather than enforcing the Income Tax Act in the state.

“One of the most important provisions of the article 371(f) of the Constitution is the protection that has been afforded with respect to the laws and acts that were in existence in the State prior to its merger. Sikkim had its own income tax laws and it was expected that with the Constitutional guarantees provided, all these laws would remain in force. However, in 1989, the Indian Income Tax laws were sought to be enforced in the State which in our opinion goes contrary to the safeguards enshrined in article 371(f) of the Constitution,” he said..

Other political parties in the state are also against enforcement of the country’s general income tax laws. Sources said the laws had been extended to the state, but not enforced as yet.

During his visit to New Delhi this week, Chamling met home minister L.K. Advani, finance minister Yashwant Sinha, railway minister Nitish Kumar, information and broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj, and Planning Commission deputy chairman Jaswant Singh. Chamling welcomed the assurances contained in the national agenda of the BJP led government and the proposal to create a separate ministry. ■

## The Statesman

10 April 1998

### Chamling to focus on N-E states

CLACUTTA, April, 9- The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, is attempting to break away from the insularity of state politics. This is apparent from his decision to tie up with other smaller parties in Parliament.

The Sikkim Democratic Front will be part of a separate group in the Lok Sabha, along with parties of some of the north-eastern states and the Trinamul Congress.

The decision to join the front has led the Sikkim Chief Minister into alliances with unlikely partners like Miss Mamata Banerjee and the Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr G Apang.

“We have decided to set up this front to make audible the demands of smaller north-eastern states and Sikkim and to ensure that the problems of the region are heard in Parliament,” Mr Chamling told **The Statesman** in an exclusive interview over telephone from Gangtok recently.

The front, which will extend support to the BJP government, is to comprise 13 like-minded parliamentarians who realise the need to project the problems of smaller states. Miss Mamata Banerjee will lead the front.

“It will be unique in the sense that there is no other group in Parliament which shares the desire to articulate the concerns of those people whose problems are normally ignored by a political leadership drawn from the major parties of the country,” Mr Chamling said.

He, however, made it clear that the setting up of such a front did not mean that the “constituent parties would compromise on their respective political ideologies and distinctive programmes.”

By espousing the cause of the “smaller states”, Mr Chamling appears to be endorsing the national agenda of the BJP government which has promised the setting up smaller states in the country.

“The setting up of such states is a positive move and could led to more effective administration in the respective regions,” he said. “The existence of smaller states does not oppose the notion of a strong Centre. It only ensures the stability and the interests of the local people”.

The setting up of the front is also being construed as an attempt by Mr Chamling to extend his political influence to regions beyond the state’s borders. He has stolen a march over his local political rivals on this matter, leaving them to “bicker over their own petty political interests with the sole aim of political survival.” ■

# SUNDAY

AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION

11 April 1998

## Promises to keep

*CM Chamling faces administrative challenges*

The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has consolidated its position by retaining the long Lok Sabha seat in the strategic border state of Sikkim. But chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling is struggling to implement his government's pro-Sikkimese policies and programmes. At least that's what the recent mass-transfer of bureaucrats suggests.

The chief minister is determined to see that the "son-of-the-soil" policy, ironically initiated by his predecessor and enemy number one Nar Bahadur Bhandari, is implemented in order to gain the people's confidence.

The present shake-up comes close on the heels of last year's reshuffling of 64 senior officials, including 29 state power department engineers. This time, Pawan Kumar Chamling has transferred over 70 middle-level bureaucrats and engineers. In an obvious move to appease the state civil service, four of its cadres have been elevated to the rank of secretaries.

But a lot remains to be done. In the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, Chamling had vowed to fight corruption at every level and cleanse the system. That, of course, is easier said than done. To keep his word, he will first have to set his own house in order. No state government department is free from the malaise of corruption, a fact which the chief minister himself acknowledges.

The culture of ostentatious living, a lifestyle fostered by the 14-year-long Bhandari regime, is too deeply entrenched among the powers that be. To bring about a change, Chamling will have to ensure that his 15-member ministry functions as a coherent whole. He will also have to ensure popular participation in the process of detecting, exposing and curbing corruption.

Another disturbing trend has been the involvement of some SDF members in extortion rackets. Chamling is alarmed and aggrieved by reports of partymen 'raising funds' from the business community. "Some of the SDF leaders and workers are losing their commitment to the party's ideology and working for personal gains. This is our biggest problem. In fact, it is a serious setback," admits the SDF supremo.

While the administrative challenges remain, Chamling has the advantage of knowing that he is in a politically sound position. His SDF, after its meteoric rise to power in 1994, has weathered many a political storm. In 1992, he

had floated the party and was its sole representative in the Assembly. Today, the ruling SDF has 26 MLAs in the 32-member House.

Pawan Kumar Chamling will also be banking on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition at the Centre to back his play. The SDF supporters here are confident that the party and the people of Sikkim will be "rewarded" by Atal Behari Vajpayee's government in Delhi.

"Under the able leadership of Pawan Kumar Chamling and with the blessing of the BJP government in Delhi there will be political stability and economic progress in Sikkim," say one SDF-loyalist.

**G.Chettri / Gangtok**

## NATIONAL

## HERALD

6 May 1998

## Sikkim gets web site

NEW DELHI, May, 5- Sikkim a landlocked state has come closer to the rest of the world with the inauguration of its multimedia web site on internet over Nicnet. The Web Site was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Sikkim Mr Pawan Chamling here today.

Mr Chamling said that in the absence of a proper Doordarshan centre and news linkage, Sikkim had been hardly available to the outside world but now with a touch of the button people across the world could learn about the state's exotic flora and fauna and its generous endowment of natural beauty lakes, rivers, glaciers and monasteries. With the launch of this Web Site, the tourism industry of the state would also get a big boost, he added.

The existing manual system of administration and management would function more efficiently and effectively by starting a management system which would link all the departments and establish a strong network between all the user organisation, said the Chief Minister, Sikkim being a small state, this network can be established at a comparatively lower cost.

"I have also in mind various other projects wherein computerisation can be used effectively for better management of records, accounts, financial and public transactions and personnel matters," Mr Chamling said, "I constantly encourage the heads of my departments to make all efforts for increasing their efficiency through computerisation and to motivate the employees working under them to become computer literate, he added.

The Chief Minister said that the state was committed to extending all support to the National Informatics Centre for their activities which would help the state to advance.

The information regarding Sikkim is depicted over the Web in a very lucid way using texts, pictures, voices as well as video clippings. People from any corner of the world can have access to the available information about Sikkim sitting at their homes with their PCs. The state unit of Sikkim has also come out with a draft plan for the implementation of information technology in the state.

The Project hopes to take the state of Sikkim into the hi-tech, world of information technology. This Multimedia Web page of Sikkim has been developed by the state unit of the NIC. ■



6 May 1998

## Chamling opens Sikkim website

SIKKIM: Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling on Tuesday inaugurated a multimedia website of Sikkim in the Internet developed by National Informatics Centre at a function here. With this launch, Sikkim became the fourth north-eastern State after Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura to have a multi-media website in the Internet. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Chamling said, "With the Launch of this website the tourism industry of the state would get a big boost." The website which could be accessed by 30 million internet subscribers around the world on <http://Sikkim.Nic.In/> will give an insight on the astounding variety of flora and fauna, the exquisite festivals in the backdrop of the enchanting mountain range, glaciers, lakes, hot springs and the mystic monasteries of Sikkim.

*SENTINAL*

7 May 1998

## Sikkim Govt makes austerity measures more stringent

GANGTOK, May 6(PTI): In a bid to make austerity measures more stringent the Sikkim Government has banned the Purchase of any new vehicle during the current financial year.

The State administration has also passed strictures on furnishing and fittings at government buildings. A formal

notification, from the State Finance Department, to this effect has already been issued.

The Chief Minister Pawan Chamling announced this while addressing a high-level meeting attended by the Chief Secretary and other Government on Saturday last.

Under the austerity measure, the present government has already discontinued the practice of serving drinks in any official gathering.

The meeting, which reviewed the progress of various ongoing schemes and discussed a number of future plans of the Government, also decided to issue identification certificates only after thorough verification by the police and the panchayat.

The State Government would deduct the arrears from the budgets of certain departments whose heads would fail to settle "outstanding dues" of power, printing, telephone-despite being served reminders- without further delay, he said.

The meeting also discussed issues like non-acceptance of photocopies of official documents which were not attested by an authorized signatory, conferment of official recognition of all places of worship, making work-permit mandatory for all labourers and fixing uniform schedule rate for all public works departments, the sources said.

The Chief Minister asked the Departments to prepare a list of total number of private schools in the state and conduct inquiries whether they (school authorities) sought any permission for operating their institutions.

Assam Tribune

8 May 1998

## Chamling stresses on maintaining strict financial discipline

GANGTOK May 7- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has stressed on maintaining strict financial discipline and called upon the secretaries of all State Government departments to make endeavour to generate more revenue and mobilise resources. Sri Chamling was addressing a high-level meeting of senior bureaucrats of this Himalayan State here on Monday, reports UNI.

Chamling said, "revamping of our work culture and present system of functioning has become the need of the hour. Our duty is to find out solutions to problems, not to create them." The Chief Minister came down heavily on the undue delay by departments in clearing pending files and settlement of bills, while was stalling progress of various welfare schemes causing untold suffering to the people.

He pulled up the departments for their callousness in



clearing their outstanding dues pertaining to power, printing, consumers items and telephone bills. The Chief Minister declared that as an austerity measure, no furnishing and fittings of offices and purchase of new vehicle would be allowed during the current financial year. Chamling also expressed grave concern over the growing influx of people from outside the State. He said, "in the wake of the ever increasing influx, a large number of undesirable elements with repugnant culture, values and traits have crept into Sikkim endangering our rich culture, traditions, various and language.

He urged the bureaucrats to seriously ponder over this alarming issue, which had put the very future of Sikkim at stake.

Among the far-reaching decisions taken during the meeting included issuing of domicile or identification certificates only after thorough verification by both police and panchayats, imposition of severe penalties on those violating the law banning the use of plastic bags.

More stringent procedure in issuing trade and motor vehicle licences, maintenance of records and conferment of official recognition to all places of worship in the State is needed.

The high-level meeting, headed by the Chief Minister, was also attended by the newly appointed top brass of the State bureaucrats besides department secretaries, including Chief Secretary Sonam Wangdi, Additional Chief Secretary, GSW Tenzing, State Director General of Police LC Amarnathan and Finance Secretary, Tashi Topden, also decided to make work permits mandatory for all labourers engaged in the State.

The meeting decided to ensure that all jobs, including construction works, to be awarded to locals in all organisations in Sikkim irrespective of their affiliations and fixing uniform scheduled rates for all the public works departments.

The Chief Minister took serious view of the arbitrary manner in which a number of organisations engaged in the State were christening various places of Sikkim without the State Government's permission and also spelling wrong names of important towns and villages of the State along the National Highway 31 A. Sri Chamling instructed the department concerned and the State Chief Secretary to look into the anomaly and rectify the same.

Chamling also instructed the State education department to inquire into the mushrooming of private schools in the State. He also asked the education and land revenue departments to immediately prepare a list of all private schools operating in the State and submit to the Government.

Announcing the first State-level four-day exhibition-cum-sale from May 24 to 27 the Chief Minister directed all departments dealing with rural public works, including repair of rural school buildings and providing furniture to village schools, plantations, minor irrigation works, water

supply schemes and horticulture to transfer 30 per cent of their respective schemes to the gram panchayats within a week of receipt of notification from the State rural development department.

Chamling called for active participation of all departments in the exhibition-cum-sale. They have been instructed to put up stalls to apprise and educate the public and participants alike on the activities of their respective departments.

Expressing gratitude to the State Government employees for their co-operation and extension of support to the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front Government during the past three-and-half years in implementing a number of people-oriented welfare schemes. Chamling hoped for similar cooperation in the future and urged the secretaries to provide exemplary leadership for the overall development of Sikkim.

## *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

12 May 1998

### Sikkim hosting two-day festival of witch doctors

GANGTOK, May, 11- A TWO-DAY festival of witch doctors -- shakti shanti puja -- is being held here for the first time for the "well-being and welfare of the State and the people".

Inaugurating the programme, Chief Minister Chamling said the festival of the jhakris and bijuwas (witch doctors) would be held every year to attract tourists to the State.

About 500 witch doctors are participating in the festival which began today. The festival would be held every year on the occasion of *chandi purnima* or *Buddha purnima*, he said.

Chamling urged the people to keep alive the tradition of the jhakris, whose skills were required to cure the ailing in rural areas. ■

## **THE ASIAN AGE**

14 May 1998

### Chamling wants Army recruitment unit in state

Gangtok, May 13: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling recently put forward the suggestion that an Army recruitment centre be set up in Sikkim, as in other states of the country.

Mr Chamling, who met Union defence minister George Fernandes in New Delhi last week, told him that a "small"

centre ought to be set up in Sikkim to enable the youth of the state to sit for interviews for recruitment to the armed forces.

Mr Chamling also requested Mr Fernandes to expedite the long pending cases of compensations for land occupied by the Army in the strategic border state. Mr Fernandes reportedly assured Mr Chamling that once the Border Roads Organisation completed the task of land alignments, his ministry would settle the matter. Mr Chamling also discussed the possibility of setting up defence related smallscale industries in the state for the benefit of unemployed youth and entrepreneurs.(UNI)

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 May 1998

### Three Eventful Years of Peace And Economic Reconstruction

Twenty-four years ago the people of Sikkim joined the Indian Union to secure for themselves basic democratic rights, including those of adult franchise and one man one vote. In the initial years democracy was provided an opportunity to grow and flourish. However dark clouds engulfed the state in 1980 when an oppressive government took over the state. For fourteen years Sikkim lived under a regime of terror and political oppression. Three years ago, on December 12, 1994 the people of Sikkim destroyed a dictatorship to vote the Sikkim Democratic Front, led by Pawan Chamling to power. During the past three years the government, under the dedicated leadership of Pawan Chamling, has successfully restructured the political and economic environment of the state making it pro poor, pro rural and pro people. Economic planning has been reorganised to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the poor and the needy of the Sikkimese society, particularly those living in the rural areas, who were for long denied the fruits of freedom and economic prosperity. Setting itself the goal of economic prosperity for self sufficiency with social justice and freedom from fear and exploitation, the SDF has initiated programmes for the benefit of the poor and deprived sections. Its efforts are now visible for all to see. Economic development schemes with a heavy pro poor, pro rural slant, have put a smile on the faces of the rural population, who had suffered deprivation and neglect for several years under previous governments. Within the short span of three years the SDF has earned considerable credit within and outside the state. Among the major achievements has been the end to the reign of terror and political oppression and the return of the rule of law. Another major achievement has been the success achieved in bringing about an emotional integration of the Sikkimese people with the rest of the country.

*"I have greatest respect for Mr Pawan Chamling, not only as Chief Minister but as a person and a great human being. He is a remarkable personality. I would not look at him as a politician but rather as a poet, writer, editor, and one who has espoused great causes of democracy, national integration, economic development and other progressive causes. He had started the search for democracy with alighted candle in the manner of Socrates looking for a honest man. Chamling has shown immense courage, suffering all kinds of repression to secure democratic rights of the people."*

**- K. R. Narayanan**

#### I have A Vision For Sikkim

*I have a vision for Sikkim. I would like to build a Sikkim which is a haven of peace and tranquility. Where every citizen is safe and secure and conscious of his or her rights and duties. Where the poor and the deprived get equal opportunities to grow and prosper. Where every family has a roof over its head and each member is assured of two square meals every day.*

*Above all I would like to see a Sikkim where everyone can live with dignity and without fear or discrimination. I would like to build an altogether new and sukhi (happy and prosperous) Sikkim which will be the pride of Mother India. Above all I would like to bring about the emotional integration of the people of Sikkim with the rest of the country. I would like the Sikkimese people to play an active role in the development of the nation. This is my dream.*

**- Pawan Chamling**

## Assam Tribune

18 May 1998

### 'Sikkim most peaceful State'

GANGTOK May 17- In spite of under development, Sikkim can boast of being the "most peaceful" State without any insurgency problem, Governor Chaudhury Randhir Singh yesterday said.

Addressing a programme on the occasion of State Day, Chaudhury Singh said, "Sikkim is absolutely free from any militancy problem despite being underdeveloped which is believed to be at the root of insurgency."

The Governor termed the State Day as a day of "Stock-taking" and congratulated the administration for its over-

all performance, especially in education and rural housing schemes.

Praising the country's nuclear feat, the Governor cautioned neighbouring countries not to underestimate India and urged them to continue the environment of friendship.

The Chief Minister Sri Pawan Chamling, in his speech dwelt at length on the achievements of his government during his tenure.

"Some of the basic democratic values had started eroding even though democracy was being practised in Sikkim", he said.

But, ever since the SDF Government came to power freedom of speech and the rule of law were established, the Chief Minister said.

Asking Government employees to serve Sikkim in "letter and spirit" for the State's development, Chamling said he considered them as the "Backbone of the society." If they work diligently and shoulder responsibility, there is no reason why Sikkim should lag behind?" he said.

Chamling reiterated his Government's support to the Prime Minister for his "Strongest" decision on the nuclear test. - PTI

## The Statesman

22 May 1998

# Panel to oversee N-E development

GANGTOK, May, 21- The Planning Commission will look after development of the north-eastern states, including Sikkim, following restructuring of the North Eastern Council, a senior home ministry official has said, reports PTI.

Development of the states along with law and order had earlier been under the Union home ministry's purview.

Following Sikkim's inclusion in the NEC, the Union Additional Home Secretary met the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling and other top officials on Tuesday.

Dr P D Shenoy, in charge of NEC affairs, said the proposed Bill on restructuring the council to accommodate Sikkim was "in the final stage" and would be sent to the Planning Commission and the Prime Minister's Office soon, officials said.

Besides the proposed NEC Bill, the meeting discussed enforcement of direct taxes laws, construction of an air strip, writing off loans amounting to Rs400 crore. ■

## The Indian EXPRESS

23 May 1998

# Centre offers hope to Sikkim's last king, ready to compensate 'lost kingdom'

Gangtok, May 22: Years after Sikkim's Controversial merger with India, when Crown Prince' Tobgyal Wangchuk Tenzing Namgyal was anointed the '13th consecrated Chogyal of Sikkim' on Feb 19, 1982 following the death of his father, he became a king without a kingdom.

And now, 1 years later, there is a flicker of hope that he may at last get a price for the lost kingdom.

The Vajpayee Government has opened what has remained a closed chapter for successive Government in New Delhi- paying compensation to the family of the tiny Himalayan State's former rulers.

New Delhi responded this time to a plea by Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling who brought it up with Atal Behari Vajpayee soon after he became Prime Minister.

"I think Delhi should get the issue sorted out once and for all," Chamling says, "the compensation should be paid on humanitarian grounds and also for practical reason. The Sikkim Government frequently gets involved in legal cases over land and other property which the Chogyal family claims. This hampers development work."

Following Chamling's plea, the Union Home ministry called a meeting with Sikkim Government officials in New Delhi on May 5. Although the meeting was postponed. Chamling has asked several Government departments to prepare lists of the 'palace' property.

He says this is being done with the Centre's approval.

Chamling has sound political reason to see the issue settled. For, the palace may be deserted and lacklustre, the merger a settled fact and the 13th Chogyal Wangchuk living almost an ascetic's life, but the legacy of the palace still strikes an emotive chord in , many Sikkimese hearts.

Until a few years ago, most politicians in Sikkim would try to exploit public sentiments over the merger during elections. That has changed 23 years after the event. But making sympathetic gestures to the palace is still considered politically correct.

Nar Bahadur Bhandari, whose pro-palace sympathies brought him political prominence and subsequently 15 years of Chief Ministership until 1994, also raised the issue of compensation to the Chogyal's family with New Delhi, albeit without success.

The 12th Chogyal, Palden Thondup Namgyal, never

accepted the merger and refused to sign the instrument of accession. He also declined an offer of generous compensation by the Janata Government's Prime Minister Morarji Desai and another by the Charan Singh Government to make him the Governor of an Indian State.

"It'd be a good thing if it comes," says Tashi Gyaltzen, manager of the palace since December, 1975. He does not, however, remember when the present Chogyal, Wangchuk Namgyal, last sent a representation to New Delhi on this.

"The Chogyal lives almost like a hermit, spending a lot of time with his guru who lives in Nepal. He travels to Nepal mostly by bus. See, he can't even maintain the palace lawns," he points to the unweeded garden that lies between the simple, two-storey palace and the gumpa, the royal chapel.

And, when he is here, 43-year-old Wangchuk Namgyal, educated at Harrow and the Ealing School of Business in London, divides his time between the lonesome palace and the Buddhist monastic college he has set up at Takchi on the outskirts of the town.

"But no, you can't meet him there because he is in retreat, meditating," Gyaltzen is almost apologetic, "some other time you try for an appointment. He'll be pleased to meet you. He is a very simple man."

## The Telegraph

1 June 1998

# Sikkim govt to leave Rumtek alone

GANGTOK: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has said that his government would not interfere with the religious affairs of the Rumtek monastery in the state, report UNI.

The chief minister expressed this view while meeting the visiting Tibetan minister for religion and cultural affairs of the exiled government of the Dalai Lama here recently. He told Kirti Rimpoche that his government would not interfere with the religious matter at the monastery regarding the controversy about the head of the Kagyupa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Chamling said his government would abide by the decision of the Buddhist temporal head the Dalai Lama on religious affairs. His government would only confine to maintaining law and order situation around the monastery, 28 km from Gangtok, he said. Rumtek is the headquarters of the Kagyupa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The dharma chakra centre here was established in 1959 after the Chinese took over Tibet.

The emissary of the Dalai Lama expressed happiness

over the well-being of the Tibetan community in Sikkim, who have been living in this state for the last so many years in perfect harmony with the local populace.

The Rimpoche also expressed his government's gratitude to the Union government for granting asylum and extending assistance to the millions of Tibetans living in India, who he said regard India as their "second home."

## Assam Tribune

2 June 1998

# No interference with Rumtek affairs: Chamling

GANGTOK, June 1- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has said this his Government would not interfere with the religious affairs of the world famous Rumtek monastery in the State, reports UNI.

He expressed this view while meeting the visiting Tibetan Minister for Religion and Culture Affairs of the exiled Government of the Dalai Lama here recently. He told Kirti Rimpoche that his Government would not interfere with the religious matter at the monastery regarding the controversy about the head of the Kagyupa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Sri Chamling said that his Government would abide by the decision of the Buddhist temporal head the Dalai Lama on the religious affairs. His Government would only confine to maintaining law-and-order situation around the monastery, 28 km from Gangtok, he said.

Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre is involved in the ongoing five-year-old row over the selection of the reincarnation of the head of the monastery since the death of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa in 1981. Rumtek is the headquarters of the Kagyupa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dharma Chakra Centre was established in 1959 after the Chinese took over Tibet.

The emissary of the Dalai Lama expressed happiness over the well-being of the Tibetan community in Sikkim, who have been living in this tiny Himalayan State for the last so many years in perfect harmony with the local populace maintaining the most friendly and cordial relationship. The Rimpoche also expressed his Government's gratitude to the Government of India for granting asylum and extending assistance to the millions of Tibetans living in India, which, he said, they regard as their second home.

Sri Chamling assured the Tibetan Minister that the Tibetan community in Sikkim was living with due respect and dignity, earning their livelihood without any prejudice or discrimination.



# SUNDAY

AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION

18 June 1998

SIKKIM

## A fresh start

*The Centre's decision to include Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council spell hope for the tiny Himalayan state*

The recent decision of the Centre to include Sikkim in the North-Eastern Council(NEC) has brought some cheer to this tiny state tucked away in the eastern Himalayas "We are hopeful that our inclusion in the NEC and the presence of the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) government in Delhi will definitely help improve the Centre-state relationship, chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling told Sunday.

"Our inclusion in the NEC will give a boost to our economy. An additional Rs 15,000 crore has been set aside for the NEC states, along with special subsidies," explain the president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF)."But the most important gain from the membership of the council will be the greater political say in the national context."

According to the chief minister, ever since Sikkim merged into the Indian Union in 1975, it has been consistently ignored by successive government at the Centre." We do have many problems, but the biggest of them is that New Delhi does not understand our problems. We refuse to remain like beggars, compared to the rest of the country. Being an Indian means being given our share, our rights as a north-eastern state, not charity," declares Chamling.

After three-and-a-half years in power, the SDF supremo is candid in his assessment of the state's problems." Sikkim is like economic and political science)to make the system scientific, relevant and dynamic.

while explaining the efficacy of the new method, Shubhankar Chakrabarty said, "The question bank is an answer to the problems plaguing the education system. Since the students know the whole range of questions from which the final paper will be set, they don't have to look for 'guide-books' available in the market. Besides, the students now won't have to bank on private coaching centres. The new method will also eliminate the scope of question leak, since a secret cell from among the faculty will choose the final set, a few days before the exams."

The teachers will be far more accountable since they will have to prepare the students to tackle all the questions

in the bank, before framing the final papers." We are even gathering answer scripts of students who scored high marks in previous examinations to use as inputs for model answer," revealed Chakrabarty. The cash-strapped university will thus be saving money normally spent on paper-setters and moderators. These funds can then be utilised for other meaningful academic projects.

The departmental heads of the university have already hailed the new methodology and offered cooperation in implementing it. And for once, the students are most excited about their exams.

*Pankaj Adhikari/Calcutta*

# The Statesman

18 June 1998

## Feeling let down

Three-and-a-half years in power offers enough time for introspection. And the chief minister of Sikkim, Pawan Kumar Chamling, has no qualms about speaking to The STATESMAN of the many ups and downs he has had as head of government.

"When I assumed office on 12 December 1994, I had dreamt of total teamwork in government but I learnt as I went along that it is one thing to frame policies and quite another to implement them," he said over the telephone from Gangtok. "I can't deny that at times the desired teamwork among the various government agencies, the bureaucracy and the Cabinet- that along can deliver the goods to the people- has been missing."

Yet, one cannot help recalling the words of a starry-eyed poet-turned-politician, speaking to this correspondent at his hometown Namchi on the eve of being sworn in as chief minister. The actual "battle" (for democracy) has only just begun, he had said. Every word he seemed to be italicised .

The battle continues today though the adversaries may have changed and Mr Chamling's words become more measured. "I had a vision then which I still have now. Only things seem to have got more difficult. But achievement is still possible. I was an optimist then; I am one now."

Is there a hint of despondence in his confession that he is "not 100 per cent satisfied with his Cabinet's performance"?

"Work from my colleagues has not always been proportionate to policy, and some ministers and MLAs do seem to lack commitment."

The chief minister, over the years, has not shied away from making his disapproval known. There have been Cabinet reshuffles, expulsions of senior leaders from the party, the serious attempts at cleansing the bureaucracy of corruption .

“Corruption charges have been followed up and at least 17 persons suspended from the administration during my tenure. State officials need disciplining.” One way of doing that is to impose an austerity regime, forcing them to change the extravagant life-style many of them have got used to.

“This will save the government Rs 20 crore a year. A liquor ban has been imposed on government functions-even those at Mintogang(the chief minister’s residence). No official gets more than one government vehicle.

“And from this year we have banned refurbishing of offices, buying new furniture, curtains etc. No one will be allowed to make personal STD calls from the workplace; no department shall have more than two STD connections.”

To set an example, the chief minister has got rid of the Mercedes Benz his predecessors used, and travels in a Maruti Gypsy.

He has had his triumphs too: recently the Centre decided to induct Sikkim into the North East Council. “This will be a boost for our economy,” he says. “An additional Rs 1,500 crore is expected And special subsidies.”

The most important gain from membership of the council will, of course, be the “Bigger political say in the national context . Ever since Sikkim merged in the Indian Union it has consistently been ignored by the Centre. We have many problems, but the biggest of them is that New Delhi does not understand or problems. We refuse to remain a beggar in relation to the rest of the country. Being an Indian means being given our share- not charity but our rights as another of Indian state.”

He hopes things will be better now. In return, he guarantees “all positive support to the Centre”.

Yet, the people are divided over the merger 23 years ago. The residual resentment continues to be stoked by politicians- and even though Mr Chamling only last month delivered a long State Day speech to commemorate the merger, he believes Sikkim is yet to integrate with the rest of the country in any important sense.

“How else does one explain why there hasn’t been a single Union minister from the state in 23 years? Nor an ambassador of Governor or judge? This rankles in people’s minds. Even today the Opposition calls me an agent of the Centre,” Mr Chamling says.

## Assam Tribune

21 June 1998

### For Chamling, battle for democracy continues

From Probir Pramanik

GANGTOK, June 20- The recent decision of the Cen-

tre to include this tiny Himalayan State in the North Eastern Council(NEC) is all set to boost up the economy of this area other wise Centre-dependant state.” We are hopeful that our inclusion in the NEC and the new Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) Government at the Centre, will definitely improve the Centre State relationship,” said Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling.

Speaking to The Assam Tribune here, Shri Chamling said, “Sikkim’s inclusion in the NEC will be a boost to our economy . An additional Rs 15,00 crore is expected to be given to the NEC along with special subsidies.” He said, . The most important gain from the membership of the Council will be “the greater political say in the national context”. Chamling said, “Ever since Sikkim merged with that Indian union, it has consistently been “ignored” by successive governments at the Centre. We have many problems, but the biggest of them is that New Delhi does not understand our problems. We refuse to remain a beggar in relation to the rest of the country. Being an Indian means being given our share, not charity but our rights as a North Eastern State.”

After three-and-a-half years in power, the Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF) supremo has enough time for introspection. He has no qualms about speaking of the many ups and downs he has as the helm of government of this tiny yet strategic Himalayan border state of Sikkim. Chamling rushed that Sikkim is yet to emotionally integrate itself with the rest of the country in any importantly true sense. “How else does one explain why there hasn’t been a single Union Minister from this Himalayan state in the last 23 years since its merger with the Indian Union? Nor has it an ambassador or Governor or even a judge for that matter?”

While this reckles in the minds of the Sikkimese people, the Opposition even today calls me “an agent” of the Centre, Chamling said. Yet, the Sikkimese people are divided over the merger of 23 years ago. The residual resentment over the issue continues to be stroked by politicians in the State even though the SDF supremo only last month delivered a lengthy State Day speech to commemorate the State’s merger.

However, Chamling hoped that will now be better with the State’s inclusion in the NEC and, in return, he guarantees “all positive support to the Centre”.

The Chief Minister, who, had promised the State of a Nava Sunaolo, Sikkim has been relentlessly making attempts at cleansing the state bureaucracy of corruption. Over the years, he has not shied away from making his disapproval known. There has been major cabinet reshuffles, expulsion of some very senior leaders from the party on alleged anti-party activities and serious attempts at cleansing the bureaucracy of corruption. Making no bones about it, he said that corruption charges have been followed up and at least 17 persons were suspended from the administration during his government’s tenure so far.

“State officials needs disciplining. One way of doing that is to impose an austerity regime, forcing them to change the “extravagant” lifestyle, many of them have been got used to from the former Sikkim Sangram Parishad regime.

“This will save the State Government almost Rs 20 crore. We have even imposed a liquor ban on all State Government functions even those at “Mintogang”, the Chief Minister’s official residence. While no officials get more than one government vehicles.”

The Chief Minister pointed out that from this year the government has banned refurbishing of offices, buying new furnitures, curtains etc. No employee will be allowed to make personal STD calls from the work-place and no department shall have more than two STD connection, with the view of slashing the State Government’s astronomical telephone bills accumulated in the recent past.

As if to set an example, Chamling himself has got rid of the fancy Mercedes Benz his predecessor used, giving way to travelling in a Maruti Gypsy King instead.

The Chief Minister in a hint of despondence in his confession said that he is not 100 per cent satisfied with his Cabinet’s performance.” Work from my colleagues has not always been proportionate to the Government’s policy, and some ministers and MLAs do seem to lack commitment,” he rushed. But for the man who promised to restore democracy, the battle continues even today, though the adversaries may have changed. Chamling said, “I had a vision then and has one even today. Only things have become more difficult. But achievement is still possible.

## Assam Tribune

26 June 1998

■  
Landslide damage pegged at Rs 103-crore

### Chamling piqued over Centre’s response

GANGTOK, June 25- The Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today said that he would take up the matter of central assistance for the landslide-hit State with the Centre during his visit to Delhi tomorrow, report agencies.

The series of landslides in the State this month has claimed 11 lives.

“The extent of damage in the entire State following landslides is pegged at Rs 103-crore which may go up with two more months of monsoon yet to come and I am not happy with the Centre’s response”, Chamling told a press conference.

“Despite sending two volumes of memoranda substantiated with audio and video cassetts, besides a bunch of fax and letters, neither any cenrtal funds are available so far nor are they sending a technical committee to assess the

situation and the damage”, he said.

The Chief Minister said it was a matter of concern that the supply line of the strategically sensitive border State, the National Highway 31A, remained unserviceable for “nearly a month.”

It showed that the Centre did not have much time to look into the problems of Sikkim.” they are very busy with the big State”, Chamling said.

**Central taxes opposed:** Chamling reiterated that his government would convince the centre not to impose central taxes on Sikkim.

Speaking to UNI here, Sri Chamling said, he would meet Prime Minister Vajpayee, Home Minister Yashwant Sinha, among others during his week-long visit to Delhi from Tomorrow.

“I will impress upon the central Leadership the fallout of the imposition of central taxes on this tiny Himalayan State which enjoys special privileges under Article 372 (F) of the Indian Constitution. The people of this sensitive and strategic border State feel that the extension or imposition of the central law is an infringement of the special provisions of the Constitution relating to Sikkim an enshrined in Article 371(F) of the Constitution, “Sri Chamling said. Sikkim had its own Income Tax Act and taxes were being collected accordingly, he maintained.

Since the matter is politically sensitive, parties in the State will like to exploit the situation and chances of major political repercussion may lead to considerable disturbances in a sensitive border State like Sikkim. The matter should be settled amicably and treated as a political problem rather than it be adjudicated in a court in law, he observed.

## Assam Tribune

28 June 1998

### SDF to continue support to BJP- led govt: Chamling

GANGTOK, June 27- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has reiterated that his Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) will continue to provide unconditional outside support to the BJP- led Government at the Centre, reports UNI.

Addressing a new conference here on the eve of his week-long visit to Delhi yesterday, Chamling, also president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF) said “We will continue to support the BJP Government at the Centre. We have always maintained a cordial relationship with

all previous governments at the Centre, but we have never compromised on the interest of Sikkim while doing so. We have and will co-operate with the Centre for the greater interest of the nation but we are not a bonded-labour to any political party or individual.”

Expressing his displeasure at the Centre’s lackadaisical attitude in providing urgent relief for the tiny Himalayan state ravaged by numerous landslides in which 18 people were killed so far and property worth over Rs 103 crore damaged, Chamling accused the Centre of giving a ‘raw deal’ to Sikkim.

He said, “the BJP government has no time for a tiny state like Sikkim when they are pre-occupied with larger states like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh for political reasons. We in Sikkim feel totally neglected.”

The SDF president refused to comment on the longevity of the BJP-led Government at the Centre. He said, “We will continue to support. We want to see stability in the country. We want to maintain a good working relation with the Centre.”

Chamling, accompanied by his entire Cabinet and a host of senior state bureaucrats, is likely to take up the matter of immediate relief for this landslide-ravaged State and also follow up its charter of demands placed before the Central leadership.

Chamling wants the Centre to send a central team to assess the magnitude of devastation caused by the landslide and provide immediate relief besides, speedy restoration of the State’s only lifeline, the National Highway 31A, which is important both in view of Sikkim’s strategic location and for bringing in essential commodities of which the State is facing an acute crisis.

**THE HINDUSTAN TIMES**

1 July 1998

## **Withdraw direct tax law, seeks Sikkim**

GANGTOK, June 30 (UNI) Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has demanded the withdrawal of direct central tax law and abrogation of Section 2 of the Finance Act, 1990.

He said that the implementation would go against the wishes of the State Government and the people of Sikkim.

In a memorandum, submitted to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi yesterday, Mr Chamling stressed the fact that the notification seeking to enforce direct central tax laws on the State should be withdrawn and Section 2 of the Finance Act, 1990 abrogated so that

the safeguards guaranteed and the limitations prescribed under Article 371(F) of the Constitution were fully observed by the Central Government.

Mr Chamling said since his Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) assumed power in 1995, the matter relating to imposition of direct tax laws had been pursued ‘vigorously’ by successive Governments at the Centre.

The Chief Minister said the ‘extension’ of direct tax laws was an infringement of the special provisions of the Constitution relating to Sikkim as enshrined in Article 371 (F) of the Constitution.

The State Government apprehended that this politically sensitive matter would be exploited by the Opposition in the State, Mr Chamling said and admitted that the previous Sikkim Sangram Parishad Government, led by Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, agreed to the extension of the Act in 1993.

He, however, maintained that though the Act was extended and enforced in the State, its implementation was kept in abeyance following a public hue and cry.

It was during this period that the State witnessed its worst law and order problem, Mr Chamling stated and said the Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government had to pay the price for its decision to extend the Act and was toppled in 1994.

Mr Chamling also said the SS Government earlier in 1989 filed case in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the extension of the law to the State. He, however, felt that the matter should be amicably solve with the Centre.

**The Statesman**

2 July 1998

## **RESCUING SIKKIM**

Case for better treatment by Delhi

IT is a little odd that Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, continues to harp on his 20-month long plea for a Rs 3,000-crore economic package when there is little hope of its being considered. Chamling also wants Delhi to waive a Rs 400-crore loan as “a goodwill gesture.” Conceding this would mean inviting similar requests from other hill state most of which are in the red. But if Kashmir’s loan can be written off why not Sikkim’s which is also a strategic border state and merits some consideration. Since Chamling inherited the debt from the former Chief minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, he has some sort of a case. Delhi must appreciate that Sikkim has, through strict austerity measures, saved as much as Rs 30 crores in 26 months. This can continue only at the cost of efficiency.



Chamling had convinced the Narasimha Rao government to increase the state's outlay by 42 per cent and also got a Rs 16-crore grant. He had no such luck during his visit this week. All he received was an assurance of better road links. Sikkim's induction into the North Eastern Council also does not hold out much hope financially. The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front joined the 11-member North East Regional Political Parties Forum that support the BJP-led coalition at the Centre with the hope that it would "project the special needs of smaller states at the national level". Surprisingly, the Centre did not respond to Sikkim's request for assistance to meet the burdens imposed by recent natural calamities. On the contrary, the BJP's local unit was quick to urge Delhi to send an observer team to probe a local price rise. Since maximum benefits must be realised from tourism, the state's main asset there is need for better infrastructure for which money is needed. The Centre must help.

## The Statesman

3 August 1998

### SIKKIM'S ORDEAL

Delhi's silence adding to despair

Come floods and landslides and afflicted states make a beeline for Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh wants Rs 50 crore for relief. An all-party Assam team demands conversion of loans on flood control into grants. For Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, half a loaf is better than none but even that was not forthcoming. The Centre's dithering is not understandable given the fact that its team has already assessed the damage caused by the June 20 landslides. After the team's departure last month, Sikkim suffered further extensive damage to property and communications. Few believe Delhi will ever agree to Chamling's longstanding demand for a Rs 3,000 crore economic package and also the request for waiver of the Rs400 crore loan. But the Centre might have to soften its attitude on this strategic border state which has subjected itself to austerity measures and set an example for other states. But there is a limit. Sikkim's real trouble will start when it implements the state pay commission recommendations.

Chamling is mistaken if he thinks the state will substantially benefit by joining the North-eastern Council. Integrated development of the seven North-eastern states has been possible because of their geographical continuity. The only common feature that Sikkim has with these states is similarity of economic problems. The Solicitor-General and a senior advocate of the Supreme Court have set at rest Opposition fears that Sikkim will lose its special

status and identity under Article 371(f) by becoming an NEC member. Money is required to exploit hydro potential estimated at 800MW. Tourism too needs a thrust. Now that the Rathong Chu project has been abandoned midway following resistance from environmentalists it is only fair to clear the 500-MW Teesta Stage V project. Along with restoration and strengthening road communications the state must think of a massive drive for afforestation. Landslides are entirely the result of largescale denudation of forests. Voluntary organisations and students can play an important role in this. ■

## Sikkim OBSERVER

22-28 August 1998

### Chamling's Trials And Triumphs

*Marcus Dam talks with Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, to know how an uncaring Centre, indifferent colleagues and corrupt officials have frustrated his plans for the State..*

Three-and-a-half years in power offers enough time for introspection. And the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, has no qualms about speaking to The STATESMAN of the many ups and downs he has had a head of government.

"When I assumed office on 12 December 1994, I had dreamt of total teamwork in government; but I learnt as I went along that it is one thing to frame policies and quite another to implement them," he said over the telephone from Gangtok. "I can't deny that at times the desired teamwork among the various government agencies, the bureaucracy and the Cabinet that along can deliver the goods to the people-has been missing".

Yet, one cannot help recalling the words of a starry-eyed poet-turned politician, speaking to this correspondent at his hometown Namchi on the eve of being sworn in as Chief Minister. The actual "battle" (for democracy) has only just begun, he had said. Every word had seemed to be italicised.

The battle continues today though the adversaries may have changed and Mr. Chamling's words become more measured. "I had a vision then which I still have now. Only things seem to have got more difficult. But achievement is still possible. I was an optimist then ; I am one now." Is there a hint of despondence in his confession that he is "not 100 per cent satisfied with his Cabinet's perfor-

mance”?

“Work from my colleagues has not always been proportionate to policy, and some ministers and MLAs do seem to lack commitment.”

The Chief Minister, over the years, has not shied away from making his disapproval known. There have been Cabinet reshuffles, expulsion of senior leaders from the party, and serious attempts at cleansing the bureaucracy of corruption.

“Corruption charges have been followed up and at least 17 persons suspended from the administration during my tenure. State officials need disciplining “One way of doing that is to impose an austerity regime, forcing them to change the extravagant life-style many of them have got used to.

“This will save the government Rs 20 crore a year. A liquor ban has been imposed on government functions even those at Mintogang (the chief minister’s residence). No official gets more than one government vehicle.

“And from this year we have banned refurbishing of offices, buying new furniture, curtains etc. No one will be allowed to make personal STD calls from the workplace; no department shall have more than two STD connections.”

To set an example, the Chief Minister has got rid of the Mercedes Benz his predecessors used, and travels in a Maruti Gypsy.

He has had his triumphs too: recently the Centre decided to induct Sikkim into the North East Council “This will be a boost for our economy, “ He says, “An additional Rs 1,500 crore is expected . And Special subsidies.”

The most important gain from membership of the Council will, of course, be the “bigger political say in the national context. Ever since Sikkim merged in the Indian Union, it has consistently been ignored by the Centre. We have many problems, but the biggest of them is that New Delhi does not understand our problems. We refuse to remain a beggar in relation to the rest of the country. Being an Indian means being given our share-not charity but our rights as another Indian State.”

He hopes things will be better now. In return, he guarantees “all positive support to the Centre”.

Yet, the people are divided over the merger 23 years ago. The residual resentment continues to be stoked by politicians- and even though Mr. Chamling only last month delivered a long State Day speech to commemorate the merger, he believes Sikkim is yet to integrate with the rest of the country in any important sense.

“How else does one explain why there hasn’t been a single Union minister from the State in 23 years? Nor an ambassador or Governor or judge? This rankles in people’s minds. Even today the Opposition calls me an agent of the Centre,” Mr. Chamling says.

(Courtesy : The Statesman)

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 September 1998

### 23 Years on Sikkim’s ex-king set to get relief

GANGTOK, Sept. 6 (PTI) Twenty -three years after the merger of Sikkim in the Indian Union, a breakthrough has been made in settling compensation claims valued at nearly Rs 100 crore of the former king (Chogyal) of Sikkim following the visit of Central team.

The four-member Central team, led by joint secretary in the Union Home Ministry G.K. Pillai, held a tripartite meeting on the matter with present Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal his advocate and the State high officials last Thursday.

State Land Revenue secretary Karma Gyatso who attended the meeting on behalf of the Government said the meeting held over two days remained ‘inconclusive’.

However, he quoted chief secretary, Sonam Wangdi as saying, the meeting “moved in the right direction” and was “fruitful”.

The Chief Minister Pawan Chamling told reporters here last night that the compensation claims of nearly Rs 100 crore of the former Chogyal were unsettled.

The visit of the team was in response to his request to the Centre for an early settlement of the claim as the legal heirs of the Chogyal were demanding compensation, Chamling said.

Stating that “it would be too premature to reveal the outcome”, Gyatso said here yesterday that another round of talks was likely to be held in October in New Delhi.

A Siliguri report said G.K. Pillai who led the team, told reporters at Bagdogra Airport before emplaning for Delhi yesterday that he had held two rounds of talks.

Describing the talks as ‘positive’, he said at least four to five rounds of talks would be required to give the matter a final shape.

The other team members were from the Union Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission.

Before the merger in 1975, late Palden Thondup Namgyal was the Chogyal of Sikkim.

Earlier attempts for settlement of his property in 1979 and in 1980 had made no headway.

By a resolution passed in the Sikkim Assembly in 1974, the rule of the Chogyal came to an end and the State Assembly enacted the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974.

Sikkim became an associated State of India in the same year and was accorded status of full State through the 36th amendment of the Constitution on April 26, 1975.

# WICHAR WEEKLY

19-25 September 1998

## Tai Situ Rinpoche returns to India after four years State asked to intervene into the Rumtek controversy

Gangtok : His Eminence, Tai Situ Rinpoche has asked the State Government to help install the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa at the Rumtek Monastery and solve the prevailing deadlock within the Monastery.

Situ Rinpoche met the Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling in New Delhi on September 9. During the 90 minutes meeting, the two discussed the present impasse at the Rumtek Monastery and events that led to it. Situ Rinpoche expressed his unhappiness over the ban imposed on him on alleged anti-Indian activities and said that he was pained by the allegations.

The Centre Government has imposed a ban on Situ Rinpoche in 1994 preventing him from entering India on alleged anti-India activities. The Ban on him was lifted in August this year and he arrived in New Delhi in the last week of August.

Tai Situ Rinpoche, an eminent religious figure of the Karma Kagyu school, came into news when Ugen Thinley was successfully installed as the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa, the head of the Karma Kagyu order, at Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet.

However, when the authenticity of Ugen Thinley's candidature as the reincarnation of 16th Karmapa was challenged by a fraction of Karma Kagyu followers led by His Eminence Shamar Rinpoche, a controversy broke out within the Rumtek Monastery. Shamar Rinpoche, one of the three regents of Rumtek Monastery, the seat of the Gyalwa Karmapa, did not support the candidature of Ugen Thinley which led to divisions within the Monastery. Only when His Holiness, the Dalai Lama approved Ugen Thinley's candidature and he was successfully installed at Tsurphu, the controversy subsided but the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa is still in Tibet and yet to be formally installed at Rumtek Monastery.

Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, on the request made by Situ Rinpoche to use his office to bring the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa to India, said that the role of the State Government is confined to maintaining law and order and his Government is doing just that. While maintaining that religion should be kept above politics, Mr Chamling, however, said that all political parties in the State should

request the Central Government to bring the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa to India and this should be united effort, irrespective of party politics.

This is the first meeting of Situ Rinpoche with Mr Chamling. ■

# SUNDAY

AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION

11-17 October 1998

## Pawan Kumar Chamling is ready to go in for snap polls

Sikkim Chief Minister Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) supremo Pawan Kumar Chamling is taking no chances this time. His arch rival, former CM and Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) strongman, Nar Bahadur Bhandari seems to be gaining ground. And as if to catch the SSP completely off-guard, Chamling recently announced that he is willing to go in for snap polls any time between February and March, 1999.

Addressing a news conference, Chamling welcomed Chief Election Commissioner M.S. Gill's suggestion that Governor's Rule be imposed in a state going in for Assembly polls. "Elections under Governor's Rule would be the real test for a political party's influence at the grass-roots level." pointed out Chamling. The CM indicated that he would like to take up the challenge, as he was ready to face the electorate under a "neutral" administration.

Sikkim-watchers attach a lot of importance to this. They feel that the SDF supremo's confidence stems from the fact that he has swept all four polls in Sikkim since he came to power in 1994. This includes the state's first-ever party-based panchayat polls which were held last October. The SDF also retained the lone Lok Sabha seat. And the party position has improved after six former legislators, mostly tribal Bhutia and Lepchas belonging to the Opposition SSP, have been admitted.

This apart, the Opposition in the tiny Himalayan state is somewhat unprepared to face a mid-term poll. Observers point out that apart from Bhandari's SSP, other prominent Opposition parties -- the Congress and the Sikkim Ekta Manch (SEM) -- are still politically "inactive". A couple of new entrants like the Sikkim Jana Shakti and the Sikkim Liberation Front are in the fray. Besides, the state units of the CPI(M) are rather insignificant players in Sikkim's political scenario.

Last year, the SEM had started off with a bang when former state power secretary and influential bureaucrat Laxmi Prashad Tewari resigned from service to float what was touted as the 'third force in Sikkim politics'. Several

SDF dissidents had joined hands with Tewari. But within a year, most of these leaders have deserted Tewari.

In July this year, former SDF general secretary and founder member Sonam Dorjee left the ruling party to join the SEM. He later quit the SEM to team up with the SSP, along with another prominent SEM leader, Pintso Chopel, L.P. Tewari is now left with only a handful of people at the top level and practically no followers. With his challenge having ended in a whimper, Tewari recently met the SSP supremo, fuelling talk of a possible anti-Chamling alliance.

The fund-starved Opposition leaders are now dependent on the controversial lottery baron and Congress MP from Assam, Mani Kumar Subba, to activate their parties. Subba visited Sikkim recently to revive the state unit of the Congress and is likely to play a more active role in the forthcoming Assembly polls.

The presence of the lottery baron in Sikkim's politics is believed to be bothering Chamling. Opposition parties are preparing for a untied fight against the SDF in the polls and are relying on Subba to keep them together, at least till the elections. Subba had, reportedly, played an 'active' role during the last elections when he had not only helped in toppling the Bhandari government, but had also funded the SDF.

After 1994, Chamling and Subba parted ways because the latter was alleged to have made 'unreasonable' demands. This time round, several SDF leaders have indicated that they would like to start a dialogue with Subba in order to neutralise the Opposition. A lot could now depend on the CM's willingness and ability to patch up with his friend-turned-foe.

For the moment, though, Pawan Kumar Chamling has set the cat firmly among the pigeons with talk of snap-polls in Sikkim. ■

*G.Chettri/Gangtok*

## The Statesman

20 October 1998

### Chamling may call snap polls

GANGOK, Oct. 19.-The Sikkim Chief Minister has said he is willing to call snap polls sometime between February and March next year.

Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, speaking at a recent press conference, welcomed the Chief Election Commissioner's suggestion that Assembly polls in all states be held under President's Rule.

Mr Chamling, also the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front supremo, said holding elections under Central rule would be a real test of a party's hold at the grassroots level. He said he was willing to take up the challenge as he was

ready to face the electorate under a new neutral administration.

Political observers, however, feel that Mr Chamling's readiness to go in for a snap poll has been influenced by the rising popularity of his arch rival and former chief minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

Others feel that the chief minister is confident enough to call the elections as his party has swept all polls since he came to power in 1994.

The SDF has won all elections since then, including Sikkim's first-ever party-based panchayat polls in October, 1997. The party also retained the lone Lok Sabha seat early this year. Apart from this, the observers feel the SDF is confident the Opposition is not prepared to face a mid-term poll.

They said that apart from Mr Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad, other major Opposition parties like the Congress and the Sikkim Ekta Manch are still inactive politically.

Besides, the CPI-M does not cut much ice in the state's political scenario.

The SEM was formed last year, when the former state Power Secretary and an influential bureaucrat, Mr Laxmi Prashad Tewari, resigned from service to float what was touted as the third force in Sikkim politics.

Several of the ruling SDF's dissidents had joined the SEM, only to desert Mr Tewari within a year.

Recently, the former SDF general secretary and founder member, Mr Sonam Dorjee, who left the ruling party for the SEM last July, joined the SSP along with the prominent SEM leader, Mr Pintso Chopel.

Mr Tewari is left with only a handful of people at the top level. His recent meetings with Mr Bhandari suggest the possibility of an alliance.

Given this background, Mr Chamling is hopeful of bettering the SDF's 1994 performance in case of a snap poll.

The party's position improved following the induction into the SDF of six former legislators -- mostly tribal Bhutias and Lepchas -- of the Opposition SSP.

Observers, however felt that the presence of the lottery baron and Congress MP from Assam, Mr Mani Kumar Subba, in Sikkim politics bothers the SDF chief.

The Opposition is confident of a united fight against Mr Chamling and is relying on Mr Subba to keep the Opposition together till the elections.

Mr Subba had played an active role in the last election, when he allegedly helped not only in toppling the Bhandari government but also funded the SDF.

After the 1994 polls, however, both Mr Chamling and Mr Subba fell out on the latter's 'unreasonable' demands on the Chamling government.

Mr Subba, on his part, had kept the ruling SDF on tenterhooks most of the time during the last four years with his financial influence. ■



# THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 October 1998

## Chamling demands Cabinet berth

From Gautam Chaudhari

CALCUTTA, Oct. 22 Angry over the shabby treatment meted out to the people of Sikkim by the BJP Government, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), a minor coalition partner to the BJP-led Centre, has demanded its inclusion in the Union Cabinet and the coordination committee of the BJP allies.

In an exclusive interview to The Hindustan Times here today, the Sikkim Chief Minister and the SDF supremo, Mr Pawan Chamling ; said that they had already conveyed the party's wish to be included in the Cabinet to the Prime Minister and the BJP leadership, once the Cabinet is expanded in the coming future. He pointed out that though the SDF had only one MP in the Lok Sabha, the party is no less important in the numbers game in view of the fragile nature of the coalition government.

Though sore at the way the BJP-led Government was consistently ignoring the demands of the Sikkim Government, Mr Chamling said he would continue to support the present Centre government in order to maintain the stability of the Union Government.

"We do not believe in double standards, but it is sad that the BJP Government maintains a double standard policy when it is the question of the demands of the hill people", an agitated Chief Minister said . He said it was precisely to restore the imbalance and to usher in speedy development in the hill region, that the SDF would like to have a representation in the Union Council of Ministers.

Giving instances of the double standards of the BJP, Mr Chamling pointed that even after the massive landslides in his State, which cut off the State from the outside world for many days, the Central assistance had remained elusive .

He wondered why the Central grant on calamity had not been given to the State Government, when the BJP Government did not hesitate to grant liberal financial assistance to Uttar Pradesh and recently to Andhra Pradesh." A Central team had visited our State to assess the situation, but the gesture shown to Andhra Pradesh had remained lacking when it came to Sikkim. The State demanded Rs 300 crore on that account, but there had been no response from the Centre", Mr Chamling regretted as it has forced the State Government to juggle with its own meagre resources to help affected people. "You feel slighted when

your people are ignored", said Mr Chamling.

He referred to the fact that no Sikkimese has ever been considered for appointment as an ambassador, a governor as an ambassador, a governor or a judge even when there was no dearth of suitable candidates for these posts. "No honest efforts have been , made towards this direction even though Sikkim remains a part of the national mainstream and its motto has always been to make a strong and greater Hindustan and not a greater Nepal", he added, indirectly referring to the greater Nepal concept , floated by the hill leader of Darjeeling Subhas Ghising.

Similarly, the Centre had turned deaf to his demand for waive of loan worth Rs 500 crore or declare a two-year moratorium on the loan and to a Rs 300 crore economic package for the State's development, he said.

# The Statesman

24 October 1998

## Chamling to pressurise Centre for Sikkim's demands

CHINMOY TAHKURTA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Oct. 23- Though the much-talked-of joint front with the Trinamool Congress and other new political allies has not taken shape, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front will continue to put pressure on the Centre to get its demands accepted, said Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim, in an exclusive interview to The Statesman.

The SDF supremo, who is well disposed towards the BJP-led government at the Centre, lamented that it had not yet taken any positive step to write off the state's loan of about Rs 500 crore. The repayment burden on the state, along with the interest, comes to about Rs 94 crore, every year. New Delhi is also silent about the state's demand for a special economic package of Rs 3,000 crore for development of infrastructure in the state. So is the issue of considering senior and capable dignitaries of Sikkim for appointment as ambassadors, governors and judges, which is hanging fire for a long time.

One stage, Mr Chamling found a new political ally in the Trinamool Congress leader, Miss Mamata Banerjee. They decided, in principle, to be part of a new front with like-minded MPs from the smaller north-eastern states. The front was to function as a group of parties sharing similar regional concerns in Parliament.

Now that the project has remained a non-starter , Mr

Chamling would keep on persuading the Centre to make the voices of Sikkim's people heard. "Though I head a regional party in Sikkim, I am a nationalist in my attitude," he claims. By espousing the cause of smaller states, Mr Chamling virtually endorses the National Agenda of the BJP Government which is in favour of formation of smaller states for more effective administration.

A poet-turned-politician, Mr Chamling considers the Centre's decision to include Sikkim as a member of the North-East Council an important milestone for the SDF Government. "It will ensure us more economic development and greater political say in the national context for which we have been fighting for the last few years."

Coming to his own front, the chief minister had no hesitation in speaking plain truth about the gap between his government policies and their implementation. At times, the desired level of interaction among the government agencies, the party MLAs and the bureaucracy had been found missing, he laments. Nevertheless, he asserts: "I was an optimist when I assumed office in December 1994 I am still one now."

The chief minister's another helplessness is "the absence of a constructive Opposition". In fact House of 32, the Opposition has now only six members. "We want effective Opposition but what really exists now is a group of people with the sole intention of grabbing power by any means. They fought against me unitedly in the last Lok Sabha and panchayat polls and were routed."

Mr Chamling's confidence stems from the fact that the SDF had swept all the polls since it came to power in December 1994. "Even without being a Communist, I have done some thing tangible for the poor people in Sikkim," he said. He listed the massive rural housing programme for which the state government had already spent Rs 80 crore. All students up to class V are being provided with free uniform. All students in Sikkim are getting text books and exercise books free.

The controversial Rathongchu hydel project, the chief minister pointed out, was scrapped in deference to the sentiments of the people of the region who were against the sacrilege of holy places and religious structures.

The government has now decided to convert the entire area into a heritage site.

As the population in urban areas is increasing rapidly, the existing infrastructure has become insufficient. Keeping in view the eco-friendly aspect, the state government has sanctioned a passenger ropeway project at Gangtok for cheaper and quicker means of transportation from Deorali to Tashiling Secretariat. A proposal for development of a new township at Reshithang and Ranka has also been cleared to reduce pressure on the Gangtok town.

When asked whether he was in favour of a snap poll, Mr Chamling said he was ready to face the electorate any time the Election Commission wants. He did not elaborate the point but said: "Please wait and see what happens."

As regards the proposed helicopter service between Bagdogra and Gangtok, Mr Chamling hoped it would start any day. Once the so-called snag in procuring spares for the helicopter is tackled, Sikkim will be on the aviation map with the operation of the much-awaited helicopter service.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 October 1998

### *Chamling may take risk, go in for early polls*

From Anil Maheshwari

GANGTOK( Sikkim), Oct. 25 Pawan Kumar Chamling Chief Minister of Sikkim, the tiny Himalayan State in eastern India, is taking a calculated risk by demanding a snap poll around March next. The present term of the state legislative assembly expires in November next year but Mr Chamling is hinting at an early poll for the last few months.

Observers point out that besides the fair weather around March, another important reason for the advancement of elections is that the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front would prefer simultaneous polls for the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, an autonomous body in the neighbouring Darjeeling hills and Sikkim.

Both are predominantly inhabited by people of Nepali origin. Simultaneous polls would contain Nepali youth from coming to Sikkim from Darjeeling. Kalimpong and other towns in Darjeeling hills for electioneering.

Some of the political parties in the state often commission the services of these youths for political activities. Moreover, the opposition parties seem to be least prepared for a snap poll.

Since Mr Chamling dethroned Nar Bahadur Bhandari after the latter's 14 years and half long rule in November 1994, he has faced elections almost every year. Lok Sabha elections were held in May 96, panchayat elections in October 1997 and again the Lok Sabha polls in February last. In all the elections, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front emerged with flying colours.

In the last Assembly elections, Chamling's party had won 19 out of 32 seats in the House. Later its strength swelled to 25, due to desertions from other parties. A winning side is what politicians want in this state with about 2.3 lakh strong electorate in a population of less than five lakh.

In fact, the present Chief Minister is credited with launching several welfare schemes for the people, in particular those belonging to the backward strata of Sikkimese society. However, he is not in an enviable position in the ensuing Assembly polls because the benefits accrued to

all people.

As much as 70 per cent of the total outlay of the budget was earmarked for the development of rural areas which are particularly backward. Daily wages were increased by 100 per cent to Rs. 55. Focus was made on education in the grassroots level with free uniform, textbooks and exercise books to every student upto class fifth.

Majority of landless peasant households were given half-an-acre of land for farming. However, the beneficiaries have taken them as general measures not aimed to benefit any particular group or section. Therefore, they refuse to be grateful to the ruling party for such welfare measures.

Moreover, after more than two decades of accession of the state to the Indian Union, the average Sikkimese has yet to join the national mainstream. And that is the main plank of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, led by Nar Bahadur Bhandari.

Former Sikkimese bureaucrats and disgruntled leaders seem to have developed a knack for floating political parties. At least three political parties have surfaced during the last 16 months. The Sikkim Ekta Manch, launched with fan fare and billed as the third force L.P. Tiwari, a former bureaucrat, in July 1997, remains infested with bickerings and desertion by its members since its birth.

Two of its founder members have joined the Sikkim Sangram Parishad. The former political secretary to the Chief Minister Taraman Rai, who was among the first to join Tewari's new outfit, now heads his own Sikkim Jana Shakti Party.

The Election Commission has already recognised the Sikkim National Liberation Front. The other is the Sikkim National Party whose sole professed aim is to fight for the rights of Nepalese of Sikkimese origin.

The Indian National Congress has once again emerged as a political force, to be reckoned with. The Nepali origin leader M.K. Subba, who is a Congress member of Lok Sabha from Assam, has been entrusted with the job of strengthening the party. The money power wielded by Mani Kumar Subba is welcomed but at political leaders in the state. His active support to Chamling brought about Bhandari's downfall in 1994. Later, he too parted ways with Chamling.

At present he is considered close to Bhandari. The opposition parties look towards him for forging unity among their ranks in a bid to give a united fight to the ruling party. Some members of the ruling party too are in favour of forging alliance with Subba once again to remain in saddle. But all the politicians are wary of Subba. His wealth is welcome but he remains a pariah for leaders. It is also a fact that Subba managed to keep the Chamling Government on tenterhooks most of the time during the last four years. Subba is perceived as a potential candidate for the coveted post of Chief Minister.

Mandalisation of politics is bound to affect the outcome

of poll result in this state. The backward classes and a section of tribals form the Chief Minister's main vote bank while the upper caste Nepalese remain solidly behind Bhandari. In the last Assembly poll, East District with predominantly upper caste Nepalese, returned eight Sikkim Sangram Parishad's legislators out of 10 in the district. This party is heated by Bhandari.

## The Statesman

26 October 1998

### CHAMLING'S MOVE

#### An early poll does make some sense

Perhaps the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, wanted to catch the Opposition unawares when he recommended a snap poll. He has arguments to suggest that this is not the intention. He feels there will be no time left for the November 1999 Assembly elections after the Puja and Diwali holidays, so he wants them before the monsoon. The 1994 election was a watershed in the history of the state; Chamling's fledgling Sikkim Democratic Party humbled the ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad led by Nar Bahadur Bhandari, under whose 14-year rule democracy was suppressed. The political scenario has changed over the past one-and-a-half-years. Three new parties have emerged. The Sikkim Ekta Manch, led by former bureaucrat, L P Tewari, was floated with the avowed objective of throwing out Chamling. But contrary to expectations it failed to become a third force, and is now trying to forge an alliance with the Congress. One expected Tewari to join hands with Bhandari but his hobnobbing with the Assam MP, M K Subba, a lottery baron, suggests it is being done with an eye on financial support.

Subba allegedly offered Chamling Rs 5 crore to help him contest the last Lok Sabha poll as a Congress candidate. The amount was to be paid in three instalments: after the SDF support, enrolling his name in the voters' list and at the scrutiny stage. If the outcome of the next plll is to be determined by money power, there is little the Chief Minister can do. He, however, seems optimistic of repeating the 1994 performance despite cause for worry. In the last parliamentary elections his party nominee retained the seat but with a reduced margin of 50,000, compared with 85,000 in 1996. This, because the Opposition were united. The SDF's list of achievements may be impressive but much remains to be done to narrow the gulf between the have and have-nots. Sikkim merged with India only in 1975, missing the benefits of the first from Five-Year Plans. Being a strategic border state it deserves to be rescued from deep economic stagnation. This is possible only if the planners at the Centre understand the state's problems. ■

# The Statesman

7 November 1998

## Chamling confident of being re-elected

STATESMAN New Service

SILIGURI, Nov. 6- The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, today dismissed as baseless the Opposition allegation that he wants snap polls early next year because of the state's economic bankruptcy.

Talking to reporters at Bagdogra airport before leaving for New Delhi to discuss the states long-standing demands, Mr Chamling said that it was for public convenience that he wanted the Assembly polls to be held in April-May instead of November 1999, as scheduled.

The festive season during November will hinder people from voting and the monsoon will pose a problem. He added that he will not be meeting the Chief Election Commissioner now.

Mr Chamling was confident of his party Sikkim Democratic Front's return to power. He accused the Opposition parties namely, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad and the Congress, of being "opportunistic".

He blamed them for concocting stories about the "law and order problem" in the state through the media.

He said some people had been brought from outside to create disorder and malign his administration. Recently, four armed outsiders had been arrested in Jorhang, Mr Chamling informed.

In Delhi, Mr Chamling would be meeting, besides others, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, the Defence Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

# The Statesman

13 November 1998

## EYES ON SIKKIM

### But Chamling holds the cards

Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling set the cat among the pigeons by encouraging speculation about a snap poll. He intended to catch his detractors on the hop but reports suggest that all Opposition parties have welcomed the idea. Recent clashes between the ruling party and the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad supporters suggests what could lie ahead. By far the most significant

development has been the merger of the Sikkim Ekta Manch with the Congress, an indication of the national party's determination to come to power for the first time on its own. Since Sikkim became part of India in 1975 the Congress has shared power three times in alliance with regional parties. The Sikkimese do not appear to accord much importance to them as the issues involved are predominantly local. Since the Congress has no strong base it has to count on SEM support. Floated in August last year by former Power Secretary L P Tewari, the Manch was expected to emerge as a third force. Several Congress and ruling Sikkim Democratic Front dissidents joined it even as influential members quit and joined Nar Bahadur Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad.

Money is likely to play a decisive role in the elections. The Congress has sent, not without reason, its MP and lottery baron, Mani Kumar Subba, to oversee preparations in Sikkim. He is influential in Delhi and has been trying to get a foothold in Sikkim politics since 1985, when he enrolled his name in the voters' list. He allegedly offered Mr Chamling five crores to support him as a Congress candidate in the last parliamentary poll. He also played a significant role in toppling the Bhandari ministry and helping the SDF. The ruling party does not have money power but judging by its sweeping victory in the panchayat elections and retention of its Lok Sabha seat despite joint opposition from the Congress, SSP and the SEM, the SDF does seem better off than the others. ■

# The Telegraph

14 November 1998

## Sikkim seeks Centre's aid to stall tax laws

FROM KESHAV PRADHAN

Bagdogra, Nov. 13: Sikkim has sought the Centre's help to retain certain laws framed during the Chogyal regime. Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling made this request to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Talking to newsmen at Bagdogra airport on his way back to Gangtok this afternoon, Chamling said: "We appealed to the Prime Minister not to extend direct Central laws to Sikkim. We don't want Central tax laws since we already have our own laws. We want to keep Sikkim a tax-free state."

Chamling added that his government has demanded the restoration of reserved seats in the Assembly for the Nepalese and the Limboos. The Morarji Desai government had scrapped the provision of reservation for the Nepalese and the Limboos, while retaining the same for Bhutias,



Lepchas and other Scheduled Caste members.

Chamling said his demands are in consonance with Article 371 (F) of the Constitution that grants Sikkim a special status in the Indian Union. The provision also allows Sikkim to retain its old laws.

Chamling, whose party supports the BJP-led coalition government at the Centre, also pressed for the recognition of Nepalese ethnic groups that have hitherto not sought Scheduled Tribes status. The groups include the Magars, Tamangs and Gurungs.

Chamling said the Centre had tried to implement income tax laws in Sikkim because of a mistake committed by the then government. "Previous governments have allowed outsiders to launder black money in the absence of Central laws," he alleged. Chamling said he had invited Vajpayee to Sikkim in December to inaugurate an engineering college there.

## The Statesman

3 December 1998

# Lok Adalats put Sikkim on India's legal map

### STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GANGTOK, Dec. 2.- With the establishment of permanent and continuous Lok Adalats in all the four district and sub-district headquarters of Sikkim, the state has now been placed in the legal map of the country.

Last month, Sikkim achieved the rare distinction of being the first state in the country to have set up Lok Adalats throughout the state. The last Lok Adalats were set up on 11. November by the Acting Chief Justice, Mr Justice Anup Deb, in Namchi and Ravangla district and sub-district headquarters respectively.

The State Legal Services Authority headed by Justice Deb as executive chairman views the setting up of these Lok Adalats as "another milestone in the efforts being made for taking justice to the doorsteps of the poor, the deprived and the downtrodden".

The Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, told reporters that "the establishment of Lok Adalats in all the districts is a proof that there is democracy and justice in the state".

The Chief Minister inaugurated the Lok Adalats in the Gangtok and Pakyong sub-division head-quarters, which fall in the east district, on 4 and 5 November. The other two districts where Lok Adalats are set up are Geyzing and Soreng in the west and Mangan and Chungthang in

the north.

Addressing a Press conference here recently, Justice Deb said apart from providing free legal services to the poor and needy, those who stand to benefit from the Lok Adalats will be Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, women and children. He said efforts are also being made to ensure that the Other Backward Classes come under the purview of Lok Adalats.

## The Northeast **daily**

19 December 1998

# Sikkimese unity may become a victim of power-play

Unity and loyalty pays in the long run and that's what the former chief minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, is betting on. His Sikkim Sangram Parishad, formed on May 24, 1984 when he was ousted from power, is now making concerted efforts to make a comeback in the next assembly polls with the support of the minority upper caste Nepalese. Bhandari's strategy of keeping his vote bank intact while causing further division and rift among tribal and backward class voters, who are presently with the ruling-Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), may ultimately work out in his favour.

Results of the assembly polls in November 1994 and Lok Sabha polls in 1996 and 1998 prove that SSP's hold among the upper caste Nepalese vote bank has remained virtually intact. For instance, in the upper caste Nepali-dominated district of the east, SSP won 8 of the 12 seats leaving the ruling party with only four. The prestigious Gangtok seat was also captured by the SSP in east district. The racial divide among the majority Nepalese reflected in the assembly polls results has remained very much the same in the two subsequent Lok Sabha polls in 1996 and 1998. With the ruling party losing its grip among the people, there is no reason why the forward section of the Nepalese, locally referred to as NBCs (meaning Newar, Bahun and Chettri), need to switch their loyalty, particularly when Bhandari is steadily gaining ground.

Two important developments have worked in Bhandari's favour. Firstly, division among the minority Bhutia and Lepcha tribals, who constitute at least 30 per cent of the state's 4.5 lakh population, is gradually showing. Secondly, cracks in the majority Nepalese community, who are clubbed together as OBCs, is now becoming more visible. Presently, tribals and backwards are the main vote bank of the ruling party. In the 1994 assembly polls SDF won all seven seats in south district, six of the nine seats in west and two of the three seats in north. These three districts are dominated the tribals backward classes. In the 32-

member House, SDF won 19 seats, SSP 10, Cong(I) two and Independent one. After the assembly polls six SSP legislators defected into the ruling party. Former minister and Congress(I) leader, Sonam Chyoda Lepcha, MLA, joined the SDF early this year raising SDF's total tally to 26.

While the chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, is a Rai and belongs to the OBC group, Bhandari is a Chettri (Kashtriya) and hails from the NBC fold. Minus the Newars, who originate from the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, the Bahun Chettris (Brahmin-Kashtriya) are Hindus and racially belong to the Aryan stock. Prominent among the OBCs in the state are Rais, Limbus, Gurungs and Tamangs. Though majority of these hill tribes are Hindus and economically backward they also practise 'Bonism' (ancestral and nature worship) like the Bhutias and Lepchas. Racially, the OBCs belong to the Mongoloid fold and have their own language/dialect though they are all known as Nepalese and can fluently speak the Nepali language.

Mandalisation of the country under the previous National Front Government at the centre has drastically changed the social and political equation in Sikkim. Though the traditional enmity and rivalry between the 'tagadari' (referring to the Bahun-Chettri who wear the sacred thread) and the 'matwali' (OBCs who are fond of liquor) among the Nepalese community remained a dormant political volcano in the introduction of the Mandal Commission Report in the state since the early 1990s has resurrected the traditional hatred and bitterness amongst the two communities.

The toppling of the 14-year-old Bhandari government by tribal-dominated SSP legislators in mid 1994 and subsequent poll victory of the ruling party in the November 1994 assembly polls all go to reveal that the Mongoloid stock, which include Bhutias and Lepchas, have the upper hand in the former Buddhist kingdom of Sikkim. As early as March 1951, the London Times in one of its leading articles head-lined 'Unrest in Nepal', wrote :

"Nepalese of Mongoloid-Tibetan stock (Mangar, Gurung, Limbu and Rai) --- regard the Rajput governing class, to which King Tribhuvan and the Rana family both belong, as alien. A feeling is growing among the men of Gorkha race that they have more in common to the east and north than with the plainsmen of India. This feeling is very strong in the large Gorkha colonies in Sikkim... Bhutan and in Assam. It has been reinforced by the regular arrival of political refugees from Nepal, full of grievances against the Kathmandu government. In this way there has grown a dangerous movement which is ready to accept help from any quarter in overthrowing the Kathmandu regime and breaking the power of the Rana family".

*The Times* in another article in April 1951 stated : "... there is a party in Nepal which dislikes the present connection between Delhi and Kathmandu and would

prefer to build up a Mongolian-Tibetan national movement linked to Sikkim, Bhutan and countries north of the Himalayas rather than the India". It appears that much the same sentiment still persists in Nepal. *The Sunday Mail* of Calcutta in an article headlined 'Anti-Hindu stir building up in Nepal' in 1992 wrote "various ethnic groups in Nepal, known for their martial qualities, have expressed concern over the erosion of their racial and tribal identity. They have opposed imposition of Nepali as the language of the Himalayan Kingdom, demanded education in their respective mother tongues and threatened a bloodbath if the domination of the Brahmin and Chettri Hindus over the Mongoloid segment of the population is not ended. They have also opposed the constitutional provision of having Hinduism as the state religion. They claim that the Hindus are actually a minority in Nepal, and if a state religion is a must, let Nepal be called a Buddhist country".

Being acutely aware of the ethnic racial composition of the population in Sikkim and the dangers of racial politics in this sensitive and strategic Himalayan border region, BS Das in his book, *The Sikkim Saga* in 1982 wrote: "A tiny speck in the vastness of India with its Himalayan serenity, Sikkim seems to be insignificant in the vast multitude of problems facing other states of India. Yet, behind that Mongoloid droopiness of the eyelids, lies a dangerous streak of potential trouble more serious than of the 'seven sisters' of the north-east".

Das, who was appointed as the chief executive of the administration in Sikkim by the Indian government in 1973 when political turmoil reeked the former kingdom leading to Sikkim's ultimate 'merger' with India in 1975, further observes in his book: "Its emergence as Nepalese speaking state, its geographical location with Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan surrounding it on three sides, its ethnic discontent and power distortions linked to it the 'sons of the soil' politics of the adjoining north-eastern states affecting the Nepalese settlers there and the demand of a Gorkhaland by the Darjeeling Nepalese with an eye on Sikkim, are some of the dimensions of the problems which need a careful study based on the perceptions of tomorrow".

Das adds, "China's trouble potential in this region with its non-acceptance of Sikkim's merger with India and Nepal's mother country image in the eyes of the two million Nepalese settled in the north-eastern region besides the Bhutanese problems with its own vast Nepalese population, cannot be ignored easily or lost sight of in the national context".

Bhandari's highly inflammatory communal speeches attacking the tribals, particularly the Bhutias, in 1994 has deeply wounded and alienated the minority community. Perhaps in retaliation of this verbal assault six tribal legislators of the SSP defected to the SDF in 1995. Some of them are now members of the Chamling cabinet. Like the majority Nepalese the tribals are also a divided lot. To begin with the original Sikkimese Bhutias and Lepchas

have always resented the inclusion of Sherpas, Tibetans, Bhutanese and Chumbipas in their fold. Traditionally, seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly were reserved for only the Sikkimese on parity basis i.e. equal seats between the Sikkimese Nepalese on one hand and the Sikkimese Bhutia-Lepchas on the other.

Before the reorganisation of assembly seats in 1979, of the 32 seats in the House, 16 were reserved for the Bhutia-Lepchas while 16 went to the Sikkimese Nepalese. Much against the wishes of the Sikkimese people, for the first time in Sikkim Assembly elections in October 1979 were fought without seats being reserved for the Sikkimese. Under the 1979 ordinance, all seats of the Sikkimese Nepalese were abolished keeping only two seats for the Nepalese Scheduled Castes. The new seat arrangement in the assembly also affected the minority community. Their 15 seats, excluding the one seat kept for the Buddhist Sangha, were not only reduced to 12 but more communities, which were added in the tribal fold under the 1978 Scheduled Tribes Order, were also eligible to contest from the seats originally reserved exclusively for the Bhutias and Lepchas. The 1978 order diluted the definition of 'Bhutia' by including non-Sikkimese such as Chumbipas, Dophapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo. Under the Representation of the People Act.1950/51 seats are actually reserved for the tribals in general and not exclusively for the Bhutia-Lepchas who are of the Sikkimese origin. This act of betrayal by the government of India has been opposed by the minority community and like the Sikkimese Nepalese, have demanded restoration of seats in the assembly for the three ethnic communities of the state.

While the tribals such as the Sherpas, and Chumbipas, Tibetans, etc. resent 'discriminatory' objections raised by the Bhutia Lepchas, particularly on the seat reservation issue, it has no doubt further divided the minority tribal community. But more than this division there is also a well-orchestrated move to divide the original Bhutia-Lepchas. While the Lepchas are being divided on the basis of religion, a section of the political leadership in the state, aided by outside forces, has been emphasising on 'class' distinction among the Bhutias. While Christian Lepchas are making inroads into predominantly Buddhist Lepcha territory, the Lepcha community as a whole feels dominated by the more forward and politically aggressive Bhutias.

It remains to be seen which way the tribals will go in the ensuing assembly polls slated for November 1999. Though the tribals resent Congress hand in the 'merger' of the former kingdom they, by and large, feel that their figure prospects and protection lie with the central government and national parties, particularly the Congress(I). Many tribals view the present move to revive the Congress(I) in the state with much hope.

Much now depends on whether Chamling man ages to keep his flock intact till the elections. There is a distinct possibility that the SSP and Cong(I) may come together to oust Chamling. All said and done whoever manages to divide the people on communal, racial and ethnic lines will emerge victory in the coming election.

As politicians scramble for power "Sikkimese unity" will suffer a serious set back. It is clear of 'divided we stand, united we fall'. ■

## The Statesman

19 December 1998

# Chamling seeks comeback, but with new faces

GANGTOK, Dec. 23- Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling is determined to make a comeback with a better team even though capable, committed and credible candidates for the Assembly polls scheduled for November, 1999, are hard to come by. Speaking to **The Statesman** here last week, Mr Chamling said he was fed up with self-seeking leaders who join politics for "money only". He appealed to the people to choose "good people" for the coming Assembly polls.

The chief minister said politics is "not a business to make more money", but a "noble profession". He said the state needed men and women whose sole aim in joining politics is to "serve the interests of the Sikkimese people and the country". He said: "Till now, we have people in politics whose main objective is to make money. I, now want the new leaders to serve the people."

Mr Chamling accused the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad of continuing with its dynastic tendencies and terrorising people. He said the SSP, led by the former chief minister, Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari, who ruled the state for 14 years since 1979, has not changed its ways. It is still being run by Mr Bhandari's family members and his former colleagues in the Cabinet.

The chief minister also criticised the Congress for catering to "outsiders" whose chief aim in taking part in local politics is to "do business and make more money." He said both the SSP and the Congress were run by "self-seeking leaders". Mr Chamling reiterated that he was in politics "in the interests of Sikkim and the Sikkimese". He added: "There will be no compromise with anti-Sikkimese

forces”.

Mr Chamling welcomed the Women’s Reservation Bill being tabled in Parliament, but said that he may have to change his Assembly constituency of Damthang in south Sikkim if the Bill is passed. He said Damthang and some other constituencies such as Doreang and Yuksam in West Sikkim, which are Mr Bhandari’s and the former chief minister, Mr SM Limboo’s traditional home constituencies, may now go to women candidates as women voters outnumber men in these seats.

If the Bill comes through, 11 of the 32 seats in the Assembly will be reserved for women. ■

## The Statesman

24 January 1999

### Chamling rules out meddling in Darjeeling

#### STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Jan. 23.- The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, today said neither he nor his party wants to meddle in political matters of West Bengal. He said he doesn’t have the time or interest to interfere in Darjeeling.

Mr Chamling had been one of the advocates of the Gorkhaland cause for the last two years. This didn’t go down well with either the West Bengal government or the DGHC chairman, Mr Subash Ghising.

It is also remoured that the pro-Gorkhaland eight-party combine of Darjeeling has the blessings of the Sikkim chief minister. He has supported the formation of a hill state on several occasions.

Mr Chamling shared the stage today with the state municipal minister, Mr Asok Bhattacharya, and the CPI-M MP of Darjeeling constituency, Mr Ananda Pathak. He unveiled the statue of the “unknown soldier” at Pradhan nagar .

To allay the growing apprehension against him and his party, the Sikkim Democratic Front, on the issue of Gorkhaland, Mr Chamling said: “We do not want to be branded supporters of any political force in West Bengal.”

Individual relationships exist between politicians of the two states, Mr Chamling admitted. He said he was against interfering in political matters concerning Sikkim’s neighbour .

Mr Chamling, however, stood his ground against “Fascism” and said that the plight of the people in general con-

cerned him. He criticised the ouster of Nepalis and Gorkhas from Assam, Shillong and Nagaland in the past.

“It was a matter of serious concern and should be taken note of by the intelligentsia,” he said.

Economic backwardness and political deprivation are the two basic problems dogging the people belonging to the Nepali and Gorkha ethnicities, he said. “We should aspire to improve our qualitative life and contribute to the society, not just grow in numbers.”

Speaking on the same occasion, earlier, the state municipal minister, Mr Asok Bhattacharya, cautioned the people to stay alert against forces which were trying to rip the country in the name of religion or of community.

## The Statesman

7 February 1999

### Sikkim will supply rice at old rates

GANGTOK, Feb. 6 - The Sikkim government has decide to supply rice at the previous rate through the public distribution system despite the Centre’s hike in foodgrain prices recently.

A state Cabinet meeting on Thursday, headed by the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling has decided to sell subsidised rice at the rate of Rs. 6 per kg to those who figure in the state voters’ list, own land or houses in rural areas, possess trade licences or are state and Central government employees, an official release said.

The Sikkim Democratic Front government’s decision to maintain the rice price would cost the state an additional Rs. 18 crore. The state had been bearing a subsidy of Rs 12 crore per annum since 1995 to maintain supply of subsidised rice at Rs. 6 per kg, the release said. Incidentally, the state has not implemented either the below poverty line (BPL) or the above poverty line (APL) schemes. It has an uniform system for PDS.

To tide over the additional financial burden, the Cabinet has decided to impose a 20 per cent cut from the planned budget to augment non-plan budgetary expenditure, the release said. The Cabinet has also directed the state food and civil supply department to check black marketing and hoarding and take stern action against those indulging in such acts.

It also decided to identify land at Piplep or Kamling in east Sikkim for the immediate construction of a food godown, the release said. Addressing the Sikkim police in their annual review meeting here yesterday, the chief minister, who also holds the home porfolio, said security personnel should check hoarding and black marketing. ■



21 February 1999

# Sikkim CM honoured by environmentalists

THE CHIEF Minister of Sikkim, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling has been rated as the best Chief Minister by environmentalists for putting a complete ban on the use of plastic and polythene bags in his State and halting the construction of Rathang Chu Hydro electric project to protect the bio-diversity of the area. In recognition of his commitment to environment and sustainable development, Mr. Chamling was honoured here today by the Centre of Science and Environment at a public function.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Chamling said that he was planning to bring out a comprehensive State environment policy "The time has come for all of us to spearhead a model of development that is environment-centric," the Sikkim Chief Minister said.

Expressing concern over environmental changes in his State Mr. Chamling said, "Our Zemu glacier has depleted in size by more than 3 to 4 kms. The water in the Teesta is flowing at an all time low. We have had the warmest winter in living memory. These are all indications that things are going wrong."

Enumerating the initiatives taken in his State during the past four years, Mr. Chamling said that felling of green trees and grazing in reserved forest areas had been banned in his State. He said that a survey had been carried out and inventory of natural resources had been carried out in Sikkim using modern technologies like remote sensing, he added that he had begun environment and pollution monitoring, soil conservation and had taken several other measures in his State.

"We are looking for ways and means which will help us to keep over-development out of the areas of bio-diversity. We are giving much more emphasis to ecotourism," Mr. Chamling said while requesting for assistance and investments in the development programs of Sikkim.

Mr. Chamling has been rated as the best Chief Minister by the Centre of Science and Environment following a readers' survey. ■

21 February 1999

# Chamling, Naidu voted 'green' CMs

**BY OUR CORRESPONDENT**

New Delhi, Feb. 20: Chief minister of Sikkim Pawan Kumar Chamling was ranked the best chief minister in a survey which was conducted to find out how "green" the country's chief ministers are.

Environmentalists ranked Mr Chamling as the best chief minister. Second in running was Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh. The survey was conducted among environmentalists of different states and the readers of Down to Earth magazine.

However, readers awarded the first position to Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu. Interestingly, both Mr Chamling and Mr Singh were pushed down in the survey. Mr Naidu was ranked sixth in the environmentalists' list.

Tailenders in the readers as well as the environmentalist's survey were Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi, Kerala chief minister E.K. Nayanar. While readers gave Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh the second runner-up spot, environmentalists pushed him to the bottom of their list. Others who fared badly include Karnataka chief minister J.H. Patel and former chief minister of Orissa J.B Patnaik.

Among others, Mr Chamling was lauded for his role in scrapping the Rathong Chu Hydel Project in west Sikkim and banning the use of plastic bags in Sikkim. Mr Digvijay Singh scored high because of his role in launching various programmes under the Rajiv Gandhi Mission. The readers on the other hand appreciated Mr Naidu for taking a keen interest in community forestry projects and watershed development programmes, which has been particularly successful in Anantpur district of Andhra Pradesh.

Punjab chief minister Prakash Singh Badal and West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu came third and fourth respectively in the environmentalists' survey. Though Mr Basu's policies have choked Calcutta wetlands with urban growth, but the environmentalists of Bengal forgave him on account of the highly successful implementation of joint forest management programmes in the state.

Besides Mr Digvijay Singh and Mr Naidu, Manipur chief minister W. Nipachama Singh and P.K. Dhumal of Himachal Pradesh figured in the list of chief minister's showing an active interest in watershed development. Mr Dhumal was also lauded for setting aside Rs 10 crores from the state budget for a radically different forestry project

which includes micro-level planning, management and even handling of money.

Addressing a press conference of Saturday, Down to Earth editor Mr Anil Aggarwal said that this was the first-ever survey of its kind.

The survey was conducted in September 1998 and there were 335 respondents in addition to 237 environmentalists who rated the chief minister of their respective states. Mr Chamling was also present on the occasion.



22 February 1999

## Green development vital: Chamling

The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has called for a development model where industrialisation will incorporate environmental concerns and minimise damage caused to life supporting natural systems. Quality of life means total harmony with nature. This is a challenge; not only for Sikkim but for the rest of the country, the Chief Minister said while speaking at meeting here over the weekend on Challenges for Sustainable Development in Sikkim organised by the Centre for Science and Environment. Referring to environmental pollution in his State, Mr. Chamling said the Zemur glacier had become smaller by more than three to four kilometers and the Teesta river was flowing at an all time low. "The State experienced the warmest winter in living memory this season," he said.

He added that in the past four years his Government had taken several initiatives on the environment. The Government banned felling of green trees; only dead, dying and diseased trees can be removed for the benefit of people. Besides, grazing in reserved forest areas and plantation areas is prohibited and fodder collection is permitted only on a sustainable basis, the Chief Minister said.

More importantly, the State Government cancelled construction of the Rathang Chu hydro-electric project after a hefty investment to protect and save the bio-diversity and the rich heritage of the area, the State Government had restricted the use of forest land to the minimum without making any compromise on national security, Mr. Chamling said.

Apart from these steps, diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes was reduced and compensatory afforestation made mandatory; a survey of the State's natural resources was carried out through remote sensing and an inventory was prepared and proposals for eco-friendly industries encouraged, he said.

The Government plans to give a thrust to ecotourism to keep "over-development" out of bio-diversity rich areas,

Mr. Chamling said.

He said his Government was facing a resource crunch which is a major impediment in implementing plans to improve the environment. Another area of worry is that the State is strategically situated, the Chief Minister said. "What we need today is huge investments in development programmes, pollution-free technology and development of human resources," the Chief Minister said, urging the Centre to provide financial assistance. ■



28 February 1999

## Chamling felicitated

GANGTOK: The Sikkim forest department felicitated chief minister Pawan Chamling on Saturday on his becoming the "greenest" state leader in the country in a survey conducted by a leading environmental magazine Down to Earth, published by the Centre for Science and Environment, reports UNI.



12 March 1999

## No green horn this minister

*Sujata B. Shakeel*

Citizens of Delhi can draw comfort from the fact that they do not have Pawan Kumar Chamling as their Chief Minister. For had he ruled Delhi, most of the Capital's denizens would have ended up cooling their heels in jail and paying up a fine of Rs 5000/- for littering the city!

It is precisely for this reason that the tiny state of Sikkim boasts of being the front runner in ecological conservation in the country, while we in Delhi, can at best, claim the fourth rung as the world's most polluted and environment unfriendly city!

Not for nothing has Pawan Kumar Chamling Chief Minister of Sikkim been feted as the "green" chief Minister of the country by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). Indeed, he believes that most of the city's problems: pollution, littering, garbage dumping, over-burgeoning population et al can be dealt with surely, severely and effectively if only "the 'netas' change their outlook. Be more responsible towards their duties, work with sincerity and honesty and for once place the people before self"!

On a two day visit to the Capital, to attend an official meeting, during which he successfully managed to swing

a grant of Rs 270 crore for his pet projects like rural development, housing and employment generating schemes, Chamling found time to wax eloquent about his elaborate itinerary that would take Sikkim to great heights as “the most modern, model and self sufficient state in India”.

He is a man in a hurry who wants to pack in maximum punch in his tenure, by way of development programmes. A down-to-earth person, his political advisor Goroong calls him a “complete grass root man” (punintended!) explaining away his affinity to nature and all things green.

Topping the agenda is naturally, environment conservation. “There is an urgent need (he can’t stress the urgency enough) to restore and balance economic growth, ecology conservation and public health”.

Most environment problems in the cities can be resolved by focussing on rural concerns, he says.” We need to focus also on rural masses, provide them with more facilities, launch new programmes to prevent their exodus to cities and urban areas. By ignoring this vital segment, we are encouraging a better part of the people to leave villages for greener pastures, thus burdening the cities with population they could well do without”.

In fact he cites this “exodus” as one of the important reason why cities, especially Delhi continue to be plagued with problems pertaining to civic and health facilities, cleanliness and pollution .

And while a major portion of responsibility to provide a sound administration rests with the leaders and the government,” the people too need to be conscious about their role and duties in making their city a better place to live in”. As chief minister, he banned cattle grazing in reserve forest and forest areas in Sikkim, scrapped the Rathong - Chu Hydel Project in West Sikkim which despite the employment it generated, would have endangered the fragile environment of the hills, and prohibited the use of plastic bags all through the state. “If people wish to use plastic bags they have to do so outside the state. They cannot bring it in” he save with apparent glee.

He prescribes “stringent action” to combat issues which end up in depredation of the environment and basic facilities. As leaders, at the helm of affairs “we must, we ought to take some unpopular decision, which may seem people unfriendly but ones which will ensure a better future, a better world for our children”. says Chamling.

**NATIONAL HERALD**

29 March 1999

## Chamling the green CM of a green state

NEW DELHI, March (IPS)- As Chief Minister of the Indian state of Sikkim, Pawan Kumar Chamling has the onerous job of protecting one of the hottest biodiversity

properties in the world.

Chamling has been more than .....to the task. Last month, he .....the .....of “greenest Chief Minister” of Indian’s 22 federal states for policies that range from banning plastic bags to canceling a major hydro-electric project.

Said Anil Agarwal, chief of the Centre for Science and Environment . (CSE) which awarded him.... title following a nationwide survey, “Chamling was the only chief minister who had begun worthwhile sustainable development programmes.”

Chamling, a soft-spoken former soldier, said he knew it was .... to get tough when Gangtok. Sikkim’s picturesque capital situated at 2.000 metres in the Himalayans was hit by a series of devastating landslides caused by plastic bags choking up the jhoras or large drains.

Originally mountain streams carrying crystal clear water, the jhoras turned into drains as rapid development forced Sikkim’s high .....to bear concrete jungles instead of pine forests under the ..... of development.

.....and trekkers to Sikkim’s charmed alpine valleys and mountaineers attempting to ..... the massive Kanchenjunga the world’s third highest peak, bought their own contribution of non-biodegradable detrius .

into the fourth of a five-year term as Chief Minister, Chamling said he found himself having to make the classic choice between economic growth for the 400.000 people of his remote and deprived state and environmental conservation.

“Sikkim joined the Indian Union only in 1975 after voting in favour of democracy rather than monarchy in a referendum- so we have a lot of catching up to do.” Chamling said.

On the other hand, Sikkim has the oppertunity of not repeating .....made by the older and ..... Indian states. Chamling .....particularly determined that .....people should be involved ... conservation activity .

“The rural people are the closest to nature and their daily needs ..... and food and fodder are drawn from the forests the ..... is how to maintain the ..... balance between man and nature.”

Chamling started out by ..... the destructive practice of ..... cattle in Sikkim’s thick but ..... forests. “I have seen what grazing does to forests and anyway cattle are better fed in stalls.”

The graziers have taken the matter to the courts. “We have always grazed out cattle in the open- besides it costs money to build stalls for cattle and effort to fetch fodder to them.” says Nyima a villager.

Last year, Chamling made amends by introducing the more popular joint forest-management programme which innovatively intergrates into joint -watershed management . Sikkim has 40 important watersheds.

“People are being asked to draw maps and point out rivers, streams, houses, important historical sites and land-

slide-prone areas so that officials can convert them into scientific maps," says Chezung Lachungpa, president of the Green Circle a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Gangtok.

Because the people are involved right from the start we can avoid the kind of conflict that happened with the Rathong Chuhydro electric project.

"That project was begun after consulting contractors and businessmen rather than the local people who were easily doped into getting small compensations for their land," says Jigme Kazi of the Concerned Citizens of Sikkim (CCS).

Initially, Chamling insisted that the project- begun by Nar Bahadur Bhandari, his political rival and predecessor in power- must go through because some four million dollars had been spent on it. "But then he heard out the people who live around it." Kazi said.

It became clear to Chamling that the Rathong Chu project would indeed have endangered a glacial lake, submerged an ancient Buddhist monastery and disturbed the fragile ecology on the southern slopes of the **Kanchenjunga bordering eastern Nepal.**

"We are giving up a lot considering that Sikkim has been estimated to be able to generate about 20,000 mw of electricity which we can export to other states," says Chamling.

That is no idle boast given that Sikkim covers a dizzying drop of 8,000 metres near the Kanchenjunga to near sea level when the state touches the rice field of neighbouring West Bengal state- all in a space of .....Kms.

In his attempts to protect Sikkim's .....Chamling has had to take out the army which maintains an ———some presence in a state neighbouring China which still does not recognise it as being a part of India.

For example when the army wanted to build a firing range in the northern part of the state over looking Tibet he lobbied hard to get the project cancelled two years ago.

"The army offered compensation but nothing could have replaced the unique wildlife in the area which includes the snow ....., the musk deer, Tibetan wild ass, various species of rodents and rare medicinal plants and herbs," said Lachungpa .

But Chamling says the biggest impediment to his attempts to protect Sikkim's environment have come from his own bureaucrats ."Most of them are corrupt and cause unnecessary delays."

The joint-forest management programme would have started a year ago but for impediments created in its implementation by bureaucrats who do not like to encourage honest NGOs, he said .

"Take also the ban I imposed on plastic bags which is being flouted openly in many areas of Gangtok- I cannot personally ensure that the ban is being adhered to." Chamling said.

# THE ASIAN AGE

1 May 1999

## Chamling praises Vajpayee

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Bagdogra, April 30: Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling said on Friday that the political instability in the country was caused by power hungry politicians. The president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, who returned to Gangtok from New Delhi told the Asian Age that the people had identified these politician and would vote accordingly .Mr, Chamling applauded Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's sincere effort to understand the problems of the people of Sikkim. He said: "Mr, Vajpayee's biggest achievement was that he provided a clean government, free of corruption charges." He added that the legislative elections would be held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections if it is held in October or November but not if it is June. He said: "We want to give time to our Opposition to build their strength.

# The Financial Express

1 May 1999

## SIKKIM - THE ONWARD MARCH From Chogyal's durbar to people's court

*Ashis Chakrabarti*

It was mid-December, 1994. Pawan Kumar Chamling had just been sworn in as Chief Minister of Sikkim, ending the 15-year rule of Nar Bahadur Bhandari. As reporters asked Chamling of his first priorities, he gave a curious, if also a telling, reply. "When I was expelled from the SSP (Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad)", he said, "I went to attend the Assembly session holding a burning candle in my hand and looking for vestiges of democracy. I found none. As Chief Minister I want to ensure that no one has to do this in Sikkim in future."

He was obviously speaking from deeply-felt personal experience. For Chamling's swearing-in as Chief Minister was something of a grand finale to a grim, two-year-long battle, which, at one stage, became life-and-death affair. Ever since he raised the banner of revolt against Bhandari's



dictatorial rule he was a hounded man often living underground or under protection of Central intelligence agencies. He came to be called the leader of the "Khali Khuthey" (the barefoot population), championing the cause of Sikkim's backward classes. Bhandari's regime had seen the rise and power of the upper caste Newars, Bauns and Chhetri.

But that was five years ago. Sikkim is at the crossroads again. The tiny Himalayan state goes to the Assembly polls again this September. And, more significantly, the year 2000 will mark the 25 anniversary of its merger with India. So it should be time for stocktaking not only for Chamling's 5-year rule but also for the state's journey on the road to socio-economic progress.

By all account, Chamling has succeeded in keeping his first promise—the people of the state now have a taste of democracy which Bhandari denied them. There is nothing of the atmosphere of fear that haunted not only Bhandari's opponents but also large sections of the common people in those years. Even the Opposition SSP or Congress cannot accuse Chamling of terrorising his political opponents. In fact, the Chief Minister has broadened democracy by holding the first-ever party based panchayat elections in October, 1997. Panchayat elections were held in Bhandari's time too, but the so-called partyless elections became keeping with the national policy of reservation for women, the Chamling government reserved 33 per cent of the panchayat seats for women. The result is a great social churning in a state where women constitute nearly 40 per cent of the 4.7 lakh population. Women hold nearly 60 per cent of the Government jobs. But the Government has not, however, extended the reservation facility for women to the Assembly as yet.

Chamling has also done something unique for women. In 1997, he introduced a "delayed marriage scheme" which was aimed at not only population control but also improvement in health for mother and child. In a backward society where women are prone to marry at an early age, the Government introduced a scheme by which a woman gets Rs. 50,000 deposited in a bank account in her name if she marries after 18. There are post-marital incentives if the first child is born two years after marriage and the second after four years. The amount deposited in the bank can be withdrawn along with interest by a woman as a retirement benefit. The so-called OBCs (other backward classes) were Chamling's trump card against Bhandari's upper caste NBC (Newar, Baun and Chhetri) combine in the 1994 elections. Keeping the OBC constituency in mind, Chamling introduced a rural housing scheme which entitled the poor to a grant of Rs. 20,000 and seven galvanised iron sheets to build their own dwelling units. An estimated 20,000 families are said to have benefited by the scheme so far. The Chief Minister claims his government has aimed at taking development to the villages, where as in the earlier regime most of the development projects were Gangtok-

centric.

His critics have accused him of taking populist measures to retain his electoral bases. But Chamling argues that in a state which has no industries worth the name Government-backed projects are the major avenue for development and people's economic well-being. By the state Government's estimate, 68 per cent of the population still lives below the poverty line. The Bureau of Statistics, however, puts the figure much lower at 36 per cent. Whatever the reality, poverty is pervasive in the state more than 50 per cent of which is covered with forests.

The Chamling Government, however, could do more to promote and expand environment-friendly ventures in horticulture, floriculture and tourism, for which the state has great potential. One major source of economic growth of the state is hydro-electricity, the state having abundant water resources. But major hydro-electricity projects, some of which are under way, need massive Central and private financial involvement. Fortunately for the state, Chamling has succeeded in bringing the Centre-State relations on an even keel. Sikkim seems to have left behind the years of strident anti-Centre postures at election times. New Delhi too has responded favourably by conceding last year to the state's long-standing demand for inclusion in the North Eastern Council (NEC). After 23 years, the Centre began talks last year for paying compensation to the family of the former Chogyal. The opening of the trade route from Tibet via Nathula another state demand of many years—can give the much-needed booster to Sikkim's economy.

Obviously, Sikkim is set to enter the new millennium with hope and promise. Yet there is one dark spot which Chamling could not light up. Corruption is still a major problem, particularly with a section of the politicians and the bureaucracy. The Chief Minister does not deny the problem in fact, he sometimes admits his failure to bureaucrats and other erring government employees. The coming elections will show how the people judge his government's successes and failures. But Sikkim seems to have finally emerged from the shadows of the Chogyal's durbar. Its road ahead is for a plane in the sun with the democratic polity of India. ■

## Assam Tribune

25 June 1999

### 'Bhandari's allegation baseless'

GANGTOK, June 24- The Police has termed as baseless former Chief Minister and Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) supremo Nar Bahadur Bhandari's allegation that he was attacked at Tarkhola on National Highway 31A in neighbouring Darjeeling hills on June

15, in which a party supporter was killed, reports UNI. The Opposition leader had also alleged that another party supporter was killed by ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) supporters in Kamling in Tribal dominated West Sikkim and a woman killed in police firing at Jorethang in South Sikkim the same day.

Talking to reporters here, State Director General of Police L C Amarnathan said confusion had been created regarding the incidents on June 15 when the SSP had organised a rally in Jorethang.

He clarified that in the Tarkhola incident one person had been killed when the tyre of the vehicle he was travelling in burst and he was pierced by a stray object. The vehicle was part of the SSP motorcade. The Kalimpong police have registered a case of culpable homicide under Section 304 of IPC. The post-mortem report too indicated that there was no evidence of any gunshot wound, he added. He said in the Kaling incident one person was allegedly assaulted by some persons. He later succumbed to his injuries at a hospital here on June 16. The incident was the outcome of personal enmity. Five persons, including four named in the FIR, had been arrested while another is absconding. He also rubbished Sri Bhandari's allegation that a woman was killed in police firing. She had died of a heart failure while the incident is being given a twist to incite communal passion, the DGP said.

Sri Bhandari had demanded a CBI inquiry into the three incidents and immediate dismissal of the Pawan Chamling led government. ■



26 June 1999

## CHAMLING READY TO BACK ANY GOVT. AT CENTRE

By Malabika Bhattacharya

GANGTOK, JUNE 25. The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, is firmly behind the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee as he feels that the BJP would emerge single largest party after elections and would be in a position to form a Government once again.

However, Mr. Chamling has not slammed the doors on the Congress (I) either. He says his party, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), has no bias against it. "We will not hesitate to cooperate with a Congress (I) Government either. Our primary concern is Sikkim and its interests."

In an interview with The Hindu Mr. Chamling said his party had extended support to the BJP-led coalition as it

thought India badly needed a stable Government. "But we are always willing to work in close cooperation with the Centre, be it run by the BJP, the Congress (I) or any third party."

Talking about a host of issues ranging from the SDF's poll prospects to the opposition to the AICC president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi's recent tour in the State, Mr. Chamling appeared confident of retaining his grip on this Himalayan State.

"As of now, we feel certain of winning at least 22 seats. The tally may even go up," he added. On the prospects of his rival, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad, Mr. Chamling said the SSP was a spent force with no credibility among the voters. Mr. Bhandari had ruled Sikkim for 15 years and was now facing a CBI inquiry for his alleged disproportionate assets and misappropriation of public funds. The party, Mr. Chamling is closely watching is the Congress (I). It seems to be in a upbeat mood ever since Mr. Kumar Subba, the MP from Tezpur, Assam was appointed the AICC observer for Sikkim.

According to analysts, two factors appear to be working in favour of the Congress (I). First, the choice of Mr. Subba has breathed a new life into the party as this is the first time that New Delhi acted in tune with the ground realities. In the past, the high command always dominated the State party by foisting a plainsman who was ignorant of the State's topography, history and sentiments. "The idea is to inject a sense of confidence into the Congress (I) workers. They have it in plenty now. I am sure the party will form the next Government in Sikkim," Mr. Subba said.

Second, the animosity which was almost ingrained in the people against the Congress (I) ever since the State's merger with the India in 1975, has somewhat receded. The voter in Sikkim is said to have held the Congress (I) responsible for the merger and thus prevented it from getting voted to power. The few times that the party had gained power was either by staging coups or manipulating the regional parties. The new voter is unaware of such a feeling and is reportedly keen on giving the Congress (I) a chance. "People have seen the regional parties for a long time. They may like to try out the Congress (I)," Mr. Karma Topden, the State Congress (I) president, said.

According to analysts, the Congress (I) is in the process of reaching an electoral understanding with Mr. Bhandari. Even though Mr. Bhandari ruled out any truce with the Congress (I), the Congress (I) indicates its going soft on the SSP. The need for an understanding rises from the fact that unless the two parties come together, Mr. Chamling would benefit from the spitting of votes.

It goes without saying that Mr. Chamling does not share Mr. Subba's euphoria about the Congress (I). But, he too, thinks that the SDF's principle adversary in the coming polls would be the Congress (I) and not the SSP as the later claims. ■

# Assam Tribune

26 June 1999

## Bhandari aiding ISI in Sikkim, alleges Chamling

GANGTOK, July 1- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has alleged that Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) supremo Nar Bahadur Bhandari is supporting and aiding Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in setting up a base at Jorethang town in South Sikkim bordering West Bengal, reports UNI.

Addressing a news conference at his official residence here on Wednesday evening, Sri Chamling alleged that a prominent businessman, who is also the SSP's publicity in-charge has close links with ISI based in North Bengal's trading hub of Siliguri. This apart, three members of the Opposition SSP are suspected to have ISI links and all the four are residents of Jorethang.

Asked if he could substantiate his allegation about the former Chief Minister's involvement with the Pakistani intelligence agency, he said, "I will inform the Central leadership of Sri Bhandari's anti-national activities and the support he is extending to the ISI operatives both in Sikkim and North Bengal. I will apprise the Central leaders in Delhi during the Chief Ministers' meet on July 7," he said. There are enough evidence of Sri Bhandari aiding and supporting the ISI in Sikkim. His supporters based in Jorethang are indulging in anti-India and anti-national activities, Sri Chamling said and added, "We have sounded a red alert throughout the State."

Sri Chamling said, "Sri Bhandari's anti-national leanings are well-known and his party's close link with the ISI proves that in Sikkim the ISI is being supported and idea by Sri Bhandari and his SSP."

Chamling, who is also the president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), said that Sri Bhandari and his party's stance had always been anti-India. In 1979 he had won the election with the slogan of 'Sikkim farkaunchoo (I shall make Sikkim independent), Chamling said, adding, in 1986 as the then Chief Minister Bhandari said, "If we cannot get rice from India, China and Nepal are there to provide rice for us."

Bhandari's anti-national credentials were ample example of his connections with ISI activists to create trouble in this sensitive and strategic border State, the Chief Minister alleged. Citing the case of two Chinese nationals who were detected to have entered the Himalayan State without any valid permits in September 1996, Sri Chamling alleged that the two Chinese nationals, Ye Mao and Cao Shengfei, on interrogation had revealed that they had come

to meet Sri Bhandari. "We had reported the matter to the Union Home Ministry and the two Chinese were deported."

Pressed repeatedly by media persons for concrete evidence of the ISI activities, Sri Chamling could only say, "We are keeping a close watch on their activities." Asked if the State government had prior information on their activities why no action had been taken on the suspected ISI agents reportedly "supporters of Opposition SSP", the Chief Minister said, "We will take action in due time. Most of these people are operating from outside Sikkim at present. It is that we are just giving them some long rope before moving in."

Sri Chamling said even the Central intelligence agencies were aware of their activities. "We have specific reports that these people come into Sikkim, hold meeting and slip out through Nayabazar into neighbouring Darjeeling Hills. We have proof that these people are supporters of Sri Bhandari and members of the SSP. One of them is the SSP's publicity chief." ■

# SENTINAL

30 June 1999

## Chamling supports govt on Kargil

GANGTOK, June 29 (PTI): Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has expressed full support to the Centre's military and diplomatic initiatives to flush out the Pakistani intruders in Kargil "Where an War-like situation has been forced on us". The Sikkimese people have shown "solidarity and concern for our Armed Forces who are fighting a difficult battle against all odds," Chamling said in a letter to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday last. The letter, circulated to the press today, said "I with my utmost sincerity want to assure you that Sikkim Government will do all that is necessary to meet the challenge." Chamling's Sikkim Democratic Front was an ally of the BJP-led coalition Government in the 12th Lok Sabha. Meanwhile, the government urged the Army authorities here to inform it in advance about the arrival of the bodies of Sikkimese soldiers killed in Kargil so that the bodies could be received in a befitting manner. The letter, written by the State's Chief Secretary Sonam Wangdi to Maj Gen U K Dube, the General Officer Commanding of 17 Mountain Division, said the district collectors have been asked to arrange for giving last respect to the soldiers. Various organization in the State have expressed solidarity with the Indian soldiers and condemned the Pakistani action by taking out processions, burning effigies and observing silence.

# Assam Tribune

2 July 1999

## Sikkim employees to donate 1 day's salary for martyr's family

GANGTOK, July 1- About 23,000 employees of Sikkim government will donate one-day's salary for the families of Army men who laid down their lives defending the motherland in the current conflict with Pakistan, according to the State Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, reports PTI.

Chamling, who was addressing a press conference here last night said the collected amount would be deposited to the Prime Minister relief fund to help the brave soldier's families.

The Chief Minister said he was also considering to set up a Chief Minister's relief fund in which any one can contribute for the cause.

Chamling said he would attend the Chief Ministers' meeting in Delhi on July 7, convened by the Centre to discuss the Kargil situation.

In the proposed meeting, "I, on behalf of the government and the people of the State, will support the Centre's action and Prime Minister's bold decisions in defending the country's territory," the Chief Minister said.

## Sikkim E X P R E S S

10-13 July 1999

## CM MEETS VAJPAYEE, SUBMITS MEMORANDUM

### CMs meet held to discuss Kargil

**GANGTOK:** Mr P.K. Chamling during his recent (7 July) visit to the capital met the Prime Minister and discussed with him the "social, economic and political" matters of "concern of the people of Sikkim." An official release issued by the government reads that the CM has submitted an memorandum to the central high command, listing out the pending demands regarding the social economic and political issues of the state.

The release made available to the press adds that the four point political demands put forward for acceptance comprises of protection of Sikkim subject certificate holders "who are Indian citizens, Restoration of Reservation of seats for Ethnic Sikkimese of Nepalese origin and Tsongs in Sikkim Legislative Assembly, as it existed prior

to 1979. The state government has also demanded in increased representation of Sikkim in the parliament from one member in each house to two members. In the economic front the eight point demands include the curtailing off of loans and interest, Road communication Infrastructure alternate alignment of NH31A, exploitation of Hydel Potential, Increase of Tourism Potential in the state.

The Prime Minister Mr. Vajpayee has assured the acceptance of the need for an alternate alignment of NH31A and also added that the bill for induction of Sikkim in North East Council has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha. He has assured to consider the other demands too.

### CM attends chief minister conference:

A conference of the chief minister were convened by the PM recently (07.07.99) to discuss the situation arising out to the intrusion of infiltrators and the regular Pakistan Army Troops in Kargil Sector. The meet also aimed to assess the internal security implications arising from such. The conference, attended also by P.K. Chamling, decided upon to set up a high level committee for preparing a national policy for rehabilitation of Jawan, to set up a national war memorial, unanimous support for the diplomatic steps taken by government, to avoid nationalisation of Kashmir issue.

# Assam Tribune

16 July 1999

## Rights of ordinary Sikkimese to be ensured : Chamling

GANGTOK, July 15- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has said if voted to power in the next Assembly polls his government would ensure constitutional safeguard for the rights of ordinary Sikkimese under Article 371(F), reports PTI.

Chamling, president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), asked people to 'punish' him if they had lost their rights and dignity during the last five years of SDF rule.

"We want to take the ethnic Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali communities forward and do not want to remain in power by 'threatening or 'misleading' the common people," he said.

Referring to the campaigning by the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP), without naming it in particular, he said its poll promise was to implement the May eight 1973 tripartite agreement in "letter and spirit" after coming to power, which amounted "to make Sikkim indepen-



dent again.” The agreement maintained Sikkim’s unique status before becoming a part of Indian union.

Chamling explained the said agreement, signed by different parties and the Centre, became null and void after May 16, 1975 when Sikkim merged with India. The agreement was ‘superceded’ by Article 371(F) of the Constitution which came to force following Sikkim’s merger ensuring special provision for the Sikkimense.

The Chief Minister lamented “we are passing through a transitional period even after 25 years of merger when the Sikkimense people have not become entirely Indian in mentality.”

Asking the people to vote according to their conscience Chamling said “cast your vote according to your wish.

## Assam Tribune

20 August 1999

# Chamling vows to make Sikkim self-sufficient State

TEMI BAZAR( South Sikkim). Aug 19 - Ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) supremo Pawan Chamling has exhorted the people to refrain from casteist politics and try to build a self-sufficient State by the next millennium, reports UNI.

Addressing a campaign rally in the Himalayan State’s only tea garden town on Wednesday braving heavy rains, the SDF chief appealed to the Sikkim people to vote the party back to power for a second successive term and not be misguided by the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad’s antimerger policies of restoring the May 8, 1973 tripartite agreement, signed by the erstwhile ruler of Sikkim, the Chogyal, the Government of India and then the political parties of Sikkim.

The SDF chief clarified that the agreement had no relevance after insertion of Article 371 (F) into the Indian Constitution. Article 371 (F) provides total protection to the people of Sikkim and safeguard their special rights.

Sri Chamling claimed that since the SDF was successful in restoring democracy in the State, it was time to “institutionalism democracy” for the Sikkimense to live peacefully and with dignity.

Announcing the candidature for the Temi-Tarku Geeral constituency, Sri Chamling said the outgoing State Tourism and Agriculture Minister Gargaman Gurung was being renominated for the second term.

The SDF supremo said if the party was back to power, it could implement what he termed as ‘Vision 2020’.

He said, ‘We intend to make Sikkim a self-sufficient, poverty-free and unemployment-free State by the millennium. The SDF’s pro-poor policy, including rural housing schemes will be extended along with enhancement of daily wages to Rs 100 from the present Rs 80 he promised. Students up to the senior secondary level will also be provided with free uniform, he added.

He asked the people to strengthen the hands of the SDF in taking Sikkim, the youngest State in the Indian Union, to the national mainstream. He claimed that it was the SDF government which had given the Sikkimense a clean government after 14 years of despotic misrule by the previous government.

The SDF supremo also promised to provide a more streamlined State administration.

## DECCAN HERALD

21 September 1999

# Sikkim CM confident of Victory

From Prasanta Paul  
DH News Service

DAMTHANG (SIKKIM), Sept 20

In his teens, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling often stood on a big rock, gazing at the valleys, rugged mountain tops and also his russet-splashed village. The green, expensive paddy fields in terraced carves do not grow paddy throughout the year due to Sikkim’s extreme climatic conditions. As a young man, Mr Chamling thought of bringing in development at his village. But circumstances forced him to join the police and the dream took a backseat.

Twenty years on, circumstances brought him back to the centre stage of the State’s vortex of power which has given him an opportunity to implement his vision into reality. After serving a term as chief minister of this strategic north-eastern border State, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) president has realised how weary is the weight of the crown for the person who wears it. Not only the village from where he hails, hundreds such villages in the remote nook and corner of the State have been awaiting fruits of development and basic health care.

Engaged a four-cornered battle, Mr Chamling is seeking re-election from here on the plea of carrying on the “unfinished agenda” which he promised to implement in the manifesto, if voted to power, during the 1994 assembly elections. Sikkim Ka Janata did elect the SDF with a clear majority in the December 1994 poll with a hope that some of the promises would be kept.

Nearly five years have rolled over and places around Damthang have motorable roads and some of the villages do sport corrugated roofs. While the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) candidate displays a list of works undone by the SDF strongman, the Congress nominee complains about corruption and discrimination in distribution of rural assistance.

However, SDF Secretary D Tamang is in splits: "How can they level charges when they have sold themselves to an unholy alliance?" he says.

Even as the chief minister told this correspondent that his government had succeeded in fulfilling 90 per cent of the pre-poll pledges, power crisis and rising unemployment have formed part of the nagging allegation he could not skirt.

But Mr Chamling has an answer too for that: "The 14 year-old rule by the SSP led by Mr Bhandari has pushed the development clock backward. When we assumed power, we inherited this legacy of the past and you have to give us some time to repair the clock adjust its pace."

Damthang apart, Mr Chamling has been contesting from another seat- Jorethang Nayabazar - in the South district and while he declined to say if the uncertainty of his victory here has prompted him to opt for a second choice, sources in the SDF point out that the chief minister decided to field himself from Jorethang as there were "Too many claimants and none was willing to withdraw".

Called a messiah of the OBCs in Sikkim- Damthang has a significant presence of other backward caste people comprising 65 per cent of the electorate - Mr Chamling assumed the mantle at Mintogang (the official residence of the chief minister) by the OBC vote in the 1994 poll. The SDF president is hopeful of a repeat performance around this time too.

## The Statesman

10 October 1999

# Sikkim Governor invites Chamling to form govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK, Oct. 9 - The Sikkim Governor, Chaudhury Randhir Singh, today formally invited the leader of Sikkim Democratic Front Legislature Party, Mr Pawan Chamling, to form the government in the state after the latter staked claim to do so.

Mr Chamling met Chaudhury Singh this afternoon at

the Raj Bhavan here and handed over the letter signed by all 24 elected members of the party unanimously selecting him their leader officials said here.

The Governor, as per recommendations of the state Cabinet, also dissolved the fifth Assemble, the official said adding the official notification to this effect would be out tomorrow .

The swearing-in ceremony will take place on next Monday.

Mr Chamling was asked to act as a caretaker government till alternative arrangement were made, the official added.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 October 1999

# New Sikkim Govt on Monday

Gangtok, October 9

THE SIKKIM Democratic Front (SDF), led by Pawan Chamling, which secured a three-fourth majority in the 32-member Sikkim Assembly, will be sworn in for the second successive term on October 11.

Sikkim Governor Chaudhury Randhir Singh will administer the oath-of-office to Mr Chamling and his council of ministers at the Raj Bhawan on Monday.

The SDF, which bagged 24 seats, will raise its tally to 25 when has another independent elected member from the Himalayan state's unique monastic seat of Sangha formally joined the party.

Addressing a news conference here last night, SDF chief spokesperson and former Chief Minister BB Gooroo said the Sikkimese had reposed their faith in the SDF and by electing Mr Pawan Chamling had proved that he was the "undisputed messiah" of the poor.

Mr Gooroo said although the size of the cabinet has not been decided yet the party's central working committee would meet on Saturday to elect the leader of the SDF Legislative Council, with Mr Chamling as the leader of the House.

The main Opposition, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad led by former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari, could only win seven seats in the Assembly. The Congress, which contested all 32 seats was routed.

The SDF spokesperson said the State Congress president Karma Topden and SSP president Nar Bahadur Bhandari should resign from their posts owning moral responsibility for their party's dismal performance in the just concluded polls in the State.

Ruling out "horse-trading", Mr Gooroo said the situation is different from when the SDF came to power in

1994, when the party had won 19 seats. Six of the opposition SSP legislators had crossed over to the ruling party. But now the SDF is in a stronger position and can form Government on its own, he added.

Asked about the prime objective of the new Government, Mr Gooroong said the SDF Government will "shake-up the State's bureaucracy." He informed that the State administrative machinery would be geared up to make it more disciplined and transparent to live up to the Sikkimese peoples expectations. "We intend to make the administration more effective and responsive to the peoples needs."

Meanwhile, Mr Chamling in message has expressed gratitude to the people for giving the SDF a decisive mandate for forming the Government for a second successive term.

Mr Chamling said the SDF Government which was voted to power in 1994 has been striving hard to strengthen democracy in the State and establish peace

## The Statesman

12 October 1999

# Chamling opts for 8 new faces

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK, Oct. 11. - For the first time, a two-tier ministry was installed in Sikkim today bringing in eight new faces in the 17-member -Sikkim Democratic Front government, led by Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling.

The Governor, Chaudhury Randhir Singh, administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mr Chamling, who led his party to victory with two-thirds majority in the 32 member House.

Besides Mr Chamling, 11 Cabinet ministers and five ministers of state were administered the oath at Raj Bhavan.

The Cabinet ministers are Dorjee Dazom Bhutia, Garjaman Gurung, Hishey Lachungpa, Karna Bahadur Chamling, Thinley Tshering Bhutia, Ran Bahadur Subbam Prem Singh Tamang, Dorjee Tshering Lepcha, Karma Tempo Namgyal Gyaltzen, Ram Bahadur Subba and Sher Bahadur Subedi, the last three being new faces.

The ministers of state, all new faces, are Girish Chandra Rai, Tseten Dorjee Lepcha, Chandra Kumar Mohara Ongden Tshering Lepcha and Thutop Bhutia. Mr Chamling dropped three of his earlier ministers who won the elections. Woman Speaker : For the first time, Sikkim will have a woman Speaker in its Assembly.

"We will have a woman Speaker and a tribal deputy Speaker... It will be a new history for the state," Mr Chamling said.

## DECCAN HERALD

12 October 1999

# Development tops Chamling's agenda

GANGTOK, Oct 11 (pti)

The new Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today said his government's top priority would be the economic development of the state.

"My government will take up economic and infrastructure development and address the unemployment problem in the state," Mr Chamling told reporters after the swearing -in ceremony of his council of ministers at the Raj Bhawan here.

Into his second consecutive term, Mr Chamling said his government would become more 'responsive' to the needs of the people.

The new cabinet was a 'balanced ' on with equal number of eight representations each from the tribals and general communities, he said.

The 17-member two-tier Sikkim Democratic Front(SDF) Ministry, headed by Mr Chamling, was sworn in earlier today.

Governor Chaudhury Randhir Singh administered the oath of office and secrecy to the chief minister and his cabinet colleagues at a simple function.

The ministry comprises 12 of cabinet rank and five ministers of state, who were inducted for the first time in the history of the state. None of the five were ministers in the earlier government.

SUPPORT: Mr Chamling today said his party Sikkim Democratic Front will join the new NDA government if offered a ministerial berth.

Talking to reporters here soon after his swearing-in, Mr Chamling, also SDF president, said "We want to support Vajpayee from inside and not outside." The newly elected SDF MP Bhim Prasad Dahal is already in Delhi to participate in the NDA meeting, he added.

## THE ASIAN AGE

12 October 1999

# Sikkim elects first woman Speaker

Gangtok, Oct. 11: A 17- member two- tier Sikkim Democratic Front ministry headed by Pawan Kumar Chamling was sworn in here on Monday . Governor Choudhury

Randhir administered the oath of office to the chief minister and his Cabinet colleagues at a simple function at Raj Bhawan here.

The SDF has decided to appoint Kalawati Subba as the first woman Speaker of the 32-member Assembly. Speaking to reporter Mr Chamling said the lone woman legislator in the House, Ms Subba who was elected from west Sikkim's Yoksum constituency would be the state's first woman speaker.

The ministry comprises 12 Cabinet ministers and the first five ministers of state in Sikkim's history.

Besides Mr Chamling, the Cabinet ministers who took oath Vabdo Dorjee Dazom Bhutia, Garjaman Gurung, Hishey Lachungpa, Karna Bahadur Chamling, Thinley Tshering Bhutia, Ran Bahadur Subba, Prem Singh Tamang, Dorjee Tshering Lepcha, Karma Tempo Namgyal Gyaltzen, Ram Bahadur Subba and Sher Bahadur subedi, the last three being new faces. None of the five were ministers in the previous SDF government.

The ministers of state, an fresh entrants in the ministry, are Girish Chandra Rai, Tseten Dorjee Lepcha, Chandra Kumar Mohara, Ongden Shering Lepcha and Thutop Bhutia.

The Sikkim Democratic Front won two-thirds majority in the 32-member assembly by annexing 24 seats, the remaining seven going to the main Opposition Sikkim Sanfral Parishad. (PTI, UNI)

## Assam Tribune

21 October 1999

### Chamling's move to buck up administration

GANGTOK, Oct 20 - In a bid to tighten his hold over the new government the Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has issued directives to ministers, MLAs and MP for "effective and efficient running of the administration," reports PTI.

Under the new directives, even the ministers and MLAs have seek prior appointment to see the Chief Minister and secure his approval before proceeding on tour. They have also been asked to apprise the area MLA on such visits to various constituencies of the state, official sources said here today.

An official circular issued by the Chief Minister's secretariat said ministers would be expected to 'exercise checks to prevent unauthorised use of official vehicles and telephones' provided to them.

They should do away with the practice of bringing files 'personally' for the Chief Minister's consent by passing the normal procedure. Ministers were also asking not to routed through the normal channel but brought by the of-

ficial personally, the circular said.

'Interference' in transfer of employees, which was a matter of government policy, would not be tolerated, the circular said.

'The Chief Minister's directives to his ministerial colleagues and MLAs assumed significance in the backdrop of criticisms of his alleged lack of hold over the state administration in the first tenure. Also some ministers had earned a bad name for their 'unbecoming' conduct.

The circular asked all the ministers to route their press statements on government policies and advertisements to newspapers through the state information and public relations department.

Ministers and MLAs should interact with government official in a 'temperate manner and make sincere efforts to give correct direction' ensuring their legitimate demands placed to public interest were made and carried out to a meaningful conclusion.

The directive urged all MLAs to exert 'moral leadership' in every sphere of their activities - both public and private- thereby becoming 'beacon lights' for others to follow and emulate.

## The Statesman

1 November 1999

### Hard decisions ahead, Chamling tells people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK, Oct 31 - The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, today asked people of the state to get ready for some "hard decisions" his government will take.

"We have to take some hard decisions in this tenure- which people army not like at all. But they will be benefited in the long run" Mr Chamling said.

Addressing a function on the occasion of "Rashtriya Sankalp Diwas", observed to commemorate late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi's death anniversary, the Chief Minister said his government has formed a task force to identify the "genuine" people living below the poverty line (BPL).

Once the identification process was over, facilities like subsidised rice and other items would be extended only to the BPL class and not others, he said.

Asking people, including ministers and bureaucrats, to work with "more responsibility", the Chief Minister called for "honesty and sincerity" in the functioning of the government.

Earlier, the Chief Minister paid homage to the late



leader. An all- religion prayer was held to mark the occasion.

The judge of Sikkim High Court, Justice Anup Deb, Mr Chamling's Cabinet colleagues and senior government officials also attended the function.

Shake-up : The Sikkim government yesterday effected a major shake up in the state's police administration by transferring both senior-and middle-level officials, adds UNI.

The reshuffle follows the recent transfer of some 42 senior- and middle-level bureaucrats .

According to an official order, the state Additional Inspector General of Police (headquarters), Mr Yap Tshering Bhutia, was transferred and posted as the Chief Fire Officer in the Sikkim Fire Service.

### 'FINISH WORK IN 100 DAYS'

GANGTOK, Oct. 31.- Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling asked the state Rural Development Department to complete all pending and ongoing schemes within 100 days and submit the progress report to him.

Mr Chamling, who himself has the RDD portfolio, asked senior officials to give "top priority" to the repair of bridges, water supply and construction of pavements. He stressed the need for proper supervision of these projects, officials said here.

Mr Chamling further directed the RDD to construct a panchayat bhawan with all basic amenities in every gram panchayat unit of the state.

Expressing his "dissatisfaction" over the quality of furniture and books provided to the panchayat libraries, Mr Chamling directed the department to supply quality books and furniture besides assigning a joint secretary-level official to look after those, they added.-PTI

The Additional Superintendent of Police, state Crime Branch, Mr K B Gurung, replaced Mr Bhutia as the AIGP (headquarters). Among the Indian Police Service Officials transferred were the Superintendent of Police, East Sikkim, Mr S D Negi, who has been transferred to the state Crime Branch as SP, replacing Mr Gurung.

The Commandant of Sikkim Armed Police, Mr Akshaya Sachdeva , took over as SP, East Sikkim. The ASP, North Sikkim, Mr Vinit Vinayak, is the new commandment of the SAP, while the SP, state Crime Branch, Mr Luktuk Gyatso, has been transferred and posted as SP, check posts. Mr Gyatso replaces Mr Bhupendra Thapa who was transferred as Officer on Special Duty to the Sikkim Nationalised Transport earlier this month.

Among the middle-level official, the ASP, Sikkim Armed Police, Mr Mimgma Bhutia, was transferred and posted as ASP, state Crime Branch, while the ASP, West Sikkim, Mr Sonam Tshering Bhutia, replaced Mr Mimgma

Bhutia as ASP, Sikkim Armed Police.

The Deputy Superintendent of Police, Special Branch, Gangtok Mr B Tamang, was posted as Sub Divisional Police Officer, Soreng, in West Sikkim.

Incidentally, Mr Tamang, who was earlier the SDPO in Soreng, was shifted from the post after the Election Commission had relieved him and three other police officials from poll-related duty in August this year.

The DSP, state Crime Branch, Mr K D Sanderpa, was posted as SDPO, Rabongla, in South Sikkim, replacing Mr K B Gurung, who was transferred and posted as the SDPO, Mangan, in tribal North Sikkim.

The Officer-in -Charge of Soreng police station, Mr Karsang Tshering Bhutia, has been posted as Inspector of Police in Sikkim Armed Police. The Police Inspector of Home Guards, Mr K B Gurung, replaced Mr Bhutia as OC (Soreng ) in West Sikkim.

## The Statesman

3 November 1999

# CM AT WORK

### Too many promises for Chamling to keep

SIKKIM'S Chief Minister Pawan Chamling is asserting him self. Within 24 hours of being sworn in he ordered the transfer of 12 middle- level bureaucrats. Last week several senior bureaucrats and police officials were given new assignments. Mass transfers characterised Chamling's previous tenure also but he could not get rid of vested interests in key departments bent on perpetuating former chief minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari's work culture. Pawan secretary LP Tewari, who held the post for 13 years, was one of them. Tewari, however, made light of Chamling's job by resigning in 1997 and floated the Sikkim Ekta Manch which, contrary to expectations, failed to become a third political force. Unable to make an impact, it merged with the Congress which drew a blank in the recent assembly elections. Chamling's directive to the Rural Development Department to complete all pending work in the next 100 days is indicative of his determination to create a work culture . It remains to be seen how effectively his colleagues help him fulfill the public commitment to eradicate corruption and poverty. Little progress was made over the past five years in implementing pro-people programmes, due to ministerial and bureaucratic insensitivity. Bureaucrats used to ostentatious lifestyles during Bhandari's regime will find change difficult, but will have to adjust. State employees risk losing out on promotion if they default in submitting their annual property returns. Harsher decisions are expected .

Chamling has many promises to fulfill. The new ones

are to provide free school uniforms also for students of fifth to eight standards, increase labourers' minimum daily wage to Rs 100 and make rice available at Rs 4 a kg to those living below the poverty line. Lofty ideals apart, what the state has to tackle urgently is growing unemployment. Law and order also needs attention against the background of post-election clashes. The fact also, remains that disgruntled elements are out to rupture communal harmony and tarnish the government's image.

## Sikkim plans seven helipads to boost tourism

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK, Nov. 2.- In a bid to promote and develop the state's tourism sector, the Sikkim government has decided to construct seven helipads in the state in the current financial year, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling said.

The decision was taken at a high level meeting chaired by the chief minister and attended by tourism minister, Mr KT Gyaltsen, agriculture minister, Mr GM Gurung, chief secretary, Mr Sonam Wangdi and finance secretary, Mr Tashi Topden, among others here yesterday.

The helipads would be built at Dodak (Soreng), Pelling and Yuksom in the West district, Ravangla in South, Yumthang in North and East Sikkim's Tsongu and Aritar areas by March, 2000.

Necessary infrastructure will be build around the helipads and the concerned departments carry out beautification work and provide basic amenities, officials said here today.

The decision came close on the heels of the chief minister's announcement of laying a helipad in Soreng during a public meeting there on Friday.

Sikkim has so far got only a civil helipad near Gangtok besides a few of the Army.

Mr Chamling directed all the departments having guest houses in various parts of the state to hand over those, if not required for official purposes, to the tourism section which would convert them either to wayside amenities or utilise them as they deem fit to generate more revenue and employment.

Yesterday's meeting also decided to build a Sikkim House at Siliguri for the people of Sikkim and government officials during their stay in the north Bengal town.

The chief minister asked the secretaries of tourism, buildings and transport departments to jointly locate and inspect a suitable site at Siliguri in this regard.

Decision was also taken in the meeting to connect the Saramsa parks and garden near Ranipool, 12 km from here, with the nearby Marchak floriculture centre by construct-

ing a bridge over the adjoining stream with view to develop the area as a tourist spot, the officials said.

The high-level meeting decided to mark out suitable land for developing growth centres for industries and lease them for a prescribed time to the prospective entrepreneurs.

The chief minister stressed the need to take quick decisions by the departmental heads and secretaries in public interest without any "unnecessary lengthy procedural wrangles".

**NATIONAL HERALD**

14 November 1999

## 'Satpal dedicated to national unity'

### **Herald News Services**

NEW DELHI, Nov 13- The Chief Minister of Sikkim Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling said that prominent spiritual leader Mr Satpal Maharaj is doing the best to establish and strengthen National Unity through his great missionary deeds.

Mr Chamling was addressing millions of people, gathered in Ramlila Ground, New Delhi from different corners of the country and abroad at the occasion of the inauguration of Rashtriya Ekta Sammelan organised by Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti, Mr Chamling said that Mr Satpal Maharaj has successfully invoked the light of spiritual and Knowledge in the hearts of the people of Sikkim. They now realise that life without spiritual knowledge is meaningless.

He said, "I am not here to speak out my own thoughts but to listen to the great spiritual leader Mr Satpal Maharaj and get blessings from his majesty."

Mr Satpal Maharaj honoured Mr Chamling with the title of Man of Dedication Award' 99" on behalf of Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti for great deeds done by him for Green Revolution and other social works in Sikkim.

Presiding the Sammelan the great spiritualist Mr Satpal Maharaj said that all the people of India belonging to different religions are like different flowers and eternal soul within all of them is like the only thread of the garland.

It is due to indifferences that people are struggling against each-other in the name of communalism, casteism and superstitions. He said that the great saits of India successfully invoked the feeling of National Unity in the hearts of people though spiritual power.

Mr Maharaj appealed to all the saints and sages present in the Sammelan to go to every village, town and city of the country to strengthen the National Unity among people. He illustrated the love of motherland expressed by Lord Rama when he entered Lanka after killing Ravana the great

demon. Lakshman was overwhelmed by the beauty and charm of Lanka and proposed to stay at Lanka, Lord Rama said no to that proposal as the motherland was better even than heaven to him.

Mr Maharaj also appealed to the political leaders of the country to realise the importance of spiritual power. He said that only through spiritual power we can get success in fighting against nation wide vils such as corruption, immorality and communalism etc. At this occasion Mr Satpal Maharaj expressed great sympathy to the super cyclone hit people of Orissa and appealed to all the people present in the Sannelan to participate in the Relief Fund establish by Manav Utthan Sewa Samiti for the storm victims of Orissa.

Holy Mother Amrita Ji also appealed to the people to give a hand to help the cyclone hit people of Orissa open heartedly she told that the human who lives for others know the real meaning of life.

Holy Mother Mangla Ji expressed that this vast conference is invited every year to mark the birth day of Hans Ji Maharaj who dedicated his whole life for the religious harmony and welfare of people.

## The Statesman

18 November 1999

### Sikkim drive against graft

#### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK, Nov. 17- In keeping with the Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling's commitment to make Sikkim corruption-free, the state vigilance department was gearing up to conduct surprise checks and raids in various departments

A high-level meeting, chaired by the Chief Secretary, Mr Sonam Wangdi, here yesterday, deliberated on conducting inspections and surprise checks, timely compliance of audit objections and property returns of the government servants, official sources said here today.

A preparation of a codified manual by all departments and observance of conduct rules relating to integrity and discipline of the employees also figured in the meeting, attended by the DGP, Mr LC Amarnathan, the chief minister's secretary, Mr PT Gyamtso, and the vigilance director.

Mr Chamling, in a recent public meeting, had said that he would not hesitate to engage the vigilance department to weed out corruption from administration and punish the employees not submitting their property returns annually. During the meeting yesterday, Mr Amarnathan dealt with various aspects of preventive vigilance and its legal provisions while Mr Wangdi emphasised the role of vigilance officials for a smooth functioning.

## Assam Tribune

2 December 1999

### Chamling opposed to inclusion of Sikkim is Sixth Schedule

GANGTOK, Dec 1 - Sikkim Should not be included in the Sixth schedule of the Constitution, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Tuesday, said reports PTL.

'For including Sikkim in the Sixth Schedule, the State has to be shortened into a district- which is not a welcome step and we have to stop it, 'Chamling told a gathering here referring to the recent media reports to this effect.

The Chief Minister's statement assumed significance in the backdrop of a reported meeting between the Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad President Nar Bahadur Bhandari and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Chairman Subhas Ghising recently in which they claimed to have clinched a 'pact'.

Chamling said for Darjeeling, which is a hill council district, the measure (of including it in the Sixth Schedule) was 'relevant, but not for Sikkim.'

Referring to proposed property tax, Chamling said that it would not affect the poor people in villages. It would be aimed at revenue generation for the State.

At least Rs 10 crore worth of business was being transacted from Sikkim market in a year but not a single farthing was coming to the state exchequer, he lamented .

Western culture: Chamling exhorted the people of the State not to get swayed by western culture and follow their own tradition.

Don't get westernised in dress and culture. Follow ours own to keep it alive, 'Chamling said here after presenting literary awards to exponents of Bhutia language.

The denzong Kay-Rab Yargay Tsogpo (Sikkim) Literary Association) felicitated Norden Tshering, a State Government employee and Yapchung Kazi, a programme executive in AIR here, for their contribution to Bhutia language.

## The Financial Express

26 December 1999

### Sikkim plans medical insurance for poor

**Somnath Dasgupta**

Calcutta, Dec 25

THE Sikkim government is working on medical insurance scheme for all people below the poverty line, Chief

Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling said here on Saturday.

Chamling said that he met National Insurance Co's chief AN Poddar here on Friday with the proposal. The tiny Himalayan state, which has a total population of around four lakh, expects an outgo of around Rs 1 crore as annual premium.

The chief minister said Sikkim already offers its people free medical care as well as medicines. The insurance scheme is expected to get going in the next fiscal. Sikkim is also setting up a ministry for information technology, and promoting itself as a site for software export projects. To start with, the entire administration together with all records is being computerised.

In a major initiative, all educated unemployed will be offered free computerised training he said.

Chamling said his government aims to make Sikkim a model state in another 15 years. He reckons that the relatively small population his state should help him achieve stiff goals like removal of illiteracy and poverty. On the population control front, the government offers monetary incentives for delayed marriages and spaced childbirths. The thrust areas will be tourism infrastructure, information technology, export of hydroelectric power and traditional products such as large cardamom.

Commenting on the agreement between states to end sales tax wars, Chamling said Sikkim does not stand to lose as it recently became a member of the North Eastern Council. This status, once ratified by a change in the NEC Act of 1971, will fetch it benefits like 10 year exemption from central excise.

In tourism, the state's focus will be on developing infrastructure like roads, helipads and airstrips. The private sector will be offered land on 99-year lease for setting up hotels and clearances will be given speedily.

Chamling stressed that the focus will be on eco-tourism, to showcase the state's natural beauty without damaging it.

## The Statesman

27 December 1999

# Chamling's millennium pledge

CM CHALKS OUT DETAILED TOURISM PLAN

UDAY BASU

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Dec. 26 - The Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, wants to greet the millennium with the pledge to make his state the Switzerland of India.

And this is not one of those hollow millennium promises. Mr Chamling has chalked out a detailed plan to make tourism the state's major revenue earner. The plan is to be implemented during the first 15 years of the new millennium.

He would also maintain "good relations" with both Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu. "Being a partner of the NDA, it's only natural that I would seek Mr Vajpayee's help for my state's development. I need similar cooperation from Mr Basu also, since he is the Chief Minister of my closest neighbouring state," Mr Chamling told **The Statesman** in an exclusive interview yesterday.

"To begin with, Sikkim will have new helipads by March next year, which is a key tourism infrastructure input," he said.

Each of the 160 panchayat areas will be turned into a tourist spot. "Our panchayat system would be unique in the country, since it would be made a major apparatus to develop tourism infrastructure. We spend 70 per cent of our development budget through the panchayats and in the new millennium bulk of the panchayat funds would be spent for developing tourism," Mr Chamling said.

The Sikkim Democratic Front government has already submitted a charter of demands to the Prime Minister for the state's economic rejuvenation. It has urged the Prime Minister to provide three 14-seater helicopters to be used for the nine helipads.

The SDF, which is a partner of the NDA, has sought Mr Vajpayee's intervention for speeding up the construction of an airstrip in Sikkim. The spot identified for the airstrip has also got the Union environment ministry's clearance.

Mr Chamling wants the Centre to assign a special role to his state for making trade with China through Tibet a reality. His government has already identified areas where warehouses can be set up. He feels the Union Home and external affairs ministry should give top priority to his government's proposal to introduce bus services between Nathula and Lhasa like the Delhi-Lahore or Calcutta-Dhaka bus services.

Take up with the Centre the inclusion of Sikkim into the North Eastern Council. The Vajpayee government took steps in this direction during its 13-month-long tenure. But the process needs amendment of the North Eastern Council Act, 1971, for which Mr Chamling will press the Prime Minister.

Once included in the NEC, Sikkim would also be a beneficiary of funds allocated to the seven northeastern states.

Weeding out corruption would be yet another millennium pledge of the Chamling government.

During its previous tenure it was one of the SDF's electoral promises and Mr Chamling began administrative reforms geared to that objective.

"I have already tightened the vigilance and anti-cor-



ruption departments.

The fight against corruption will be carried to its logical conclusion during my second term in office," he said.

The SDF registered a landslide victory capturing 25 of the 32 Assembly seats "marginalising" Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 December 1999

# Former Sikkim prince awaits millennium 'compensation' gift

Ashis Chakrabarti

Calcutta, December 26

If ALL goes well, the 13th Chogyal of Sikkim, Prince Wangchuk Namgyal, may get a millennium gift from the Indian Government - a compensation for his father's lost kingdom.

The issue of paying the compensation to the heir of the 12 Chogyal, Palden Thondup Namgyal, has been hanging in fire ever since the tiny Himalayan kingdom merged with the Indian Union in 1975.

It was taken up by the first Vajpayee government in 1998 at the instance of the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling.

Chamling told The HindustanTimes here last evening that substantial progress had been made in the tripartite negotiations on the issue between representatives of the Government of India, the Sikkim Government and the "palace".

It had remained a "highly emotive issue" for the people of Sikkim for nearly quarter of a century.

The Sikkim Government too had a stake in resolving the issue because much of the disputed proper could actually go to the State after an amicable settlement of the issue.

Negotiations of the 13th Chogyal's compensation were stalled after the first Vajpayee government fell. But before that, in June this year, the Government of India and the Chogyal's representatives "agreed in principle" on the modalities of paying the compensation, Sikkim's chief secretary, Sonam Wangdi, said. If the present trend in the talks continues, he hoped that the Chogyal may get the compensation in the millennium year.

Chief Minister Chamling activated several State Government department to prepare detailed status reports on the property claimed by the Prince Wangchuk. Sikkim Government sources said, the claims amounted to prop-

erty worth Rs 100 crore.

Obviously, both New Delhi and Gangtok had objections to Prince Wangchuk's claim on several estates and government buildings in the State capital and elsewhere.

For instance, the Prince's claims on the old Sikkim House in New Delhi, the State Secretariat and the present Chief Minister's official residence at Gangtok were turned down.

Legally, though, Prince Wangchuk was never accepted by the Indian Government as the 13th Chogyal for the simple reason that the kingdom ceased to exist with its merger with the Indian union.

At a ceremony at Gangtok on February 19, 1982, after his father's death, however, Wangchuk was "consecrated" as the 13th Chogyal.

According to the Sikkim Chief Secretary the old question of Prince Wangchuk signing the "instrument of accession" was no longer relevant to the compensation issue. The prince now lives almost a hermit's life, dividing his time between religious places in Nepal and his ashram at Takchi, near Gangtok.

## HIMALAYAN OBSERVER

27 December 1999

"DEVELOPMENT CANNOT COME  
AT THE COST OF ENVIRONMENT"

# Chamling is India's Mr. Green

By a Staff Reporter

**Gangtok: The Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, has been rated as the "Number One" CM in the country for his efforts to promote sustainable development in the State. Environmentalists have placed Digvijay Singh of Madhya Pradesh in the second place while Punjab's Prakash Singh Badal was ranked third.**

A survey conducted by the Centre for Science and Environment among 335 readers of Down To Earth(DTE) magazine and 237 "noted environmentalists" in the country revealed that while Chamling topped the list of rankings of CMs made by the environmentalists Sikkim stood first both in conservation of rural and urban environment.

Environmentalists have lauded Chamling's opposition to specific dams and hydel projects and his efforts to curtail logging and restrict timber transport in the State. Chamling's emphasis on eco-tourism, afforestation, ban on recycled plastic bags, cattle grazing and preservation

of the "ethnic culture" were other areas where he received praises from environmentalists.

DTE readers placed Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, in the number one position although he was ranked sixth by the environmentalists. "In the environmentalists' survey, the CMs who came out with flying colours" were Chamling and Singh, a DTE report of February 15 said. It added, "However, the readers awarded Chandrababu Naidu..... the top position in the survey",

According to DTE Editor, Anil Agrawal," As regarding the urban environment, the credit only goes to Sikkim" where 78 per cent of the respondents felt that the urban as well as the rural environment was improving.

In his interview to DTE, Chamling says that he plans to initiate " a massive terracing -cum-afforestation programme". While maintaining that "Development cannot come at the cost of the environment", Chamling seems confident of blending "the right technology" with sustainable development. He adds: "No development process can exclude environmental management. I very disturbed".

While addressing a function organised by the Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi on February 20th that our precious environment is conserved not only for the present but also for the future generations".

Referring to the "tremendous biological diversity" in the State, Chamling said one third of total flowering plants found in the country are from the State which has more than 5000 species of its kind. Added to this is the fact that nearly 50 per cent of butterflies in the Indian subcontinent are found in the State.

While mentioning that the State's tree cover has gone up from 37 to 44 percent in the last few years, Chamling said "Even for Defence purposes the State Government has restricted the use of forest land to the minimum extent possible without compromising national security".

The Chief Minister also pointed out that his Government is giving priority to "eco-tourism" in the State with the hope of attracting tourists who are "sensitive and responsible to the environment".

## Assam Tribune

29 December 1999

# Chamling invites industrialists to Sikkim

GANGTOK, Dec 28 - Sikkim Government has invited private entrepreneurs to develop its infrastructure, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling said, reports PTI.

Chamling returned here last night after a fortnight-long tour to Maharashtra and West Bengal.

An official release said today Chamling has invited S Ghosh, managing director of Dutchess Package tea and markets to Gulf countries, to discuss the possibility of exporting the beverage grown in the State.

The Chief Minister has also invited German firm Ardikem representative Dipankar Ghosh to hold talks on a proposal for ginger oil extraction on buy-back arrangement, the release said, adding, the project will cost about Rs 7 crore proposed to be taken up as a joint venture with help from financial institutions.

Subrata Roy, the head of 'Sahara India Parivar', has been invited to visit the state to explore the state's winter tourism potential and infrastructure development, it said.

The managing director of Bengal Air Services Ltd Swapan Sen has expressed his company's interest to launch joint venture projects like helicopter service, while heads of two packaging companies have also evinced keen interest in a Rs 10 crore joint venture in Sikkim which would provide employment to 400 locals, the release added- PTI

## Assam Tribune

30 December 1999

# '99 herald Chamling-led SDF's return to power in Sikkim

GANGTOK, Dec 29- The return of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) led by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling to power in October Assembly polls and the party's victory in Lok Sabha polls marked Sikkim politics in 1999 as the state set poised for a major boost in tourism sector in the new millennium. Riding on 'pro-poor' plank, Chamling romped home the 32 member Assembly with SDF winning 24 seats with another by an independent backed by them- leaving the rest seven to his archrival Nar Bahadur Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) and washing out Congress.

The simultaneous elections despite a boycott call by the Bhutia Lepcha communities to press for their demands saw 81.57 per cent voter turnout.

It also saw SDF nominee Bhim Prasad Dahal retaining the long Lok Sabha seat third time in a row- record in Sikkim- although the party conceded minus 13.22 per cent vote swing.

Promising 'good governance' in the run-up to the polls after facing criticism of 'slack administration', Chamling

resorted to a 'streamlining' exercise with large-scale transfer of employees, bureaucrats and over 1000 teachers soon after coming to power.

The Chief Minister, who as SDF president denied tickets to half a dozen sitting MLAs including three ministers, the Speaker and his deputy in the Assembly before the polls, created a history in the State by forming a two-tier ministry for the first time while nominating a woman as the head of the legislative House.

In an unprecedented move, Bhandari, a three-time Chief Minister for nearly 15 years, who kept complaining to the Election Commission on various anomalies allegedly committed by the government, decided to fight from two places in the Assembly polls- out of which he lost in home town Soreng, the seat he has been representing since 1979.

Chamling, with his priority fixed on tourism and infrastructure development, toured the west and southern states in the year end to follow their models and also woo private entrepreneurs into Sikkim. Earlier in March, the state took part in the international tourism fair in Berlin.

In the information technology (IT) sector, Sikkim achieved laurels with the National Informatic Centre (NIC) releasing a CD -rom of electoral rolls- for the first time in the country in July. The telephone directory on the internet was also launched by them of the Independence Day.

Mobile phone service came to Gangtok in June after an initial hesitation- thanks to which Sikkim became the second state in North-east after Assam to have this facility.

The Department of Telecommunication (DoT) set up phone booths at the famous tourist spot Tsomgo (Chhangu)lake at 12,400 ft height and also at the Indo-Chinese border Natu La (pass), located at 14,200 ft high, which was thrown open four days a week for the domestic tourists from mid-September.

To keep each other informed, the Indian and Chinese army commissioned a hotline on November 20 at the Natu La.

During the Kargil conflict, Sikkim did not lag behind and the State Government stood behind the Centre's military and diplomatic initiatives.

Its employees donated their one day salary amounting to Rs 17 lakh, responding to an appeal by the Chief Secretary.

The State Government felicitated 'son of the soil' Hindi filmstar Danny Denzongpa, footballer Bhaichung Bhutia and three others for their contributions in the respective fields.

In the health sector, three cases of Kala-azar resurfaced in Sikkim after a gap of almost 50 years. The detection of two AIDS cases out of 10 HIV carriers also caused concern.

A German team, however, came here on its third consecutive visit for conducting a weeklong plastic surgery camp for the disabled.

# ALIVE

1999

## *States of the Nation* **Promotion of tourism in Sikkim**

Sikkim is going to get a bonanza of sorts as the State, with its ancient Buddhist monasteries, is slated to figure prominently in the Government of India's "Explore India 2000" programme starting in April 1999. According to the Union Minister of State for Tourism, Omak Apang, Sikkim, the youngest member of the North Eastern Council (NEC), would be the focal part of the integrated tourism development master plan being chalked out by the north-eastern States and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industries of India (Assocham).

Sikkim is being given such an important place in tourism development because it has been found to have followed "eco-tourism." The State is being rewarded so that its achievements inspire other states of the north-eastern region. One of the examples of the promotion of "eco-tourism" in Sikkim is the way the picturesque tribal north Sikkim, with its pristine alpine mountains and plateau, has been preserved. Here, domestic as well as foreign visitors, were restricted to certain strategic areas. But the regions which are open to the tourists are also well maintained.

The Government of India has also decided to organise an international flower show in Sikkim as a way to usher in the new millennium. Sikkim is also to be included in the Buddhist circuit, starting from Bodhi Gaya in Bihar. The present Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Kumar Chamling of Sikkim Democratic Front, has been able to give stability to the State's economy, making it one of the best governed States of the country.

Some of the important tourist centres of the State are Gangtok, Bakkhim-a natural garden, Yoksum - famous for the consecration ceremony of Sikkim's first Chogyal or ruler in 1642 AD. There are 200 monasteries in the State, important ones being Dhubdi monastery, Tashing monastery, Rumtek monastery etc.

With so much assistance and attention, it is hoped that Sikkim would turn out to be the most sought after tourist destination of the country, and also a money-spinner on that account. ■

# SIKKIM HERALD

2 February 2000

## First Sikkim Investors' Forum Meet

The first Sikkim Investors' Forum Meeting was held on 22nd February 2001 at India International Centre in New Delhi. It was chaired by George B Assaf, Representative and Regional Director. UNIDO. The Chief Minister of Sikkim Mr. Pawan Chamling led a very high level delegation to this forum which included five Cabinet Ministers, Chief Secretary of the State and number of Departmental Secretaries.

From the investors' side there were representatives of CH, FICI, ASSOCHAM, PHDCCI Dabur K and Co, DCM Shriram, Austrian Trade Commission, National Hydro-power Development Corporation, Tata Consultancy Services, The Oberoi Group of Hotels Mittal Group of Industries, Girotra Consultants, SR Batliboi, Ansals, Jindals, Sun Pharmaceuticals and a large number of foreign missions. The objectives of the Forum's meeting as outlined by Dr. Mahendra P Lama, Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister were: i)

to introduce the investors to various development activities in Sikkim and provisions led out by the Stated potential investors and to invite the investors to the very potential identified areas like power, software, education, health horticulture and tourism .

Chief Secretary, Mr S.W. Tenzing critically examined the possibilities of investment in Sikkim particularly in the context of improving infrastructures and fiscal positions in the State.

Mr Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister, while delivering his inaugural address said " Sikkim's steady economic growth is reflected both in its State Domestic Product (SDP) and per capita income. The SDP at current prices recorded a very high growth rate per and tourism in the last sixteen years. Even the per capita income of the State has maintained one of the highest growth rates of 12.96 percent per annum. we have the tenth highest per capita income in the country.

As compared to hardly 30 percent infants covered by immunisation in 1975. It is more than 70 per cent today. The number of primary health sub-centres which was 2 in 1975, increased to 147 in 1999. The literacy rate of 17 percent in 1971 has now increased to over 70 percent. Besides Sikkim has achieved 100 percent electrification in rural and urban house holds and has provided access to safe drinking water to 100 percent of its population.

In spite of limited cultivable land in the State, agricultural development could make considerable progress in the

last two decades. The total food production has steadily increased from over 61.8 thousands tonnes in 1980-81 to 1.03 lakhs tonnes in 1997-98 . For a State which has hardly 64,000 hectares of net sown area, this range of output is fairly high."

While discussing the globalisation issue and its likely impact on Sikkim he mentioned that:

"In Sikkim we are fully aware of the process of globalisation. We would like to exploit each bit of its advantages. At the same time, we are fully driven to minimize the adverse impact of this process. In other words, we want to Sikkimese the globalisation process.

Sikkim being a land locked State, we know, our greatest strengths are not the huge and gigantic factories to produce goods in mass scale but those products which are high value content. The service oriented sectors are our other strengths.

We want a growth pattern in Sikkim that is sustainable, both economically and ecologically . We are very fragile-both in terms of the geographical location as also socio-cultural make-up . We are a population of just 5 lakhs when compared to a billion in India".

He stated that his government has three clear strategies now. He mentioned

"Therefore, my Government has three very clear strategies for the sustainable development of Sikkim. First, the Government will increasingly be playing a role of facilitator and would devote much of its time, energy and resources to consolidate what has been done so far. This means government will continue to work for the poor and down trodden and gradually withdraw from many sectors.

Secondly, many of the development activities are now handled by the Non-governmental Organisations. We firmly believe that the NGOs are the right means to consolidate the development process, we have initiated. They have the drive, commitment and resources. Let me inform you that only two months ago, we successfully organized a very fruitful meeting between the Government of Sikkim with the reputed NGOs in Delhi. The response it generated was immense.

Thirdly, the Government will increasingly open the productive sectors to the private entrepreneurs by making the investment in the State, both attractive and sustainable. In the State, there has been a steady erosion of entrepreneurial urged largely because of (i) planners' skewed priorities, (ii) ignorance about the opportunities, (iii) inability to attract appropriate private investors and (iv) wrong prescription of incentives. All these virtually, have, overshadowed the political will of the government. "We are now in the process of correcting each of these ills and providing very durable solutions".

He summarised the expectations of his government from this meeting as follows.

"Let me now briefly deal with what Government of Sikkim expects from the investors of India and abroad.



We would like the private sectors to join us in our dis-investment efforts participate in new ventures and help us in designing a new paradigm of development that suit the nationwide economic reforms and the ultimate way to globalisation.

We have tremendous potential in certain specific areas. We have the huge potential in power, tourism, natural resources, health, education and agro-based industries. For example, we are the highest producer of large sized cardamom in the country. Our ginger, orange and orchids have no parallel. Nowhere, one can find such a highly contrasting natural beauty and resources in such a small area, as Sikkim.

We have a variety in our architectural heritage and range of glaciers and mountains. We want to conserve them. Yet, we would like people to enjoy and interact with such fascinating beauty in a much closer way. We firmly believe that the private sector, their investment and management contributions are going to be the interface between this potential and the fruits emanating therein.

We expect the investors to bring the best of technology available, knowledge, production structures and management systems. Our core intent is to develop a long term partnership with the private sector.

We want the private sector to be a part of Sikkimese ethos, culture and development goals. Only this can inject a high growth regime into the state. It could be easily done if the commitment is there. We have very shining examples of Sikkim Distilleries, Sikkim Time Corporation and Sikkim Jewels. They have been there for long, contributing immensely to the growth process.”

He further mentioned that Business Today survey has identified three distinct investment strengths and competitive edge of Sikkim.

- Highest surplus in power in the country at low power tariffs.

Least troubled State in the North East, hence, ideal for investment in tourism and, High rate of literacy and wide coverage of public health care system.

Mr. S Sen, Deputy Director General of Confederation of Indian Industry put forward six point action investment plan for Sikkim which included sending a large but relevant delegation of CII to Sikkim, supporting in training the Sikkimese for skilled jobs and opening computer centres in Sikkim and helping Sikkim for marketing of handi-crafts. He also assured that CII would train Chamber Staff of Sikkim for running the Chambers effectively.

Mr. Jayant Bhuyan, Secretary General, ASSOCHAM stated that Sikkim should have Integrated Economic Development Plan and not exclusive sector plan. He mentioned that Rs. 10 lakhs investment in manufacturing sector could generate hardly 13 employments whereas the same investment in tourism sector can absorb 89 persons. Sikkim can play a major role in developing Buddhist circuits in the Eastern Himalayas.

Mr, Bill Johnson, Senior Counsellor (Commercial) High Commission of Canada remarked that he was really impressed by the show of unity, commitment and enthusiasm of the people of Sikkim. This was amply reflected in this Investors’ Forum meeting. He assured that Canada , its investors and its aid wing (CIDA) will soon initiate their programmes. He said that Canada would be very keen to invest in Hydel Power Projects.

Mr. TCA Srinivasan Raghavan, Consulting Editor of Business Standard mentioned that large industries do not suit the natural endowments. He emphasized on services sector, which should be the main area of activities in Sikkim. He spoke of health and education to the main sector.

Mr. B.S.Punia, Joint Vice President, DCM, Shri, Ram Consolidated Ltd. highlighted the pull factors are likely to be for investment in Sikkim. He talked of climate and logistics, pro-active regulations and healthy industrial relations to be the main pull factors.

The Chairman of the Session Dr. George B Assaf, Representative and Regional Director, UNIDO mentioned that:

“Investment promotion is a complex under taking that requires thorough consideration and careful design. Many factors influence a country’s , or a State’s ability, to attract investment. The policy and business environment, and investment promotion strategy, supporting institutions, infrastructure and various instrument; tools and methodologies for promoting investment are some of the important factors. One must not forget the regulatory and legal environment and the need for a long term perspective and transparency in these frameworks. Nor should we forget the national resource and skill base of a country of State. In this context, the Chief Minister has already mentioned the enormous bio-diversity that Sikkim has.

But the attraction of international or domestic investment is now a days a highly competitive activity. So, the all important question that almost every investor would like an answer to is:

And, why Sikkim and not elsewhere?

We hope that the presentations today will provide answers to these important questions.

UNIDO views the promotion of new investment and other forms of financial and technological cooperation between firms within a country and across countries as an important contribution to sustainable industrial development UNIDO’s investment promotion support services combine the collective experience of UNIDO and other agencies of UN System as well a private sector bodies, to help overcome the critical investment promotion problems of a country at the national level or those of a particular geographic region within a country. We provide assistance at three levels.

\*At the policy level, to government in the design, formulation and implementation of strategies and policies in

the fields of investment promotion and technology transfer.

\*At the institutional level, to building-up national/ regional level capabilities to identify, formulate, analyse / screen/appraise and promote industrial investment and technology projects.

\*At the enterprise level, to help matchmaking between entrepreneurs in developing and transition economies and potential partners abroad.

UNIDO's Invest and Technology Promotion Network comprising Investment and Technology Promotion Offices (ITPOs) International Technology Centres and field offices, emplacements and broad cross-section of industrial stakeholders.

These are some of the approaches and tools we have available in UNIDO through the Regional Office covering India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan of which I am the regional Director. I look forward to exploring ways with which we can be of assistance based on the identified needs of the people of Sikkim."

There were presentation made by the Government of Sikkim representatives in both the Sessions:

Session I Tourism, Agro-based Industries and Services Sector: Investment Potentials. Presentations were made by Mr. T.T. Dorjee, Finance Secretary, Mr. Karman Gyatso, Secretary, Tourism, Mr. S.K. Gurung, Secretary, Dr. Anil Mainra, Conservator of Forests.

And in the Session II: Power and Software Sectors: New Horizons for Investors presentations were made by Mr. D.D. Pradhan, Chief Engineer, Department of Power and Mr.P.D. Rai, Chairman SIDICO.

Mr. Alok K. Shrivasta, Resident Commissioner, Government of Sikkim, proposed the vote of thanks.

Assam Tribune

12 February 2000

## Sikkim Power dept asked to adopt revenue generating steps

GANGTOK, Feb 11- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, in a bid to streamline the State administration and make it more productive has decided to adopt stringent measures to ensure more revenue generation programmes for the cash-starved State, reports UNI.

Sri Chamling, at a review meeting of the government

's various departments recently, had instructed the Power department to accord highest priority on revenue generation, besides consumers' satisfaction.

He said, the Power department being the largest source of employment generation agency of the State with current strength of over 5,400 staff on its payroll- should works as a commercial organisation. Every house in the State should be provided with genuine meter, power pilferage should be stopped and all defaulters should be brought to book immediately, he ordered.

The Chief Minister warned that the State government would not take up any new power project unless and until all the existing power houses are properly upgraded.

He ordered the concerned officials to improve all existing power houses on top priority basis and make the department more transparent and convert it into a commercial organisation and use its manpower properly.

Sikkim was presently facing a severe power shortage with frequent and prolonged power cuts. The officials attributed to the power shortage as abnormally due to low river as well as non-functional of some power houses which were under repairing job.

According to officials here, the State's daily power consumption is 29 MW and the generation capacity being just about half of the requirement. Incidentally, this Himalayan State imports about 15 MW of power from Chukha and Jaldhaka hydel projects in neighbouring Bhutan and West Bengal respectively.

State's major hydel project, the 12-MW Lower Lagyap hydro power station, East Sikkim, which usually generates around 5.5 MW during the lean winter months is at present only being able to generate 4 MW due to the abnormally low river discharge.

Incidentally, the State has tremendous potentiality to produce over 8,000 MW hydro power if its resources were properly exploited.

The Centre recently sanctioned Rs. 2,000 crore for the 510-MW 'Teesta stage-five' hydro-electric project in tribal North Sikkim.

## Chamling unhappy over slow pace of lake project work

GANGTOK, Feb 11 - Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has expressed 'displeasure' over the slow pace of work at the famous Tsomgo(Chhangu) lake development project, reports PTI.

During a surprise visit on Wednesday to the lake, located at 12,400 ft height and 34 km from here, to oversee the construction work of a car park in the vicinity, Chamling expressed his displeasure over the slow pace of development work although 'the foundation stone (for the project) was laid in the beginning of the last year.'

Official sources said here on Thursday that the Chief Minister also felt the need to have a concrete footpath en-

circling the lake for the visitors to move round.

The State Tourism department had early last year embarked on the Tsomgo lake development project under which a car park and public amenities like toilets, shopping plaza were promised to be constructed.



20 March 2000

## Unemployment posing threat to peace, says Sikkim CM

GANGTOK, MARCH 19. Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, has warned that the growing unemployment in the State could pose a major threat to its peace and tranquility in the future and urged the Centre to help overcome the problem.

Addressing a group of visiting journalist from Calcutta Mr. Chamling said, "maintaining peace in this international border State in the past 25 years since the former kingdom merged with the Indian union, is our greatest contribution towards the integration of the nation. But the growing unemployment among the educated youths is posing a threat to the law and order situation," he added.

"Sikkim has achieved emotional integration with the rest of the country and we are proud to say that we are Indians. I am proud to be a Hindustani," Mr. Chamling maintained.

Drawing attention to the increased threat to the region from ISI activity and Kamtapuri militancy in the neighbouring North Bengal, the Chief Minister said although his State was free from all sorts of underground activity, the Government was taking all preventive measures to avoid the possible spread of militancy in the State in view of unemployment among the educated youth.

He said the security forces were always alert to the presence of anti-national elements in the State. But the militancy in the neighbouring areas may affect the flow of tourists into Sikkim, he added.

Mr. Chamling said his State should be given more financial aid on priority basis than Jammu and Kashmir. He suggested that the Centre should formulate a plan for massive recruitment of youth from the North-East and Sikkim into the army.

The Chief Minister pointed out that the investment of the nationalised banks in the State was the "lowest," claiming that the banks had not invested more than 10 per cent of their business.

He said the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, was sensitive towards the demands of Sikkim and urged

the private industrialists to come and invest here." I have very good relations with the Centre and New Delhi is helping the State to grow up. But we need more financial help to get over the backlog of the past. Out of total fund, about 80 per cent is spent for debt liability and other spendings and 20 per cent goes for developing infrastructure."

He said there was an excellent opportunity for the industrialists to invest in power and hydro based industry in the State. He also offered to provide land to entrepreneurs to establish educational institutions in the State,

He said the State had been demanding construction of a double lane in the main arterial road linking the State with the rest of the country, so that industrialists could come without much trouble.-UNI



22 March 2000

**THE LAST WORD/ CHAMLING PLANS STIFF JAIL TERM FOR POACHERS, TIMBER SMUGGLERS**

## Sikkim to enact stringent environment norms

BY SUBHRO NIYOGI

Gangtok, March 21: Sikkim is taking extreme measures to protect its natural resources.

Leading the "green movement" is state chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling, who plans to introduce an environment bill in the Assembly's Budget session. The bill, if passed, will put in place some of the toughest laws to deter poachers and timber smugglers. Killing a bird could get a year's jail term. The state will be particularly harsh on poachers who burn down trees. The term could be upto 10 years.

Mr Chamling is determined to go to any length to protect the state's flora and fauna. "Maintaining the state's ecological balance is of paramount importance," Mr Chamling said.

The state government has already banned felling of trees, grazing on reserve forest land and use of plastic. However, stiff penalties are needed to deter people from flouting existing regulations. The bill, to be introduced in the next session of Vidhan Sabha, will bring in such deterrents .

The state has also introduced the Garbage Control (Amendment) Bill 2998 that prevents shopkeepers from using polybags. Sikkim's eco-conservation is all the more essential as its economy is almost entirely dependent on hotels and tourism industry. "We wish to promote eco-

tourism and are promoting sports like white water rafting, hand gliding and trekking," Mr Chamling said.

Tourism apart, maintaining the crucial ecological balance is necessary for the state's survival.

Deforestation and jhoom cultivation (burning down forest land to make way for cultivation) over the year has led to weakening of the top soil and often results in landslides and extensive soil erosion.

To prevent deforestation and relieve the constant pressure on land, the state is promoting cooperative farming. "We don't have enough land for a tea garden which has a minimum requirement of 500 acres. We are, therefore, urging people to go in for cooperative farming. The government will extend financial and technical help if required," the chief minister said. One such experiment is already underway at Tsang.

"Afforestation and other conservation measures are not enough to preserve our forests. The forest department's mobile squad has been vigilant against illegal timber trade. The field staff has been provided with arms and communication equipment. In order to secure the involvement of local people without whom no conservation and protection programme can be a success, the state has implemented a joint forest management scheme," Mr Chamling said.

The area under the Khangchendzonga National Park has been increased from 850 sq kms to 1,784 sq Kms. Currently, 29 per cent of the total geographical area of the state, encompassing the national park and five wildlife sanctuaries, has been declared as protected area. In addition, 2,655 sq kms of area under the Khangchendonza Biosphere Reserve is also a protected area.

## Assam Tribune

30 March 2000

### Direct central tax in Sikkim

## Chamling calls for consensus against imposition

GANGTOK, March 29 - Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has called on all political parties in Sikkim to arrive at a consensus against imposition of direct central tax in the State, reports UNI.

Addressing the Assembly, Chamling, as the leader of the House, called upon all political parties in the State to jointly oppose the imposition of direct central tax in Sikkim.

Chamling said although the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) government had been opposing the imposition of central income tax, the Opposition has been turning it into an issue to misguide the Sikkimese people.

He said, although the Central Income Tax Act had been

extended in Sikkim in 1989 it had not been implemented in the State owing to strong opposition from the Sikkimese people and the state government.

The matter has been made political by the Opposition and has been taken to court by the previous Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) government, the Chief Minister said.

He said, 'Since the matter is sub-judice, we cannot comment on the issue. We would abide by the ruling of the apex court'.

He called on the main Opposition, the SSP, to rise above petty political consideration and resolve the matter unanimously. Chamling appealed to the Opposition parties in the State to jointly pass a resolution in the House, and urged the Centre not to impose the Central Direct Tax Act for the greater interest of the Sikkimese people.

Chamling said, under the special provision of Article 371(F) of the Constitution, Sikkim follows its old tax law under the Sikkim Income Tax Manual, 1948.

Dispelling apprehension of leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari that inclusion of the state in the North East Council (NEC) would 'do away' with Article 371(F) and all the privileges and safeguards the state enjoys, Chamling said Article 371(F) is parliamentary matter and no state government has the right to 'do away' with it.

Sikkim's inclusion in the NEC would not only make it more economically viable. In fact, the State has received Rs 60 crore from the NEC kitty as non-lapsable funds for the current financial year, the Chief Minister disclosed to the House.

Chamling expressed concern over the demand of the Opposition demanding fulfillment of the commitments of May 8, 1973 tripartite agreement signed by the erstwhile ruler of Sikkim, the Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal, the Government of India and the then Sikkim political parties.

## FREE PRESS JOURNAL

3 April 2000

## Sikkim CM against price hike

GANGTOK : Sikkim chief Minister Pawan Chamling and constituent of NDA, has shot off another letter-second in three days to the centre reiterating his plea to reduce the enhanced price of food grains, reports PTI. In his letter written on Saturday, Chamling requested Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to consider bringing down the cost of essential commodities supplied under the PDS to the pre-hike level. ■



# THE ASIAN AGE

3 April 2000

## Reconsider PDS price hike : Chamling

GANGTOK : April 2 (PT) : Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has shot off another letter - second in three days - to the Centre reiterating his plea to reduce the enhanced price of food grains. In his letter written yesterday, Chamling requested Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to consider bringing down the cost of essential commodities supplied under the PDS to the pre-hike level. Official sources said here today that Chamling also referred to the "deep concern" voiced unanimously by all 25 MLAs of his party through a resolution passed on March 31 last. The legislators authorized him "to take up the matter with the Prime Minister so that the increase in prices could be brought down." The Chief Minister whose Sikkim Democratic Front is an ally of the BJP-led coalition at the Centre and provide outside support to the Vajpayee Ministry, in his earlier letter on March 30, had requested Vajpayee to revert the price hike to "alleviate the problems of the people of the State." Meanwhile, the State Food and Civil Supply Department decided to implement the revised rates "only when a formal declaration is made by the Union Government." The fair price shops would continue to sell their old stocks at the existing rates, the sources said. All these shops in the State were "cautioned" to desist from hoarding foodgrains and sell them at the revised rates. The Department warned "The businessmen against withholding the old stock of foodgrains to avoid action under the essential commodities act." ■

The Financial Express

6 April 2000

## Sikkim to sell rice at Rs 6 per kg for BPL cardholders

SIKKIM government would sell rice at Rs 6 per kg 'only' to those people living Below the Poverty Line (BPL) from May onwards, chief minister Pawan Chamling has announced here. We will continue to sell rice subsidised rate of Rs. 6 per kg only to BPL people from May after completion of the ongoing economic survey identifying the poorer section in the society Chamling said here yesterday addressing a conference of the state's panchayats.

However, in the current month (April), rice would be sold at Rs 11 per kg with Rs two subsidy from the state

government he said. The chief minister said the economic survey identifying the BPL and APL people would be completed by this month-so the government extend the facilities only to those earmarked. In a veiled attack on the Centre, Chamling alleged the union government slashed by 4,000 quintals the monthly quota of rice from the existing 73,000 quintals which the general public were blaming the state administration. ■

Business Standard

6 April 2000

## Sikkim to sell rice at Rs 6 per kg

GANGTOK : Sikkim will sell rice at Rs 6 per kg only to those living below the poverty line from May onwards, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has announced here.

We will continue to sell rice at the subsidised rate of Rs 6 per kg only to people below the poverty line, after completion of the ongoing economic survey identifying the poorer section," (PTI) ■

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

6 April 2000

## Chamling to join NGO after politics

GANGTOK : Sikkim chief Minister Pawan Chamling has expressed his willingness to join a Non-governmental Organisation after retiring from politics, reports PTI. "I wish to join an NGO to serve the society and god when you (people) will not require me anymore," he said at a panchayat members' conference here on Tuesday. Chamling, who led his Sikkim Democratic Front to return to power for the second consecutive term in October last year. ■

The Telegraph

6 April 2000

## Chamling rallies Opp. to block income tax

*from Keshav Pradhan*

Siliguri, April 12 : As part of its campaign to retain Sikkim's distinct identity, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) government will oppose replacement of old laws framed during the Chogyal's regime by Indian laws.

In last week's budget session, chief minister resolved to stop extension of central income tax to the erstwhile Himalayan Kingdom which was merged into the Indian

Union 25 years ago. He also sought co-operation of the Oopposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad, which readily supported the move. Six years ago. SSP chief Nar Bahadur Bhandari, now leader of the opposition, was thrown out of power after he failed to resist the Centre's decision to impose central income tax on non-tribals.

In Sikkim, income tax is paid according to a manual introduced by its former rulers way back in 1948. A case filed by the Bhandari government against the imposition of central income tax is still pending in the Supreme Court.

Speaking to The Telegraph on the SDF government's stand on the income tax question, political adviser to the chief minister B.B. Gurung said, "We will oppose tooth and nail any attempt to extend direct taxes to our state. We feel that such an extension will go against the spirit of Article 371 [F] of the Constitution which gives Sikkim a special status in the Union."

Gurung, who was chief minister for two weeks in 1984, alleged that the Centre had partly imposed direct income tax in 1994 because Bhandari had agreed to this. Since SDF is part of the ruling National Democratic Alliance at the centre, Gurung is optimistic that his party's government can explain to the Vajpayee government about the possible repercussions of direct taxes in the state.

In the early Nineties, Sikkim had strongly opposed introduction of sales tax. Later it accepted it after a committee of finance ministers headed by West Bengal finance minister Asim Dasgupta made some changes which it found acceptable.

The SDF will continue to fight for restoration of reserved Assembly seats for Nepalis and Limboos. Last week, leaders of the Organisation of Sikkimese Unity, an organisation of the state's three major ethnic groups-Bhutias, Lepchas and Nepalis-submitted a memorandum to Sikkim governor Chaudhury Randhir Singh seeking restoration of reserved seats for Nepalis and Lepchas which were abrogated by the Morarji Desai government in 1979.

The system of reservation of seats for Bhutias, Lepchas, Nepalis, Limboos and Scheduled Castes was introduced by the former rulers much before Sikkim became a part of India. ■

## THE ASIAN AGE

23 April 2000

### Sikkim peaceful : Advani Meets governor, Nathula Pass visit today

BY PRAMOD GIRI

Gangtok, April, 22: Union home minister L.K. Advani said the government has no plan to reinstall the 17th

Karmapa Ugen thinley Dorgee in the rumtek monastery in Gangtok as demanded by many Buddhist organisations.

He added that before taking any such decision the government would consult the Dalai Lama.

Mr Advani said this at a press conference in Raj Bhawan after meeting leaders of various political parties and religious organisations including the Rumpoche of Rumtek monastery.

Earlier, Mr Advani, who is on a two-day visit to Sikkim, reached here in a helicopter. He held meeting with chief minister P.K. Chamling. Among others whom he met were governor and chairman of Sikkim Bidhan Sabha.

Mr Advani's proposed visit to Nathula Pass has been postponed till Sunday due to inclement weather.

Mr Advani said Centre is considering re-opening of Sikkim-tibet trade route.

While speaking on his proposed trip to Tinbigha in North Bengal, Mr Advani said Indian government is in constant touch with its Bangladesh counterpart. Branding infiltration as a major problem for the border states, Mr Advani assured Central help to the states constantly plagued by infiltration.

In reply to queries, Mr Advani said deputy chief minister of West Bengal Buddhadev Bhattacharya met him and apprised him of subversive activities conducted by Ulfa and ISI in north Bengal.

He said of all the states in Northeast Sikkim is the most peaceful state.

One the issue of compensation demanded by family members of former king of Sikkim Mr Chogel, Mr Advani said the Union Government is considering the demand. ■

## Assam Tribune

1 May 2000

### Chamling's call to Nepalese community

GANGTOK, April 30- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has asked the Indian Nepalese community to shrug off the 'labourer' tag attached to them, reports PTI.

"There is a conception dominantly prevailed among us that Nepalese are labourers, poor, or soldier class. But this is not true time has come to shrug off this stigma and we have to march forward in life with a competitive attitude in the world," Chamling told a gathering of literates here on Wednesday.

"Due to this stigma, Nepalese could not gain confidence in their living and as long as that is not coming among us, we cannot prosper," Chamling said after presenting the Agam memorial award to Nagaland based litterateur Hari Prasad 'Gorkha' Rai.

The award comprising Rs 50,001, a citation and a shawl, was instituted by the Sikkim Sahitya Parishad here.

The Chief Minister also expressed the State government's willingness to publish the works of eminent Nepali writers and poets.

**Mountaineering permission:** Political adviser to the Sikkim Chief Minister B B Goorong on Tuesday said an Austrian mountaineering team has been allowed to scale the Kanchenzonga mountain ten metres short of the peak.

In a statement, the adviser said the team had been given permission by the Central government.

Goorong said since the mountain is regarded by the people of Sikkim as a deity, permission to scale it is not normally given, and on occasions when given, the expedition is required to stop 10 metre short of the summit.

He said there was no difference of opinion in the administration over the issue.

## The Telegraph

11 May 2000

# Investing firms must employ local people, hints Chamling Sikkim blocks job-seekers

**FROM KESHAV PRADHAN**

Siliguri, May 10 : Sikkim is all set to check the influx of job-seekers from outside the state amid plans to celebrate the silver jubilee of its merger with the Indian Union next week.

A senior bureaucrat in chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling's office today said, "The government is planning to make employment of Sikkimese mandatory for all outstation firms that intend to invest in the state."

Chamling also indicated this at a public function in Gangtok yesterday where he said he would make sure that the Sikkimese get all the jobs they deserve before signing a memorandum of understanding with the National Hydel Power Corporation on the Rs 2,200 crore Teesta power project.

The officer said, "The number of unemployed is going up fast in Sikkim. We want them to be absorbed by the NHPC and other companies who want to start new ventures here." As part of Phase V of the Teesta project, the NHPC has already begun construction of staff quarters and approach roads to the project site in Zongu area of north Sikkim.

Among other major conditions are proper rehabilita-

tion and compensation to people already or likely to be displaced because of construction work and allotment of 12 percent of power to the state free of cost, he added. The project is expected to generate nearly 510 MW of power. The Sikkim government would also ask the NHPC to make sure that none of the employees, including labourers, stay back once the project is over.

Five years ago, another ambitious hydel project over the Rathongchu river in west Sikkim was scrapped following protests from tribal Buddhists who feared that construction work there would threaten Norbugang, a site where the first Chogyal was consecrated in the 16th century. By the time the project was withdrawn, the Centre had already spent a few crores of rupees on it.

Justifying the chief minister's stand on employment, the bureaucrat said, "Our desire to safeguard the interests of the Sikkimese should not be misconstrued as a move against other fellow Indians."

Lately, a number of reputed firms attracted to the tourist trade and software and electronic goods manufacturing and technical education have shown their willingness to start their ventures in the tiny state.

For a long time, there has been a lurking fear among the Sikkimese that outsiders may swarm the state because of job opportunities offered by the new ventures.

As one of the smallest states, Sikkim has a population of a little over four lakh people. The bulk of outstation people working in government and private concerns is from neighbouring Darjeeling.

In a significant development, the Chamling government, which supports the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in Delhi, has decided to celebrate May 16, the day Sikkim became a part of India in 1975, in a big way.

It has invited all surviving leaders who fought against the Chogyal in support of the former Himalayan kingdom's accession to the Indian Union in the early Seventies.

Among them are two former chief ministers Kazi Lhendup Dorjee (the leader of the merger struggle) and B.B. Gurung, who is now political adviser to Chamling.

The invitees will be honoured with shawls and citations at a function to be attended by Governor Choudhury Randhir Singh and Chamling. The day, also known as State Day, is a holiday in Sikkim.

## The Statesman

29 June 2000

# Sikkim keen to restore House quota for Nepalis

SILIGURI, June 28- The Sikkim government is keen to ensure "genuine representation of different ethnic groups

in the Assembly and restoration of reservation for the ethnic Nepali community of Sikkimese origin," Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling said today.

"The issue is very sensitive and concerns the future of Sikkim," the chief minister told **The Statesman** over the telephone from Gangtok.

He said the state government has set up an advisory committee that would "examine and recommend amendments to Section 7 (1A) of the Representation of People Act, 1950 and Section 5(A) of the Representation of People Act 1951." The committee would also examine the need to amend the Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1978, he said. The Assembly has been informed of the matter. The move is designed to dispel apprehensions among the ethnic Nepali community of the state that its identity was being threatened since they did not enjoy seats reservation in the present Assembly. Our of the 32 seats in the Sikkim Assembly, 15 are reserved- 12 for scheduled tribes, two for scheduled castes and one for the religious Sanghe group..

The committee, headed by state's health minister Mr. DD Bhutia, comprises 13 members Opposition parties have been asked to nominate two representatives each for the committee. Ministers and legal experts have also been included. Mr. Chamling said the advisory committee would examine the reservation issue and "study legal aspects of the Representation of People Act before it submits its report to the state government. Centre's assurances on the matter will also be considered."

On receiving the report from the advisory committee, the state government plans to discuss the matter with panchayats and leaders of different political parties before placing the recommendations before the state Cabinet for its approval.

Once the Assembly adopts a resolution on the issue, the chief minister said, he would lead a delegation, comprising representatives of all political parties, to Delhi to press the Centre for its acceptance. ■

## Youth Culture

A Quarterly of National Youth Project

June 2000

### Chief Minister's Good Example

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling of Sikkim was so much impressed by Dr. S. N. Subba Rao's Speech on 11th that he thought it was not necessary to read out the long speech prepared by him, but opted to make short extempore speech. More importantly, he set an example for others the next day by walking more than a kilometer or so from

his house to Bhaiji's residence without any security! "He was pressing me to conduct a Camp for 5000 youths. I told him-let it be 1,000 first and later on 5,000. So, the Camp for 1,000 may be in November 2000; 700 Sikkim youths plus 300 outside youths", writes Bhaiji.

## THE ASIAN AGE

2 July 2000

### Victoria Cross holder Ganju Lama dies

Gangtok, July 1: One of the three surviving Victoria Cross holders of India, Ganju Lama, died in his native Sangmo village of south Sikkim late on Friday night, official sources said here on Saturday . He was 78 and is survived by nine children.

Ganju Lama, besides receiving the highest gallantry award from the British, was also recipient of the Military Medal for his bravery during World War II. He was also conferred the Pema Dorjee title by the erstwhile King of Sikkim.

The Sikkim government had honoured the soldier by awarding him VIP status. He was presented with a red light-fitted car with the word "VC" inscribed on it and a monthly allowance of Rs 1,000. The government also named a road after him in his native place.

Sikkim governor Chaudhury Randhir Singh and chief minister Pawan Chamling condoled the Lama's death.

The governor said in his message, "With the passing away of Ganju Lama, the nation has lost a brave soldier who made the country and Sikkim proud with his great service." Describing the war veteran as "one of the greatest sons of Sikkim," Mr Chamling said his death robbed the state of a very pious person, a brave soldier and a legendary personality.(PTI)

## Assam Tribune

4 July 2000

### Chamling hails Topden's appointment as envoy to Mongolia

GANGTOK, July 3 - Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan K Chamling has expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister AB Vajpayee for appointing Karma Topden as the



country's ambassador to Mongolia, reports PTI.

"I am pleased with the Centre for conceding to my request of appointing a Sikkimese as a Governor, High Court judge of ambassador," the Chief Minister said while releasing a copy of his letter to the Prime Minister.

Topden, a former bureaucrat who was also present, said his appointment marked the 'fulfillment of a demand' pressed by the Chamling government.

Expressing his 'gratefulness' to Chamling Topden, presently Sikkim, Pradesh Congress president, said he admired 'the largeness of heart, broadness of mind and genuineness of commitment' of the Chief Minister because despite belonging to a rival political group, Chamling celebrated his appointment with joy and enthusiasm'.

Topden said the Election Commission of Mongolia was recently in Delhi to know about poll procedures which shows that they consider 'our democratic set up as a role model'.

Elections in Mongolia, where a coalition government is at the helm of affairs, is due in July, Topden, a former Rajya Sabha member from Sikkim, said.

## THE ASIAN AGE

5 July 2000

### Chamling in Hindi panel

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling has been nominated as one of the members of the reconstituted Kendriya Hindi Samiti headed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee as chairman. The function of the Samiti, apart from exercising administrative powers, would be to coordinate in the work and programme for the "development, propagation and progressive use of Hindi for all official purposes in various ministers and departments of the union government."

Compiled from agency reports

## The Statesman

24 July 2000

### Chamling goes online

Gangtok, July 23.-For those who could not make it to the Sikkim chief minister's residence to attend his weekly grievance-redressal sitting should not lose hearts.

For Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling has gone online to listen to them. Thanks to the state unit of the National Informatics Centre, common people in the state can reach the chief minister by logging onto <http://sikkim.sik.nic.in/cmonline> to mail their grievances to Mr. Chamling.

The website; which became operational from 14 July,

would provide the complainant a "grievance identification number" to enable him to pursue the matter later, said Mr. Sourabh Gupta, in charge of NIC. The government has decided to set up 40 community information centres - spread over all four districts - from where people would get free opportunities to mail their grievances to the chief minister, Mr. Gupta said. Two such centres would come up within a fortnight, he said.

This was aimed at "bringing more transparency in governance" and reaching out more people, said Mr. Gupta, also the special secretary of the state's information technology department.

The website contains the profile, achievements of the chief minister and information on his council of ministers. Mr. Gupta claimed that no other state in the country has launched this kind of website linking the common people with their chief ministers.

"Only the Prime Minister has gone online," he said. ■

## The Indian EXPRESS

4 August 2000

### Govt may yield, let Karmapa visit Rumtek

The Centre is considering a request from Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling to allow the Chinese-born Karmapa Lama to visit the Rumtek Monastery, a Government spokesman said today.

The Chief Minister made the request when he called on Home Minister L. K. Advani today. The Chinese-born Karmapa arrived in Dharamsala last year under a cloud of controversy. Anointed by Beijing as the 17th Karmapa, he is said to have fled Tibet and had sought asylum in India. However, the Government has not yet taken a decision on the request. ■

## Weekend

REVIEW

25-31 August 2000

### CHAMLING ONE OF TWO

Sikkim CM one of the two CMs invited to special dinner by PM

by A STAFF REPORTER

**GANGTOK:** Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling was one of the only two CMs invited to attend the dinner hosted by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee,

at Hyderabad House, New Delhi on 23 August in honour of the Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori, who is on an official visit to India. The other Chief Minister to be invited for the dinner was Mr. Chamling's J&K counterpart, Farooq Abdullah.

During the course of dinner, Mr Chamling also got the opportunity to interact with A. Morimoto and Taro A Sho, both Members of House of Councillors of Japan. The CM also interacted with H. Hira Payashi, Ambassador of Japan in India and K. Sugimoto, Executive Assistant to the Prime Minister of Japan.

The Union Defence, Minister, George Fernandes, Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Murasoli Maran, Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Information Technology, Pramod Mahajan, Minister of State of External Affairs, Ajit Panja, Minister of State for Personnel and Small Scale Industries, Mrs Vasundhara Raje Scindia and Som Pal, Member, Planning Commission were some of the prominent dignitaries invited for the dinner. The Chief Minister is reported to have held fruitful discussions and exchange of views with them as well.

**SUNDAY**

AN ANANDA BAZAR PUBLICATION

2000

## Promises to keep CM Chamling faces administrative challenges

The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has consolidated its position by retaining the lone Lok Sabha seat in the strategic border state of Sikkim. But chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling is struggling to implement his government's pro-Sikkimese policies and programmes. At least that's what the recent mass-transfer of bureaucrats suggests.

The chief minister is determined to see that the "son-of-the-soil" policy, ironically initiated by his predecessor and enemy number one Nar Bahadur Bhandari, is implemented in order to gain the people's confidence.

The present shake-up comes close on the heels of last year's reshuffling of 64 senior officials, including 29 state power department engineers. This time, Pawan Kumar Chamling has transferred over 70 middle-level bureaucrats and engineers. In an obvious move to appease the state civil service, four of its cadres have been elevated to the rank of secretaries.

But a lot remains to be done. In the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls, Chamling had vowed to fight corruption at every level and cleanse the system. That, of course, is easier

said than done. To keep his word, he will first have to set his own house in order. No state government department is free from the malaise of corruption, a fact which the chief minister himself acknowledges.

The culture of ostentatious living, a lifestyle fostered by the 14-year-long Bhandari regime, is too deeply entrenched among the powers that be. To bring about a change, Chamling will have to ensure that his 15-member ministry functions as a coherent whole. He will also have to ensure popular participation in the process of detecting, exposing and curbing corruption.

Another disturbing trend has been the involvement of some SDF members in extortion rackets. Chamling is alarmed and aggrieved by reports of partymen 'raising funds' from the business community. "Some of the SDF leaders and workers are losing their commitment to the party's ideology and working for personal gains. This is our biggest problem. In fact, it is a serious setback," admits the SDF supremo.

While the administrative challenges remain, Chamling has the advantage of knowing that he is in a politically sound position. His SDF, after its meteoric rise to power in 1994, has weathered many a political storm. In 1992, he had floated the party and was its sole representative in the Assembly. Today, the ruling SDF has 26 MLAs in the 32-member House.

Pawan Kumar Chamling will also be banking on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition at the Centre to back his play. The SDF supporters here are confident that the party and the people of Sikkim will be "rewarded" by Atal Behari Vajpayee's government in Delhi.

"Under the able leadership of Pawan Kumar Chamling and with the blessings of the BJP government in Delhi, there will be political stability and economic progress in Sikkim," says one SDF-loyalist. ■

*G.Chettri/Gangtok*

**Assam Tribune**

12 September 2000

## CIC inaugurated in Sikkim

GANGTOK, Sept 11- The first of the 40 community information centres (CIC) approved for Sikkim by the Centre was inaugurated here on Wednesday with an aim to "narrow" the gap between the wired elites and non-wired mass", reports PTI.

Inaugurating the CIC, Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, who is also the State's Information Technology (IT) Minister, thanked the Centre for having approved 40 such units for the State.

“It would enable citizens to have access directly for redressal to their grievances, information on latest techniques in agriculture, pest control and other areas of interest would also be available to the rural mass at the touch of a button which would certainly be a big step forward in empowerment of the village people,” Chamling said.

The State’s IT Secretary, RS Basnet, said each CIC would be equipped with six computers including server and satellite equipment for direct and fast access to Internet.

The CIC, from where people can use Internet and send e-mail free of cost, was a part of the Centre’s initiative to provide computer accessibility to general public in the 200-odd centres, earmarked for the north-eastern region in the next two years.

IT policy: Sikkim government on Wednesday said it was drafting an information technology (IT) policy.

The proposed policy would highlight the initiatives taken by the State government and provide the framework and guidelines for software entrepreneurs, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, who also holds IT portfolio, said here.

Chamling said the government, which has already, launched a number of websites and CD-Roms prepared by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), has also plans to establish a software technology park essentially to provide the basic infrastructure like wide band-width access, stable power supply and space on hire to the interested investors.

Sikkim, he said, certainly has an ‘edge’ over other States because of its good climate, lack of labour problems and a low crime rate. Space has been allotted to the IT department for the software technology hub, training room and space for application development.

The park can also be a source of employment to the local profession also and is believed to solve the unemployment problem in the State, Chamling said.

Stating that the proposal would be in line with the government’s policy to invite private sector investments in the IT sector, the Chief Minister said software development can come up as a major industry here” as it does not face any locational and other disadvantages as is characterised by other industries.”

## The Statesman

30 September 2000

### POOR MAN’S HERO

But Chamling must promote teamwork

SIKKIM chief minister Pawan Chamling has reason to be upbeat. The state received Rs 80 crore more than last year for its annual plan. Another Rs 80 crore will come

from the non-lapsable pool of the North Eastern Council. Three Sikkim Sangram Parishad legislators defected and joined the Sikkim Democratic Front, raising the ruling party’s tally to 28 in the 32-member Assembly. This should put paid to Nar Bahadur Bhandari’s threat to topple the government. Chamling dreams of making “a new Sikkim, a sukhi Sikkim” and setting up model village in every constituency. His seriousness is reflected in the earmarking of 70 per cent of the annual budget for the agricultural poor. But it would be wrong to assume that a bigger allocation is an index of the quality of progress. Besides, there is the ambitious promise of making Sikkim free from corruption and poverty, a difficult task. The emphasis on rural prosperity is yet to acquire a momentum. Desired changes can be achieved if the employment aspect is given priority. Much depends on political will and Chamling’s ability to work as a team, a spirit lacking during his earlier tenure.

More important is the need to preserve communal harmony. Vested interests are at work. Those responsible for the recent distribution of communal pamphlets must be dealt with firmly. There is resentment over the reduction of the number of reserved seats for Bhutia-Lepchas from 15 to 12 during Lhendup Dorji Kazi’s rule in the late 70s. Reservation for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin was abolished. All political parties are vocal and the sooner restoration is made the better. This apart, there delicate issues like declaring a cut-off year to identify migrants and inclusion of ethnic Nepalese among OBCs. Chamling may be riding several horses but his one-party government has four more years to produce results.

## The Indian EXPRESS

10 October 2000

### Chamling demands bonus for peace

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP  
GANGTOK, OCT 9

SIKKIM Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has urged the Centre to consider his state for a bonus for the “reasonably high degree of peace” in the state for the past six years.

Chamling said that most states were fighting insurgency and various other law and order problems. “Sikkim is the most peaceful state, even more peaceful than Mizoram.”

“Considering my state for a peace bonus will not only boost Sikkim’s welfare and infrastructure building initiatives, but will also send a positive signal to state afflicted with insurgency,” he said. “Otherwise, there are politicians who want to keep the fire on insurgency alive for extracting funds from the Centre,” he said, without taking names.

Chamling, however, has not tried to quantify the amount

he wants from the Centre. "It is for the Centre to assess. It can look into the special needs of the state. We have problems in infrastructure, power and communication. If these are tackled by the Centre, that itself will be a bonus," he said.

Chamling submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Minister L.K. Advani a few weeks ago, pointing out that Sikkim had the lowest crime rate in the country.

The crime rate in the state is 101.1 per lakh of population against the national average of 183.2, the memorandum states.

"We do not have any insurgency problem despite being a border state in the north-east. Moreover heinous crimes in the state can still be counted in the fingers," the chief minister claimed. He said that Sikkim had not witnessed any militant uprising even though it joined the Indian Union only in 1976.

"Ours is a perfect example of national integration. Look how our people have become a part of the Indian Union within 25 years. Sikkim can be projected as a role model of national integration," he said, claiming that he was the first chief minister of any state to have initiated emotional integration of the people.

"Only those states which are hit by insurgency and violence, and are known for dowry deaths get media coverage. The media too, should recognise the good things that we have been maintaining in Sikkim," he said.

Under Chamling, Sikkim has initiated a series of developmental projects including, massive plantation and regeneration of forests for which the chief minister was named the "Most Green Chief Minister" by *Down To Earth* magazine last year.

## *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

11 October 2000

**State has shown most improvement in both urban and rural environment, but**

**CM is not resting on his laurels.**

# **Chamling celebrates as Sikkim's green record blooms**

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP

If *Down to Earth* magazine conducts survey to find the "greenest" chief minister this year too, Sikkim's Pawan Kumar Chamling may well walk away with the honours for the second year running. Last year, he beat Andhra

Pradesh Chief Minister N.Chandrababu Naidu and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh.

"We belong to the green hills and we understand what greenery means to the Himalayas," Chamling told *The Indian Express*. In fact, Chamling is rated the best among all chief ministers by both environmentlists as well as the common man as regards protection of the environment, with Sikkim recording the highest improvement in both urban as well as rural environment.

Under Chamling, Sikkim became the first state to ban plastic after a massive landslide that claimed 27 lives in the state in 1997. In fact, one hoarding put up by the 'Tourism Department just outside Gangtok says : "The Himalayas may change you, but please do not change the Himalayas." It is an obvious warning to visitors and tourists to keep away from throwing plastic cans and polythene packets which are likely to cause soil erosion -- a definite danger in a state formed of younger rocks and therefore considered geologically unstable and prone to landslides.

In his concern for the environment, the CM called off a hydel project proposed to be set up at Rathong-Chu in west Sikkim, though Rs15 crore had already been spent on it. A firing range in north Sikkim has also been scrapped. The state has banned smoking in public places and dumping of garbage in rivers and mountain slopes is considered a major crime. Almost every state department is engaged in carrying out a motivational campaign, with the state Tourism Department taking the lead.

Sikkim has also introduced the joint forest management-cum-integrated watershed management programme, with the government involving the common people in a big way. People are being asked to draw up maps and point out rivers, streams, houses and landslide-prone areas. Officials then convert these sketches into scientific maps. The common people are thus made part of the planning process, which helps greatly in successful implementation of the schemes, Chamling adds. The state government also banned open grazing in high-altitude pastures as well as forests in 1995, and a new scheme has been launched to bring more areas under forest cover.

A number of new forests -- Smriti Vanas -- are being raised all over the state with the active participation of the people. "Every gram panchayat will soon be required to set up a Smriti Vana, each within the current year, and such forests have already come up in four district headquarters," Chamling said.

In Gangtok, a 50-acre plot of land has been identified for setting up Smriti Vana, with smaller plots within it reserved for businessmen, Red Cross, NGOs, etc. The scheme, launched in 1996, has already brought about 400 acres of land under the green cover, serving the dual purpose of creating awareness as well as making people realise the importance of ecological balance.

"While every district headquarters will have a 500-acre



plot to turn green, every gram panchayat will have to maintain 20 acres of forest within their jurisdiction,” Chamling said. Each of the 32 Assembly seats will also have to establish such green zones, he added. ■

# The Telegraph

17 October 2000

## Chamling seeks legal curbs to stem influx

**FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK**

Siliguri, Oct. 16 : Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has advocated “suitable changes” in the Representation of people’s Act, 1950 and the Delimitation Act.

Chamling conveyed his stand on the issue to a 14-member parliamentary standing committee, led by Lok Sabha member A. Sahu, during its visit to Himalayan state last week.

“When the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim merged with the Indian Union in 1975, special provisions under Article 371F of the Constitution were worked out to protect the state’s interests. However, Sikkim’s demographic pattern is now changing due to influx from the states and neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh,” the chief minister said.

He said repeal of the Sikkim Subjects Regulation Act of 1961 had antagonised the Sikkimese.

“Unless the influx of outsiders is checked immediately, the demographic pattern will change drastically, leading to discontent among Sikkimese youth. The latter could even become wayward. That will be disastrous, for Sikkim is still a peaceful place unlike the northeastern states, Chamling warned.

Stating that the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 had been misinterpreted by most people, the chief minister said, “Three distinct ethnic groups comprise the Sikkimese- the Bhutias, the Lepchas and the Nepali-speaking people. However, all Nepali-speaking people are not foreign nationals. The language spoken by them has been accorded recognition under the Eighth Schedule.”

The Sikkim Assembly has 32 seats, 12 of which are reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha community and two for Scheduled Castes. The “Sangha” seat is reserved for a representative of the Buddhist monasteries, while the remaining 15 are general seats. This arrangement however, did not come into effect when the erstwhile Himalayan kingdom merged with the India Union. Under Articles of the historic May 8 agreement signed by Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal and representatives of the Centre and various political parties, all 32 seats were reserved for the

state’s three ethnic communities.

Fifteen seats were reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha community, 15 for the majority Sikkimese Nepali community and one each for Scheduled castes and the Buddhist clergy. The arrangement continued even after Sikkim became an associate state of the Indian Union 1974.

But on 18 May 1979, a Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha for an amendment to the Representation of People’s Act. The amendment was meant to facilitate “readjustment” of seats in the Assembly. The move entirely altered the pattern of reservation of seats. The state’s Nepalese population no longer had any seats reserved for them, while those reserved for the tribal Bhutia-Lepcha community was reduced to 12.

Chamling said the Sikkim Assembly should be reconstituted on the lines of those in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya. He also urged the Centre to make appropriate changes in the Representation of People’s Act and the Delimitation Act.

The chief minister told the standing committee that the Sikkimese Nepali community should be again provided reservation in the Assembly. “Inclusion of ethnic Nepalese communities like the Limbus, Tamangs and Gurungs in the list of Scheduled tribes is also imperative,” he said.

# Assam Tribune

28 October 2000

## Chamling urges Gorkhas to shed ‘minority complex’

GANGTOK, Oct 27 - Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has urged the Gorkha community not to get bogged down by ‘minority complex’ but to emulate the ideas of the Parsi community so as to attain excellence in society, reports PTL.

“The Gorkhas living in this great nation of millions of people need not necessarily feel small and incapable. We are afflicted by a phobia which we can call a minority complex,” Chamling told a gathering in Dehra Dun.

“We can take the Parsi community as a most relevant reference in this context. They hardly number over one lakh but excel in intellectual accomplishments at the national level, Chamling, who was addressing the platinum jubilee celebration of the Gorkha Military Inter-College here on Sunday last, said.

Urging the Gorkhas to take a leaf from the Parsis, the Sikkim Chief Minister said they (the Gorkhas) also needed to imbibe a ‘similar spirit’, an official release circulated to

the press on Wednesday quoted him as saying.

Recalling the contributions of various great Gorkha warriors and freedom-fighters since time immemorial, Chamling said the Centre recently approved a memorial statue of Sahid Durga Malla to be erected next to Gandhiji's in Parliament.

Chamling's clarion call assumed significance in the backdrop of his effort to bring the Gorkha community into the mainstream.

**SSP denies report:** The Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) on Wednesday denied a media report which said that the party's general secretary, Birendra Subba, had quit.

The SSP secretary, DB Basnet, when asked to react on the report, said that Subba, along with 17 others including the vice-president, Satish Rai, were 'expelled' on April 17 after they joined the fledgling Gorkha National Liberation Front here.

"The question of Subba's quitting SSP did not arise as he had been expelled," Basnet said refusing to provide names of the 17 others.

Meanwhile, a press release issued by the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front on October 16 had claimed that Subba joined the party pledging loyalty to the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

Subba was not immediately available for comment.

## Assam Tribune

10 November 2000

# Sikkim Govt's steps to beautify ancient palace

GANGTOK, Nov 9- The Sikkim Government has taken steps to beautify the 17th century Rabdantse Palace in West district, which was the second capital of the erstwhile kingdom, reports PTL.

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, during his visit to Rabdantse on Sunday, discussed various aspects of its development with the senior officials according to official sources here.

The Rabdantse Palace, built in the late 17th century by the erstwhile second king (Chogyal) of Sikkim, has been taken up by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to preserve the ancient royal heritage.

Official sources said Chamling directed the official to lay six-foot-wide stone footpath, construction of a beautiful gate in its front and to take to plantation in and around the palace.

The Chief Minister ordered to maintain a board depicting the history of the monument, the sources said.

To add to its beauty, Chamling suggested setting up a

bird sanctuary in the forest as variety of fliers were seen in that area.

Chamling also visited Pelling, a tourist spot near Gayzing, the base of Mount Khanchendzongha.

During his visit to Uttarey, another tourist place bordering Nepal, the Chief Minister asked the district collector to acquire land for reconstruction of a lake.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 January 2001

# Sikkim emphasis on tourism, power

By Nirmalya Banerjee

The Times Of India News Service

GANGTOK: "Plastic is drastic. Save environment," proclaims a poster at Singtam, a non-descript town in Sikkim. It is a pointer to the seriousness with which the Himalayan state has taken up the task of banning plastics.

"Sikkim is one of the few states where the use of plastics has been restricted effectively," says Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling. "The use of plastic shopping bags was banned in 1995 and we have managed to enforce the ban."

To attract tourists to Sikkim, the state government has given emphasis on maintaining peace and tranquility, protecting the environment and afforestation, the chief minister said.

To attract pilgrims to a state known for its string of Buddhist monasteries, a 108-foot tall statue of Gurupadmasambhava is being installed at Namchi.

For protection of environment, the Sikkim government has decided not to encourage too many five star hotels in the state, said Chamling. "We will have a few, for the benefit of foreigners, but not too many of them." He claimed that the system of restricted area permit prevailing in Sikkim is not too much of an inconvenience for foreign tourists visiting the state. "Even as S.P. can issue the RAP for 15 days."

After completing his six years in office, a major challenge that Chamling faces is ensuring a steady power supply in Sikkim. Power cuts are widespread and frequent, particularly in the capital town of Gangtok. It is a pity, considering that the total demand in the entire state is only 60 MW -almost the same as the power demand of just one locality in any of the major Indian cities- and the supply is only half of that.

Five years from now, Sikkim will be a power surplus state, however, as it will get its 12 per cent supply from the 510 MW Teesta state 5 project of the National Hydrel Power Corporation. The state government plans of tide over the

intervening period with supplies from the Power Grid Corporation. The old power stations in the state are being repaired. To give a shake up to the power scene, the state has sought the advice of former West Bengal power minister Sankar Sen.

Chamling understands that its plan to attract industries to Sikkim will fall flat unless the power scene improves. He thinks "high value, low volume and employment oriented" units are ideal for Sikkim. Like information technology, which is a "clean industry", agrobased and natural resource-based industries.

Roads too, continue to be one of Chamling's headaches. The Sikkim government is planning to request the Centre to declare national highway 31A a "national property" which will not be closed to traffic even during bandhs. Frequent bandhs in Siliguri and Darjeeling cuts off this life-line of Sikkim, putting the entire state in difficulty. Repair and upgradation of many roads within the state is also a crying need.

Although the formalities in Lok Sabha to include Sikkim in the North-East Council are yet to be completed, the state has already benefited from the non-lapsable pool of funds that the Centre had set up for NE states. "We received Rs 112 crore in two years from the pool," says Chamling.

But, Sikkim expects other benefits due to the NE states, like a tax holiday for new industries and a transport subsidy.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 February 2001

### Sikkim donation

GANGTOK: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling has announced an assistance of Rs 51 lakh and other relief materials to the quake-ravaged Gujarat. The state is also sending a 10 member medical team, led by state health minister D.D. Bhutia, a release said here on Wednesday. The chief minister has appealed to the state government employees, voluntary organisations and the business community to contribute generously to help the quake-hit people, (PTI).

## Assam Tribune

1 February 2001

### Sikkim bags National Tourism Award

GANGTOK, Jan 31- The Sikkim State has bagged the National Tourism Award, 1999-2000, reports UNI.

The award was given to State Tourism Minister KT Gyaltsen by Union Tourism and Culture Minister Ananth Kumar at a function to celebrate Indian Tourism Day on January 25 at Ashoka Hotel in New Delhi.

The award was conferred on Sikkim for the second consecutive year as being adjudged the best destination in the North-east.

Informing this at a press conference, Sri Gyaltsen said on Tuesday that the Government of India has appreciate the "hard work of the Sikkim Government for development and promotion of tourism."

The Tourism Minister also lauded State Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling for taking personal interest for promoting tourism in this industrially backward state.

"It is the people of Sikkim who deserve the prestigious award for their spontaneous warmth, hospitality and friendly nature to the tourists," the Tourism Minister said,

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 March 2001

### Chamling dares Opposition to no-trust vote

Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, today challenged the opposition to bring a non-confidence motion against his government rather than talk about toppling it. "If you have the mandate, bring a no-confidence motion in the Assembly. I am ready to face it. But do not indulge in toppling talks in hotels, cafeterias," Chamling told the House.

Some Opposition leaders are still talking about dislodging the government which has a clear mandate of 25 in the 32 Member Assembly, the Sikkim Democratic Front Leader said.

"If this (the toppling game) leads to any trouble, the Opposition will be solely responsible," Chamling said. He invited the opponents to a debate on the merits and demerits of his government.

He was confident that there is not threat to his government as long as the poor people are with him. ■

## Gangtok TIMES

21 March 2001

### Decentralisation of Sikkim Administration:

*A Key to Progress, says Chief Minister Chamling*

In keeping with the commitments made by the present ruling Government the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has initiated a series of meetings with various State Government Departments on decentralisation of administration and delegating of powers to the Heads of the departments.

While discussing with the Health and Family Welfare Department on 24th May on matters relating to referral cases and medical aid the Chief Minister Directed the Department to refer the most deserving cases only for treatment outside the State. The Meeting was also attended by the Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dr. D.P. Kharel, the Chief Secretary, Mr. K. A. Varadan, the Finance Secretary, Mr. Tashi Topden, the Development Commissioner, Mr. S.W. Tenzing, the Health Secretary, Mr. D.Dahdul and the Secretary to the Chief Minister, Mr. P.T.Gyamtsso.

After detailed discussion on the subject it was decided to delegate full powers to the Health Secretary for the special cases referred by the State Medical Board for treatment outside Sikkim. From now onwards the State Health Secretary has been fully empowered to accord administrative approval and financial sanction as far as referral cases are concerned. The members of public and Government employees possessing recommendations from the State Medical Board for treatment outside Sikkim may now request the Health Secretary directly instead of approaching the higher authorities.

In the same meeting it was also decided to immediately send back all the Medical Officers and staff presently attached with the STNM Hospital to their respective postings. The step was necessary as the public of the different areas are obviously suffering due to their absence.

Meanwhile, it was also decided to fill up all the vacant posts of doctors without any delay so that there would be no shortage of Medical Officers to look after the health care of the patients.

## **Bhim Prasad Dahal Will Support Congress in Lok Sabha**

The lone Lok Sabha Member, Mr. Bhim Prasad Dahal, will support Congress at the centre in accordance with the commitment made by Sikkim Democratic Front, says the Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling. This statement was made by the Chief Minister in an exclusive interview to the Press Trust of India at Gangtok.

Mr. Chamling further said, "I am a simple man, and as such I do not follow double standard. We would extend unflinching support to the Congress at the Centre."

Replying to a question Mr. Chamling hinted that in near future he may expand his government by inducting two Ministers in his cabinet. ■



24 March 2001

## **SDF promises better life for Sikkimese**

**By Pratim Ranjan Bose**

KOLKATA, MARCH 23, Namchi has never seen anything like this. The hometown of the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, the hill station was barely able to accommodate the beeline of cars, ferrying several thousand sympathisers, mostly in the age group of 18 to 30, from all across the State to the open session of the 'First Decadal Convention' of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), on March 4.

Traffic came to a standstill on the narrow hilly tracks leading to Namchi. And, when the party president, Mr Chamling, rose to address the gathering at 1 p.m, a larger number of his followers were still on the long march to the venue.

The three-day convention began on March 2, with an aim to review the party's guiding principles and ethics. Besides recounting its "journey to restore democracy" by replacing the Narbahadur Bhandari-led Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) from power in December, 1994, the convention set into motion a "purification drive of the party cadres at all levels," a SDF communique, said.

The closed session on March 2 and 3 adopted 23 resolutions "to ensure a better life for the Sikkimese" by way of all-round economic growth and prosperity, alleviation of poverty and economic disparity, empowering women and others.

The current year was declared as "The Implementations Year". Emphasis was given on ensuring "peace and tranquillity" and enforcing a higher degree of "emotional integration" of the people of the 22nd Indian State with the rest of the country.

Considered the most peaceful State (amidst widespread unrest in the whole of the northeast), Sikkim is worried about possible attempts to disturb the peace.

"Intelligence reports suggest that secessionist forces from the State have joined hands with the Maoists in Nepal," Mr Chamling said. He blamed the Opposition SSP for fuelling such sentiments.

The Government effected decentralisation of power by holding the two-tier panchayat elections, with 33 per cent seats reserved for women, in 1997. It is now planning to hold the municipal elections along with the next panchayat elections in September.

"Beginning 2002-2003 we will spend 10 per cent of the budgetary allocation through panchayats, " the Chief



Minister said, adding that "It will be stepped up to 30 per cent in the next five years."

The State Planning Commission has already been set up and the economic survey conducted. Sikkim is also the fourth State to bring out a human development report in September 2001.

Lok Adalats have been constituted in all nine subdivisions along with the setting up of atrocity courts, courts for human rights and family courts.

To bring the whole State under the e-governance project, 40 community information centres with 2 MBPS bandwidth connection have been constructed. The centres are expected to be operational soon with hardware and software support from the Union Communications Ministry.

To reach the target of 85 per cent literacy rate during the Tenth Plan (from the existing 69 per cent), education up to college is free and "primary education has been taken up from the door step".

The student population from pre-primary to the higher secondary level has gone up to 1.39 lakh.

Apart from the general higher education facilities, the State Government had recently set up two polytechnics, managed by the Nettur Technical Training Foundation of Bangalore, in South Sikkim.

The Pal Foundation of Manipal has set up one engineering college and a medical college hospital at Rangpo and Gangtok respectively.

But for the natural stress of tourism which will receive a further boost if the Hyatt Regency group sets up the first five star hotel and the commercial airport comes up near Gangtok, the State is focussed on creating adequate infrastructure to attract industry.

The maximum stress is on the power sector. With the 60 MW Rangit hydel project already put into operation the 510 MW Teesta Stage-V is under construction by the NHPC and a number of new projects yet to come up, the State will be a net exporter of power by 2007. "We will earn no less than Rs. 40 crores by selling power", Mr Chamling said.

The net State domestic product has growth by 12 per cent annually from a negative growth rate (-2.43 per cent) in 1994-95. The per capita income has gone up from -5.79 per cent to a healthy 7.12 per cent in 1999-2000. And, according to the Chief Minister, the state's financial position which was on the verge of bankruptcy has also been put on a stronger foundation, free from the burden of huge overdrafts and payments failure.

Sikkim is today on the growth path, But, the State has its problems too. First, in the bureaucracy. Inherited from the monarchical past, only a few bureaucrats are from the Indian Administrative Services.

"Half the bureaucrats are yet to accept the democratic process, resulting in a delay in the implementation of Gov-

ernment policies," Mr. Chamling said.

And, when the administration does not work the Chief Minister pitches on with the needful." People come straight to the CMs residence even for a polythene sheet or for a grant of Rs 100!" Mr. Chamling has also made it a practice to address their problems personally. And, so he did even at Namchi.

## The Statesman

6 April 2001

# The man with the Candle

*Sikkim's popular chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling is in pursuit of sustainable development, peace and harmony in his state. Sujit Chakraborty charts out his single-lane policy*

It was the Assembly session in Sikkim some years ago and the state was in turmoil over the issue of democracy. One opposition legislator rose, took out a candle from his pocket and proceeded to light it amid the growing furore. The Speaker said it was unacceptable by Assembly norms. The legislator walked around with the candle and finally stopped, facing the then chief minister. Turning to the Speaker, he said, "I am looking for democracy, Sir in this august gathering. Does it exist here? Or is in the pocket of the chief minister!"

Pawan Kumar Chamling is a man of culture a litterateur with a number of books to his credit, and a man whose rise from the grassroots has endowed him with a sense of belonging to the soil. The search for democracy ended with this man with a humble background rising to become the chief minister.

In the spring of 2001, Chamling was faced with two main predicaments, and his candle was searching for two more things after democracy: protection against external violence and prosperity for the people without damaging the virgin environment of Sikkim.

"In a complex manner, these are linked," the broad-shouldered man with a generally expressionless face admits. "Ecotourism is the single lane to prosperity. We have been developing this over the past few years. In my time, I'm trying to adopt certain measures that will bring in finances and yet keep the environment clean," he says.

Chamling has been credited with stopping major industrial efforts, like the Rathong Chu hydel power project in Yoksun. His detractors say he did it for fear of loss of the Bhutia-Lepcha vote bank. "But I cannot be insensitive to the voters' wishes and needs," is how he seeks to defend his stand.

Chamling is a master of the art of turning the tables on his critics. More recently, during the GNLF-sponsored bandh in Darjeeling, he was away in Delhi, trying to bring in funds for the ecotourism projects. The opposition accused him of “playing the fiddle in Delhi while Sikkim burnt”. “But,” says Chamling, “they say I have a fragile and tenuous balance in my ministry which can collapse any day. Well, I gave them all the time to do that, and here we are!”

The issue of ecotourism is paramount in Chamling’s mind. The state gets a Central grant of Rs 1,500 crore annually. But the economy is fragile. Government data says 83 per cent of the state is under forest cover. Industry (except for Danny Dengzongpa’s brewery unit off Gangtok, Sikkim Time Corporation, and Temi Tea) is virtually non-existent. Tourism wasn’t developed even a few years ago, for Sikkim’s traditional isolation had not been quite congenial. However, the near-closure of such destinations as Kashmir, and now virtually, Darjeeling, because of political unrest has prompted tourists to opt for Sikkim. Now, Sikkim’s bewitching beauty has won millions of suitors from across the world.

“But there is a problem,” Chamling says. “The money from tourism is not percolating to the grassroots.” All the hotel-owners and transporters are non-Sikkimese. “In 1997 the revenue from tourism was only Rs 30 lakh, and this year it has risen to Rs 40 lakh.” However, he admits, it’s wrong picture for with 1,40,151 domestic tourists and 11,320 from abroad till 31 March 2000, it would mean that they visitors spent not more than Rs 40 per head in Sikkim!

“That’s the chief problem,” Chamling says. “We are spending so much on infrastructure. By the end of the year, you’ll find almost all motorable road vastly improved .... the money is not reaching us. We get a mere eight or ten per cent of what the tourists spend. The challenge is changing the economy from a consumerist to a producing one.” In fact, that’s his refrain. “We’ve to generate money at the village level itself.”

If this does not happen, this is going to cause problems. “I’m aware of this,” he says. “That is precisely the reason why we must develop ecotourism at the grassroots level.” As he himself says, the state has an enviable education and literacy pattern, “Seventy-one per cent in women and 86 in men,” says Chamling. That leaves the state with a large number of educated youth. And like in many other north-eastern states, they are reluctant to go outside the state, and look up to the government for creating jobs.

The situation must be viewed in the backdrop of the subtle differences between the three main communities of the state- the dominant Nepalese, and the traditionally docile Bhutias and the Lepchas, the last being the native community of Sikkim with a mythical background. “There are three communities any they live in harmony, but one cannot deny that they have their own feelings,” Chamling

admits in his typical feet-on-ground sensibility .

Does this mean that someday this harmony myth will explode? “You cannot rule out the possibility of outsiders coming in and trying to cash in on the traditional simplicity of the people,” Chamling says. Added to this is the fact that still most Sikkimese do not and indeed cannot, feel integrally Indian. This has to be seen in the context of the context of the Pakistan’s ISI threats.

I’m striving hard for an emotional integration. I’ve even told our Prime Minister that we need funds for setting up a theme park that will showcase the cultural and religious identities of all the states. In Sikkim, I want to have theme villages where people can see what our cultures are. So far, the Centre has not responded. But, emotional integration is a must.”

But this approach may make him more vulnerable, for his detractors describe this effort as “anti-Sikkimese”. “But all efforts will go down the drain if the economic benefits do not reach the grassroots.” Chamling says.

On the economic front, Chamling takes credit for some radical measures. “We’ve introduced the Lok Adalat and Family Courts with designated judges at all levels,” he says. “We have ensured 30 per cent job reservations for women. At the Zilla parishad levels we’ve Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha (women as presidents and vice-presidents). We’ve also introduced the Small Family scheme.

“These include monetary benefits for people staying in school up to 13 years of age. If they complete Class 12, there will be added benefits. Likewise, if they complete graduation, the benefits will be more. Women who do not marry after 21 years are covered by the scheme. And if parents, till the age of 50, have just two children, they will get Rs 50,000.

“On the tourism front, we have drawn up out a Master Plan that ends in 2017. By that time we have to raise the revenue from Rs 24 crore to Rs 180 crore. We have detailed plan growth areas.” The Master Plan, however, has one lacuna: it seeks to keep out the local populace; just the thing the chief minister says he does not want. Does he contemplate village-level resorts that might generate income direct interaction with the local crafts sector in Sikkim and even help some educated youth get involved in the tourist trade as communicating agents between villagers and foreign guests?

“We’re keep to develop this kind of tourism. Sikkim is not only a collection of beautiful places, but of beautiful people, rich in culture and religion, as well. In fact, we have the largest number of monasteries and the best-positioned Buddhist destination,” Chamling muses. It is clear that he feels the need for this kind of advanced, rural tourism, but also that not much has been done so far on these lines.

He denies allegations of partisan distribution of benefits. “Allegations are made against any party in power . Why did the people vote for us then?” So far, the govern-

ment has been stable, despite trouble-mongering every now and then. The state is peaceful more or less “and the crime rate is coming down”.

The bureaucracy is solidly behind the man, possibly because the previous regime was autocratic and partisan against the Bhutia-Lepcha communities. Recently, 16 sub-inspectors of Sikkim Police have been promoted, despite the fact that some of them were staunch opposition supporters. In one striking instance, literally and physically, a senior police officer slapped a man for traffic violation, without knowing he was the chief minister’s son. The next day, the officer was chastised “for only slapping the man and not putting him behind bars!”

And another officer gives statistics on arrests : “Most cases of violence are during elections. But I can tell you that we have more Chamling supports under arrest than those belonging to the Opposition. I’ve never ordered any police official to arrest anyone. They do their duty.” In fact, recently a minister was sought to be arrested for a forestry-related offence. “Never was I told to lay off,” says the officer handling the case.

The civil bureaucracy too is supportive The environmentally conscious chief secretary Sonam Tenzing represents pro active governance . All these factors make the Chamling era interesting and allow the regime to move forward with their progressive programmes.

However, as said earlier, the whole scheme of things stands upon one crucial factor. The Gorkhaland fringe movement(anti-Ghising) movement is now in the hands of Naga militants. Ulfa and NSCN fund Kamptapur movement. And disturbances in these states around Sikkim are growing. At the same time, the heat is on the separatists as well. the Nepalese police forced Chattrey Subba to seek surrender to India. Bhutan will not keep quiet for too long in the face of ISI activities either. In this scenario, does he think these terrorists will not use Sikkim’s calm as a haven?

“Definitely they will. In fact, the growth in the number of people from Bangladesh is causing great concern,” the chief minister says.

Police are worried about Islampurias (euphemism for Bangladeshi Muslims) settling in Sikkim. “So far, we have no knowledge of any training camps of terrorist activities in Sikkim. However , our security systems are alert,” says Chamling who agrees that such organisations can succeed if the common people’s dissatisfaction is allowed to persist. “Which is why I’m stressing so much on the ecotourism aspect,” Chamling says.

The man is still moving around with the candle. Democracy has survived . Now the search is for sustainable development, peace and harmony. And if fostering grassroots- level entrepreneurship through advanced form of ecotourism can ignite people’s support, Pawan Kumar Chamling will never have to worry about his vote banks or violent political cranks.

## CM thanks Centre for Sikkim honour

### UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

PHENAGLA, April 4. - The chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, has thanked the Centre for making Sikkim the highest tele-density region of the country.

Addressing a function here yesterday, after communication minister Mr Ram Vilas Paswan dedicated a 1000-line capacity telephone exchange, some 8 kms from Gangtok, Mr Chamling said due to the constant patronage from the Centre this was possible only in 26 years, after this former kingdom merged with the India.

He, however, said that the state’s development works often suffer due to frequent bandhs in neighbouring Darjeeling.

He requested the Centre to ensure free movement of Sikkim’s vehicles during agitation in Darjeeling, West Bengal.

Mr Chamling, said whenever there is a bandh in Darjeeling, the NH 31-A, the lifeline of Sikkim, connecting Gangtok with Siliguri, becomes the target and the state suffers due to road blockade. The state loses Rs 3 crore a day due to non plying of vehicles through the Kalimpong sub division during agitations. Kalimpong is the only thoroughfare between Gangtok and nearest railhead Siliguri.

He said, Centre should convene a tri-partite meeting of West Bengal, Sikkim and the Central leaders to sort out the problem. He urged the leaders of the country to peacefully settle the Darjeeling problem.

The chief minister asked the centre to provide one more helicopter for the state for passengers flying between here to Bagdogra. He appreciated the Centre’s allocation of Rs 50 crore for setting up air port facility in Sikkim.

Earlier, Mr Paswan assured fullest cooperation his ministry for improvement of communication facility in the state. He said within this month a general manager post would be created in the telephone department and mobile facility would be provided to the state by next December.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 May 2001

## NHPC not cooperating with Sikkim: Chamling

HT Correspondent

*Gangtok, May 5*

THE SIKKIM Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling told reporters on Friday that the National Hydroelectric Power

Corporation (NHPC) was not “cooperating” with his Government as desired.

The Chief Minister said cooperation was lacking when it came to coordinating fresh appointments for the Teesta Stage-V hydel project with the Government.

Apparently, the Government is kept in the dark on this front despite a memorandum of understanding signed between the State Government and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation whereby it is bound to fill all surplus posts with Sikkimese candidates.

Teesta Stage V, the 550-MW projects at Dikchu, bordering east and north Sikkim was cleared despite opposition from various sectors on the environmental and demographic impact it entailed.

The State Government, given the myriad fears raised on the project, had commissioned a high level coordinating committee to work out the modalities of the project and bind NHPC to commitments that would assuage some of the fears raised by dissenters. The memorandum of understanding was a result of this initiative.

“NHPC, despite several reminders, has not informed us of the number of surplus posts the project is going to create,” the Chief Minister said. He was not happy with the progress of work at the project site at Dikchu in east Sikkim. “Work has not progressed the way it should have,” he said.

Even though National Hydro-electric Power Corporation is yet to confirm the number of jobs it will generate for the State, the Chief Minister feels that a minimum of 200 vacancies for engineers and some 1000 clerical posts will be generated by the project.

Chamling also opined that the locals were not utilising the opportunities created by the project. “The demand for live-stock and vegetables, once the project is in full swing will be tremendous. Our people should be preparing to meet this demand,” he said, while adding, “Our people should also help themselves.”

We asked why his Government could not pressurise the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation into compliance, the Chief Minister admitted that technically, the State Government had when asked why his Government could not pressurise the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation into compliance, the Chief Minister admitted that technically, the State Government had no control over National Hydroelectric Power Corporation. “Neither does the Centre,” he added.

Incidentally, the memorandum of understanding signed with Sikkim is a first for the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, which has not signed a memorandum of understanding with any other State as yet.

## The Statesman

7 May 2001

### Dubey made deputy chief of Sikkim plan panel

GANGTOK, May. 6 - The former foreign secretary, Mr Muchkund Dubey, has been appointed as the deputy chairman of the Sikkim Planning Commission.

The Cabinet meeting, chaired by the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, yesterday okayed the formation of the commission. The meeting also decided to accord a Cabinet minister's rank to Mr Dubey and minister of state ranks for other members.

Mr Chamling, who would head the nine-member panel, told reporters here that the former West Bengal power minister, Mr Sankar Sen, Mr Ashok Lahiri of national institute of public finance and policy and JNU professor Mahendra P Lama would be in the commission as members.

Mr KC Pradhan, a former chief secretary, the incumbent chief secretary and the finance secretary would be the other members of the commission, having the state's development commissioner as its member secretary.

The panel is to formulate a long-term strategy for “sustainable economic growth with social justice”, to advise the government for preparing five-year, annual and district plans for achieving fiscal stability in the state.-PTI

## Assam Tribune

20 May 2001

### Emulate developed nations to arrest population: Chamling

GANGTOK, May 19 - Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has called for emulating developed countries for arresting the population growth in the country as well as the State, reports PTI.

“We have to think how to stop the population growth. Italy has chalked up a programme to reduce its populace by 22 million by 2050. Likewise, we may also think to bring Sikkim's population down to four lakh in the next



49 years from its present figure of 5.4 lakh,” Chamling said here on Wednesday.

The Chief Minister said with the gradual diminishing of natural wealth, it would be increasingly difficult to feed so many mouths in the next 50 years when the world population would stand at over 11 billion.

## Assam Tribune

27 May 2001

### CM for eco conservation :

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has called upon the scientific community for finding ways to conserve natural resources and bio-diversity and help in reaching the benefits to the common people for sustainable livelihood.

Addressing a seminar on “State of Scientific Research in India, Chamling said the scientific and technological communities working in the state to focus on conservation of Sikkim’s rich natural resources and bio-diversity . The benefits of the work should go to the local communities for their sustainable livelihood.

“We can pin our hopes in science and technology to rescue us from the menace like population growth, food security, poverty, economic drifts, dreadful diseases, pollution and climate change,” he told the seminar attended by Jawaharlal Nehru University vice-chancellor, Pro Ashis Dutta, here recently.

Dutta, in his speech, said priority should be given on security of food, energy, environment to make the society knowledge-based, interactive and powerful.

Malnutrition claimed more lives in a year than diseases like AIDS or TB. Scientific research was therefore required to solve the problem and bio-technology should be aimed at benefiting the common people, ha added.



## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

30 May 2001

### Sikkim rolls out the red carpet for private investors

Our Kolkata Bureau

KOLKATA 29 MAY

THE SIKKIM government is going all out to woo private investment. As part of the core industrial strategy the

government has decided to open up a number of productive sectors like tourism, agriculture, energy and education to private entrepreneurs.

“We have already in place a number of sector specific studies, which can be used by the private sector for detailed information. For instance in tourism we have a master plan prepared by the Tata Economic Consultancy Services, in horticulture by the Indo-Swiss Project Sikkim(ISPS) and in hydel power by National Hydro Power Corporation ,” Said Mr P. Chamling chief minister of Sikkim. Mr Chamling was addressing the members of Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) in the city on Tuesday .

To promote a congenial investment atmosphere, the government has modified its investment policies, legal framework, environmental rules and fiscal incentives, besides ushering in efficiency, accountability and transparency in the system of governance.

The Sikkim chief minister urged the CII to help the confederation promote the concept of agricultural export zones(AEZ) in Sikkim by bringing in latest technology, modern management, capital investment and entrepreneurial zeal. With our intense focus on agricultural and horticultural produce, we need to take full benefit of the AEZ concept announced in the Exim Policy 2001, to adequately tune ourselves to the principles and laws of WTO, he added.

Mr P.S. Tamang industry minister of the state of Sikkim, also mentioned a few other high priority areas like handloom and handicrafts, IT , tea, minerals. mining and health as political investment destinations.

## Business Standard

30 May 2001

### Sikkim woos pvt funds, to focus on intellectual capital

Our Bureau

KOLKATA, 29 MAY

SIKKIM HAS thrown open its doors to private investors and plans to focus on developing its intellectual and professional capital and tap its untapped resources.

Speaking at an interactive session organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) today in Kolkata, the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling, said, “The Sikkim government would selectively encourage projects that would be high value-low volume and ecofriendly . Single window clearances within two weeks would be issued for these industries.”

Chamling was in the city along with some of his Cabi-

net colleagues to hold talks with private investors for attracting investments Chamling also urged CII to give special attention and intervene in the new concept of Agricultural Export Zones, announced in the Exim Policy 2001. The Sikkim government has identified key areas where private investors could come in. These include academic and scientific research, power, information technology and tourism, among others. The government would also gradually withdraw from select sectors.

The Chief Minister added that project reports in sectors like power and education have been drawn up, which could be put to use by private investors. Vast resources of hydro power, to the extent of 8000 mw, lie untapped in Sikkim. To bring in active participation of public and private sectors in power generation and transmission, which requires huge capital investment, a free and competitive state power policy has been formulated.

In education, Sikkim has come up with a 'Smart School Project', in which it wants to involve private players in a major way. The government has estimated the project cost to be around Rs 2 crore and would float tenders to rope in computer agencies in this project.

Sikkim despite being the natural home for around 475 species of orchids, has so far not been successful in exploiting the full potential of exports in this arena due to lack of requisite capital and infrastructure. The government to boost its exports, especially horticultural products, plans to enter into joint venture agreements with foreign companies and private players. The horticultural department of Sikkim government has entered into a joint venture with an Australian company.

Harsh Neotia, chairman, CII (eastern region), said CII would send a delegation to the state within the close of the year to assess investment opportunities .

## ...plans JV s with Bengal

**Our Bureau**  
KOLKATA, 29 MAY

WEST BENGAL and Sikkim will take joint initiative to boost tourism and develop food processing, agrihorticulture industries and transport sector in the two State.

After holding talks with the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, the West Bengal Chief Minister, Buddhadeb Bhattacharaya, said today that a high-level meeting involving the concerned secretaries of the two states will hold a meeting in Siliguri later to discuss the issues threadbare.

Bhattacharaya and Chamling discussed areas where there is a scope of improving the cooperation between the two states for development of north Bengal and Sikkim. Bhattacharaya later left for Delhi to meet the Prime Minis-

ter, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Talking about the transport problem in the hill areas, Chamling said that people were inconvenienced because of the frequent bandhs. Everytime a bandh is called vehicular movement along National Highway 31 A is paralysed causing immense hardship to the people of Sikkim, he added.

## Business Line

30 May 2001

# Sikkim seeks pvt funds for power, tourism

**Our Bureau**  
KOLKATA, May 29

SEEKING a major partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in the new avenues of developmental process in the State, the Sikkim Government had sought fresh investments in areas such as education, tourism health, hydel power and food-processing sectors.

Showcasing the many incentive offered by the State Government to private entrepreneurs in both new and traditional industries at an interactive session organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), eastern region, here on Tuesday, Mr Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim, invited the private sector to come forward with the best of their capital, technology and management skills.

He said the plan was to increasingly open up the productive sectors to private investment, since there has been a steady erosion of entrepreneurial urge lately. He blamed this on the planners' skewed priorities, general ignorance about opportunities, inability to attract private investors and the wrong prescription of incentives. Steps have been taken to correct each of these ills, and for the first time, a State planning Commission has been set up to look into the formulation of Sikkim's long term perspective plan, he said.

The Commission, to be headed by Mr Muchkund Dubey, former Foreign Secretary, will advise the State Government on the preparation of both annual and district Plans, achievement of fiscal stability and mapping for efficient resource and export management.

Outlining the vast scope for private sector investment in the State's education sector, where on average, there are 37 teachers for one school at the secondary level (one teacher for very four students), he said a new initiative had been launched to diversify the educational system through

introduction of professional colleges, technical institutions and skill-building schools.

As a part of this new programme, "Smart Schools" are being started in each district (Sikkim has four districts), primarily to encourage all-round development of the individual and in the process democratise education so as to provide every child with equal access to learning. The schools are set to begin functioning by end of the year.

In the proposed smart schools project, being launched on a pilot- basis now, there would be increasing participation of parents, community and the public in the education process, he pointed out. The CM said efforts were also on to get the educational institutions in the State affiliated with institutions of national and international importance. The plan is to provide a thrust to research and academic activities in the State, which boasts a rich and rare natural and cultural heritage.

The new concept of Agricultural Export Zones (AEZs) in the latest Exim policy fitted very well into Sikkim's mission of "Krishal Lal Bazar" and "kinarma pugisakekalai" (market to the farmers and land to the marginalised people). The need is to link farmers directly to the regional, national and international market through various forms of intervention. He urged the CII members to participate in this venture by bringing in latest technology, modern management, capital investment and a new entrepreneurial zeal.

According to Mr P.S. Tamang, Minister of Industries, the highest priority is being accorded to eco-friendly industries. The thrust areas are horticulture and floriculture, minor forest-based projects, handicraft, tourism, IT, hydel power and tea. Mr. Tamang invited private capital in areas such as minerals and mining. Single window clearances are being issued to prospective entrepreneurs within two weeks.

The Government would encourage projects which are of high value but low volume, ecofriendly and not detrimental to the State's cultural heritage, he observed.

Commenting on the on-going power sector reforms in the State, Mr History Lachungpa, Minister for Power, said in the first phase, the Sikkim Power Development Corporation Ltd had taken up three hydel projects, totaling 120 MW, to be funded through market borrowings. There are as many as 39 small, mini and micro hydel power schemes, totalling 218 MW. The State Government has already issued notice inviting bids from prospective developers for implementation of the Teesta Stage -IV(495 MW) and Stage -VI (39 MW) projects.

There are six stages under the Teesta Cascade, totalling 3,635 MW, and States I&II are under detailed investigation by the Central Water Commission. Teesta Stage-V is being executed by NHPC, and according to the power Minister, is scheduled to be completed by 2007.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 May 2001

### Sikkim has ideal climate for private schools: Chamling

The Times of India New Service

KOLKATA: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling has sought the help of industry captains to convert the land of monasteries into an educational hub of South Asia.

In an interactive session with the CII on Tuesday, Chamling made it clear that besides industry he was keen to lure private investment in education as well. He told industrialists that his government was thinking of starting 'smart schools' to produce a thinking workforce that is also technologically literate.

"My government is very keen on private sector participation in education," he said. Chamling assured industrialists of the best possible amenities in the state for investment in education.

The chief minister claimed that the state had the most congenial atmosphere to become the educational destination of the east.

"These private institutions will be self-sustainable as they can attract both students and professionals from within India and the neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Myanmar," Chamling added.

According to him, Sikkim is currently diversifying the educational system by introducing professional colleges and technical institutions after achieving a good primary educational infrastructure. The state currently has 501 primary and 75 secondary schools for a population of 500,000.

On an average, it has one teacher for every four students and 37 teachers for one school. Describing the concept of 'smart schools', Chamling said that these will encourage all-round development of the individual covering the intellectual, physical emotional and spiritual domains.

The chief minister also stressed the need for increasing participation of parents, community and the public in the educational process. Incidentally, Sikkim is the first state in eastern India and the fourth in India to produce a human developing report." Our government has accepted the report and has already started implementing some of the recommendations."

### Highway plea

The government should take steps to ensure that National Highway 31A remains open even if there is a bandh in the Darjeeling hills. This was stated by Sikkim chief

minister Pawan Chamling in his meeting with state chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Tuesday.

“NH 31A is the lifeline of Sikkim. If that closes down, the entire life of the state gets disrupted,” Chamling told newsmen after the meeting. The highway is the only connection between Sikkim and the rest of the country, passing from Siliguri through the Darjeeling hills.

As a result, whenever there is a bandh, that was quite frequent in recent months, especially after the attack on Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council chairman Subash Ghising, this mountainous state has had to face tremendous problems.

“NH 31A is a national highway and thus it is not the property of a particular state. Thus the West Bengal government should arrange for the highway to remain open even if there is a bandh in the Darjeeling hills,” said Chamling.

The Sikkim CM is in the city for an interactive session with CII. He is accompanied by ministers of housing and public works, transport, agri-horticulture, forests, tourism, power and industry, along with the chief secretary and director-general of police.

## THE ASIAN AGE

30 May 2001

### State initiates joint tourism projects with Sikkim

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

Kolkata, May 29: The state government has initiated joint new tourism projects with the Sikkim government. Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee met Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling at the Writers' on Tuesday to discuss the projects.

“We are happy that the Sikkim government wants to start joint venture projects in tourism and food processing sectors. Both states have a huge potential in these areas,” Mr Bhattacharjee said.

Mr Chamling invited industrialists from Bengal to invest in tourism, horticulture and food processing sectors. “We will provide infrastructural facilities to private investors. We have investment friendly policies, legal framework and fiscal incentives,” he said. Sikkim will provide a tax holiday to new investors from Bengal.

The Sikkim government wants to promote packaged eco-tourism in the state jointly with the West Bengal government. “We expect ecotourism to draw investors from other states,” Sikkim tourism minister K.T. Gyaltzen said.

The Sikkim government has had an action plan prepared by Tata Economic Consultancy services, which focuses on the state's potential in tourism. Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation has also strengthened the tour-

ism infrastructure in the state to woo investors.

The Sikkim government is also trying to improve the transport network in the state to provide better connectivity with other parts of the country. Mr Chamling expressed concern over the breakdown of his state's communication system during bandhs in Darjeeling. “National Highway 31A is the only means of communication from Siliguri to Sikkim. If there is a bandh we are cut off the rest of the country. The West Bengal government should ensure that our communication system is not hampered,” he said.

He also said his state has started a second generation of economic reform. “Our prospective hydel power capacity is around 8000 MW. We want private companies to set up power projects in the our state.” Sikkim power minister Hishe Lachumpa said.

Meanwhile, industry minister Nirupam Sen said the state will initiate technological upgradation of existing industries to revive industry in the state. He was speaking at a programme organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry. Mr Sen urged state-based industrialists to help re-open closed industries. “We have already set examples by reviving, some sick and closed industries,” he said. Mr Sen wants to create job opportunities for unemployed youths. He said: “We decry the policy of giving preference to the sons of the soil but cannot deny them chances, particularly in the new projects, considering the grave unemployment situation in the state.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 June 2001

### Centre urged to reserve more seats for ethnic groups

By Nirmalya Banerjee

The Times of India News Service

KOLKATA: The Sikkim government has taken up with Centre the question of having more reserved seats in the state Assembly for various ethnic groups in the state, chief minister Pawan K. Chamling said in Kolkata on Thursday.

Talking to TOINS, he said 15 seats out of 32 in the state were already reserved for communities like Bhutias and Lepchas. A few other communities, including the Sikkimese Nepalis and Limbus, have been demanding seat reservation in the Assembly for some time. During the rule of the Chogyal in Sikkim, they enjoyed such reservations.

While the Sikkim government was yet to come to a decision as to how many additional seats should be reserved for these communities, the final decision has to be



taken by the Centre and a Constitutional amendment would be necessary for this, Chamling said.

The efforts of the Sikkim government to check unplanned construction of buildings in some of the tourist towns have been hampered by a Constitutional provision that gave protection to properties owned by monasteries, Chamling said.

Hotels were mushrooming in some of these tourist places, leading to deforestation and ecological imbalance. As the constructions were being carried out mostly in areas owned by the monasteries, the state government has limitations in intervening.

The state government has, however, recently passed a legislation for planned constructions in the towns, a senior official added. "Our plan is to explain to the people the ill effects of unplanned construction and take the people along with us in our endeavour to stop this," he said.

The state government is trying to lay the emphasis on development of tourism in the state, "For this, the first requirement is development of roads in Sikkim," the chief minister said.

A programme for road restoration has been taken up. It is likely to be completed by the end of this year. Seven helipads are under construction near tourist spots such as Soreng, Geyzing, Yuksam, Rabangla and Yumthang. Besides, an airport was also under construction at Pakyong, 25 km from Gangtok.

Presently, a helicopter service operates between Bagdogra and Gangtok.

The state government will also have to acquire new helicopters when the additional services are introduced. The Sikkim government has suggested to the West Bengal government that it take up with the Centre the demand for turning the Bagdogra airport into an international one to serve the Saarc countries, Chamling said. It will help in the promotion to tourism in the entire region.

Power shortage was another problem the government would have to cope with Chamling said. With, Chamling said. within two years, when about eight micro hydel projects would be commissioned, the generating capacity of the state would increase to 130 MW from the present 93 MW. Besides, in 2007, Sikkim would also receive 12 per cent of the power generated by the 510 MW Teesta stage II project of the National Hydel Power Corporation.

# The Telegraph

2 June 2001

## Forget roads, fly to Sikkim

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, June 1: Good news for tourists to Sikkim. The hill state will soon be on the air map of the country.

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling announced today that the Centre had earmarked a fund of Rs 50 crore for an airport which can be used by small Dornier aircraft. Chamling has been in the city for a few days and inaugurated the Sikkim House yesterday.

Sikkim tourism minister K.T.Gyaltzen said BWD engineers had already begun work on the airport, which will be located at Pakyong, about 45 minutes from Gangtok. The project is expected to be completed within two years.

The state is now accessible only by road- NH-31A is Sikkim's lifeline, connecting it with Siliguri's plains. The nearest airport is the one in Bagdogra. The government of West Bengal and Sikkim are now trying to get Bagdogra declared as an international airport.

Chamling said the priority sectors for his state were tourism, power education and health. He also emphasised the need to link Sikkim by railway with the rest of the country.

"A policy decision was made by the Central government that all states in the country will have railway links. I hope the government will soon see to the need of the hill state," he said.

The chief minister said the air and rail links will boost tourism in the state. At least 50,000 people in the state are involved in the tourism industry. Sikkim hosts about 2 lakhs domestic tourists and 25,000 foreign tourists every year.

Chamling pointed out that his state suffered in case of any agitation in Bengal because NH-31 A remains cut off. "Each time there is a bandh in Darjeeling, our supplies are cut off and we suffer a loss of Rs 3 crore daily," he said. "I have already written to GNLF chief Subash Ghising on this and have received a positive response," he added.

The chief minister said Sikkim was the most peaceful state in the country, considering the international borders around it, and should be given a "peace bonus" by the Centre.

"We have borders with China, Bhutan and Nepal. Bangladesh is also very close. But we are the most peaceful state and the Centre should officially recognise us. Even during the elections, when there was so much violence in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, not even a bird was hurt in Sikkim," Chamling said.

The chief minister added that Sikkim also needed a university and hospitals and urged the Centre to assist the government.

Chamling said he would try to seek investments for his state. He has already met representatives of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and has invited it to visit the state. "A team from the CII will visit Gangtok in the last week of June. We have drawn up a list of priority sectors. We have a 8,000-MW hydel potential and we welcome entrepreneurs ready to harness the potential and convert it to electricity," he said.

2 June 2001

## Chamling seeks better deal for Sikkim

By Our Special Correspondent

KOLKATA, JUNE 1 Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, Sikkim Chief Minister, said today that the BJP-run NDA Government at the Centre should pay adequate attention to Sikkim's development needs.

"The Centre can do a lot more for Sikkim than what it does now. It's sympathetic to its needs but that's about all," he commented.

Mr. Chamling made these observation while addressing a news conference at the Kolkata Press Club. The Chief Minister is currently in the city along with his Cabinet colleagues and officials to attract investments to the Himalayan State.

He said the Centre was "overlooking" the fact that it could, among other things, provide rail and air links, improve communications, build a university and a hospital in Sikkim.

"It (the Centre) is ignoring us perhaps because we have only one Lok Sabha MP from our State," Mr. Chamling said.

Mr. Chamling replied to a host of questions mostly relating to his Government's relationship with the Centre and its efforts to boost tourism and promote horticulture.

He cited yet another instance of the Centre's indifference to Sikkim when he said the Vajpayee Government never considered Sikkim for the peace bonus which it did in the case of Mizoram.

"Sikkim has been the most peaceful State India. I have told the Prime Minister and the Home Minister many a time that a recognition would do wonders to Sikkim's morale," Mr. Chamling said.

During his nearly week-long stay in the city, Mr. Chamling met industrialists and business houses to seek investments in hydel power generation, tourism and infrastructure development. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has assured him that it would send a team to Sikkim shortly to identify areas for investments.

He said the State had 8,000 MW hydel power potential

and it was ready to sign MOUs with any private party keen on developing the Teesta power projects.

The Chief Minister met the Bengal Chief Minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, a few days ago and suggested that since Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan had good hydel potential but little consumption of their own, joint efforts be launched to develop and sell this power.

Mr. Chamling suggested that the two States should work together to promote tourism in North Bengal and Sikkim.

The urged Mr. Bhattacharjee to impress upon the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) Chairman; Mr. Subash Ghising, to keep the national highway, running from Siliguri to Sikkim, out of the purview of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) sponsored bandhs in future.

"I also wrote a letter to Mr. Ghising urging him to see reason. He responded positively," Mr. Chamling said.

3 June 2001

## Chamling wants PM to intervene

OUR CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JUNE 2

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has sought the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's intervention on the safe return of the Karmappa to Rumtek Monastery in Gangtok.

The present Karmappa, now in exile following dispute over his succession, has been undergoing medical treatment in a government medical institute in Himachal Pradesh under strong military security.

Mr. Chamling said, "The people of Sikkim want Karmappa back in Gangtok without any further delay but his fate now lies in the hands of Mr Vajpayee. I have written a number of times to him and Mr L.K. Advani, seeking their help but so far no positive result has emerged.

A section of the people in the monastery had challenged the legitimacy of the Karmappa's claim. It wanted another Karmappa to be in his place. But the Chamling government and others accept his legitimacy.

At Calcutta Press Club last evening, he avoided answering questions relating to Mr Subhas Ghising's demand for

**KARMAPPA  
ISSUE**

Gorkhaland in Darjeeling

He said: "It is a matter where I am no where, but I feel the Centre, the Bengal Government and Mr Ghising should sit together and resolve the Gorkhaland issue."

Mr Chamling has been in Kolkata for the past week along with his Cabinet and other senior government officials in the campaign for "re-building and reshaping a new developed Sikkim".

"I have been assured of positive help and assistance from Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharyya and the state's industrialists and business community for the over all development of our tiny hill state", Mr Chamling said.

The Chief Minister said the Centre had already granted Rs 50 crore for setting up a small airport at Pakyon near Gangtok which would be completed within the next two years. He hoped Sikkim would soon again establish its air-link with Bagdogra.

Mr Chamling said: "Tourism, power, education and health are our priorities and the government will encourage private participation to a large extent for over all development in these sectors."

## The Statesman

4 June 2001

# Chamling asks Centre for peace bonus

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, June 3- The chief minister of Sikkim, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, wants the Centre to pay his state peace bonus for his government's ability to maintain peace and keep insurgent group out of the state.

He has submitted his demand to the Centre so that Sikkim can get additional funds for its development.

"Peace and development go hand in hand and I should get incentives for developing my state as my government has been able to guarantee peace for its people," Mr Chamling told The STATESMAN.

He believes bandhs and strikes are not conducive to growth and development. "That's why I have even suggested to the Centre and Mr Subhas Ghising, chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council to keep National Highway 31 out of the purview of bandhs. This highway is the

lifeline of our state. Hence, it should be kept free from the ambit of agitations such as bandhs," he said.

Mr Chamling has already completed one and a half years of his second consecutive term and his main thrust is on industrialisation and education.

The initiative for industrialisation started in December last year, when Mr Chamling met captains of industry in Delhi and invited them to invest in his state.

Mr Chamling's meeting with representative of Confederation of Indian Industries in the city last week was a continuation of the process of "sustainable development" he has started.

Mr Chamling said: "We are not solely dependent on plan and non-plan allocations. We have sought the help of NGOs, lending institutions and private investors."

A major investment in improving educational opportunities is the Rs 57 crore worth ongoing project of building two polytechnics. Each will admit 500 students. The funds are being provided by the Asian Development Bank. The construction will be completed in two years.

Sikkim has about 1,300 school and colleges where about 150,000 students get enrolled. Education is free from the school to college level. At different stages of school education uniforms, text books and exercise books are distributed free.

The wily chief minister wants to maintain good relations as much with the BJP-led NDA government as with the Left Front government.

"Unlike the Trinamul Congress or the AGP, our party has no electoral alliance with the NDA. yet we support the NDA government from outside. We had good relations with the Congress government at the Centre. We want co-operation from all for the development of our state," he added.

## Assam Tribune

4 June 2001

# Chamling unhappy with NHPC

KOLKATA, June 3- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today welcomed private entrepreneurs for setting up hydel power projects in the Himalayan State, but expressed 'unhappiness' with the National Hydel Power Corporation (NHPC) for not employing the people of Sikkim, reports PTI.

The NHPC, at present constructing the 510-MW Teesta

## Bishops call for 'better shepherding'

GANGTOK, June 5- A bishops conference from the Church of North India (CNI) began here yesterday with a call for a better "shepherding the flocks", reports PTI.

"Much of our time is lost in administrative matter and we could not find, time to shepherd our flock properly as a result of which our sheep are often scattered and lost," the moderator of CNI, ZJ Terome, said while inaugurating the three day annual feature sponsored by the Sikkim Government.

The moderator, who is regarded as the head among all the bishops of CNI, said the conference, being attended by different diocesan heads would deliberate on different religious aspects including a uniform code.

Terome thanked Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling for announcing the accommodation expense for all bishops and their spouses, who came from 26 diocese of the CNI, would be borne by the Sikkim Government.

Speaking on the occasion, the political secretary to the Chief Minister, Menlom Lepcha, said Sikkim was bereft of any incident like burning of churches as witnessed in other parts of the country.

"It is for your blessings, Sikkim is peaceful State and free of insurgency," Lepcha said while paying respects to the bishops and urging them for their prayers for the development.

Lepcha, a former MLA, said Sikkim is the only State in India having an ecclesiastical department under the Government which provides financial help in constructing churches.

Organised by the diocese of eastern Himalaya, the conference was attended by bishops from Delhi, Chandigarh, Amritsar, Patna Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Agra, Maharashtra, Orissia and Madhya Pradesh.

Arterial road link snapped: Sikkim has been cut off from the rest of the world after landslides occurred at a few places between coronation Bridge and Rambli on the national highway 31A, about 32 km from here, Monday night.

Officials said that the convoy of the Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, was routed through Lopchu-Peshak as the debris on the Arterial road linking the State to the rest of the country, 31-A, could not yet be removed, reports PTI.

The first landslides of the year on the region was triggered by incessant rain in the hills during the last 48 hours, the officials said.

hydel project stage five in Sikkim, had flouted 'the spirit' of the MoU signed with the State government by not paying any attention to recruiting 'local', Chamling alleged.

"As per the MoU they were supposed to give employment to locals for the construction work, while they were free to bring skilled labour from outside. But till date, not a single person from Sikkim has got employment," he told PTI in an interview.

"People are unhappy with them. As the peoples' representative, I am also unhappy with them," he said.

Reiterating that the state had a hydel power potential of 800-MW, Chamling said the first six stages of the Teesta project having a total capacity of 3000-MW were in various stages of execution.

"The survey work for all of them are over. Some of them have even received forest and environment clearance."

To make up for the power shortfall in the State, the government had invited a global tender six months ago. Other than the government owned NHPC and NTPC, a number of private parties including Jaiprakash industries and three companies from South India have evinced interest, Chamling said.

Chamling, who has been at the helm of affairs since 1994, said his government was also interested in inviting private companies, particularly on a cooperative basis, for augmenting tea production in the State as the State's only tea garden, Temi Tea, was on the verge of reaching saturation point.

Regretting that so far no business house from outside the State had come forward in this sector, he said only the Sang Martham company had set up a tea production unit in East Sikkim on a cooperative basis.

Chamling said due to lack of resource and land, his government was unable to develop another tea garden which needed at least 2000 acres.

"The defence ministry has 2500 km of land lying idle in Sikkim. I had asked them to release 1000 acres for the purpose but they refused to oblige," he added.

Stressing that his government was striving to ensure an all-round development of Sikkim, the Chief Minister said "we are the only State in the country to have conducted an economic survey for identifying .Below Poverty Level people. The survey report says between 30 to 40 per cent of our people can be garden in the BPL category".

Sikkim, which has 26 per cent of floral and 80 per cent of medicinal plant variety in the country, has also sought the setting up of the National Medicinal Plants Research Institute Chamling said his government had banned despatch of medicinal plants from Sikkim.



# Assam Tribune

9 June 2001

## Sikkim tops as tourist destination in NE

GANGTOK, July 8 - The inflow of foreign tourists in India has registered a six per cent growth this year when 2.7 million visitors from abroad toured the country, Union Tourism Secretary MP Bezbaruah said here recently.

The entry of foreign tourists has fetched US \$3 billion, being the second largest net foreign exchange earner in the country, he told PTI in an interview.

Bezbaruah, who was here on a four-day visit, said domestic tourist traffic in the country stood at 175 million registering a 10 per cent growth from the previous year.

Referring to Sikkim, the Union Tourism Secretary said 15,000 foreign and 2.5 lakh domestic tourists frequented the Himalayan State. Sikkim had the maximum number of tourists in the entire Northeast region.

Replying to a question, the Union Tourism secretary defended the Government decision of 'dual rate' of entry fee at the Taj Mahal.

There is maximum pressure on the world famous monument as almost all out of 2.7 million foreigners visited the Taj besides hordes of domestic tourists. Maintenance is necessary to upkeep it in a good shape, for which funds are required, Bezbaruah said.

The hike for foreign tourists was therefore aimed at mobilising funds as they could afford it. But the increase for domestic visitors was nominal as the Government encouraged and wanted to promote domestic tourist traffic, the Tourism secretary said.

If the rate for domestic tourists was increased, the inflow of traffic would be reduced, he added. Bezbaruah, lauded the 'correct approach' taken by Sikkim by not going in for 'mass tourism' in the State,

"It is important that Sikkim has carefully chosen not to go for mass tourism. If you do not have proper infrastructure, but go for mass tourism, it's prospect suffers, environment bears the brunt and local culture gets diluted," he told PTI.

Now days the developed countries are encouraging different facets of tourism like adventure, ecology, ethnic which people are enjoying more. Sikkim too having a fragile environment, has taken the 'correct approach' by promoting all the aspects of travel trade, Bezbaruah said while lauding the efforts of the Himalayan State.

The other northeastern States should perhaps take a leaf out of Sikkim's example, he said.

The Union secretary, who called on the State's Chief Minister and the Tourism Minister, during his stay here, and discussed various ongoing projects, said funds would not be a 'constraint' for tourism development in Sikkim.

Sikkim has already been sanctioned Rs 6 crore for tourism development in 2000-01.

# The Statesman

9 June 2001

## CHAMLING À LA NAIDU

**Tourism is to one what IT is to the other**

DELUGED with nature's bounty, it is difficult to imagine Sikkim without tourism. If this industry was not fully exploited, it was as much because of a lackadaisical approach as official inaction and apathy. Chief minister Pawan Chamling seems bent on doing with nature-based tourism what Chandrababu Naidu has done with information technology to push his state forward. A 15-year Master Plan has been prepared with the emphasis on eco-tourism, the aim being to employ locals for their economic benefit. It is likely to get a boost after Sikkim hosts the South Asia Regional Conference on ecotourism in November. Unlike in the seven North-eastern states affected by insurgency, conditions in Sikkim are favourable. Improvements have to be made in infrastructure, mostly road communications. An airfield capable of handling Dorniers is coming up at Pakyong, and seven helipads will be added to the existing three. Presently, 50,000 people are engaged in tourism-related activities. Restricted areas are now open to foreign tourists, the inner line permit system has been simplified and the duration of visits extended to 15 days.

Sikkim will do well to incorporate Swedish and American experts' suggestion to encourage adventure tourism as there are many virgin peaks in the state. Luckily, an official in its tourism department has spent several years in Malaysia and Europe selling India and his experience should be an asset. Hospitality is the foundation of tourism and first impressions count. Attention must be paid to ensure no tourists are harassed by taxi and bus drivers at entry points like Bagdogra and New Jalpaiguri.

## Chamling sore over depts' work

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

GANGTOK, June 8 - The Sikkim chief minister has taken a "very serious view" of the "lapses" of some of his government's departments which haven't yet started work on various "time-bound" projects.

Officials said today Mr Pawan Chamling had expressed "extreme displeasure" over the "failure" of some departments to implement the projects for which funds had been provided in the budget.

The chief minister reportedly vent his ire on Tuesday, at a meeting attended by a few of his Cabinet colleagues, chief secretary and some of the senior bureaucrats at his official residence.

Mr Chamling said construction work of all the projects foundation stones of which had been laid earlier, should begin without any further delay and all "time-bound" schemes be completed within the stipulated period. He warned "serious steps" under the service conduct and financial rules, would be taken against the erring officials.

DECCAN HERALD

13 June 2001

## Development stymied by fund constraint

By PRASANTA PAUL

SIKKIM has launched an initiative to augment the infrastructure facilities to make it an attractive investment destination in various sectors. The Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) government headed by Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling which has returned to power for the second consecutive term in December, 1999, appears determined to remove some of the bottlenecks confronting the State in this regard. Mr Chamling has already undertaken a couple of successful visits to New Delhi to draw the attention of the Centre to this backward State and demanded due attention of the Union government for the State's development.

According to the chief minister who was recently in Kolkata as part of his aggressive move to woo investments, the Centre should treat the Himalayan State differently and sanction grants quite liberally for maintaining peace for more than six years at a stretch and keeping the North-East ultras at bay even though the thickly-forested parts of the State could have provided ideal hiding places for them.

The vigilance mounted by the State government has paid enormous dividends, Mr Chamling pointed out, and as such he has submitted a memorandum to the Centre for granting the State what he said 'a peace bonus'. Owing to maintenance of peace in the State, he felt, the government could not undertake developmental programmes; funds constraints have proved to be a major bane, he said.

Prolonged bandhs, strikes and violent incidents have marked the neighbouring Darjeeling Hill region, but Sikkim has hardly witnessed any general strike. "Neither has the SDF government encouraged strikes as they are

not conducive to growth and development, "Mr Chamling argued. But unfortunately, in the event of any untoward incident affecting the Darjeeling Hill region, Sikkim too is affected as traffic along the National Highway 31 A, the lone arterial surface link between the State and the rest of the country, lies crippled. Mr. Chamling has already appealed to the GNLF leader and Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) chairman Subhas Ghising to keep the highway unaffected as besides paralysing the lone link, it causes immense revenue loss to the state.

"This highway is the States' main lifeline and hence, ought to be kept out of all bandh or strike-bound areas," Mr Chamling claimed. In fact, during his meeting with the West Bengal chief minister too, he insisted that Mr Ghising be given due instructions on behalf of the West Bengal government so that the Sikkim-bound vehicles carrying essential items and goods besides passengers are not blocked by agitators when they pass through the highway falling within the Darjeeling region. here is neither rail or air link in the State; the condition of the highway too is far from good as several stretches still remain landslide-prone and with the onset of monsoon, chances of disruption of traffic are high. Mr Chamling has particularly drawn the attention of the Centre to these vagaries of nature, hinting that Sikkim continues to be a State lacking in proper funds flow from the top despite having immense natural resources and tourism prospects.

The chief minister has embarked on a programme of industrialisation and it began in December last year when he met the captains of the industry in New Delhi and urged them to make a fact-finding trip to the state before deciding on investing. During his sojourn in Kolkata too, Mr Chamling hosted a dinner for a galaxy of industrial majors in the city and explained to them his government's resolve to remove all irritants including ensuring availability of land. Mr Chamling who promised that the State government would offer the entrepreneurs land on a long lease, invited them to visit the State at the earliest. Accordingly, a team comprising CII leaders is expected to pay a trip to Gangtok in last week of this month. The chief minister has claimed that the state has enough potential in tourism, hydel power and horticulture.

The hydel power capacity in the Himalayan State is about 8,000 MW and this can be tapped considerably to feed power starved Sikkim and for export to the neighbouring States. Former West Bengal power minister Dr Shankar Sen, who had revolutionised the power scenario of the Left-ruled State, but had to quite following difference with the former chief minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, has been inducted into the Sikkim State Electricity Board as a special advisor. Dr Sen with his experience in the energy sector has been advising the SDF government on ways and means to develop non-conventional sources of power.

Already, a major investment in improving the educational opportunities has been made with an on-going project

worth Rs 57 crore that envisages building of two polytechnic. Funded by the Asian Development Bank, each of the polytechnics to be completed within a couple of years, will admit 500 students. Besides, as part of a comprehensive plan to augment infrastructure, the State has embarked on the work of constructing a small airport at Pakyong in East Sikkim that would facilitate operation of small aircraft. Stating that the airport would be ready by 2003, Mr Chamling said that at the initial phase, it would be maintaining air links with Bagdogra at Siliguri in North Bengal and later, it might arrange more flights to other parts. Recently, the Eleventh Finance Commission has approved Rs 50 crore for construction of the airport and the preliminary work started after selection of a site. Once a regular flight between Pakyong and Bagdogra starts, it will give tremendous boost both to State's tourism and industrial prospects.

## Assam Tribune

9 July 2001

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Sikkim has already been sanctioned Rs 6 crore for tourism development in 2000-01.

# Sikkim all set to usher in industrialisation

GANGTOK, July 8 - Sikkim with its inherent communication bottlenecks terrain, is taking a slew of measures including easing restrictions for land acquisition by "outsiders" to usher in industrialisation in this mountainous State, reports PTI.

Since returning to power for a second term in October 1999, CM Chamling is pursuing a single-point agenda of "development" of the State by creating conditions for industries- congenial for Sikkim's climate and topography.

A 21-member delegation of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) came here earlier this month for threadbare discussions with the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary besides other officials on the prospect of possible investments, has further emboldened this proposition.

Enthused by CII's "positive" response, the Sikkim Government has decided to declare few areas of the State as "industrial belt" and facilitate "single window" system for the convenience of the investors.

"We have decided to declare Rangpo to Ranipool (a stretch of 31 km), Ranipool to Samsa (5 km) areas in

East district and Melli to Legship via Jorethang (nearly 90 km) in South Sikkim district as industrial belt," said.

A "single window" system to complete all formalities for investment within seven days would also be facilitated for the industrialists, the Chief Minister said.

Chamling said his Government had identified hotel, amusement park and ropeway, agro-based horticulture, floriculture sector, high value-low volume precision-oriented industries, information technology, education and related facilities and invited participation in these sectors.

Potentialities of hydro-power, infrastructure development, export of cottage industries products, tea, cardamom and ginger were also discussed with the CII team.

Harsh Neotia, Chairman, CII (eastern region) who led the delegation to Sikkim, while expressing confidence over the State Government's response in the prospects of industrialisation, however, guarded his reaction.

"We shall go back with various suggestions and policies to study those before coming out with concrete investment proposals," said the Director of Gujarat Ambuja Cement Ltd.

For industrialisation in Sikkim, acquisition of land has been a major issue over the years as "outsiders" are not eligible to purchase land and property in the State under an old regulation prevalent from the erstwhile king's regime.

But to keep any land-related problem at bay in the specified industrial belt, the Government is now ready to "relax" norms by giving land to the investors either by a lease deed of 99 years or even by sale, Chamling said.

Sikkim's communication link, especially the fragile National Highway 31A, has always been a "bottleneck" for industrialisation of the Himalayan state.

To overcome this, the government plans to construct 11 helipads in the State by the end of the year. Also an airstrip for small aircrafts 'landing would be ready within 15 months. A technical team from the Union Civil Aviation Ministry would submit its report in this regard to the Chief Minister by this week.

"We have already Rs 50 crore with us for this purpose and if more funds are required we could manage it from other sources," Chamling said.

Keeping in mind the nagging issue of employment, the Government has asked the investors to engaged local manpower and keep Sikkimese interest at the top in their ventures. If necessary, they could also take local businessmen as trade partners.

That Chamling is all for this agenda was evident last year when he led a high-level State delegation to Delhi to meet a host of national and international donor agencies, NGOs and potential investors to invite them to be partners in Sikkim's progress.

But how successful these ventures would be ultimately depends mainly on the State's bureaucrats who actually call the shots here.

# The Telegraph

10 July 2001

CHAMLING CHANTS SMALL  
FAMILY MANTRA

## Late-marriage bonus for Sikkim women

**FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK**

Gangtok, July 9: Marry late and let your money grow.

The new family planning strategy of the Pawan Chamling government promises a bonanza for Sikkimese women. By the Small Family scheme, a girl child is encouraged to delay her marriage in return for monetary rewards.

To make sure that women get a leg-up, the Chamling-led Sikkim Democratic Front has also ensured 33 per cent reservation for them in government jobs and in rural bodies." In Sikkim, I want to raised the lot of the womenfolk on an equal footing with that of their male counterparts," Chamling said.

"Besides making 33 per cent reservation mandatory for women in state government jobs and an equal percentage of women's participation in the rural self-governance, we have devised the Small Family scheme."

The state has also made education free till the graduation level. The state provided free text-books and uniforms to all school-going children. Chamling says his government has started another scheme to "compensate poor rural parents who earlier were reluctant to send their children to school" on the pretext that they were needed to help supplement the family's income.

"We are encouraging these poor parents by making compensations both in cash and kind. They are now being offered jobs in rural development schemes of provided funds under the rural housing scheme in exchange for sending their children to school," he said.

The Small Family scheme aims to break the tradition of early marriage among Sikkimese women. Under the scheme, after a school-going girl turns 13, the state government deposits a sum of Rs 2,500 in a bank and opens an account in her name.

After she passes out of school, the government deposits another Rs 2,000 in her account. Similar amounts are deposited after she passes the 12th standard and completes



her graduation. If the girl marries after 22, she is given a "bonus" of Rs 4,000 and similar amounts accrue for every subsequent year of delayed marriage. There is another bonus of Rs 5,000 if she marries at the age of 25.

"The best part of the scheme is that by delaying their marriage, women are taught to restrict their family to two children. Once this woman attains the age of 50, she is entitled to withdraw the entire amount along with the interest, provided she has two children. Certain deductions will, however, be made if she has more than two children," the chief minister explained. Over 5,000 girls have been included in the scheme.

Chamling also stressed that women are entitled to seek government jobs, 33 per cent of which are reserved for them.

"Women in Sikkim are being encouraged to participate in rural self-governance. We have provided 33 per cent reservation for women candidates in the panchayats. In fact, certain panchayat constituencies have been earmarked for women only," he said.

## INDIA T O D A Y

23 July 2001

# Power and powder-keg

Massive hydel projects planned in high seismic region

The Teesta is to the Sikkimese as oil is to the Sheiks," said Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling to describe its hydel potential. A poet and short-story writer, he may like to revel in similitude, but it is more than just a figure of speech.

Chamling's dream- ever since he assumed office in 1994- to harness the Teesta is finally taking shape. The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) has begun work on a six stage project to produce 3,635 MW from the Sikkim part of the river, which also flows through West Bengal." By harnessing the Teesta we can change the life of the people. It has a prime position in our poverty alleviation programmes," he said." It is no more just a river. It is our hope and our future."

Because of logistics the NHPC has first taken up Stage V of the project in the Dikchu-Sirwani area close to Singtam town. This, when completed in 2007, would MW. Sikkim is to get 12 per cent free, which would cover the state's estimated peak power demand of 60 MW then.

But dams on the Teesta, winding its way through the earthquake-prone Himalayan region, are hardly like oil wells in the Gulf." the entire north-east comes under

zone[the most seismic zone in the country]," said J.R. Kayal, director, central geophysics divisions of the Geological Survey of India in Kolkata. Zone 5 is prone to earthquakes above magnitude of 8 and some of the major quakes in the country have been in this area.

Chief engineer of the project M.M. Madan said the earthquake engineering department of the University of Roorkee was carrying out a survey of the project area. "Seismic design parameters are being incorporated," he said. "This means all civil engineering structures like dam and powerhouse will be high gravity concrete that will remain safe even in a large earthquake." An expert in computerised planning of tunnelling constructions, Madan was involved in projects on the Chamera in Uttar Pradesh, the Rangepet in Sikkim and the Loktak in Manipur.

The Sikkim government and NHPC entered into a power purchase agreement in November 1999 and signed a memorandum of understanding in August 2000, six months after work on the Rs 2,568- crore State V started.

The project is expected to strengthen Sikkim's road network and be a boon to the hospitality industry the reservoirs should make the place all the more picturesque. Besides, the project would generate a number of jobs; even after commissioning it would require 400 employees. Further, one member each from all displaced families will get a job. The NHPC has set aside Rs 5.46 crore for rehabilitation and Rs 2.19 crore for afforestation.

Keen on the state's development, Chamling recently attended a meeting of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in Kolkata. Inviting investors to the state, he later told The Week: "We need high-value low-volume industries such as tourism, horticulture, hydel power, private institutions for higher education and software." He hoped that Sikkim's first airport at Pakyong, 25 km from Gangtok, would be commissioned in 15 months. He is, meanwhile, building seven helipads: the state's only road link. National Highway 31A, passes through the volatile Darjeeling.

While the government claims that the abundance of power will attract investors to the state, environmentalist lament the project will kill the river. Their main fear is about reservoir-induced seismicity. They talk with trepidation about what happened in Koyna in 1967. But these are just minor tremors before Chamling's resolution to build the dams.

Tapash Ganguly

## The Statesman

3 September 2001

# Consider hidden costs, Chamling tells Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GANGTOK, Sept 2. - Sikkim has urged the Centre to consider all "invisible costs" to its economy in providing military, environmental and development-related security before deciding the strategic plan expenditure and revenue budgets.

"Sikkim is the most significant geographical entity that provides comprehensive security to the nation. It provides military, environmental and development related security," chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, said at the NDC meeting in Delhi Yesterday .

Sikkim, a "geo-strategically significant" border state encircled by China, Bhutan and Nepal from three sides, has a "huge concentration" of military forces. It provides the "best of services" in protecting the national security interests, Mr Chamling said.

The physical burden of these forces put "pressure" on land and other natural and manufactured resources, which incur huge development and environmental costs for Sikkim.

The protection of bio-diversity and forward and backward linkages due to it to the entire Himalayan community and the plains land has never been quantified, he said. The chief minister lamented that this was not appreciated in many quarters.

Elaborating on "development-related" security, Mr Chamling said the land-locked and agro-climatic variations in the state made the economic development process very slow and limited.

The limited choice and the constraints in development, compared to the wide range of choice and techniques available to the states, needed to be considered as "opportunity benefit" Sikkim would have to forego. These benefits required to be objectively assessed and accordingly provisions made for compensation, Mr Chamling said.

One way to recognise these services of comprehensive security is to partially supplement the state resources for the upkeep of the hills and the Himalayan region. "We consider this issue very critical for the sustainability of Sikkim, the Sikkimese and the nation as a whole," he said.

## Assam Tribune

9 September 2001

### Centre respects sentiments of Sikkim, says PM

GANGTOK, Sept 8- The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has assured a delegation of Sikkim leaders that nothing would be done by the Centre to "hurt or upset" sentiments of the people of the state, reprints PTI.

Vajpayee said this when a delegation of Sikkim Cabinet ministers and MLAs, led by the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, had called on him in New Delhi last Wednesday to urge him not to implement the Central Income Tax Actm 1961 in the state in deference to the wishes of the people, official sources here said.

Chamling told the Prime Minister that Article 371 F (K), under which the Sikkim Income Tax Manual is protected, is very sensitive and urged him to resolve the issue by maintaining the 'status quo', the sources said.

Chamling suggested that one of the way resolve the issue would be to 'exempt' people having Sikkim Subject Certificates (a special domicile certificate) in the state from the purview of the tax, the sources added.

## The Statesman

19 September 2001

### DREAMS OF PLENTY

But Chamling must contend with bureaucrats

SIKKIM chief minister Pawan Chamling's determination to strengthen economic structures is apparently aimed at securing his own political future. He has many commitments to honour before the next elections due in 2004 and if all goes well, the electorate might even allow him a third term. Since most of the population is rural, the annual budget is tuned to improving their living standards. The decision to treat education as an industry with special emphasis on quality is noteworthy. Soon the state will have its own medical college. The Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology held its first convocation recently. Inflow of revenue is expected through tourism which has been given top priority. Chamling's plea for special funds to the strategically-placed border state to meet "invisible costs" to its economy in providing military, environmental and development related security deserves Delhi's consideration.

But Chamling has problems. Not all his departments share his enthusiasm to complete tasks on hand. His recent anger over the delay or non-implementation of some "time bound" projects, for which funds have already been allotted, is telling. Which points to the fact that despite changes in the administrative apparatus over the past seven years, bureaucrats still remain unresponsive, perpetuating the work culture of the longest serving chief minister, Nar Bahadur Bhandari. Old habits die hard and the practice of accepting largesse will not to broken overnight. Perhaps Chamling needs to concentrate on who and what is queering the pitch.

## Sikkim House adopts resolution on tax laws

The Sikkim Assembly today adopted a private member's resolution to withdraw the notification for extension and enforcement of direct tax laws in Sikkim.

The resolution, moved by the Cabinet Minister, Mr. K. N. Rai, seeks to unanimously endorse the memorandum submitted by the state to the Centre in this regard. It also resolves that the government may submit another memorandum to the Centre asking it not to enforce or implement direct taxes in the state and to review the relevant notifications "in the interests of the people of Sikkim and for achieving emotional integration into the mainstream."

The Income Tax Act, 1961, was enforced in the state in 1989 after both Houses of Parliament approved.

The move was opposed by the Sikkimese as Article 371 F of the Constitution had guaranteed special rights and privileges to the state at the time of merger with India. Since then the issue has been a major one for all political parties including the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, supported the resolution and called for joint efforts to prevent central direct taxes in the state.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, while welcoming the Oppositions' support, placed a fresh memorandum in the House that called for the non implementation of direct taxes in the state.

The memorandum was signed by all MLAs including the Speaker.

The House also decided to send a team to New Delhi on 16 November and submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister and Union home Minister. The team, to be headed by Mr. Pawan Chamling, will comprise all 32 MLAs.

Mr. Pawan Chamling said non-implementation of central direct tax laws in the state is crucial. He said Article 371 F protects the rights and privileges of the Sikkimese and the possibility of the implementation of direct taxes questions the state's special status and identity.

Implementation of direct taxes in the unconstitutional way will dilute the provisions of Article 371 F. ■

## PARTIES CROSS POLITICAL DIVIDE

by **A STAFF REPORTER**

GANGTOK: The touchy issue of the implementation of the Direct Tax Laws in Sikkim that brought down the Sangram Government in 1989 has brought about the meeting of minds in the archrivals Sikkim Democratic Front and Sikkim Sangram Parishad over the two-day session of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

With the judgement on the implementation due any day now, the SSP chief and leader of the opposition, Nar Bahadur Bhandari said that joint discussions should be held to stall its implementation in the state. Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister and head of SDF went a step ahead when he said that there was no time for discussions and a joint delegation from both the parties should leave for New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister and ask them to review the implementation as it would hurt the sentiments the people of Sikkim.

A memorandum was signed by all the MLAs and they are now set to meet the Prime Minister on 17 November. The other resolution that saw acceptance was the raising of the salaries of the ministers, the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and MLAs, with JK Bhandari, SSP MLA asking for a salary higher than that of the Chief Secretary, as it would raise their respect in the eyes of the people.

In the two-day session of 5 and 6 November, the House passed the Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Bill, Sikkim Allotment of House Sites and Construction of Buildings Amendment Bill and Sikkim Ministers, Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly Amendment Bill. The bills had been introduced in the September session.

Among the new bills introduced and passed were the Sikkim Commission for Backward Classes (Amendment) Bill, Sikkim State Commission of Women Bill and Sikkim Sales Tax (Amendment) Bill. In financial business, the Supplementary Demands for Grants and Appropriation Bill was also introduced and passed. A report of the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee was also tabled during the session. Tulsi Pradhan filled up a vacancy in the membership of the Estimates Committee brought about by the resignation of Tseten Tashi Bhutia.

# Sikkim E X P R E S S

10-13 November 2001

## Sikkim Legislature in its Unity Makes a History

All the 32 MLAs of Sikkim Legislative Assembly including the speaker have reached a consensus and signed a memorandum to urge the Union government to refrain from implementation of direct Central taxes in Sikkim. This grand unity forged by the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front headed by the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, and the main opposition party, Sikkim Sangram Parishad headed by the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, made a history in Sikkim Legislature.

The development is viewed by observers as a mark of maturity of democracy in Sikkim and the beginning of an era of cooperation between political parties on issues of collective interest of the state and its people across partylines. As a precedence, the example augers well to be an insurance for political stability and lasting peace in the state.

The historical event took place on Wednesday, November 7, the concluding day of a 2-day session of the Sikkim Legislative Assembly. A cabinet member, Mr. K. N. Rai moved a resolution seeking an unanimous endorsement of a memorandum gives by the state to the Centre, which urges the Union government to withdraw its earlier notification for extension of Central tax laws in Sikkim. The state government argued in the memorandum, it is learnt, that the move tantamounts to watering down the special status and identity of Sikkim, as envisaged in Article 371F of the Indian Constitution. The Article 371F under clause (k) guarantees continuity of all premerger laws of the state, including Sikkim Income Tax Manual 1948, it is noted.

The memorandum further urged the Centre to retract enforcement of the Income Tax Act, 1961, in Sikkim, as intended since 1989. This is necessary for Sikkim's "emotional integration into the mainstream" of the country, it is argued.

As the resolution was moved by Mr. Rai seeking a consensus in the matter, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, leader of the opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad Party supported it. Mr. Bhandari also emphasised on the need for joint efforts to prevent Central direct taxes in the state.

Mr. Chamling, who has often pleaded for a "constructive opposition role" in the state politics, was visibly delighted by this momentous development. He welcomed Opposition's support to reach a consensus in the move mooted by the ruling party and placed a fresh

memorandum in the House which was signed by all members including the speaker, Mrs. Kalawati Subba.

Simultaneously the House also unanimously decided that a team of all 32 MLAs of the state, led by the Chief Minister, will go to Delhi on November 16 to submit the memorandum to the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister.

Addressing the House, Mr. Chamling dealt with what has to be driven home to the government at the Centre regarding sentiments of the people of Sikkim vis-a-vis the Constitutional guarantee in Article 371F, especially under Clause (k) pertaining to sanctity of Sikkim's own laws including the tax laws.

The unity forged in the Sikkim Legislature has already sent a positive signal to the society as a whole. The message of "cooperation along with completion" in the polity of the State is expected by many to have the beneficial effect in further consolidation of peace and harmony in the society here.

"Dignity and cordiality" in transaction of business in Sikkim Assembly, as highlighted in these columns of Sikkim Express in its preceding issue paved the path for the exemplary. Legislature Unity in the state, it is believed. ■



19 November 2001

## Sikkim Team Meets PM, Wants Exemption From Direct Tax

The Centre's plans to enforce the direct tax laws in Sikkim has the state's political scene in a ferment. A delegation of leaders, led by chief minister Pawan Chamling, met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Friday and urged him to review the decision.

The issue, which threatens to snowball into a major source of confrontation between the Centre and the state, has brought all the parties, regardless of their ideological affiliations, together. In an interesting development, Mr. Chamling and his arch-rival, Nar Bahadur Bhandari of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad, have joined hands to compel the Centre to review and withdraw the decision to extend the direct tax laws to the north-eastern state.

The state is currently governed by its own income tax laws. When the state merged with India 26 years ago, it was agreed that the Sikkim Income Tax Manual, 1948, would continue to operate. This was part of the tripartite deal worked out to provide certain constitutional safeguards



to the people of Sikkim.

However, in 1989, the Centre decided to replace the Sikkim Income Tax Manual with the Central Direct Tax laws. "This has created serious apprehensions among the people about the erosion of their local identity," the memorandum submitted by the all-party delegation to the Prime Minister stated.

The issue, according to state tourism and land revenue minister K.T. Gyaltsen, has become an emotive one. It led to the collapse of the Nar Bahadur Bhandari government seven years ago when it tried to enforce the Centre's diktat.

"We're not worried about the extension of central laws to the state," chief minister Chamling, whose party, Sikkim Democratic Front, is a constituent of the NDA, observed. He added: "We're more worried about the violation of Article 371F (k). We want the sanctity of the Constitution to be preserved." According to Mr. Chamling, it was imperative on the Centre's part to review its earlier decision in order to maintain peace in the sensitive border state. "We're not in favour of any confrontation with the Centre. We're optimistic that Mr. Vajpayee will respect the people's sentiments and react positively," he said. ■

## Sikkim E X P R E S S

24-30 November 2001

# On The Issue of Tax Law PM Impressed by Sikkim Unity

An all party delegation of Sikkim led by the chief minister and president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, Mr. Pawan Chamling, accompanied by, among others, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, former Chief Minister and leader of the main opposition, Sikkim Sangram Parishad, met the prime minister. Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee in Delhi on November 16 and submitted a memorandum.

The memorandum, based on an unanimous resolution earlier passed in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly and signed by all the 32 MLAs of the state on November 6, was presented to Mr. Vajpayee in person by Mr. Chamling. In his presentation, Mr. Chamling strongly pleaded for the prime minister's personal attention for a "review/withdrawal of Direct Tax Laws in Sikkim." as urged in the memorandum reflecting the collective wish of the people of Sikkim. Mr. Chamling said that sanctity of the Indian Constitution is important and that enforcement of Central Direct Taxes in Sikkim tantamounts to "violation of Article 371F (k)" which

assures protection of the state's own law as per Sikkim Income Tax Manual of 1948.

Mr. Chamling is believed to have drawn attention of Mr. Vajpayee to item 3 of the memorandum he gave; which reads : "The enforcement of the Direct Tax Laws to (in) Sikkim has become a sensitive issue which has even brought down a government in the past primarily because of the reason that the enforcement went contrary to the safeguards given to the State under the provisions of Article 371F of the Constitution of India and sentiments of the people of Sikkim."

Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari said in a press meet subsequently held here on November 19, that he fully supported the presentation of Mr. Chamling to the Prime Minister. "Chamling told me in the Assembly on November 5 about the resolution to be brought in the House next day and I assured him full support in the interest of the people." Mr. Bhandari told reporters.

Mr. Bhandari said that the prime minister appeared to be "sympathetic and positive" to Sikkim's cause. Mr. Vajpayee said he would need some time to study the memorandum and the related matter, Mr. Bhandari informed. Talking to reporters, the SSP leader expressed his reservations, firstly, about an all party instead of an all legislature memorandum and, secondly, about withdrawal of Sikkim's case from Supreme Court on November 7, without revealing the decision in the State Assembly on November 6. He however said "whatever is done (is) done, as Chamling felt it best." Mr. Bhandari gave the reporters to understand that Mr. Vajpayee was impressed by the unity in Sikkim polity on an issue of public interest. "Something can be expected from him (Mr. Vajpayee)." Mr. Bhandari felt.

Meanwhile, on November 19, the IPR Dy. Director Mr. D.P. Neopaney issued a press release which is purported to be report of the Delhi meet in November 16, (Indian Income Tax and other Direct Taxes for Sikkim) was to be deferred at least by 20 to 30 years" the chief minister told the prime, the release said. The chief minister also said, according to the release. "It was the wish and desire of the common people of Sikkim that they should be allowed to attain a certain economic level comparable to bigger states."

On Wednesday, November 21, an "emergency" press meet was held by SDF at its Deorali party office.

In the meet, mediapersons were briefed by the party chief whip, Mr. K.N. Rai, education and law minister, Mr. R.B. Subba, tourism and land revenue minister, Mr. K.T. Gyaltsen and SDF general secretary, Mr. P.D. Rai. The chief whip informed how the resolution was unanimously passed in the Assembly. According to him, presentation of the memorandum to the prime minister by an all party delegation had an "added advantage". Mr. Gyaltsen and Mr. P.D. Rai were visibly emotional while insisting how "emotional and sensitive" was the tax issue and media role in the matter

Mr. Subba, on the otherhand, factually answered specifics queries as to when and under what circumstances the income tax case of Sikkim was withdrawn from the Apex Court. When asked, whether Central Income Tax in Sikkim would result in State's annual revenue of atleast Rs. 30 crores to benefit the "95% extraordinarily poor" majority of the State. Mr. Subba answered in the dramatic "It may be more than 300 crores". he quipped.

Since 1989, the income tax issue has come a full circle in Sikkim after 12 years. A logical end of it, sooner or later, is expected by all right thinking people of the State.



1-7 December 2001

## Tax Laws Vis-a-vis Constitution CM's Unique Pleading to PM

The people of Sikkim are concerned with the extension of Central tax laws in the State inasmuch as the move amounts to a violation of the Article 371F (k) of the India Constitution to the detriment of the people's faith in the sanctity of the Constitution - the highest law of the land. This was the main thrust of the chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling's unique pleading to the prime minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee in Delhi on November 16, in presence of an all party delegation from Sikkim led by Mr. Chamling.

Upon his return to the state capital, Mr. Chamling briefed the mediapersons in a press meet held at his official residence, Mintokagang, on Wednesday, Nov. 28, Political adviser to CM, Mr. B.B.Goorong, the secretary and the director, IPR, were also present.

Mr. Chamling almost verbatim recalled how he presented to Mr. Vajpayee an all party memorandum along with an unanimous resolution Sikkim Legislative Assembly, passed on Nov. 6 and signed by all the 32 MLAs of the state, including the Speaker and the two members of parliament. Stressing on sanctity of the Constitution, he said, Article 370 for J & K. Article 370A for Nagaland and Article 371F for Sikkim were sacrosanct as instruments of faith of the people. This faith is crucial in a federal State-

Centre relation, he added.

Pointing out the existence of Sikkim Income Tax Manual, 1948. Mr. Chamling argued the Prime Minister to review/withdraw extension/enforcement of Central Income Tax Act 1961 to allay people's apprehension that the Centre is overriding the State's earlier law.

The Prime Minister was satisfied with the presentation and asked time to look into the matter, while assuring that whatever is done will be done in consultation with the state government, keeping in view the larger interest of the people of Sikkim which was close to his heart, Mr. Chamling informed. He also informed that the prime minister was pleased that the state government withdrew the income tax case from the Supreme Court before the all party meeting with him.

Mr. Chamling felt fully assured at the positive and sympathetic response of the prime minister. He described Mr. Vajpayee's government at the Centre as on which "feels for the people everywhere in the country."

### EMOTION & DEVELOPMENT

During discussion with the mediapersons, Mr. Chamling said that the people of Sikkim rightly have an emotion about their erstwhile laws vis-a-vis their identity. However such an emotion should not be over reactive to the detriment of the much needed development of the state, he said He pointed out that Employment Exchange (compulsory notification) of Vacancies Act 1951, was not allowed to be implemented in Sikkim in 1997 by the opposition on the plea of emotion about Art. 371F, while ignoring the interest of the unemployment youth in Sikkim. It is high time, Mr. Chamling said, that the people of Sikkim be given a chance to decide what is good for them.

A public debate in this regard is necessary, the chief minister said, adding, the media should also do its role. Development of the state for creation of employment opportunities would be possible with private investments in Sikkim, he noted, while pointing out the impediments for the prospective investors by way of Land Act. "outsider-insider" sentiment and the like. "What is the point in my bringing investors if I cannot give them land." Mr. Chamling asked.

### POTO NOT FOR MEDIA

Mr. Chamling said, "I agree in principle" on POTO (Prevention of terrorism ordinance), though Sikkim is a "terror-free state," on the condition that it will not apply in case of mediapersons, nor it will be used against opposition. "TADA was clamped on me when I was in the opposition". Mr Chamling recalled, adding, "I won't do that".

### MEDIA SEMINAR

A seminar on media, inviting eminent journalists from outside the state, was enthusiastically proposed by Mr Chamling. He told mediapersons here to go ahead with the plan, while assuring financial support from his side. ■

# Gangtok **TIMES**

3-9 December 2001

## **Article 371F of The Constitution Protects Sikkim's Special Status, It is Our Sacred Duty To Preserve It, says Chamling**

The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, who led an all party delegation to New Delhi and submitted a joint memorandum to the Prime Minister Vajpayee for withdrawal of Central Tax Laws, expressed satisfaction with the warm response from Vajpayee. He also expressed his deep gratitude to the leaders of the Sikkim's political parties, namely Sangram Parishad Chief, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, Congress President, Mr. Namkha Gyaltzen, Sikkim BJP President, Mr. K.C. Pradhan and Sikkim Unit Secretary of CPM, Mr. Anjan Upadhyaya, who signed the memorandum and supported the joint demand urging withdrawal or review of the extension and enforcement of Central Tax Laws in Sikkim.

This important statement was made by Mr. Chamling, while addressing a press conference at Mintokgang yesterday evening, immediately after his return from New Delhi.

In the course of his interaction with the presspersons, the Chief Minister Chamling said, it was the sacred duty of every Sikkimese to protect the unique identity of the Sikkimese people and the sanctity of the Article 371F of the constitution that offers special status to Sikkim as a 'promise' made during the time of Sikkim's merger with India in 1975. "Any violation of the letter and spirit of the Article could lead to unrest in Sikkim," he asserted.

"Our main demand and concern has been protecting the special status of Sikkim and the privilege it enjoys under Article 371F. Any violation of the provision of the Article would amount to violation of the sanctity of the Constitution. We want to avoid that at any cost," he said.

Mr. Chamling said that his government is opposed to the implementation of Direct Tax Laws in Sikkim, as it directly hurts the interests of the people. At the same time, the Government of India had promised to give special status to Sikkim under Article 371F as it had given special status to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution.

Replying to questions posed by the press, Mr. Chamling said that the President of Sikkim Sangram Parishad, Mr. Narbahadur Bhandari, said that he would fully endorse and support whatever the Chief Minister had submitted. Mr.

Bhandari also reminded that in the year 1994, his government was brought down on the same sensitive issue of extension of Central Tax Laws to Sikkim. The President of SPCC (I) Mr. Namkha Gyaltzen said that old laws of Sikkim should be protected. The Secretary of CPM Sikkim Unit, Mr. Anjan Upadhyaya stated that Sikkim's demand to protect its old laws should be sympathetically considered.

When asked about different tune sung by Mr. Narbahadur Bhandari in his press conference, Mr. Pawan Chamling said it was his old habit, and sometimes 'old habit dies hard,' but it will die ultimately.

Mr. Chamling also informed the press that the Prime Minister Vajpayee gave a patient hearing to all the speakers and assured them that the Centre would consider Sikkim's demands and take a final decision after due consultation with the Chief Minister and his government. The Prime Minister also appreciated the bold step taken by the State government to withdraw the Income Tax case from the Supreme Court.

During his stay in New Delhi, the Chief Minister attended the Seventh Council Meet on November 16 and the Chief Ministers' Conference on Internal Security on November 17 where the Chief Minister welcomed the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) and assured the Centre to establish a Special Court to try cases under the provisions of such a law but opposed to establishing a Federal Investigating Agency.

The Chief Minister, accompanied by the Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, his Cabinet Colleagues and Political Advisor and members of Parliament also met the Home minister, L.K. Advani Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, Defence Minister, George Fernandes, North Eastern Region Minister, Arun Shourie, Minister of State Vajay Goel, Law Minister, Arun Jaitley and apprised them of the major demands of Sikkim including the withdrawal of Central Tax Laws in Sikkim. They have all assured the delegation that the demands of Sikkim would be sympathetically considered in the light of changing situations. ■

# **The SIKKIMESE**

5-11 December 2001

## **I am more concern on violation of Article 371 F than tax**

GANGTOK - N.B. Bhandari's statement showing his open disagreement on Government's decision to withdraw 'Income Tax case' might have dampened the spirits of the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling but his enthusiasm for

'solidarity among political parties' has not dwindled.

At a full-house press conference on November 28 on his arrival from New Delhi, Chamling told : "Sikkim has gained from the unity move initiated by us."

Chamling argued that the remark of Bhandari on withdrawal of Supreme Court case amounted to telling that Sangram Party is not interested on joint action.

White Income Tax hog the media limelight, Chamling seems to be more concern on violation of Article 371 F. Chamling told reporters. "It is the duty and obligation of the Parliament to ensure that provisions of the Constitution are not violated and rights of Sikkimese people are protected as per the terms of 'merger'.

Chamling also criticised previous governments for displaying utter disregard to Sikkim's old laws and their indifference towards the extension of 183 Central Acts in Sikkim. "We have only three central acts extended during our tenure". Chamling said.

It remains to be seen whether Bhandari has any tricks up his sleeve to nullify the blow that he and his party have been dealt by Chamling. ■

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 December 2001

### 'Let sentiments not choke progress'

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling called upon the people of the State to make a clear-cut distinction between economic development and emotive issues.

Addressing a press conference on his return from a two week tour of New Delhi at his official residence Mintokgang in Gangtok on Wednesday, Chamling regretted that every time some land is allotted to an investor or an MoU signed, someone files a PIL, thus creating a stumbling block in the path of development. "It is high time people make a choice between overall development of the state and sentimental issue," Chamling said.

However, the Chief Minister was specific about protecting the provisions enshrined in the Constitution and said Article 371F is a sensitive issue & its protection is not only in the interest of the state and its people but the country as a whole. Chamling said that dilution of the provisions of section (k) of the Article, guaranteeing protection of old laws of Sikkim began long time back. Since 1975, 183 Central Tax Laws have been implemented in the state. Of these, only three Central Acts, namely Payment of gratuity Act 1972. Pharmacy Act 1948 and Wages Act 1936 have been implemented during his tenure.

The Chief Minister said although the Central Direct Tax would affect a small group of people including senior

bureaucrats, businessmen and others in the high income group, the issue here is not money but the sentiments of the people and the sanctity of Article 371F (k) which facilitated the merger of the erstwhile Himalayan state with the Indian Union.

"Since we do not subscribe to Central Income Tax, we have been returning the money we received as States share of the Central Income Tax as soon as we receive it," he said, Chamling feared that imposition of Central Direct Tax Laws would have the potential of creating disturbances and law and order problem in the state.

He expressed his gratitude to the Central leadership for the positive response the state received on the Central Direct Tax issue. He also expressed happiness over the cooperation received from all political parties on the issue. Chamling said "This is just the beginning, as I hope to arrive at a consensus on issue involving the interest of the state and its people with all political parties of the State."

However, making a dig at his arch-rival and former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari's recent statement criticising the SDF government for withdrawing the pending case on the Central Income Tax in the Supreme Court, Chamling said that Bhandari contradicted himself had earlier supported the move before the Prime Minister as well as the Assembly. ■

## The Statesman

30 December 2001

### Sikkim Special Status Must be Protected: CM

Nov, 29 - Mr. Pawan Chamling has expressed concern over protection of the unique identity of the Sikkimese people and the sanctity of Article 371F of the Constitution that gives special status to the state. "Any violation of the Article could lead to unrest in the state," he said.

"Our main demand and concern has been protecting the special status of Sikkim and the privileges it enjoys under Article 371F. Any violation of the provisions under the Article would mean violation of the sanctity of the Constitution. We want to avoid that at any cost," the chief minister said at a press conference yesterday.

Mr. Chamling said his government is opposed to the implementation of Central acts, especially the direct tax laws in Sikkim. "Article 371F protects all the old laws of the state and any violation of the provisions of the Article will upset the sentiments of the people of Sikkim."

Mr. Chamling said it was the duty of both the Centre and the state government to ensure the special status given to Sikkim at the time of the merger in 1975 is protected at any cost.



He said 183 central acts have been extended in Sikkim since 1975 and nobody has voiced concern so far.

"The previous governments have kept quiet over this gradual dilution of the special provision provided to us. It is sad that this fact had been overlooked," he said. Only three central acts were implemented during his government's seven year tenure.

Mr. Chamling thanked the Prime Minister and other Central leaders for "understanding" the hopes and aspirations of the people of Sikkim and hoped the Central would respond positively to the state's demand not to implement direct tax laws in the state. He had recently led an all-party delegation to Delhi on the direct tax issue. ■

# Frontline

7 January 2002

## Empowering Women

*Schemes have been launched by the Sikkim government to discourage child marriage, improve women's health and promote female economic independence.*

Women enjoy a special status in Sikkim. There is reservation for them in employment, and seats are reserved for them in panchayati raj bodies. Besides, a variety of schemes have been launched to empower them. There is no discrimination against the girl child in Sikkimese society. Girls and boys are given equal status in the family. Sikkim has no record of female foeticide. Sex-determination tests are unheard of in the State.

In keeping with the importance that Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling's Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) attaches to women's issues, the State government created a separate department of women and child welfare, in May 1995. The government has also launched various schemes for the uplift of women.

The Sikkim government launched the Small Family Scheme and the Widow Remarriage Scheme to tackle the problems of child marriage and to encourage the remarriage of widows. Under the Small Family Scheme, every girl who remains unmarried till the age of 21 is given Rs. 2,500 by the government. Under the widow remarriage scheme every couple falling under the scheme is given Rs. 10,000. In its attempt to promote social equality, the government has made it compulsory to indicate the name of the mother in the school and other official records of a child. It believes that this small measure will go a long way towards changing the very psyche of the male-dominated society.

The Central government-sponsored Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and Nutrition Scheme work towards improving the health of children and pregnant women. Facilities provided under these schemes include

supplementary nutrition, immunisation, regular health check-ups and referral services. In the case of the Mahila Samridhi Yojna, another Centrally sponsored scheme, Sikkim has achieved 100 percent of the target. In appreciation of this, the Government of India gave it an additional grant of Rs. 1.75 lakhs. This scheme aims at promoting thrift amongst women, and under it women receive 25 percent interest on their savings. In order to help women achieve economic Independence, the government runs schemes that provide financial assistance to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that undertake training programmes for women in income-generating work.

The Centrally sponsored Indira Mahila Yojna was launched in 1995 with the aim of achieving economic empowerment for women. The highlight of the scheme is that it encourages women to organise themselves in groups according to their socioeconomic status. The structure created in this manner also includes women representatives from the panchayat level. This structure helps the government to identify potential beneficiaries for its various schemes. The NGOs are involved in the processes of group formation and facilitation, and the rest of the activities are performed by the group itself.

Small group of women are organised in every anganwadi area in selected blocks. These groups from Indira Mahila Kendras (IMKs) at the anganwadi level. The representatives from the IMKs form the Indira Mahila Block Society at the block level. At the village level the IMK identifies issues that require the community and the government's intervention, the needs of the women of the village, and the government scheme that will meet those needs. The IMK also works for awareness generation in the group and for individual members, and takes up the problems with the local administration.

The Small Family Scheme, which works for the uplift of the girl child, was launched in April 1997. At the age of 13, all girls are registered under this scheme and provided with Rs. 2,500. This amount is deposited in an interest-bearing account in a bank for a fixed period of eight years. The scheme encourages adolescent girls to delay their marriages until they are 21 years of age when they are given a cash benefit of Rs. 2,000 each. If a girl further delays her marriage to the age of 22 and 23 years, she is given a further incentive of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 respectively. Couples are also encouraged to delay the first pregnancy and maintain a sufficient gap of time before the second.

The government is not just concentrating on rural women. Equal emphasis is put on educating and providing better employment opportunities to urban and educated women. Thirty percent of government jobs have been reserved for women. In the political field, 33 percent of the seats in panchayati raj bodies have been reserved for women. ■

# The blueprint for development

The Government of Sikkim has begun the process of initiating several policy reforms on the basis of the recommendations made in the Sikkim Human Development Report (SHDR). The report is the result of a joint initiative involving the Government of Sikkim, the Planning Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Sikkim became the third State in the country to release such a report on September 5 last year.

On March 26, Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling inaugurated a consultative meeting, which was attended by officials of the Planning Commission, the UNDP and the State government and representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), for deliberations on a policy framework based on the recommendations of the report. At the meeting, Chamling said: "The implementation of the recommendations of the report is a challenging task. This is because these recommendations are a major deviation from our past policies and practices. They also require a new set of approaches, tools and resources. The most crucial factors in the implementation of these recommendations, of course, are social commitment, political consensus and political will. I can assure you that we have all these factors in place today in the State."

While most of the SHDR recommendations have been welcomed by people involved in policy making in the State, sections of the report relating to education have led to some debate. According to the report, the ills of the education sector include a high dropout rate, teacher absenteeism and poor results in examinations. The high dropout rate has generated a debate within the government. The author of the report, Dr. Mahendra P. Lama of Jawaharlal Nehru University, maintains that the dropout rate is rising among schoolchildren in Sikkim. He says that it is more so in the case of girls.

Speaking to Frontline, Dr. Lama said: "There is no exact figure available. One way to check this is to see the involvement ratio in different stages in schools. This would give an idea of the (number of) missing pupils. From the information that I have, this gap has been increasing over the years, particularly with reference to girls." He warns that if this is the case, it will make capacity building difficult and lead to a growth in the number of youth who are unskilled and just about educated. According to him, the implications would be much more adverse for the female workforce. "There is a growing tendency in Sikkimese society to get women married at a young age. The high dropout rate of girls could be complementing this," he said.

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The State Education Department, however, maintains that student dropout rates are not increasing in Sikkim. In this regard, much confusion was caused when the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) sent a letter to the Sikkim government asking it to explain the increase in the number of dropouts over the past one decade. According to the Ministry's calculations, the figure was 79 percent. It was later revealed that the HRD Ministry had calculated the gross dropout rate. What it did was to subtract the number of students who passed out of school from the student enrolment figures. It failed to take repeaters into account. "This was a jarring mistake. Repeaters cannot be considered dropouts. The calculations only reveal gross dropout rates, which do not reflect the literacy levels," said a senior official of the Education Department.

The HRD Ministry has sent the State government a new formula for compiling stage-wise data so that it can calculate the dropout rate anew. A sample survey conducted by the Education Department in East district has also revealed that the picture is not as dismal as the HRD Ministry would have one believe. The survey, which was conducted in 40 schools out of the total 232 in the district, showed that the dropout rate did not exceed 20 percent.

While Dr. Lama said that more girls dropped out of schools, the State Education Department and the school principal emphasised that this was not the case. The SHDR also mentions that the spread of education is slow among girls in Sikkim. It gives poverty, social customs, negative parental attitudes, poor accessibility of schools and the non-availability of schools with women teachers as the reasons for this. These reasons are, however, refuted by the principals and the Education Department. Said the principal of the West Point Senior Secondary School, S.N. Mishra: "Girls are never discriminated against in Sikkim, especially so in the field of education. There is no disparity when it comes to enrolling boys and girls in schools." The vice-principal of the Paljor Namgyal Girls Senior Secondary School, Gangtok, C. Gyatso, agrees with this, saying: "There is no discrimination when it comes to education. Parents are as enthusiastic to get their girl child educated as they are in the case of boys."

Chief Minister Chamling has come up with a set of measures to ensure that employment is generated within the State. "It is a myth that there is lack of employment generated within the State. It is a myth that there is lack of employment opportunities in Sikkim," he said. He explained that the problem is that most of State's educated youth want the security of a white collar job. "There is a limit to the number of people that can be accommodated

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in the State administration," he pointed out. What education for all has done is to decrease the prospect of children going into agriculture. Chamling said: "We are trying to make agriculture in attractive field for generating employment by introducing technology. Those who are educated are being told that they should update their mechanical skills and use technology in agricultural activities. Besides, we are stressing on people setting up businesses of their own. Loans are being given to the educated youth to set up workshops."

The SHDR emphasises the need to set up institutes that will train students who pass out of schools in fields such as information technology, accountancy, medicine, business management, rural development and tourism. The report emphasises that the demand for specialised management personnel will increase with the growing complexity and size of industrial establishments and other tertiary sector activities such as tourism and trade.

Although the State government is yet to work out an exact figure for the rate of unemployment for the current year, it has started working towards creating jobs for the educated unemployed. According to census data, between 1981 and 1991 the absolute number of workers increased from 153,000 to 169,000 while the percentage of workers in the total population decreased from 48.4 to 41.7, which is among the highest levels of decline in India. The percentage of non-workers in the total population recorded an increase of 6.7 percentage points. "Work opportunities in Sikkim are precarious. This has an adverse impact on women, who in 1991 represented nearly 38 percent of the workforce, as against the national average of 20 percent states the SHDR.

The government is now planning to set up educational institutes that will impart technical education to those who have completed their school education. "Every district should have at least two polytechnics. This would definitely lead to more students joining them after completing their school education," said Mishra.

"Until now the trend has been that the bright students would move into fields such as engineering and medicine and other would look for jobs in the government sector. White collar jobs in the government sector have reached saturation point, so the State is working towards creating jobs in the sectors of farming, ecotourism and technical education," said S.W. Tenzing, Chief Secretary.

In his address to the Assembly at the opening of its budget session, Governor Kedar Nath Sahni laid stress on vocationalising education. "This orientation in our policy will result not only in the industrial sector but also in increasing productivity in the farm sector through better adoption of technological changes in agriculture and animal husbandry practices."

There is a growing awareness on the need to raise the level of social science research in the State. The SHDR has

zeroed in on the lack of concern shown by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and national social science bodies such as the Indian Council of Social Science Research and the Indian Council of Historical Research in either starting postgraduate courses in Sikkim or supporting research related to Sikkim. It also suggests encouraging existing institutes, such as the Sikkim Institute of Tibetology, to promote research in Buddhism and the Tibetan language.

Guided by the SHDR, the State government is reflecting on the need to target subsidies in the education sector. Besides not having to pay for their tuition, pupils get free textbooks, exercise books, uniforms and a daily midday meal from pre-primary school up to class five. All this has resulted in high literacy levels. It has also removed the line of distinction between those who cannot afford to pay for education and those who can.

The SHDR states that "the general impression is that the standard of education has gone down as education has become a free public good." It points to the trend of private schools coming up in the last few years. The success of the private schools is an indication of the fact that the quality and standard of education in the public sector are not commensurate with the expectations of parents. On this basis the SHDR concludes that there is a need to rationalise the structure of the education system.

As a result of this, the State government has cut down on its aid to some of the private schools. Said Gyatso: "After the State government reduced our aid, we increased the school fee. As a result of this, more than 100 children between class six and nine left the school."

The SHDR has generated debates in the education sector in Sikkim. Its utility has thus been realised by the State government. ■

## The Statesman

4 March 2002

### Chamling resigns as SDF president

#### Statesman New Service

NAMCHI (South Sikkim). March 5. - Chief Minister of Sikkim Mr Pawan Chamling resigned as the president of the Sikkim Democratic Front during the convention of the party here today.

Mr Chamling, the founder president of the party, had earlier dissolved the central executive committee of the party. He later renominated all members of the committee to their previous posts.

The convention also adopted a 23-point resolution

which, Mr Chamling said, would “press forward the agenda of the party”. Mr Chamling said his government would look into the agenda this year, 2002 having been declared as the Year of Implementation by the party.

Two heavyweights of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee(I), Mr Somnath Poudyal and Mr MB Dahal, joined the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front yesterday which has further consolidated the SDF’s position in Sikkim.

The move is perceived as a significant one since both leaders belong to the upper class Newar-Bahun-Chhetri castes and have considerable grass root support.

In the previous elections it has been noticed that the NBC group has traditionally voted against SDF candidates.

According to analysts, this has given a boost to the Chamling government and also effectively dashed hopes of former Chief Minister Mr Nar Bahadur Bhandari’s chances of staging a comeback by mustering support from NBC leaders.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 March 2002

# Chamling warns of ultras’ presence

**HT Correspondent**

**Namchi (South Sikkim), Mar 7**

SIKKIM CHIEF Minister Pawan Chamling today took credit for bringing development to the State and said his Government would crack down on extremist elements coming in the way of progress.

Chamling was addressing the Sikkim Democratic Front’s first decadal celebrations. He was unanimously re-elected the party president and a new executive committee was formed.

Chamling said the unity of the country was under threat from secessionist forces being instigated by not external elements but individuals back home. He indirectly accused former Chief Minister Nar Bahadur Bhandari of inciting extremist outfits. He said Bhandari is yet to come clean on whether he supports Sikkim being a part of India.

Chamling said the people have reposed faith in the Government which must defeat the insurgent forces. The Chief Minister said in the present context, Sikkim couldn’t remain oblivious to the rising threats posed by these forces. “Our proximity to Nepal, where the Maoists are active could cause problems if they were to gain a foothold here,” he said.

“We will give tribal status to other communities; the right of Bhutias, Lepchas of Sikkimise origin will be protected. The Nepali community could also be included in the other backward class list,” a senior party leader also said at the function.

## THE SUNDAY TIMES

10 March 2002

MEET THE FIDEL CASTRO OF THE EASTERN WORLD

# From mid-day to sunset

**Ronojoy Sen**

GANGTOK: Fidel Castro addressed his nation for seven hours after he grabbed power in Cuba in 1959. Nobel Prize winning author Gabriel Garcia Marquez had then called it a world record. Marquez was probably unaware the Strom Thurmond, the legendary senator from South Carolina, apparently spoke for 24 hours and 18 minutes while debating the 1957 Civil Rights Act on the floor of the US Senate.

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling might not yet be in Castro or Thurmond’s league, but he is getting there if the length of his public speeches is any yardstick. Chamling spoke without a break for five hours at a public function in Namchi - the district headquarters of south Sikkim as well as the chief minister’s hometown- earlier this week. The occasion was the tenth anniversary of the founding of Chamling’s party, the Sikkim Democratic Front.

When Chamling began his speech in Nepali slightly before 1 pm the sun was beating down on the gathering at the Baichung stadium in Namchi. By the time he was through, at around 6 pm, the sun had long since dipped behind the mountains surrounding the town and a chilly wind was buffeting the town.

While Chamling ploughed through his speech, the assembled ministers, MPs, MLAs and other VIPs on the main stage were well provided. There were endless cups of tea being brewed backstage and different type of savouries were regularly doing the rounds.

The colourful and remarkably young crowd - according to the state administration 45,000 people or nearly an eighth of Sikkim’s population had turned up -also adapted remarkably well to the situation. While some of them made themselves comfortable in and around the stadium, others strolled around the town giving it a carnival-like atmosphere. Television sets in Namchi’s stores and hotels beamed Chamling’s speech live.

For the record, Chamling proposed 23 resolutions including freeing Sikkim from poverty and illiteracy. He also stepped down as party president only to be re-elected unanimously. How much of all that percolated to the audience



is debatable . Karma Gyatso, a PWD worker from north Sikkim who was accompanied by two wives, said he “enjoyed” Chamling speech .His wives nodded in agreement . Dipa Sharma, from the western part of the state, could only say the chief minister had referred to women in his speech. “I can’t remember the details,” Sharma, who has studied till class X, confessed.

A senior SDF official admitted that Chamling likes to give long speeches .”But the chief minister excelled himself today since this was a special occasion,” he said. In the same, breath he added that the Chamling’s predecessor and arch-rival Nar Bahadur Bhandari had once given a speech that lasted over eight hours. For the time being, Chamling has some way to before he catches up with either Bhandari or Thurmond.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

12 March 2002

### Chamling SDF chief for third time

GANGTOK: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling has been unanimously renominated president of ruling Sikkim Democratic Front for the third time in a row after he dissolved the party’s central executive committee.

Chamling, who had established the party in 1993 was renominated its president for another term of five years in the just-held convention at south Sikkim’s Namchi town to commemorate the first decadal anniversary of the outfit, SDF sources said on Monday.(PTI)

## The Statesman

24 March 2002

### Chamling presents deficit budget

#### STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GANGTOK, March 23.- Chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling today presented a Rs 79 lakh -deficit budget for 2002-2003 in the Assembly.

The total expenditure proposed for the fiscal 2002-2003 is Rs 2,939.83 crore, comprising Rs 350 crore under Plan and Rs 1,484.82 crore under non-Plan account. The total receipt has been projected at Rs 2,939.05 crore and total disbursement at Rs 2,939.83 crore, with a deficit of Rs 79 lakh.

The budget has projected a marked increase in the state’s

revenue collection target at 126.04 crore, comprising Rs 67.63 crore from net tax revenue and Rs 58.41 crore from non-tax revenue sources, excluding the state’s share of sharable taxes from the Centre.

The state’s own resources for financing the annual Plan size of Rs 350 crore has been projected at Rs 23.66 crore. Mr Chamling, who also holds the finance portfolio, expressed hope of achieving these through vigorous implementation of fiscals reforms.

The total expenditure proposed in the budget also comprises centrally sponsored schemes at Rs 83.51 crore, non-lapsable pool of Rs 69.58 crore, accelerated power development programme of Rs 5.40 crore and public account of Rs 943.52 crore. Mr Chamling claimed that over the Ninth Plan period his government had sustained a growth rate of 8.04 per cent of the state’s gross domestic product at constant prices. The state government has been successful in scaling down the government guarantee against loans with the objective of avoiding contingent liability.

For this purpose, a ceiling loan limit for loan (guarantee) has been fixed. As a part of the state government’s fiscal reforms efforts, it has been decide to limit the expenditure to seven per cent and increasing revenue receipt to 15 per cent annually till the end of the Tenth Plan.

In the Tenth Plan, the state’s growth rate has been targeted at 10 per cent per annum. In order to achieve this, Mr Chamling outlined a number strategies.

They include: allocating adequate financial resources in core areas such as agriculture and allied sectors, power, communication, education, health tourism and industry; pruning the inefficient sectors; instituting an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of Plan projects; strengthening and consolidating the mechanism for the delivery of goods and services; strengthening the revenue administration and broadening the tax base for mobilising resources for the state’s development and exploiting funds for development under the dispensation of externally allied projects.

## THE HINDU

24 March 2002

### SDF promises better life for Sikkimese

#### By Pratim Ranjan Bose

KOLKATA , MARCH 23. Namchi has never seen anything like this. The hometown of the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, the hill station was barely able to accommodate the beeline of cars, ferrying several thousands sympathisers, mostly in the age group of 18 to 30,

from all across the State to the open session of the 'First Decadal Convention' of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF).on March 4.

Traffic came to a standstill on the narrow hilly tracks leading to Namchi. And, when the party president, Mr Chamling, rose to address the gathering at 1 p.m, a larger number of his followers was still on the long march to the venue.

The three-day convention began on March 2, with an aim to review the party's guiding principles and ethics. Besides recounting its "journey to restore democracy" by replacing the Narbahadur Bhandari- led Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) from power in December, 1994, the convention set into motion a "purification drive of the party cadres at all levels" a SDF communique, said.

The closed sessions on March 2 and 3 adopted 23 resolutions "to ensure a better life for the Sikkimese" by way of all-round economic growth and prosperity, alleviation of poverty and economic disparity, empowering women and others.

The current year was declared as "The Implementation Year". Emphasis was given on ensuring "peace and tranquillity" and enforcing a higher degree of "emotional integration" of the people of the 22nd Indian State with the rest of the country.

Considered the most peaceful State (amidst widespread unrest in the whole of the northeast), Sikkim is worried about possible attempts to disturb the peace.

"Intelligence reports suggest that secessionist forces from the State have joined hands with the Maoists in Nepal," Mr. Chamling said. He blamed the Opposition SSP for fuelling such sentiments.

The Government effected decentralisation of power by holding the two-tier panchayat elections, with 33 per cent seats reserved for women, in 1997. It is now planning to hold the municipal elections along with the next panchayat elections in September.

"Beginning 2002-2003 we will spend 10 per cent of the budgetary allocation through panchayats," the Chief Minister said, adding that "it will be stepped up to 30 per cent in the next five years".

The State Planning Commission has already been up and the economic survey conducted. Sikkim is also the fourth State to bring out a human development report in September 2001.

Lok Adalats have been constituted in all nine subdivisions along with the setting up of atrocity courts, courts for human rights and family courts.

To bring the whole State under the e-governance project, 40 community information centres with 2 MBPS bandwidth connection have been constructed. The centres are expected to be operational soon with hardware and software support from the Union Communications Ministry.

To reach the target of 85 per cent literacy rate during the Tenth Plan (from the existing 69 per cent), education

up to college is free and "primary education has been taken up from the door step".

The student population from pre-primary to the higher secondary level has gone up to 1.39 lakh .

Apart from the general higher education facilities, the State Government had recently set up two polytechnics, managed by the Nettur Technical Training, Foundation of Bangalore, in South Sikkim.

The Pai Foundation of Manipal has set up one engineering college and a medical college hospital at Rangpo and Gangtok respectively .

But for the natural stress on tourism, which will receive a further boost if the Hyatt Regency group sets up the first five star hotel and the commercial airport comes up near Gangtok, the State is focussed on creating adequate infrastructure to attract industry.

The maximum stress is on the power sector. With the 60 MW Ranjit Hydel project already put into operation; the 510 MW Teesta Stage-V is under construction by the NHPC and a number of new projects yet to come up, the State will be a net exporter of power by 2007. "We will earn no less than Rs. 40 crores by selling power", Mr Chamling said.

The net State domestic product has growth by 12 per cent annually from a negative growth rate (-2.43 per cent) in 1994-95. The per capita income has gone up from -5.79 per cent to a healthy 7.12 per cent in 1999-2000. Add, according to the Chief Minister, the state's financial position which was on the verge of bankruptcy, has also been put on a stronger foundation, free from the burden of huge overdrafts and payments failure.

Sikkim is today on the growth path. But, the State has its problems too. First, in the bureaucracy. Inherited from the monarchical past, only a few bureaucrats are from then Indian Administrative Services .

"Half the bureaucrats are yet to accept the democratic process, resulting in a delay in the implementation of Government policies," Mr , Chamling said.

And, when the administration does not work, the Chief Minister pitches in with the needful." People come straight to the CM's residence even for a polythene sheet or for a grant of Rs.100!" Mr. Chamling has also made it a practice to address their problems personally . And, so he did even at Namchi.

## The Statesman

31 March 2002

### Budget push to Sikkim reforms

GANGTOK, March 30. - The Sikkim Legislative Assembly today unanimously passed the Budget for 2002-

'03.

Presenting the CAG report in the House today, chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling said, with Sikkim getting Rs 4,453 per capita central assistance, second in the North-East only to Arunachal Pradesh, his government has already started second-generation economic reforms, stressing on rural and economic development, along with revenue generation schemes.

Continuing with the state's rural housing scheme, that provides a grant of Rs 20,000 per construction to the poor, Mr Chamling said the government will now provide free LPG to 200 poor rural households per constituency .

The chief minister also announced, that with effect from 1 April 2002, the power tariff will be cut down by 50 per cent in rural areas. Plan assistance has been fixed at Rs 350 crore this year. Funds from the pool as well as Border Area Development Project are now available . The chief minister said the administration has to ensure monitoring of projects.

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 April 2002

# 'Sikkim on its way to becoming first poverty-free state in India'

By Aditya Ghosh  
Times News Network

KOLKATA: Even though Chandrababu Naidu continues to be India's most techno-savvy chief minister, Sikkim is beating all Indian states hands down by being on its way to become first ever poverty free state in the country, claims a latest UNDP report.

UNDP has also recognised his efforts as 'global best practice' in "sustainable human development with an exemplary track record in the conservation of bio-diversity and impressive progress in human development."

Chief minister of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling's achievements has also won him a unique distinction . Recently he was declared as the 'greenest' chief minister in the country by Centre for Science & Environment (CSE).

"Chamling has spearheaded the movement for human development in the state by committing himself and the state apparatus to the challenging task of human development reporting in the state," the report claimed.

"Sikkim's commitment to sustainable human development and environmental preservation can be a model," said the report.

According to UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative in India, Brenda Gael MC Sweeney, "A thrust on sustainable livelihood together with a finely-

balanced eco-friendly development were essential to ensure that Sikkim remains as successful model of human development. As we prepare for the world summit for social development (WSSD), these and other issues are upfront on the global agenda."

"Significant and consistent gains in human development of the state, with some of the lowest infant mortality and child malnutrition rates and high literacy achievements in the whole country clearly suggests that Sikkim is poised to become India's first poverty-free state." claimed the advisor to the Union Planning Commission, Rohini Nayyar.

For his contribution towards sustainable development maintaining an ecological balance, Chamling was selected ahead of all the chief minister in the country in an opinion poll conducted by the CSE as 'Greenest chief minister' recently. According to the report, Chamling's administration had already implemented six major recommendations made by major recommendations made by the Sikkim Human Development Report (HDR), launched by the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in September 2001.

"These included setting up the state planning commission, targeting food subsidies on only the poorest sections of the society, conducting comprehensive household surveys to determine the exact nature and extent of poverty and income disparity in the State," the report claimed.

The report also lauds Chamling for ensuring greater involvement of the non-governmental sector in goods and service delivery to people at the grassroots, aiming at alleviation of poverty.

One of the two major achievements of Chamling, the report claims, was to encourage greater private sector participation in development sectors and making an effort to improve the quality of education. The other achievement, claims the report, was rapid advancement in gender-equitable development with sharply-reduced gender disparities in most spheres of human development.

## Assam Tribune

29 April 2002

# Inexperience, negative bureaucracy bane for cooperatives: Chamling

GANGTOK, April 28 - Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling Sunday attributed inexperience in running cooperative and negative bureaucracy as the two major factors for the failure of cooperative movement in the State, reports PTI.

"Inexperienced people cannot take advantage of the of the cooperative movement as they think it to be govern-

ment job. Also a negative bureaucracy from a section of the officials is not helping it to flourish," Chamling said here after inauguration a week-long exhibition organised by a group of cooperative societies.

The Chief Minister said the State government announced 2002 as the cooperative year to send out a message to the public to form societies and take advantage of various schemes. But people were not forthcoming, he said.

Even if someone was interested, the bureaucracy was not helping them too, Chamling said.

The government, he said, took a decision to put price preference in all local cooperative products in the State to give an encouragement. "Rupees 18 crore has been earmarked for giving interest-free loan to the unemployed youths in the state for starting some livelihood options" Chamling said.

Social Welfare minister O T Lepcha said this sort of exhibition, organised by the State Social Welfare Advisory Board, would give a filling to local handicrafts and help employment generation of youths.

## The Statesman

10 May 2002

### Land of Mystic splendour

SIKKIM joins with the rest of the country and the world in this International Year of Mountains 2002 to promote the conservation and sustainable development of mountain regions. The tiny Himalayan State of Sikkim is in fact an abode of a number of sacred mountains. We have Mt. Kanchenjunga (28,208ft), Mt. Narsing (19,111ft) Mt. Gabur Gangtsen (24,075ft), Mt. Pandim (21,658), Mt. Goecha (20,100ft), Forkpeak (20,382ft), Mt. Pao Hungri (23,180ft) and Mt. Siniolchu (22,609 ft) which are some of the main sacred Peaks in Sikkim among several Peaks and Passes located all over the States. In addition to these mountains Sikkim also has a number of sacred caves, rocks (naydo), lakes, stupas and hot springs. It may be mentioned here that the State Government has banned the scaling of identified sacred Peaks and also defilement of the sacred caves, sacred rocks, sacred lakes, stupas and sacred hot spring with a view to protect them under the Provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provision) Act, 1991.

Sikkim, bounded by Bhutan in the east, Tibet in the north, Nepal in the West and the State of West Bengal in the South, is a mountainous State famous for its enchanting natural beauty and many varieties of flora and fauna .

Situated under the world's third highest mountain, the majestic Mt. Kanchenjunga, Sikkim, with a population of 5.40 lacs and covering an area of 7096 sq. kms. is a veritable treasure house of lovers of Nature.

The beauty of Sikkim is unsurpassed. Amidst the grandeur of the mountain peaks, lush valley, fast flowing rivers, terraced hills, Sikkim, the erstwhile Himalaya kingdom which first became the protectorate of India in 1950 and then the full-fledged State on India after its merger with the Union in 1974, offers her visitors a rare and singular experience. With the opening of a number, of restricted areas in the State and relaxation of inner line permit system the flow of visitors and tourists, both from within and outside the country, has gone up considerably.

It goes without saying that Sikkim has incomparable range of flora and fauna. The terraced farmlands have rice, maize and barley as the main crops. Other crops like ginger, potatoes and oranges are also grown. One of the chief cash crops of the State is large cardamom. The jungles in the South District teem with plantains, bamboo, tree ferns, walnut, sal and oak, while the North abounds in Pine and Silver Fir,

Sikkim's orchids are world-famous as the State has more than 450 species of them. The colours range from the richest to the palest in species as varied as Cymbidiums, Vandas, Cattleyas, Dendrobiums, Hooheriana, Farmeri and Amoneum. The State flower is the Nobile orchid of the Dendrobium family.

There are also about 36 species of rhododendrons in Sikkim found at heights of 10,000 ft. Their variety is as diverse as the sizes and colours.

Sikkim has more than 500 species of avifauna ranging from the majestic Bearded Vulture with a wing-span of over 10 ft to the Olive Ground Warbler, just a few inches in length. Other delightful species include the Emerald Dove, woodpeckers, cockoos, kingfishers, and the fairy blue bird. Even the seemingly Himalayan desert landscape in the North has a plethora of wild ducks and wild asses that roam in the plains.

Sikkim also has more than 600 species of Butterflies many of them rare and endangered. The forests resound to the bark of the Barking Deer which shares its habitat with the adorable little Red Panda (also the state animal), the musk deer, leopard cats, and flying squirrels to name a few. The higher regions have Blue Sheep known commonly as the Bharal, the Shapi which is similar to the Himalayan Tahar, the Tibetan Wild Ass, locally known as the Kyang and the Himalayan Black Bear.

The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front Government headed by the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, which is running in its second term in the office, has spared no effort to bring about an all-round political, social and economic development of Sikkim laying particular emphasis on improving the lot of the under-privileged and vulnerable sections of our society by initiating a number of pov-



erty- alleviation and welfare schemes. Consequently, significant achievements have been made in different field of development activities in the State.

Literacy level in the development activities in the State. Literacy level in the State has gone up by 70% while drop-out rate in various schools have come down. Medical facilities have considerably been improved and Sikkim today has one of the best rural health care infrastructures in the country. Land is being provided to landless and homeless and the quality and the living standards of the people of rural areas have significantly improved. Sikkim has already occupied a place in the world map of tourism and the flow of tourism visiting Sikkim both from within and outside the country has increased manifold. Similarly, Government functionaries including the daily wage earners of Sikkim are one of the best paid Government employees in the country.

HIMALAYAN

**Weekend**

REVIEW

16 May 2002



## *CM hauls officials over hot coals*

by A STAFF REPORTER

GANGTOK: It was evident from the recent transfers of officials that Chief Minister Pawan Chamling is very unhappy with the way the administration has been functioning for the past few years. Transfers apart, those in the higher echelons of administration were anticipating trouble with too many projects standing incomplete, despite the Chief Minister's repeated warnings to complete these on time. And the inevitable happened.

In the coordination meeting held at Tashiling on May 1, the CM lashed out against the departments and has asked the officials responsible for implementing projects to speed up or else face action. He has issued strict directions to all Head of Departments (HODs) in this regard, and said that the coordination meeting will be held on the first week of every month. Incidentally, the last such meeting had been held as late as 28 September last year.

The CM was distressed that none of the projects initiated over the past seven-and-half years had the genuine people's interest in mind. Henceforth, all projects and schemes were to be 'people-centric, result oriented and beneficial to the general masses' who were the 'main target group' of developmental activities.

Reminding officials that 2002 has been declared 'year

of implementation', the CM asked all HODs to obtain, within May this year, administrative approvals and financial sanctions for all the schemes projects for the current financial year, so that these could be implemented within the stipulated time. This way, claimed the CM, "There will neither be requirement for supplementary surrender surplus money."

The CM also directed the Planning and Finance departments to clear all departmental files within a week, and if there were any objections on some particular proposals, these were to be taken up at one go, and not piecemeal. Those departments which are yet to transfer 10 per cent of their budget to the Panchayats have been directed to do so without further delay.

✘ **Roads to be completed on time and well**

✘ **All projects to be in the interest of the people**

✘ **Delay and quality compromise will not tolerated**

✘ **Coordination meeting to take stock of progress every month**

✘ **The guilty and the inefficient will be penalised**

Incompletion of certain projects has irked the CM. He took a particularly serious view of long pending projects, like the construction of the Panchayat Guest House in West Sikkim and the Rabongchu Hydroelectric projects in North Sikkim. He remarked that the construction of these minor projects had begun nearly eight years ago, and yet their completion seemed to be a far cry. He added that year after year, supplementary grants were being asked for, and this comprised the only activity on these projects.

The other projects he had in mind was the construction of the banquet hall near the Sikkim legislative assembly at Nam Nang. He has directed the Public Works Department to speed up the construction, adding that compromise on quality would not be acceptable.

Warning those responsible for the delay would be made 'accountable and taken to task', the CM cautioned departments having pending works to complete them on a priority basis.

The Road and Bridges Department, which had been hauled over hot coal in the last Assembly sittings, also faced the CM's wrath. He was displeased over the sub-standard carpeting work executed on Dentam Road, and has asked the department to 'penalise the engineer and contractor responsible for squandering public money'.

Roads apart, the CM was also unhappy to see the 'pathetic condition' of the toilet at the Melli Check Post, and the 'shabbily dressed' government employees of the Ani-

mal Husbandry Department, Melli, and the way they presented themselves before the Chief Minister of the state.

The meet chaired by the CM was also attended by the former Chief Secretary (CS) and Advisor to the government, Sonam Wangdi, the present Chief Secretary S W Tenzing, IAS, Director General of Police R K Handa, IPS, and all Principal Secretaries and HODs.

The CS in his address thanked the CM for convening the meeting and also expressed his happiness over the sound financial position of the state and marked achievements made in different field of development activities.

## The Statesman

15 July 2002

# PUPA TO BUTTERFLY

## Importance of Being Chamling

by *J.B. Lama*

The one blot in the political career of Pawan Kumar Chamling was his dismissal as industries minister in the Nar Bahadur Bhandari Cabinet in June 1992 for allegedly dabbling in communal politics. However, that turned out to be a blessing in disguise, but for which he would not be occupying Mintokgang today, official residence of Sikkim's Chief Minister.

Chamling spent the first punishing nine months organising and launching the Sikkim Democratic Front and equal time establishing a hold in the rural areas, drawing support from the Other Backward Classes for the November 1994 assembly elections. He did not topple his political mentor and guru, but he did create an anti-Bhandari wave which eventually overwhelmed that charismatic leader and put paid to his pretensions of being among with longest serving chief ministers, like Jyoti Basu and Gegong Apang of Arunachal Pradesh.

### Political Motive

For all intents and purposes, Bhandari was a dictator even if, for more than a decade, he portrayed a facade of unity and cohesion in his ruling Sikkim Sangram Parishad. Dissidence was muted, Chamling among the detractors. Many in the ministry despised Bhandari's authoritarian style of functioning and his total disregard for democratic values, but no one was prepared to bell the cat.

Then an opportune moment presented itself. In Parliament in May 1994, Union finance minister Manmohan Singh withdrew the proposal in the Finance Bill, which sought income-tax exemption for the Bhutia-

Lepcha communities. Sikkim's original inhabitants. Amid an opposition uproar, Dr. Singh informed the House that the inclusion of the special provision as well as the Bill's withdrawal, was at Bhandari's behest. Apparently, Bhandari belatedly realised the political implications of excluding the Nepalese of Sikkiimese origin and tried to make amends by demanding either tax exemption for all the three communities or withdrawal of the Bill.

Though Dr. Singh denied any intention to harm the Bhandari government, there obviously was a political motive underlying the Congress government's under haste because Sikkim was going to the polls later that year. The Bill could have been introduced earlier as the issue was hanging fire since 1989. Moreover, even if the Bill had passed, the two communities would enjoy the benefits only from the following year. It is common knowledge that although the Bhutia-Lepcha communities constitute only 25 percent of Sikkim's population, they wield considerable influence in state politics. And exemption for one section would have created communal disharmony.

Outraged by Bhandari's double-dealing, several tribal ministers deserted him. His own party legislators, headed by Sanchaman Limboo, formed the breakaway SSP(S) and challenged Bhandari's authority. In the trial of strength that followed, Bhandari had to eat humble pie. For his own self-interest, Limboo later merged his party with the Congress before the November 1994 assembly elections.

### Thorny issue

By this time, Chamling had established himself as a leader in his own right. His fledgling SDF contested the elections for the first time and won 19 of the 32 assembly seats. The SSP with 10 legislators remained a party to reckon with, but lost credibility when six of them, mostly Bhutia-Lepcha legislators, formed a splinter group and sided with Chamling. However, for fear of attracting the anti-defection law, the merger with the SDF was delayed by 18 months. Despite his unassailable position, Chamling felt "exposed" throughout his first term because his ministry had only four ministers from the Bhutia-Lepcha community, but in the October 1999 assembly elections he came screaming back, consolidating his position by securing as many as 24 seats.

The controversy over the payment of Central income-tax by Sikkimese citizens remains a thorny issue. Extended to the state in 1989, the Central law is yet to be implemented. The need for it arose because after Sikkim's merger with the Indian Union in 1975 the state became a safe haven for outsiders to launder illgotten gains. To some extent, the Sikkimese must blame themselves for encouraging this malpractice and incurring Delhi's wrath. Where Bhandari initially opposed the extension, the Chamling government challenged the validity of the Income-Tax Act 1961 and wanted retention of the Sikkim Income Tax Manual, 1948, under which most citizens pay taxes.

There is good reason why the Manual should remain. First by extending the law to Sikkim the Centre has gone against the letter and spirit of the special provisions in Article 371F (k) which clearly states that "notwithstanding anything in the constitution in force immediately before the appointed day in the territories comprised in the state of Sikkim or any part thereof laws shall continue in force until amended or repealed by a competent legislature or other competent authority."

The Centre has not reacted to Chamling's appeal for tax exemption but a cannot keep quiet for very much longer. According to come wags, even if the income-tax law becomes effective there will be more tax collectors than tax payers! The Bhutia-Lepchas are also sore about the Centre's silence over their 23 years old demand for the restoration of reserved seats for them and Nepalese of Sikkimese origin. They also resent being grouped with the Sherpas, a tribe with a different cultures and of dissimilar descent. They feel the political rights they enjoyed under the Chogyal should not be taken away. Before the 1973 Tripartite Agreement, the Chogyal treated all his subjects equally Fifteen seats were reserved for Bhutia-Lepchas in the 32 member House and some for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin.

#### **Protecting identity**

After 38 percent of the state's population was declared tribal in 1978, the next year an Ordinance reduced the number of reserved seats for Bhutia-Lepchas to 12 Reservations for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin were abolished. As a matter of fact, Scheduled Tribes can also contest from 12 reserved constituencies.

The Sikkimese expect the ruling SDF to ensure their long standing demands are met. Reservation is important to protect their distinctive identity, given the unabated influx from outside. The rise in Chamling's popularity graph will depend on his convincing the Centre. Sikkim's population has risen from 115,000 during Chogyal rule to more than 500,000. Infiltration has been a live issue since 1979 but no government has been able to check it. Significantly, the 1979 Ordinance allows people from other parts of the country to enroll as voters. Old time politicians fear the day is not far when outsiders will swamp the indigenous Sikkimese, that a time will come when, as in Assam, outsiders will have the say in state politics.

Chamling's major contribution was to restore democracy and ensure freedom of expression and the press. Committed to eradicating corruption and poverty, in his first term he concentrated on cleansing the administration and creating a proper work culture, in the process acquiring more enemies than friends. When his government promised to provide a roof over every citizen, a square mean for every family and education, health and social justice for everyone, the people dismissed it all as a rag-bag of electoral gimmickry and would be shelved soon after ministers were installed. For Chamling, the task of building "a new Sikkim,

a happy Sikkim has not been easy, but at least he is making a variant effort to translate his dreams into reality. What, perhaps, is needed is not just one Chamling but more. ■

## **The Statesman**

25 July 2002

### **Lottery Winner gets Rs. 8.61 crore**

Winner of Playwin Sikkim Super Lotto Jackpot, Mr. Bimal Gajmer, today received a cheque of Rs. 8.61 crore from the Sikkim Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling, here today.

"Now my dreams of starting a few hotels, improving upon my house-cum-hotel and helping the needy would be realised," Mr. Gajmer told reporters on receiving the cheque. He intends to donate a part of this amount to a school for blind in Sikkim. Not a regular lottery player, Gajmer, 35, said he decided to purchase a ticket "since the entire process is transparent."

Mr. Chamling said when he took oath as the chief minister, he decided to increase Sikkim's revenue for the development works. Since the proposal of playwin games was in the interest of the state, he accepted the proposal. The state government would receive 20 percent of the revenue from the online lottery, he said.

Playwin Infravest CEO, Mr. Sanjay Das, meanwhile, said the company would create many firsts in the country, building on the success of the lottery. "We are launching many new games for the three governments we have tied up with," he said, adding the new game will be introduced in Karnataka from 15 August.

New Delhi, July 24 A four member delegation, led by the chief minister, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, is to undertake a one day trip to London tomorrow to sign the "Delhi-London Friendship Agreement." The other members of the delegation include, Congress legislator, Mr. Rajesh Jain, secretary, urban development, Mr. Arun Mathur, and the chief minister's secretary, Mrs. Renu Sharma. - SNS ■

## **THE HINDU**

26 July 2002

### **School Golden Jubilee**

The Vidya Bharati Shiksha Sansthan celebrated its golden jubilee anniversary here yesterday at Shah Auditorium. The Rashtriya Sawayamsewak Sangh Chief, K.C.Sudarshan, inaugurated the celebrations.

The Minister of Human Resource Development, Murli Manohar Joshi, and the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, were present on the occasion. Mr. Sudarshan pointed out the ill effects of English Education on Indian society and urged students to study Sanskrit and Hindi. He also felt that English should not be a compulsory subject in schools.

Dr. Joshi said Indian students must be aware of the contribution of their ancestors in various subjects like science, Mathematics and textiles. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 July 2002

# NE Facilities for Sikkim

**New Delhi :** Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling called on deputy prime minister LK Advani on Friday and requested him to extend facilities enjoyed by the other North-east states to Sikkim as a special case, pending the passing of the restructuring of the North-east Council Bill in Parliament. In this connection he mentioned the facilities of North-east states are being enjoyed by All India Officers in Sikkim.

Although, the Government of India has extended all financial assistance to Sikkim as other NE States, Sikkim could not get other benefits like ten years exemption of all Central and State taxes with subsidies in different heads. These benefit are enjoyed by Assam and Tripura.

As Sikkim is the most peaceful state in the region without any insurgency activity, many enquiries have come from investors for eco-friendly industries and tourism sector. Companies in the IT industry like CII, FICCI and several Chamber of Commerce, have show keen business interest.

But, as the investors are not getting any Central tax exemption and subsidy they are eagerly waiting for the extension of North East Industrial Policy to Sikkim.

Chamling also pleaded for deferring extension of Income Tax and Direct Tax Act in Sikkim, which they are enjoying since 1975. According to him this will create instability in the state and the Central tax collection will be negligible.

Advani has assured the CM, that he will look into the matters immediately.

Chamling also asked for the restoration of full quota of 20 medical seats in different medical colleges of the country, which has been reduced to 10 by a recent Central Government order. He asked for reimbursement of the Hill Transport Subsidy from Food Corporation of India (FCI) of Rs. 3 crore. ■

## The Statesman

28 July 2002

# AGAINST THE ODDS

But Chamling is going for broke

For more than two years after assuming office in November 1994 Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling pleaded for a Rs. 3,000 crore economic package but Delhi remained unmoved. It also ignored his repeated requests to waive a Rs. 400 crore loan as "a goodwill gesture." He desperately needed funds to liquidate the heavy debts inherited from his predecessor. Delhi's silence hardened Chamling's resolve to mobilise resources. An austerity drive helped. Then he convinced Delhi to accept Sikkim as a member of the North Eastern Council, although the state is not contiguous to the region. However, Chamling is not out of the woods yet; this year's Budget showed a deficit of Rs. 79 lakh. But it is to his credit that employees in Sikkim get paid on the first day of the month.

Things should look up with the first ever Sikkim on-line weekly lottery becoming an instant hit all over India. It is a regular source of income and Chamling expects Rs. 35 crore by the end of this year, which he hopes to invest in improving health care and the quality of education. Sikkim has already met the national norm of one public health centre for every 20,000 people, the literacy rate is up at 56, schools are within walkin distance, an engineering and technological institution is functional, as is a medical college. Impressive, but more jobs need to be created to beat unemployment. And Chamling's drive to persist in the face of financial stringency is reflective of how the tough get going when the going gets tough. ■

## THE HINDU

18 August 2002

# Sikkim's Novel Day Gift

To keep deforestation and pollution level at bay in the eco-fragic Himalayan State, the Sikkim Government has introduced a novel scheme of giving 6,000 free cooking gas connections all over the State. The Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling launched the State rural energy programme costing over Rs. 1.68 crore to the Government on Independence Day by distributing LPG connections to four beneficiaries. ■



# Assam Tribune

19 August 2002

## Last Respects Paid to Vinod Pradhan

Body of ruling Sikkim Democratic Front general secretary, Vinod Pradhan, who died of cancer in Delhi Friday, reached the party head office here as a number of dignitaries paid their last respects to the leader, reports PTI.

Chief Minister and SDF president Pawan Chamling received the body at the Deorali party office amidst a constant downpour.

He placed a 'Khada' (traditional scarf) on the body by offering his respect - which was followed by almost all his Cabinet Ministers, party functionaries and chairman of state undertakings.

Earlier, ministers from the state and senior leaders of SDF accompanied Pradhan's body from the Bagdogra airport.

The body would be kept in the party office till Sunday when it would likely be taken to south district for funeral ceremony, SDF sources said.

Pradhan (38), SDF general secretary (publicity) and president of Sikkim Cricket Association, died of bonemarrow cancer at the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Hospital in Delhi Friday after suffering for a long time.

A literary figure, Pradhan was also the political secretary of the Chief Minister during SDF's first tenure. ■

## Free LPG Scheme in Sikkim

To keep deforestation and pollution level at bay in the eco-fragile Himalayan State. Sikkim Government has introduced a novel scheme of giving 6000 free cooking gas connections all over the State, reports.

The State rural energy programme, costing over Rs. 1.68 crore fully funded by Sikkim Government, was launched by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on the Independence Day by distributing LPG connections to four beneficiaries.

## HIMTAB meet opened

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today called for a 'balancing act' between Nepal's model of open tourism and Bhutan's restricted for an optimum benefit in the travel trade sector.

Inaugurating the 11th meeting of the Himalayan Tourism Advisory Board (HIMTAB), Chamling said we should maintain a balance between the two neighbouring

Himalayan kingdoms.

Chamling also asked the Himtab to look into the aspects of South-Asian 'growth quadrangle' with the promotion of tourism in the entire region involving Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.

Himtab, established by the union tourism ministry in 1987 to promote and formulate tourism policies in the Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, hilly region of Uttar Pradesh (now Uttaranchal), Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Darjeeling hill areas of West Bengal, acts as an advisory board. ■

# The Telegraph

31 August 2002

## Meaning of his words

Sir -

The Sikkim state government has taken serious note of the offensive headline of the report, "Chamling pays lip service to pet them" (Aug. 6), filed by Pema Leyda Shangaderpa. The headline and the phrase, "slogans that he has been mouthing," were not only in bad taste, but they also imply that the chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, was not sincere when he called upon his officers to generate more revenues and make genuine endeavours to transform Sikkim into a self-reliant state. Or does the headline really mean to say that the chief minister was not sincere when he urged his officers to generate more revenue and make the state self-reliant? If yes, then on what basis did **The Telegraph** reach this conclusion?

The chief minister is a sincere and committed leader who means what he says. It is through his repeated exhortations to his officers that our economic growth rate has reached an all time high, the literacy rate has shot up to 70 percent; the prosperity and all round development that has taken place in the state are there for all to see. Directives of the Central government are promptly complied with the Centrally sponsored schemes are faithfully executed. Similarly, a number of people-oriented and welfare schemes are implemented. Sikkim, despite being situated on a very sensitive border, is today the most peaceful state in the country. This is the manifestation of the dynamic leadership of Chamling and his genuine concern for the state's welfare and his allegiance to the Union.

To belittle such achievements of a young state by using offensive words like "mouthing" his "pet slogans" and giving irresponsible headlines to an otherwise fine report is not expected from a reputed newspaper like The Telegraph.

Also, the Lepcha festival, Tendong Lho-Rum-Faat, was celebrated on August 8, not August 7 as reported. The sweeping statement in the last paragraph of the report,

wilfully establishing one community as being outnum-  
bered by two other ethnic communities, is also unfair.

Yours faithfully

*P. Thondup,*

Director Info, and Public Relations Deptt.

Government of Sikkim, Gangtok. ■

## The Statesman

11 September 2002

### Karnataka firm to take over two stages of Teesta hydel project

GANGTOK, Sept. 10.-The Sikkim government seems all set to hand over two of the six stages of the Teesta Hydro Power Project to Karnataka Power Corporation Limited. The KPCL has been given the go-ahead by the state government for all intent and purpose.

The State Cabinet, which met on 26 August at Tashiling secretariat, approved the proposal of the state power department seeking approval for the implementation of Teesta Stages IV and VI Hydro Power projects through the consortium of M/s Karnataka Power Corporation Limited, owned by the Karnataka Government, and M/s Karnataka Power Corporation Limited, owned by the Karnataka Government, and M/s APTIL in Build, Own and Operate arrangement.

The Cabinet has given its consent to the department to issue Letter of Intent for the two Teesta Projects. Earlier, the state government had floated international tenders for Stages IV and VI.

Earlier, KPCL, along with consortium partner M/s ATPIL, had announced that it has "bagged" the Teesta IV (495 MW) and Teesta VI (360 MW) hydel projects. This was described as a "major breakthrough for the KPCL's consultancy wing since it met with success in international competitive bidding in its maiden attempt." It had further said that the KPCL's role would be to provide toral turnkey consultancy with the right to take minority equity stake."

The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, had said that his government was "ready to tap the full hydro power potential of the Teesta River and would award the rest of the Project Stages (I, II, III, IV and VI) to any competent party, including the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation." The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation was already involved with the Stage V Teesta Project and Rangeet hydel power project. ■

HIMALAYAN

## Weekend

REVIEW

11 September 2002

### SDF Needs Discipline: Poll Eve Warnings

With the Panchayat elections coming up on October 9, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) is almost firm to put up candidates in all the 903 gram panchayat words, offering "first preference" to the active SDF members, who are involved in "service to the grassroots" and 33 percent reservation for women.

Senior party leaders said that the members who were with Chief Minister Pawan Chamling during the 1994 assembly elections in the state and are still continuing with their dedicated works, deserved maximum opportunity to contest the elections under the party's banner.

The leadership is little perturbed with the "indiscipline" that persists among the members, to the extent of them shifting from one party to another on the issue of getting party tickets for contesting elections.

"SDF lacks in discipline. If one is denied the party ticket, he or she would join another party to find a place," they said, adding that in this panchayat elections, on party member would be allowed to contest as independent candidate, "as this ultimately will lead to a fight among the party members only."

To prevent Independent candidates in the forth-coming panchayat elections, the SDF leadership resolved that "no one (from the party) can contest independently, until and unless they resign from the party or expelled. Any one violating the party stricture will be expelled immediately.

Taking strong note of ground realities, the CM said that the party members should not look for opportunities all the time, but concentrate more on party works, which would enable them to "offer the state a fair and stable government.

In fact, the panchayat elections here are being considered important for it being the main indicator to the assembly elections that is to follow after two years. Here the ruling party has come out with a clear-cut strategy to fight the political warfare on the basis of larger commitments to the panchayats.

A party manifesto, which was released by the CM on 8 September, emphasised that all government decisions would be taken after due consultation with the voice of the people into the main stream of thinking when it comes to taking decisions for rural development."

The general grievance of the people here is "centralised power system" which deters the development process of rural areas. The rural areas and even the district headquarters suffer from "centralised functioning" of the state government, for which, the authorities feel many development projects are stuck and "there is no timely execution."

Taking this into account, Chamling said that in every gram panchayat and ward, the panchayats would be empowered to decide on the plans as well as to implement and maintain them. For good quality and timely execution of the same, all public works up to Rs. five lakh are now being decided and executed by the panchayats in village and ward level. "This will be further raised to Rs. 10 lakh and will be done on the recommendation of gram sabhas." the CM said.

He also said that 10 percent of state government's budget has been accorded to the panchayats to strengthen the villages and village people. "This will be further raised to 30 percent in due course," he assured, with a strong note to the panchayats to be more careful and matured while handling and utilising government's fund.

Mean while, the CM said that for the people from outside Sikkim, a cut-off year is being thought of, so that any bonafide citizen of the state, even if he or she is from other state of India, would be offered similar opportunities as that of any indigenous Sikkimese. ■

## *The Sentinel*

11 September 2002

### ■ **Sikkim Govt to set up herbal gardens**

GANGTOK, Sept 10 (PTI): Sikkim Government will set up 13 herbal gardens with Central help as 424 medicinal plants have been identified out of 1200 species available, official sources said here today.

The decision was taken here in the first meeting of Sikkim Medicinal Plants Board chaired by its president Chief Minister Pawan Chamling yesterday, the sources said.

Out of the 13 gardens, three each would be set up in North, East and West districts and four in the South district, the sources said.

Chamling addressing the meeting asked forest officials and NGOs to carry out research to identify the rest of the medicinal plants species in the State. Besides, awareness among people on the usefulness of the medicinal herbs should be created.

The Board, set up by the Government recently, has the Forest Minister and senior officials from the Forest department among other as its members.

## Assam Tribune

11 September 2002

### ■ **13 herbal gardens to be set up in Sikkim**

GANGTOK, Sept 10- Sikkim Government will set up 13 herbal gardens with Central help as 424 medicinal plants have been identified out of 1200 species available, official sources said here on Tuesday, reprints PTI.

The decision was taken here at the first meeting of Sikkim Medicinal Plants Board chaired by its president Chief Minister Pawan Chamling the sources said.

Out of the 13 gardens, three each would be set up in North, East and West districts and four in the South districts, the sources said.

Chamling, addressing the meeting, asked forest official and NGOs to carry out research to identify the rest of the medicinal plants species in the State.

## The Statesman

13 September 2002

### ■ **Sikkim sets up Medicinal Plants Board**

#### Statesman News Service

GANGTOK, Sept. 12- The Sikkim government recently formed Medicinal Plants Board, headed by the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, to protect its medicinal plants evolve a strategy for commercial utilisation and to check smuggling.

The board met for the first time on 9 September at Tashiling Secretariat here under the chairmanship of Mr Chamling and passed a Rs-1.25-lakh Budget to set up 13 herbal gardens across the state.

There are more than, 1,200 species of medicinal plant in the state. Out of which only 424 species have been properly identified and documented. The chief minister has stressed on the need for proper documentation of all available medicinal plants species.

The focus should be on creating awareness among people, especially at village levels, Mr Chamling said. The board will go for tie-up with reputed companies for mar-

keting its products.

To stop smuggling of medicinal plants and its products, the forest department has been asked to formulate stricter.

The panchayats have been directed to maintain records of medicinal plants variants in their respective villages.

Sikkim is known for its of traditional medicines. The practices have a strong base in the socio-religious system in the state.

But very little attention has been given to the importance of intellectual property rights of the indigenous people whose traditional knowledge has often been the source of products introduced into international markets.

Also, clandestine smuggling of medicinal plants has been going on for quite some time now.

Experts are of the opinion that unless something can be done to protect the resources, the state might face sever problem. The need is to develop a strategy to explore medicinal plants wealth, find out effective method of propagation, encourage sustainable harvesting of plants from the forests, involve small farmers and communities in their cultivation and conduct phyto-chemical pharmacological and pharmacognostic studies on the commercially exploitable species.

Experts believe that scientific awareness can bring about a transformation in the socio-economic profile of the state.

Sikkim has the potential to become a major supplier of "crude drugs" for the pharmaceutical industry.

## The Statesman

16 September 2002

### Education tops Chamling govt's priorities

Development in the educational sector tops his government's list of priorities, said Sikkim's chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, yesterday.

The chief minister was addressing the second convocation of the Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical & Technological Sciences at the campus of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT).

The Governor, Mr. Kidar Nath Sahani, who is also the chancellor of the university, presided over the convocation.

Mr. Chamling, the guest-of-honour, said: "Creation of this university, catering to higher education in technological and medical sciences, is in harmony with the policy objectives of the government with regard to human resources development."

The government would be providing unstinted support to the university, he said. "Sikkim is devoid of law and

order problems. So, development in the educational sector tops the state's priorities," said Mr. Chamling.

The university came into being in April 1996, after the Assembly enacted the Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and technological Sciences Act, following an agreement between the Manipal Pai Foundation and the state government.

The Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, the first engineering college in the state, was established in 1996-97 with the approval of the All India Council for Technical Education. The first batch of the SMIT passed out last year.

Mr. Chamling said his government's vision and philosophy is addressed to facilitating participative governance in trust areas - human resource development, ecological and environmental conservation and preservation of culture and tradition. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 September 2002

### Sikkim BJP disagree with Bhandari

Gangtok : Despite the Sikkim state BJP ad-hoc committee's proposal for its own dissolution in favour of Sikkim Sangram Parishad leader Nar Bahadur Bhandari as state BJP president, the party's central committee would prefer its continuation, led by state party president K.C. Pradhan.

This was announced by BJP vice-president Pyarelal Khandelwal, after two days of hectic consultation with state leaders to resess the party's position in the tiny Himalayan state.

Khandelwal said that Bhandari had earlier given a proposal to party president Venkaiah Naidu to join the BJP. Bhandari has given two proposals to merge with the BJP, or to co-ordinate with the party from outside.

Khandelwal emphasised that the move would not affect the BJP's relation with Sikkim's ruling SDF, which is a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance. "To strengthen its organisation, it is not immoral for the BJP to merge with some otherparty," he said.

An example, he cited the case of Tamil nadu, where chief minister Jayalalitha and opposition DMK leader Karunanidhi are both supporting the NDA government. "We are not taken any decision yet about the induction of Mr. Bhandari. We are referring this to the party high command."

Khandelwal confessed that so far the party has not received any complaints about economic irregularities or corruption charges against the SDF government. "We do not wish to disturb our friendly alliance with the ruling



party." It is reliably known that Khandelwal had a talk with state chief minister Pawan Chamling.

Chamling has welcomed BJP's initiative to expand their activities in Sikkim. "As a national party, they have a right to expand their organisation in Sikkim. We have no clash with BJP in this regard." he said. Rather, he said that his party would expend a helping hand to the BJP. ■

## The Statesman

18 September 2002

### Chamling wakes up to poor health care

GANGTOK, Sept, 17-At a time when the state government is emphasizing on health care as a priority sector, the sorry state of some primary health centres in remote areas have come as a rude awakening to the Chamling government.

The chief minister was in for a shock when he visited two PHCs in the East district. Mr. Pawan Chamling made an unscheduled stopover at Rhenock and Rongli towns on 14 September afternoon and visited the PHCs. What greeted him was negligence and indifference of the staff, "revolting and nauseating" in Mr. Chamling's words. The toilets were "filthy beyond imagination" and the places resembled an uninhabited ramshackle.

The ceilings were cracked and leaking at various places, while the electricity lines were missing. The medical officer's quarters at Rhenock PHC was uninhabited and in a state of "total neglect." Two nonfunctional ambulances were parked in front of the Rongli PHC. They had not been used for many years. The mattresses in the words used by the patients were torn and the food for the patients are not fit for human consumption, Mr. Chamling said. None on the staff was present when Mr. Chamling visited the Rhenock PHC. At Rongli, he could meet only a nurse and a wardboy.

Fazed by what he saw, the chief minister ordered the health department to renovate the PHCs immediately.

He also asked the health authorities to take action against those responsible for the upkeep of the PHCs. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 September 2002

### Sikkim health centres shock Chamling

Gangtok : Chief minister Pawan Chamling has expressed shock and dismay over the "pathetic and appalling"

conditions of two primary health centres (PHCs) in the state.

In an "unscheduled" visit to Rongli and Rhenock PHCs on Saturday, Chamling found their condition "revolting and nauseating" with the toilets "filthy beyond imagination," and their surroundings "literally in a mess," an official release said on Wednesday. None of the staff, including the doctor, were present during his visit to Rhenock PHC except for a nurse and a wardboy.

While expressing his extreme displeasure over the sorry state of affairs at the two PHCs, the chief minister directed the health department to take up immediate improvement work and asked the authorities to take "punitive action" against those responsible for the "wretched condition" of the PHCs, the release added. ■

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 October 2002

### Sikkim CM on child rights

SIKKIM CHIEF Minister Pawan Chamling has called for protection of children's rights and said his Government aimed at eradicating the child labour from the State.

"We are saddened to see many children working in tea estates, restaurants, pups etc. It is more disheartening when the influential and well-to-do families engage children as domestic helps. And we have to see that the human rights of the kids are protected," Chamling said on Sunday at the inauguration of a hostel for destitute tribal children. But the government alone could not little in this regard without people's participation.

"Let us hope all children of Sikkim get education, health, food and enjoy their rights," he said.

PTI, Marchak

### Chamling calls for switch to manure

*HT Correspondent  
Gangtok, December 9*

THE SIKKIM Government has decided to frame a policy to free the State of agro-chemicals.

Encouraged by international movements against the wanton use of pesticides and other agro-chemicals in paddy fields, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has called upon people to switch to organic manure instead of harmful chemicals.

He said the Government plans to formulate a policy soon against the use of chemicals, which not only affect

human beings, but also livestock and waterbodies.

Research conducted by the Kolkata-based NGO Centre for Sustainable Living (CPCB) recently revealed that pesticides used in the tea gardens of Darjeeling cause deformities in children.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has said the streams and rivers in Darjeeling Kurseong and Siliguri show a dangerously high content of pesticides .

Chief Minister Chamling has already earned a name for being all for protection of environment and termed as the "Greenest Chief Minister of India" by the Centre for Science and Environment, a Delhi-based non-governmental organisation .

## Assam Tribune

14 October 2002

# Sikkim to have cut-off year to check influx

GANGTOK, Oct., 13- Sikkim government is mulling over fixing a cut-off year to check influx into the state, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has said.

"A cut-off year has to be decided to check influx from outside. The government however will not do it alone but in consultation with the panchayats, civil society and bureaucracy," Chamling said here on Friday asking people to start thinking in this direction.

The Chief Minister, who was addressing a gathering of senior officials and his cabinet colleagues on the occasion of third anniversary of his second government formation day here, said once a cut-off year was fixed some more facilities would be given to those who came before that and not to those who came later.

He said he would raise this issue in the ensuing first conference of the newly-elected panchayat members. Chamling said the move would surely invite "reaction" from certain quarters but government, knowing full well cannot sit idle.

Calling for eradicating criminalisation in politics, Chamling said. "We cannot and should not 'protect' the mischief-mongers who 'tarnish' the image of the state. We need the help of bureaucracy, government employees and the media to stamp out this." He said "gone are those days of might is right," now we have to rule on the basis of brain power."

The Chief Minister, who led his Sikkim Democratic Front to return to power in the October 1999 Assembly polls with a two-thirds majority, asked the bureaucracy to implement the government policies in letter and spirit.

POTO Court : The Sikkim government has set up a

court to try cases under Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTO), official sources said.

The government has constituted a special court under the District and Sessions Judge (East) at Gangtok for all types of cases arising under the Act, the sources said quoting a home department notifications.

The government has also appointed the state's Chief Secretary cum Home Secretary S.W. Tenzing, as the 'competent authority' and home department's special secretary K.N. Lepcha as the 'designated authority' for the purpose of the Act with immediate effect, another notification said.■

## The Indian EXPRESS

14 October 2002

*Sikkim CM wants Centre to re-open Silk Route from Sikkim to Tibet, border at Nathu La with China*

# Passage to India and China, via highest mountain pass

**JYOTI MALHOTRA**

NATHULA, OCTOBER 13. *The Art of War teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's mind but on our own readiness to receive him. Not on the chance of his attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.*

At nearly 15,000 feet, perhaps at the very spot where Chinese soldiers in 1967 crossed over and mowed down a handful of Indian army soldiers at the Nathu La pass, the sayings of the ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu must be the last thing you would expect to find.

But there it is, the essence of the "art of war" hand painted on a board that you cannot miss as you slowly climb through the rarefied air to what is not only the highest pass on Indian territory, but perhaps the only place along the entire 4,000 km long border with China where both armies actually come into contact with each other. The times are changing, even though Sikkimese chief minister Pawan Chamling has been in power here for eight long years. For the last two of those, Indian tourists are now allowed to come right up to Nathu La-meaning, Pass of the Listening Ear in Tibetan after sidestepping the slategrey Chhanggu lake at a mere 12,400 feet.

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away from Gangtok, to allow the reopening of the old, historic Silk Route from Sikkim to Tibet.

"So much has changed in India in the last few years." Chamling told a group of visiting reporters in Gangtok, "Prime Minister Vajpayee has opened bus routes across the borders on both the east and the west, from Kolkata to Dhaka in Bangladesh and from New Delhi to Lahore in Pakistan. The time may have now come to open a bus route from Gangtok to Lhasa."

Chamling's request is based on more than an evocative notion of history. With a very small population (five lakh), low industrial output \*\*\* disconnect with the rest of India that is a common feature of the North-East, the government in Gangtok hopes that opening the old trade route will rejuvenate an economy that survives on a 90% central government handout. "We're looking at Sikkim as an inland entrepot," says Chief Secretary Sonam Tenzing, pointing out that the pilgrim routes to both Lhasa and Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet are shortest through Nathu La. "Trade and commerce that followed would be a powerful instrument to resolving poverty and unemployment, both of which are factors in this insurgency-wracked region."

Significantly, at a time when Sino-Indian relations are improving and there is even serious talk of a visit by Prime Minister Vajpayee to Beijing, what has been known as the "Sikkim Question" for the last 27 years since Chogyal Palden Thondup acceded to India, becomes even more important. At the heart of New Delhi's refusal to consider pathbreaking moves such as opening up the border at Nathu La to trade and pilgrimage is the fact that China has never reconciled itself to the accession of Sikkim to India. Chinese maps continue to show the Indian state as separate territory.

Lately, though, straws in the wind from China have begun to speak in glowing terms about the positive aspect of border trade at Nathu La. Beijing is said to have privately accepted, sources say, that the stamping of passports or travel documents with the Indian stamp at Nathu La and Jelep La-border passes that connected Gangtok and Kalimpong, respectively, with Lhasa during the British years-would in effect indicate an acceptance that Sikkim belonged to India.

Analysts pointed out that Sikkim, sandwiched between Nepal, Bhutan and China, offered New Delhi the opportunity to play a new great game in the Himalayan region. A few hundred yards short of Nathu La a signpost realigns the mind and the map. The Chinese town of Chubitang is a mere 13 km away. Chema is 20 km away, Yatung, where the Chinese have built a container terminal in anticipation of opening trade is 25km away, and Lhasa 420km away. On this side, Gangtok is 53km far.

At Nathu La itself, Colonel Anil Rai of the 15 Rajput Rifles which looks after the post at the moment, speaks about the "exchanges" between the world's largest armies. A couple of years ago, twice a week on Sunday and

Thursday, the two sides decided to exchange mailbags, stuffed with the mail that Tibetans on the Indian side send to family and friends in Lhasa and Shigatse. Twice a year, moreover, the commanders of the two sides cross the concertina wire to sort out possible problems on the border.

The soldiers will not speak on record about the advantages of opening up to China, but privately in New Delhi and elsewhere, senior officers admitted that the peace at Nathu La had hardly been disturbed since 1967.

"The Indian army is fully in control at the border, we would have no problem if trade is carried out." One officer said, It was chief secretary Tenzing who put it best: "The Himalayas have so far been a watershed," he said, adding, "but I conceive it as a passage to two big civilisations and markets." ■



October 2002

## Dream of Switzerland

"I dream of a poverty eradicated Sikkim"- so says Pawan Kumar Chamling, the Chief Minister of Sikkim. At present he is busy with the Panchayat Elections in Sikkim. This is the second Panchayat Election in his eight years term and even then he has not shown even a slight trace of fatigue. There are some specialities in Chamling which makes him different from others. He has the unique capability of solving the objectives and goals. He wants to improve and specialize the life style of Sikkimese and wants to classify Sikkim with the fastly developing states of India. To fulfil this purpose, the main supporters are the population (5,40,000) of Sikkim. His other main speciality is that he keeps a firm determination in realising and fulfilling big dreams.

For the coming Panchayat Elections, he opined that election would help decentralisation of power. He always thinks for the Sikkim minority. At present reservations upto 33 percent for women, 30% for backward community 23% for the schedule tribes and 6 percent for the schedule castes have been set aside. 30% of the total village Development projects. So a fruitful result in expected as according to the work put in.

Enlightening on the future developmental projects he said that the progress is on in the rural areas. Election in the 91 districts and 1000 Gram Panchayats would be held. Work is going on from the lowest level to agricultural income management and other plans for which 50,0000 ru-

pees would be spent whereas Gram Panchayat would work on projects upto rupees 1000000 and District projects upto rupees 2000000 contract for these developments will be given to the local people so that time could be saved and management made easy. Our slogan is "Our Village our work." Project relating to tourism, handcraft would be more encouraged so that there could be something in the entire villages of the state which could attract tourism.

Chamling wants to make Sikkim into Switzerland. According to him tourism is the focal point of economic development. He has plans that till 2003 the conditions of all major roads (200 km and longer) would be improved. He wants to change the very conditions of the villages so that tourism would be attracted Gangtok alone. Here lot of lakes and big mountains exist which attract the tourists. Buddhist pilgrims also come here in numbers. Provision is being made to erect 115 feet tall statue of Mahaguru Padma Sambhawa at a place called Samadrups in south Sikkim. A congenial atmosphere is absolutely necessary to promote tourism. Sikkim is the only state where cooking gas is made available free so that the forests and trees would be saved.

A majority of Sikkim people (about 70%) are dependent on agriculture. Hence a lot of village level projects are under going. Each village is given Rs.20,000 and some 40 roof sheets to construct houses. No one is without a roof in Sikkim. Now education is being made free till college level.

Some special courses have been incorporated in syllabus regarding protection of environment. The state government grants 30,000 rupees to the girls above the age of 13 years for their future protection and is kept as fixed deposits in Sanks. Chamling has the vision of making state of Sikkim completely literate and self sufficient by the year 2015 AD.

When talking about industrial progress, Sikkim lacks in industries. Even so NHPC's hydroelectric projects are progressive and better. New opportunities for employment would be generated by the projects of electricity, tourism and other services connected with the area. Till date there are 3000 unemployed but in coming five years some 172000 educated boys and girls would possibly come out unemployed. Government will always try to employ these youngsters. Leaving aside all proposed plans and projects, 90 crore of rupees would be distributed in 10th five year plan from the chief minister's fund. Every one according to their schemes would be given 10,000 rupees from the Sank and other agencies.

Though small, Sikkim can be counted as one of the most advanced states of India because there is no dearth of people and resources. There is political maturity and stability in chief minister P.K. Chamling's leadership. This place although surrounded by disturbed places like China, Bhutan, Nepal and West Bengal look like a "Garden of Peace". ■

## *The Indian* **EXPRESS**

15 October 2002

Sikkim CM wants Centre to re-open Silk Route to Tibet, border at Nathu La

# Passage to India and China, via highest pass

**JYOTI MALHOTRA**

**NATHU LA, OCTOBER 14**

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ernment in Gangtok hopes that opening the old trade route will rejuvenate an economy that survives on a 90% central government handout. "We're looking at Sikkim as an inland entrepot," says Chief Secretary Sonam Tenzing, pointing out that the pilgrim routes to both Lhasa and Kalash Mansaovar in Tibet are shortest through Nathu La. "Trade and commerce that followed would be a powerful instrument to resolving poverty and unemployment, both of which are factors in this insurgency-wracked region."

Significantly, at a time when Sino-Indian relations are improving and there is even serious talk of a visit by Prime Minister Vajpayee to Beijing, what has been known as the "Sikkim Question" for the last 27 years since Chogyal Palden Thondup acceded to India, becomes even more important. At the heart of New Delhi's refusal to consider moves such as opening up the border at Nathu La to trade and pilgrimage is the fact that China has never reconciled itself to the accession of Sikkim to India. Chinese maps continue to show the Indian state as separate territory.

Lately, though, straws in the wind from China have begun to speak in glowing terms about the positive aspect of border trade at Nathu La. Beijing is said to have privately accepted, sources say, that the stamping of passports or travel documents with the Indian stamp at Nathu La and Jelep La- border passes that connected Gangtok and Kalimpong, respectively, with Lhasa during the British years- would in effect indicate an acceptance that Sikkim belonged to India.

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The soldiers will not speak on record about the advantages of opening up to China, but privately in New Delhi and elsewhere, senior officers admitted that the peace at Nathu La had hardly been disturbed since 1967. "The Indian army is fully in control at the border, we would have no problem if trade is carried out," one officer said. It was chief secretary Tenzing who put it best: "The Himalayas have so far been a watershed," he said, adding, "but I conceive it as a passage to two big civilisations and markets."

## NEWS TIME

23 October 2002

# Sikkim CM aspires to be Union Minister

Gangtok : Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling on Tuesday said he aspired to be, a cabinet minister at the Centre and asked his ministerial colleagues and officers to dream for working in Delhi.

"I always think myself to be a cabinet minister in Delhi. Likewise you (politicians and bureaucrats) should also think to be in the Union cabinet or an officer in the Central government," Chamling said here rousing a peal of laughter among the audience.

The chief minister, who was addressing a gathering at the Raj Bhawan on the occasion of award giving ceremony of a beautification campaign among Gangtokians, said do not confine yourselves inside Sikkim, think big.

He said "I see Sikkimese people forgot to dream and act accordingly. They were only concerned with plan and non-plan funds and non-lapsable pool," Chamling said. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 October 2002

# Gangtok Revisited Small-town India Minus Strife

By Lalita Panicker

Gangtok: Desmond Doig, the adventurous editor of the Junior Statesman once wrote a moving tribute to Sikkim's capital. I still remember the heading- "Hello Gangtok you are beautiful." Today, Gangtok is a monstrous conglomeration of boxy concrete structures redeemed only by the spectacular backdrop of the Himalayas. The once beautiful town with its blue pagoda roofs is a thing of the past. On a clear day, Kanchenjunga's liquid gold slopes are visible for just a few brief moments in the morning before could cover descends. But for the most part, the overwhelming impression is one of a nightmarish tangle of exposed wiring and luridly coloured *chhole bhature* eateries and, of course, the mandatory open drains.

Though physically unappealing as all small-town India is, Gangtok is relatively free of the social problems associated with the mofussil. Indeed, a rare harmony seems a

particularly Sikkimese trait. This desire on the part of the ordinary Sikkimese to refrain from anything that would create strife probably explains why almost all seats in the recent panchayat elections were won uncontested.

Across the board, people are aware of the circumstance under which Sikkim was annexed by the Indian government. The fact that the Centre has paid scant attention to the state has also not gone unnoticed. Fertile ground for insurgencies considering the Chinese are just a stone's throw away, one would think. It is an open secret too that Maoists from Nepal transit through the state and that other north-eastern rebel groups meet up here. Yet, nothing has affected Sikkim's peace and tranquility.

Chief secretary Sonam Tenzing attributes this to the enormous stake the state government has given people in the development process. Another reason he cites is the presence of a strong Sikkimese identity, nurtured from the time of the Chogyal. The government's accent has always been on social and economic development which it feels is the strongest antidote to insurgency. In fact, so confident is the government in the Sikkimese commitment to stability that it has actively been pursuing opening the old trade routes to Lhasa. This, it believes, would give a fillip to the region's economic development. Sikkimese officials claim that the Indian army has no objections to this from a security point of view but the Centre is not too enthused.

Mr Tenzing feels that any fears on account of Chinese goods flooding the Indian market if trade routes are opened are unfounded. On the contrary, with relations between Beijing and New Delhi becoming far more positive, Chinese tourists would come in substantial numbers. "The Himalayas are a watershed for India's defence but with opening markets on both sides, it could become the bridge between two great civilisations," he says.

Up in the icy pass of Nathu La, the border post with the Chinese, peace and tranquillity have reigned for many years. The road going up to the pass has what are quaintly dubbed man-eaters, sharp curves clinging to the lush mountainside. For the large part, the road is among the best in the state since it is maintained by the army. In the russet-covered gorges on its sides, jade streams feather down jet black slopes. It is untouched land and even the normally boisterous Indian tourist appears awed into silence. Visitors from India go to the sensitive border post in jeep-loads- upwards of 200 every day- where they get to meet Chinese soldiers and speak to them.

While championing tourism as a preferred service sector, chief minister Pawan Chamling emphasises that it cannot be at the cost of the fragile ecology of state. "No development here will be at the cost of the environment or culture. We want to maximise benefit and minimise fallout." Apart from eco-tourism, Sikkim has developed 'home tourism', in which the visitor stays with a village host. No frills, no comforts. The visitor is expected to respect local customs and environment for an experience of real Sikkim.

Women play a significant role in Mr Chamling's development model. In the all-India indices of women's empowerment, Sikkim is number one. Cash incentives are doled out at every stage of the girl child's life, from birth to the age of 50. These are variously for school enrolment, retention, deferment of marriage, opting for a small family, and, finally, for old age pension. The result: 99 per cent of girls in the state go to school.

In addition, Mr Chamling has focused on land rights for the woman. No sale of land is possible without the woman's signature and official records cannot be registered without her consent. The government reserves 30 per cent of its jobs for women and they play a prominent role in public life.

Other development indicators are impressive. Phone connectivity is 93 per cent, all of the state has drinking water, and infant mortality is only 21 per 1,000. The state has excellent infrastructure. But despite all this, Sikkim has been unable to transform itself into a model state. Mr Chamling puts it down to a lack of ambition among many Sikkimese. "They have few aspirations. We have to change this mindset and get them to keep up with the times."

However, it is precisely this equanimity which has kept Sikkim trouble-free all these years. And if a more aggressive and faster pace of life is introduced, great care must be taken that it is not at the cost of the quietism that characterises Sikkim society.

## DECCAN HERALD

26 October 2002

### Rama Rao is new Sikkim Governor

Veteran BJP leader V. Rama Rao was today sworn in as the 12th Governor of Sikkim at a simple ceremony in the Raj Bhawan here. Sixty-six-year-old Rao, who replaced Kidar Nath Sahani, was administered the oath of office by the Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court, Mr. Justice Ripusudan Dayal. Soon after the swearing-in ceremony, Mr. Rao was given a guard of honour by the Sikkim police. Later, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling introduced his council of ministers, the Speaker and MLAs to the new governor. ■

## Assam Tribune

30 October 2002

### Sikkim students not getting qualitative education : Chamling

GANGTOK, Oct. 29- Sikkimese students are not getting

qualitative education despite the state government spending 17 per cent of its total budget on education, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has said, reports PTI.

“our human resource development is not up-to-the mark. Students and parents as they are not getting the proper qualitative education”, Chamling said here on Sunday.

“The teacher and student ratio in Sikkim is 1:16 and our government is spending 17 per cent of its total budget. But despite this, the objective of education has been narrowed down to seeking jobs only”, the Chief Minister told a golden jubilee programme of Vidya Bharati School in Sikkim.

Stressing the need for ‘value-based’ education which unfolds a ‘personality’, he said unfortunately everyone is going for ‘intellectual’ education which develops one’s ‘head’ and not the ‘heart’.

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## The Sentinel

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Buddhist Festival: ‘Lhabab dhuechen’ - a festival of Buddhists was celebrated throughout Sikkim with traditional religious fervour and enthusiasm, on Monday.

Special prayers and offerings were organised in different monasteries and households to mark the occasion symbolising the descent of Lord Buddha from heaven. All state government establishments remained closed to mark the occasion.

## THE HINDUSTAN

30 October 2002  
TIMES

### Sikkim gets first tourist police outpost

Archita Bhatta

Pelling, October 30

THE WEST District Police in Sikkim has set up the State’s first ever tourism police outpost in Pelling. This could be the first such outpost in the whole of North and North-East India, officer say.

Another unique aspect of the tourist police outpost is that it has been built entirely from public donations. It has been tastefully decorated in typical Sikkimese architecture in keeping with its duty- catering solely to problems of tourists. Five policemen have been assigned to this outpost, which was inaugurated today.

The outpost has come up right under a holy site, Mendang or the Holy Wall, which lay bare till now. Despite its religious significance, the hillock had turned into a local haven for drug addicts and criminals. “We called in the local lamas and explained the project. It took some convincing, but they agreed, and the hillock itself is now a place where tourists can sit in peace and watch the scenic beauty of Pelling,” said West District SP N Sridhar Rao.

“Everything about the outpost, including its exquisite design, was planned with much care because we are determined to do away with the hackneyed idea that is associated with any police office,” a senior police officer said.

“The idea is to ensure that tourists don’t face any problem, from being overcharged by shopkeepers traders or tour operators to theft and robbery,” Rao said.

Tourists can get guide maps at the outpost. The policemen posted here will also take charge of affairs in case of accidents. “In short, this is the tourism version of the Raibid Action Force,” Rao said.

The need for a tourist police outpost had long been felt in Sikkim, where tourism contributes to a major part of the State’s revenue. There was much talk about tourism police but nothing concrete had ever been done.

Sikkim Police Director General RK Handa had promised to get it done this year. He succeeded. The outpost was set up just days before his retirement.

“Sikkim is an oasis of peace surrounded by States that are being wracked by violence. We should strive to preserve the peace in Sikkim,” he said at the inauguration ceremony today.

Handa was very pleased with the fact that the outpost was built entirely with donations from the people. “Not a

single penny has come from the Government. Something like Rs 2.5 lakh was spent on the outpost, and it was all donated by people and local organisations," Rao said. "There can not be a better example of police-public cooperation in developmental activities."

This is the major reason for the delay in setting up the outpost, Rao said. "Progress was slow because the funds tricked in quite slowly," he said.

The local panchayat contributed the largest chunk, followed by the Pelling Tourism Development Association and an NGO. Individual donors chipped in with cash and kind, some sponsoring the glass panes, or furniture.



4 November 2002

## Sikkim Tea Venture

Sikkim which so far had only one tea garden, has taken up tea production in a private venture. A packet of 'Rumtek Tea' produced at east Sikkim's Sang Martam areas, was presented to chief minister Pawan Chamling by the growers' co-operative society recently. Lauding the efforts of private parties, Mr. Chamling assured them all of government help and asked them to go for market tie-ups and good technical support, official sources said on Sunday. So far, Sikkim had only one garden in South Sikkim's Temi spread over 173 hectares, producing orthodox quality tea. The product was 'purely organic' in nature and packaging was done locally out of bamboo cane. In order to procure manure, vermiculture was initiated in the area and 55 families had started cow dung gas plants in their households, he said. ■



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So far Sikkim had only one garden in south Sikkim's Temi spread over 173 hactres. ■

# Assam Tribune

5 November 2002

## MLAs' defection weakens Sikkim Opp

The recent defection of three opposition legislators to the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), has weakened the opposition in the 32 member Assembly, reports PTI.

Although the SDF claimed it would not gag the voice of any (MLA) asking uncomfortable questions to the government on the floor of the House, political analysts here are of the opinion that a weak opposition was not a good sign in a democratic set-up.

The three who changed sides N.K.Pradhan (MLA from Gangtok constituency), J.K. Bhandari (Loosing-Pacheykhani) and Sonam Dorjee (Pathing) who won the 1999 Assembly elections from the opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) tickets, were formally taken into SDF by Chamling on October 25.

In the Assembly here, the opposition members could hardly corner the government. Debates on various issues tended to be one-sided-the treasury benches being well ahead in numbers.

Interestingly, in 1984 also the Nar Bahadur Bhandari led SSP had 31 seats in the House.

In the 1999 Assembly polls when SSP had won seven seats, hope was raised that perhaps the opposition members would now take on the government and thereby establish a democratic environment in and outside the House.

But that hope was smashed when three of the SSP MLAs switched over in September 2001 making the SDF's number 28. The latest move made the opposition virtually 'toothless' as a firmly-saddled SDF further consolidated its position.

Although the crossing of floors was on the cards for some time, it was only after the SDF's clean sweep in the just-held Panchayati elections that the trio was taken into the ruling fold ceremoniously possibly to keep any dissidents inside the party at bay.

'We have changed the party after consulting our voters and to fulfil the commitments given to them during the election,' said Dorjee, a former founder member of SDF who fell out with the party five years ago.

Pradhan, a former bureaucrat, refused to read too much into the timing of joining the SDF and said it was fated. 'We are impressed by the pro-poor policies of ASDF government. The Chief Minister has a vision and we want to join him for the betterment of the people', Bhandari said.

Moreover, 'in politics, there is no friend neighter any



foe,' Pradhan added putting up a brave face.

The analysts believe whatever arguments were parroted by the new comers and their leaders, the real reason for defection lies elsewhere. Being a small state where people are largely dependent on government doles, remaining in the opposition camps for long becomes difficult in view of votebank politics.

"If you are an opposition MLA, your constituency will not be looked after well," said an analyst hinting the government grants were little available in those areas. ■

## The Telegraph

5 November 2002

### Chamling clips China concern

#### OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 4 : Sikkim voluntarily joined the Indian union and hence there was no reason why unnecessary importance should be given to what China thinks about the issue, said Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling.

China, incidentally, has not yet accepted the accession of the state to the union.

In an interview Chamling said because of the overriding concern about China implementation of certain projects, which could have benefited the local populace immensely, have been delayed.

"The issue of opening up the Nathula Pass should be actively considered by the government because its advantages can't be over-emphasised. The issue should be approached keeping in mind our interests and how to reach an amicable understanding with China," said the chief minister, who will meet with the defence minister tomorrow to discuss the issue.

The opening of the pass will not only boost trade but also tourism, said Chamling. Options of starting bus services between Gangtok and Lhasa could also be considered, he added.

Located strategically, touching Nepal, China and Bhutan, Sikkim has the potential to emerge as a major trade hub once the border is opened up, besides providing partial relief to the land-locked northeast.

The route between the two, capitals, measuring 475 km, was part of the famous Silk Route, a thriving trade route that linked several parts of south and central Asia during ancient times.

"So long as the people are happy and satisfied, there's no danger of any insurgency movement cropping up in the state. The crux of the matter is to provide employment," he said. The possibility of the Maoist menace spilling over from Nepal was dim since an active campaign was being conducted to educate people, Chamling added.

## THE TIMES OF IN-

12 November 2002

### DIA

**N-E conclave :** The Centre has hinted at organizing a conference of Chief Ministers from the north-eastern states in Sikkim early next year. This was indicated by Union Minister for Department of North Eastern Region, Arun Shourie to Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling when he called on the former in Delhi last week, official sources said here today. ■



## THE ECONOMIC

12 November 2002

### NE CM's meet to be held in Sikkim in '03

The Centre has hinted that a conference of chief ministers from the North Eastern states will be organised in Sikkim early next year. This was indicated by the Union minister for department of North-Eastern Region, Mr. Arun Shourie, to the Sikkim chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, when he met the former in Delhi last week, official sources said here on Monday.

The conference is likely to be held in April 2003. During his meeting with Mr. Chamling, Shourie said the schemes proposed by the Sikkim government under the non-lapsable central pool will be taken up for consideration in the next meeting of the screening committee to be held in Delhi on November 24.

Chamling sought the assistance of the Union minister for early formal inclusion of Sikkim in the North Eastern Council. Setting up a separate university for the state and restoration of all medical seats in the central pool also figured in the discussion between the two leaders sources pointed out. ■

## The Sentinel

12 November 2002

### NE CMs' meet likely in Sikkim

The Centre has hinted at organizing a conference of Chief Ministers from the north-eastern states in Sikkim early next year. This was indicated by Union Minister for Department of North Eastern Region, Arun Shourie to Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling when he called on the former in Delhi last week, official sources said here today. ■

## The Financial Express

12 November 2002

### ■ **N-E Chief Ministers' Meet Likely Next Year**

The Centre has hinted that a conference of chief ministers from the North eastern states will be organised in Sikkim early next year. This was indicated by Union minister for department on N-E region, Arun Shourie to Sikkim CM Pawan Chamling when he met the former in Delhi last week. ■

## Assam Tribune

13 November 2002

### ■ **Chamling Calls on Shekhawat**

GANGTOK, Nov.12- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has briefed Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat of the general, economic, social, cultural and environmental scenario of the state, official sources said today.

Paying a maiden courtesy call to Shekhawat after his assuming vice-presidency, Chamling said Sikkimese people were believers of 'emotional integration' with the national mainstream, the sources said.

Chamling, who was accompanied by two MPs from the state during his visit last week, told Shekhawat that the state government was working sincerely and seriously for sustainable utilisation of tourism, hydel power and handicraft and handloom potentials, the sources said.

The Vice-President appreciated the initiatives taken by Sikkim government and offered his support, the sources added. ■

### **CII Offers to set up institute in Sikkim**

GANGTOK, Nov.12-The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has offered Sikkim government to set up an institute here to provide quality, courses on various subjects including computer to students.

This was conveyed by CII Director General Tarun Das who called on Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling

during his recent visit to Delhi, official sources said here today.

A need to train local youth in tourism, travel and health sectors was also discussed during the meeting.

A team of CII for the purpose would visit Gangtok soon in this regard, the sources added. ■

### **President want to visit Sikkim villages**

GANGTOK, Nov.12- President APJ Abdul Kalam has expressed his desire to visit some villages in Sikkim and have 'meaningful interaction' with the farmers and school children in the State, reports PTI. ■

The President expressed this desire when Chief Minister Pawan Kuman Chamling made his maiden courtesy call to him at Rashtrapati Bhavan last week official sources said here today.

Kalam was also very keen to see the areas under ginger and cardamom cultivation and the medicinal plants in the natural habitat in Sikkim, the sources said.

Chamling invited him to visit the State sometime between December and January and apprised him of the various welfare oriented and pro-poor policies of the State.

The sources said Kalam evinced keen interest in Sikkim's development activities, its cultural heritage, biodiversity reserves, abundance of medicinal plants and immense hydel potential and congratulated Chamling for maintaining peace in the mountain State. ■

## Business Line

14 November 2002

### ■ **Hudco to take up projects in Sikkim**

GANGTOK: Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has undertaken construction of a cultural centre and a training centre for adventure and eco-tourism in Sikkim to be funded by the Union Tourism and Culture Ministry, official sources said.

The cultural centre would be built at Gangtok at an estimated cost of Rs. 8 crore and the training centre at Chemchey in south Sikkim at an approximate expenditure of Rs. 60 crore, they added. The Chief Minister, Mr. P.K.Chamling, was briefed about the concept and plan of the two centres by Hudco authorities.

Hudco has also offered assistance in preparing plans for one park in every district, a car park and development of other places in the State. ■

# Assam Tribune

14 November 2002

## HUDCO undertakes 2 projects in Sikkim

GANGTOK, Nov.13- Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has undertaken the construction of a cultural centre and a training centre for adventure and eco-tourism in Sikkim to be funded by Union Tourism and Culture Ministry, official sources said today, reports PTI.

The cultural centre would be built at Gangtok at an estimated cost of Rs. eight crore and the training centre at Chemchey in south Sikkim at an approximate expenditure of Rs. 60 crore, the sources said.

Chief Minister P.K.Chamling was briefed about the concept and plan of the two centres by HUDCO authorities. Chamling during his visit to Delhi last week also discussed with HUDCO chairman and managing director Pankaj Jain various aspects of landscape development around the proposed statues of Lord Padmasambhava and Lord Shiva to be erected in south Sikkim, the sources said. ■

# Business Standard

15 November 2002

## Airport Project Yet to Take Off

Work for the proposed airport in Sikkim was yet to begin as the detailed project report was still under preparation, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling said on Thursday. "We have not been able to start the work for the airport although the foundation stone for the project was laid by the then Vice-President Krishan Kant in April 2001," Chamling said, "It is difficult to start a project even if there are enough funds for it," he said. ■

# Assam Tribune

16 November 2002

### Governor skips Nehru birth anniversary

## Chamling complains of communication gap

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling Thursday complained of a 'communication gap' between him and

the Raj Bhawan pointing out that he was unaware till the last minute that the Governor was not coming for Jawaharlal Nehru's birth anniversary celebrations today, reports PTI.

"I was unaware that the Governor is not coming for today's programme. At the last moment I got a word that he is leaving for Delhi today. Such is the level of communication gap." Chamling said at the end of his speech after paying tributes of Pandit Nehru.

The Chief Minister said he was ready to receive the Governor with a Khada (traditional scarf) and take him to the podium but was told at the last moment that the latter was leaving for Delhi today.

Meanwhile, the official programme circulated at the venue mentioned Governor V. Rama Rao's name who was scheduled to address the birth anniversary celebration.

Sikkim on Thursday paid rich tributes to the country's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his 113th birth anniversary with Chief Minister Pawan Chamling calling for 'self criticism' to mark the occasion, reports PTI.

"Mere observing Pandit Nehru's birthday here will not fulfil our objective. We have to take inspiration from his life and work," Chamling said after garlanding the leader's bust near the Chief Minister's official residence.

He was not only a front-runner among the leaders, but he was also the founder of 'modern India,' the Chief Minister said, adding, "today is the day when we have to think how to build a 'modern Sikkim' by emulating his path."

"I call upon everyone including bureaucrats, civil society and politicians to extend a helping hand in building modern Sikkim," Chamling said. ■

# Business Line

16 November 2002

## Sikkim plea on road project

Sikkim has urged the Centre to connect it to the 'Golden Quadrilateral' project for better road connectivity.

"I have written to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B.Vajpayee, to connect Sikkim to the Golden Quadrilateral project so that we can also be benefitted by the four-lane highway," the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, said here.

Sikkim should not remain isolated from the Rs. 15,000 crore project passing so near the State, Mr. Chamling was quoted as saying by official sources.

The project will pass through Siliguri in West Bengal to connect the eastern and western parts of the country.

The Chief Minister had asked senior officials to take up the matter with the centre, the sources said. ■

# Assam Tribune

17 November 2002

## Report for Sikkim airport not ready

Work for the proposed airport in Sikkim was yet to begin as the detailed project report (DPR) was still being prepared, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has said, reports PTI.

"We have not been able to start the work for the airport although the foundation stone for the project had been laid by the then Vice-President Krishan Kant in April," Chamling said.

"It is difficult to start a project even if there are enough funds for it," a visibly upset Chamling said.

Initially, the landowners "blackmailed" the Government (with the price) and once that was sorted out, not the DPR was yet to be completed, the Chief Minister said.

The proposed airport in East Sikkim's Pakyong, about 35 km from here, on 49,524 ha would have a terminal building for 100 passengers. The 11th Finance Commission gave Rs. 50crore for this.

Citing another example, the Chief Minister said it took four years to order a statue of Guru Padmasambhava with differing views on religious and technical aspects delaying the projects.

The Tibetan spiritual head Dalai Lama had in 1997 laid the foundation stone for a 80ft statue of the guru in South Sikkim's Samdruptse area. ■

# Assam Tribune

18 November 2002

**Month-long Janata Mela :** A month-long "Janata Mela" would be organised in Sikkim to create awareness among the people about various schemes of the state and also to showcase the benefits accrued to hundreds receiving doles from the government.

All the departments of the state government were asked to participate in the mela, beginning in West district's Sombarey from December 15 next, in which Chief Minister Pawan Chamling would distribute financial benefits among a large number of identified persons, official sources said here. ■

The Chief Minister would dole out the largesses in all the place where the mela would take place. The Chief Minister held a meeting at the state secretariat on Friday to discuss ways about organising the month-long affair, in

which heads of various departments took part, the sources said. Chamling told the meeting that by holding this mela the government wanted to send the message that its grants and benefits be "fruitfully utilised," the sources said.

# INDIA TODAY

18 November 2002

## Crowning Glory

*Under Shri Pawan Chamling Government,  
Sikkim has progressed and made indelible  
marks in many areas of governance*

It has been a tryst with development, since the Sikkim Democratic Front Government came to power eight years ago, the Himalayan state of Sikkim has been gradually climbing the gradient of growth to cap the peak of prosperity in many areas.

Once famous only for its orchids, snow leopards and red panda, Sikkim has now become the model state in several areas of governance - law and order, education, judiciary, rural development- under the Pawan Chamling Government. The statistics vouch for this. The per capita income of the state is now the highest in the country. The Government has implemented exemplary measures in law and order and the crime rate in the state is the lowest in the country. Literally the Himalayan Shangri-la, harmony is the binding thread among the various communities in Sikkim.

The Government's overall objective is to make the state prosperous without compromising on local culture and traditions. The Sahitya Akademi and Song and Dance units of various communities have been established. There is a multitude of languages and most of them like Tamang, Gurung, Rai and Sherpa have now been given official recognition as "state languages" and are taught in schools. Along with Nepali, the other state languages spoken by the three main ethnic groups - Lepcha, Limbu and Bhutia - are now being taught at the university level.

Literacy and education have been priority areas for the Government. There is a school within walking distance for every child. The Government has evolved a comprehensive plan of action for children and a Smart School concept to improve the quality of education so that every child is equipped with the knowledge and skill required in the computer age. When the SDF Government took over, there was just one college. Now there are half a dozen of them.

The health sector is robust with free medical facilities



for the people and many new hospitals and fully equipped and adequately manned primary health centres.

There are effective steps in place to protect the environment of this beautiful, mountainous land of sal forests and rhododendrons. It is the first state in India to ban the use of non-biodegradable products like plastic. Under the initiative of Shri Chamling, who was declared the most-environment friendly chief minister in 1999. Smriti Vans have been established at various places. Greening Sikkim became a mass movement as people from all walks of life joined hands and planted trees and plantations in memory of their dear ones. Shri Chamling's environment plan consists of promotion of eco-tourism, harnessing of hydel power, utilisation of natural resources and preservation of the bio-diversity.

A significant thrust in Shri Chamling's governance has been to ensure a people-friendly administration. Twice a week he meets the people and listens to their grievances. Government employees have been suitably rewarded - the last seven years of SDF governance saw a record number of promotions in services. Their salary is the best in the country. His priority areas are women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. He was the first to induct women as minister and Speaker of the Assembly. Women also became Zilla Adhyakshas, Upadhyakshas and head of the Sikkim Public Service Commission for the first time in the state. With 30 per cent reservation for women in government jobs, along with 33 per cent seats in panchayats, Shri Chamling has revolutionised the social and political landscape of the state.

The Government has launched many schemes to uplift the poor and the downtrodden and develop rural Sikkim. Seventy per cent of the annual plan budget is being spent on rural areas. To raise the dignity of Panchayati Raj, Adhyakshas and Upadhyakshas are given the status of minister of state and deputy minister. Under the rural housing plan, each homeless family is given a grant of Rs. 20,000. The licensing system has been simplified to encourage people in rural areas to start enterprises and the youth are involved in rural works.

Judicial system has also been revamped thoroughly. The High Court is getting a new building, district courts established in all the four districts and Lok Adalats in all the nine sub-divisions. The efforts have shown results - Sikkim holds the record for the least number of pending cases in the country. Meanwhile old laws of the state have also been protected. All has been traditional Zomsa system of governance in the villages of Lachung and Lachen.

Sikkim is today on an alluring rise of the traditional and modern. If once the charms of the state were limited lands and mountains, they are now complemented by tangible development and progress. ■

## The Financial Express

18 November 2002

# CII May Set Up Institute in Sikkim

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has offered the Sikkim government a proposal to set up an institute here to provide quality courses on various subjects including IT. "This was conveyed by CII Director-general Tarun Das who called on Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling, during his recent visit to Delhi," official sources said here last week. ■

## Assam Tribune

21 November 2002

# Sikkim Govt. extends contract with NHPC

Sikkim government would award contract to the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) to commission hydel power projects from three more states of the Teesta river but asked it to look into the 'interests' of local people, chief minister Pawan Chamling has said, reports PTI.

"After a discussion in the cabinet, we have decided in principle to ask the NHPC to generate hydel power from stages I (320 MW), II (750 MW) and III (1200 MW) of the Teesta river. A formal letter is being issued shortly," the Chief Minister said here yesterday, about 55 km from Gangtok.

Chamling, who earlier inaugurated work for diverting the Teesta river for constructing a dam in connection with 510 MW (stage V) hydel project being executed by the NHPC, said the corporation would have to look into the 'interests' of local people and 'honour' their sentiments.

Taking a dig at the NHPC, the Chief Minister told the gathering attended by Union Power Secretary R.V. Shahi and chairman cum managing director of NHPC Yogendra Prasad that "I must say with a heavy heart the corporation did not fully honour the agreement it signed with us before executing the Teesta stage V hydel project."

This created a sort of apprehension and doubt in our mind (about the NHPC), Chamling said adding therefore we want the agency to follow the agreement (for executing the three stages), in "letter and spirit."

All the facilities and benefits accrued from the execution work of the coming projects must go to only local people, he said and added it was the government and not the NHPC which is answerable to the people.

Shahi said from the Teesta (stage V) project Sikkim would get 12 percent power free in addition to 15 percent of its share which the State can sell to others.

The Centre has set up a Power Trading Corporation to enable any organisation or State to negotiate with others in selling electricity.

Asking the State government to strengthen its distribution network for availing the benefit of the upcoming hydel projects in the State, Shahi said, "focus should be given to improve transmission system to those towns having more than 40,000 population so that urban people can get benefits."

Earlier, NHPC chairman-cum-managing director Yogendra Prasad, who briefly outlined the benefits to be received by the State after completion of the ongoing project, said by virtue of a Japanese loan amounting Rs. 750 crore given to the corporation the price of electricity in the Teesta stage V would be cheaper by 36 paise. ■

## THE TIMES OF IN-

22 November 2002

### DIA

**Chamling claim :** "When the people of Sikkim took the historic decision to join India and adopted democracy instead of monarchy, and merged as the twenty second state of the Indian Union in 1975, it is irrelevant what China says about Sikkim or shows Sikkim as an independent kingdom in the Himalayas on a map." This was stated by the chief minister Pawan Chamling in reply to a question from journalists. ■

## Assam Tribune

26 November 2002

### ■

## Vajpayee assures Centre's help to Sikkim

GANGTOK, Nov.25- Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has assured the Sikkim government the Centre's 'full-fledged' assistance and support, reports. PTI.

Vajpayee made this assurance when he was apprised of the general situation in Sikkim by Governor V. Rama Rao, who called on him at his residence in Delhi last week, official sources said here on Monday.

The Prime Minister reportedly expressed his desire to visit Sikkim sometime next year, the sources said. Earlier,

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling had urged Vajpayee to come to Sikkim.

The Governor, during his stay in Delhi, also called on Deputy Prime Minister L.K.Advani and discussed important issues relating to the state, the sources added.

Chamling's concern : Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has voiced concern over reports of violence against women in big cities saying one woman was subjected to physical assault every 35 minutes.

'Violence against women reported from metro and big cities is alarming. An estimated 54 women are getting physically assaulted every day in those places with one in every 35 minutes,' Chamling said inaugurating a regional workshop on women issues here. Only 10 out of 100 such cases were, however, reported, he said quoting statistics.

Underlining the gender equality, the Chief Minister said although women and men were born equal but 'society makes them (women) feel inferior.

The two-day workshop marking women's day, being organised by the state's social welfare department together with indigenous Women's Resource Centre (IWRC) of Shillong, was attended by participants from north-eastern states. ■

## The Telegraph

9 December 2002



### ■

## Message

*IT GIVES me a great pleasure to extend my greetings and felicitations to all in this International Year of mountains.*

*Sikkim is the abode of mountains and most of these mountains are very sacred and worshipped by people regularly. Majority of Sikkimese people are born and brought up at the base of imposing mountains, some of which are the source of famous rivers Teesta and Rangeet. Like mountain inhabitants in other parts of the world people of Sikkim are also tough and hard working but god fearing and peace-loving. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2002 as an International Year of Mountains to promote the conservation and sustainable development of mountain region. Sikkim join hands with rest of the world in this awareness campaign to draw the world's attention to mountains and their importance as well as problems.*

**Pawan Chamling,  
Chief Minister**

# Assam Tribune

9 December 2002

## Sikkim to reserve jobs for sportspersons : CM

To promote sports in Sikkim, the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has announced that his government would formulate a policy on reservation of government jobs for the players, reports PTI.

"We will formulate a policy to reserve government jobs for the outstanding sportspersons and also out-of-turn promotion for those already in the service, Chamling said here on Thursday after seeing off a 12-member contingent of the state for the national games in Hyderabad.

The Chief Minister asked more youths to take up sports as their career stating that his government was looking after the welfare of the sportspersons.

Earn laurels for the State and money for yourselves the Chief Minister told the sportspersons. ■



### THE ECONOMIC

9 December 2002

## Sikkim's eco plans

Sikkim would take steps to become a "chemical fertiliser-free state," chief minister Pawan Chamling said on Sunday. "We are going to stop the use of chemical fertiliser... Only organic fertiliser should be used in our agriculture activities. "Mr. Chamling told a gathering here stating that use of chemical fertiliser in vegetables and other agriproducts was affecting the health of the people, the chief minister said more and more people in Sikkim were suffering from either cancer or gastric problem, spending period last year. India imported 11, 356 tonnes of natural rubber in April-August this year against export of 14, 479. ■

### THE HINDUSTAN

10 December 2002

## Sikkim CM on child rights

SIKKIM CHIEF Minister Pawan Chamling has called for protection of children's rights and said his Government aimed at eradication the child labour from the State.

"We are saddened to see many children working in tea

estates, restaurants, pubs etc. It is more disheartening when the influential and well-to-do families engage children as domestic helps. And we have to see that the human rights of the kids are protected," Chamling said on Sunday at the inauguration of a hostel for destitute tribal children. But the government alone could do little in this regard without people's participation.

"Let us hope all children of Sikkim get education, health, food and enjoy their rights," he said.

PTI, Marchak

## Chamling calls for switch to manure

HT Correspondent

Gangtok, December 9

THE SIKKIM Government has decided to frame a policy to free the State of agro-chemicals.

Encouraged by international movements against the wanton use of pesticides and other agro-chemicals in paddy fields, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has called upon people to switch to organic manure instead of harmful chemicals.

He said the Government plans to formulate a policy soon against the use of chemicals, which not only affect human beings, but also livestock and waterbodies.

Research conducted by the Kolkata-based NGO Centre for Sustainable Living (CPCB) recently revealed that pesticides used in the tea gardens of Darjeeling cause deformities in children.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has said the stream and rivers in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Siliguri, show a dangerously high content of pesticides.

Chief Minister Chamling has already earned a name for being all for protection of environment and termed as the "Greenest Chief Minister of India" by the Centre for Science and Environment, a Delhi-based non-governmental organisation.

# The Statesman

12 December 2002

## Sikkim seeks new route skirting Hills

Sudipta Chanda

in Siliguri

Dec. 11. - The government of Sikkim has urged the Centre to arrange for an alternative route to Sikkim via Bengal 'skirting the Darjeeling hills.' The possible routes

would either touch Bhutan or Nepal.

"The chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling has submitted the proposal with authorities in Delhi. The matter is under consideration," the Sikkim state tourism minister Mr KT Gyaltzen said today.

Totally dependent on National Highway 31-A that runs through the Kalimpong sub-division under the jurisdiction of the DGAHC, Sikkim has to suffer traffic snarl-ups every now and then due to agitations in Kalimpong. "Though the NH 31-A is at times kept out of the purview of the rallies, in reality traffic movement gets disrupted causing harassment to the commuters."

"The ongoing 72-hour bandh in the Kalimpong sub-division has proved equally damaging for Himalayan state," Mr Gyaltzen said. Supporting the minister's statement, the secretaries of the Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association and Sikkim Travel Agents' Association Mr ST Wangdi and Mr Satish Bardewa said: "every time a bandh is called in the Hills, Sikkim feels the pinch."

"A large number of hotel reservations had to be cancelled owing to the bandh," Mr Wangdi said.

"Even if the NH 31-A is kept out of the purview of the bandh, tourists bound for Sikkim has to tread over 42 km of the bandh-affected area before reaching the boundaries of Sikkim. Since the situation can flare up any moment, no traveller or transport operator would risk such uncertainty, Mr Bardewa said.

According to them, some drivers and travellers were harassed on their way to Sikkim yesterday. "We had to send police force right up to Siliguri in the past to escort stranded people to Sikkim through areas under similar bandhs," the tourism minister Mr Gyaltzen said.

The minister said his department wanted to hold a meeting with the civil administration of Darjeeling district on this issue today but it didn't materialise owing to the absence of some officials.

"The matter needs to be sorted out at a higher level," Mr Gyaltzen said, indicating the Sikkim government was planning to take up the matter with the state government.

Assam Tribune

13 December 2002

### **Religious significance**

## **Chamling for tapping Sikkim's potential**

Gangtok, Dec.12- Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today asked the people to 'sell the enormous religious significance' of the State for better tourism and business prospects, reports PTI.

"Sikkim is devabhoomi (god's abode). Its religious significance has been elaborated in various mythological legends including the mahabharat as well as the Buddhist scriptures. But our people are yet to realise this and sell it to the outside world,' Chamling said here after laying the foundation stone of a proposed temple.

"Our Government was aiming to develop the State not only 'physically' but religiously, morally and conscientiously,' the Chief Minister said.

The temple, to be constructed over 25000 sq ft area mainly by the business community of the state capital with Government help, would replace the old structure. A 108 ft tomb has been proposed for the main temple which was expected to be completed by February 2004 at an approximate cost of Rs. three crore, the organisers said.■

## **Sikkim's special status to remain intact in NEC**

Gangtok, Dec.12- Sikkim's special status as enshrined in the Constitution would remain intact even after the State's inclusion on the North Eastern Council (NEC), bill for which was passed by Parliament yesterday, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today said, reports PTI.

"The special status of Sikkim will be the same. There is no danger to it. A line in this regard was also added to the NEC Amendment Bill which was passed by the Lok Sabha yesterday," Chamling said here reacting to criticism by some Opposition members on his issue.

With the passing of the Bill, pending the Presidential assent, Sikkim has become a full fledged member of the NEC, the Chief Minister said.

Taking a swipe at the Opposition parties for criticising his Government for having included Sikkim in the NEC by which, they claimed, the State's special status as protected under Art 37 if of the Constitution would diluted, Chamling said if you look at the manifestoes of all political outfits, the issue (inclusion of Sikkim in the NEC) figured there.

"But none pursued it to its logical conclusion except our government," he said.

With this legalisation, Chamling said the development process of the state would be on track.

The Chief Minister said Sikkim would also avail of an industrial package and other financial benefits meant for NEC states but urged the business community not to 'misuse' these facilities.■

## **Sikkim plea on road project**

GANGTOK: Sikkim has urged the Centre to connect it to the 'Golden Quadrilateral' project for better road connectivity . "I have written to the Prime Minister, Mr A.B. Vajpayee, to connect Sikkim to the Golden Quadrilateral project so that we can also be benefitted by the four-lane highway," the Chief Minister , Mr Pawan Chamling, said



here.

Sikkim should not remain isolated from the Rs 15,000-crore project passing so near the State, Mr Chamling was quoted as saying by official sources.

The project will pass through Siliguri in West Bengal to connect the eastern and Western parts of the country.

The Chief Minister had asked senior officials to take up the matter with the Centre, the sources said, -PTI

*The Sentinel*

13 December 2002

## Foreign investment in Sikkim to rise: CM

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has said investment and trade cooperation from neighbouring south Asian countries would go up in the state following its entry in the North Eastern Council and also declaration of a new industrial policy.

Investment and trade ties from neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh will go up in Sikkim as the Centre has declared a new industrial policy for the State giving tax benefits, Chamling said while addressing a Janata Mela in west Sikkim's geyzing yesterday.

The Chief Minister said Sikkim's inclusion in the NEG would envisage an increase in funds allocation for the State in different projects to the tune of Rs. 200 crore per year.

Asking the farmers to produce more, he said Sikkim's ginger and red chillies would be sent outside the State and country as an 'agricultural export zone' was already declared. We have to be ready to rise to the occasion, he said.

Chamling also urged the cultivators to use more organic fertiliser instead of chemical ones. This would fetch higher value for your products and earn a reputation for the State, the Chief Minister added.

During the Mela he distributed various government grants to about 700 people, official sources said.■

**NOW!**

18 December 2002

## It's a mela out there Chamling kicks off Janata Mela from

## Sombarey, bring home the benefits of NEC status

SOMBARIA : The state-wide Janata Mela, organized by the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) government began from December 15. The Chief Minister and SDF President, Pawan Chamling kicked off the programme from the Sombaria Bazar in the Daramdin Constituency in West Sikkim.

The Janata Mela is the initiative of the SDF party to "reach out to the people at the grass roots level and avail them of the benefits provided by the government."

Mr. Chamling was accorded a very big and warm reception by the people of Sombaria. Many had waited patiently for hours for him.

More than 700 people from the Daramdin constituency, which has R.S.Subba, Minister PWD, as its elected representative, received various benefits on the day. Amongst the people who attended were Kalawati Subba, Speaker, Ministers GM Gurung, D.D.Bhutia, P.S.Golay, R.B. Subba and G.C.Rai, Many MLAs and Chairmen were also present.

During the Mela rural housing schemes, land to ladless, Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme, gas stoves, old age pension and similar benefits were given to many of the below the poverty line rural people.

According to the SDF party publicity secretary, P.D.Rai, "This is in a way spear heading the work of the various departments who also were directed to put up stalls to disseminate information as well as to demonstrate their work. The people of the area got the opportunity to see a semblance of the work of the government at one place and indeed the 'Year of Implementation' of the government was highlighted."

Mr. Rai said that the Janata Mela is basically an "out-reach programme of the party" through which the ruling party will "assess the ground realities at the grassroots in the year of implementation."

In his speech lasting about an hour and forty-five minutes, the Chief Minister said that his government was on a sound footing. Mr. Chamling said that his government had started many welfare schemes for the people from housing loans to rural electrification programs to the vanaspati factory at Majitar. He said that now his government was financially sound due to its diligent work and coordination with the Centre and the people.

Mr. Chamling said that now that the SDF government had successfully got Sikkim into the North Eastern Council as a full-fledged member, this would bring in many more

benefits to the State. He attacked the Opposition who were now questioning many initiatives of his government. In particular he cited the case of Limboo and Tamang communities who are being considered for being accorded the Scheduled Tribe status. He said that propaganda was being used to try and whip emotions of tribal community to cause friction within the communities of the State.

He went on to announce that henceforth even more industrial benefits would accrue to the State, excise exemption being just one of them. He however, cautioned everyone to understand and learn from the mistakes of the past. He recalled that because of the misuse of similar incentives in the past, the Centre had no option but to clamp the Excise Act on Sikkim along with other Acts which the people of Sikkim are now paying dearly for.

Mr. Chamling reminded the opposition as well as the bureaucrats that the people of Sikkim could all have been very prosperous had the government of the time succeeded in utilizing the benefits for the people.

"Instead, we are subjected to so many Acts that today we are still reeling under that pressure. It is very unfortunate how at the time they only served the interests of a chosen few," he said.

He then went on to remind the people that his government was focussed only on building Sikkim so that it could achieve the highest standard of living for the people. He said that all will have to work for the alleviation of poverty and to uplift everyone by giving more and more opportunities. "And this is precisely what we are doing," he said.

On the question of opportunities he said that the government was coming out with innovative schemes. The schemes would cover all categories and age profiles, he assured. Thus in this "golden age" of Sikkim, he reminded the people, to foster good will as well as to make use of the opportunities to move forward.

Earlier he visited all the stalls and thanked the people who made this possible. The stalls reflected the mood and showed marked improvement in the quality of items on display - from floriculture to using new technology for building roads and bridges.

Through the Janata Mela, the SDF government is trying to decentralize the process of distribution of welfare schemes and take it right to the doorsteps of the people at the Districts rather than centralizing it in the State capital Gangtok.

"This way, rural populace need not come to Gangtok to avail of the facilities," Mr. Rai said.

The SDF party sees the Janata Mela, which will be held throughout the State in a phased manner, as "a start of a movement" that will strengthen the democratic movement in the State. ■

## 'They Are Jealous'

GANGTOK : The debate over the pros and cons of Sikkim joining the North Eastern Council refuses to die down. Now with even the Lok Sabha having passed the Bill, only Presidential assent is required before the amendment becomes an Act and Sikkim an official member of the NEC. Even the Chief Minister has been drawn into the slanging match and he sees envy in the protest against the latest development.

"Sikkim is now a member of the North Eastern Council but I hear that some people in town are spreading vicious rumours that by doing so Sikkim will lose its identity. These are the very same people who had tried to get membership when they were in power but failed. They are jealous now and not acknowledging the fact that by becoming a member of NEC, Sikkim will receive many additional benefits from the centre," Chief Minister Pawan Chamling said recently while addressing a gathering at the launch of smart card driving licences here at the SNT complex on December 12.

Mincing no words in his harsh assault on the Opposition, Mr. Chamling went on to comment on the whisper campaign launched against the recent decision to include Limbu and Tamang communities in the Scheduled Tribes list.

He said that rumours that the inclusion of two new communities in the ST list would endanger the safeguards enjoyed by Bhutias and Lepchas in Sikkim were aimed at fomenting communal trouble. "The safeguards for BLs in Sikkim remains protected and independent of which other tribes might join the ST list. The special protections in Sikkim are specifically for BLs and not tribals per se who have their own set of benefits and safeguards," he said.

"My job as the Chief Minister is to protect the people of Sikkim and the day I am not able to do so I will not only retire from politics but will excommunicate myself from Sikkim," the CM promised.

Taking the opportunity to respond to all the allegations levelled against his government, the CM then addressed the criticism of his government's decision to wind up the operations of HUDCO.

"We are facing huge losses as we have been paying loans taken by the previous government as far as HUDCO and Sikkim Vanaspati is concerned. We will also have to pay the Rs. 78 Crores debt of the Power Department," he added.

The Chief Minister said that his government was working towards making Sikkim a self-reliant state. "At present the state revenue is Rs 150 Crores and we are looking into various new avenues through which we can generate more revenue. We will earn Rs. 786 crores in

seven years from the on-line lottery of which we have already received Rs. 30 crores. We will hand over the Teesta-Rangit hydroelectric projects to any private party on the basis of their capabilities. Our state is blessed with a rich bio-diversity and we could utilise these resources," he added.

He also talked about the Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme and said that the youth of Sikkim should make use of this scheme. They are the future and our only hope and they should be shown the right path, he said.

He also informed that chemical fertilizers have now been banned in the state and henceforth only organic fertilizers should be used.

"Sikkim should march ahead with the changing times and the Sikkimese people too must recognise their responsibilities and perform their duties towards the state," he added. ■

## **Golden Glow For Mangan School**

# **Chamling Lays Stress on Human Resource Development For Sikkim**

by SARIKAH ATREYA

Mangan Senior Secondary School marked its Golden Jubilee here on December 11 in the presence of the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling as the Chief Guest. Apart from the local dignitaries, in attendance for the gala event were the Political Advisor to the CM, BB Gooroong, area MLA and Power Minister, Hishey Lachungpa, Zilla Adhyakshya, North, Lobzang Tenzing, Minister for Education and Law, R.B.Subba, Senior officials from the district and ex-students of the school.

On the day, the Chief Minister inaugurated the girls hostel and also the exhibition-cum-sale of handicrafts and the science exhibition put up by the students.

In her welcome address, the Principal, Ms. L.Pradhan highlighted the "glorious" fifty years of the School's existence. The School had humble beginnings in 1895, when a Finnish missionary Father Philco Pilcanan started a primary school with classes up to standard 2, along with a Church near the Gumpa Ringhem. The late Thargel Tshering Lucksom was then a teacher at the School and some of the prominent citizens who studied at the primary school were Khyaliramji, Chanam Mul, Kulman Pradhan and the late Singi Kazi.

The School was then shifted to the horticultural area. Ms. Pradhan said that when the government decided to take over the entire "development area" of Mangan, the school was again shifted to a private rented house in 1952.

"As per available records, especially the resolutions passed by the then School Managing Committee, the

Sikkim Darbar was pleased to grant the permission to run the Middle English School up to Class VIII in 1950 in a private house belonging to Supan Kazi. Although the permission was granted in 1950. It was only in 1952 that the School actually started to function. Thus the establishment of the School is taken to be as 1952," Ms. Pradhan said.

Classes of the Middle English School were held in a wooden house, with late Emanuel Lucksom as the headmaster and about fifty students.

In 1970, the School was upgraded to higher secondary level Late DC Agnihotri was the first principal of the Mangan Higher Secondary School. The School was upgraded to Senior Secondary level in 1977.

Principal Pradhan said that MSSS is the only Senior Secondary School in North Sikkim with Science stream. At present, there are 605 students in the Senior Secondary level and 301 students in the primary level, she said.

Dwelling on the various activities of the School, Ms. Pradhan said that the School had been participating in various state as well as national level science competitions and the participating students have brought laurels not only to the School but to the entire State as well.

Ms. Pradhan also took the opportunity to place some of the demands of the School before the Chief Minister. These included introduction of Commerce stream, repair of the Staff quarters, construction of a multipurpose School hall and a playground, electrification of the School buildings, transport facilities for the principal and government sponsored excursions and educational tours for the students.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister agreed in principle to grant the demand placed before him and suggested that expenses for educational tours and excursions should be shared by the School and the parents.

Mr. Chamling said that the students should be responsible towards the society and make concrete efforts to serve the society. He informed that his government had taken a policy decision to set up a college in each district and that 17 percent of the budget has been set aside for education only.

Mr. Chamling said that the State boasts of some of the best school buildings in the entire country. He said that his government's focus would be on human resource development and channelising the energy of the youth in the right direction.

Area MLA, Hishey Lachungpa, and Minister for Education and Law, R.B.Subba, also spoke on the occasion.

The students put up a colourful cultural show. Souvenirs and presented to ex-students on the occasion. Mr. Chamling also gave away the School's annual prizes and awards to the students. He also released a souvenir of the School to commemorate the occasion. ■

# The Telegraph

19 December 2002

## LS stamps on tribal status

### PEMA LEYDA SHANGDERPA

Gangtok, Dec. 19: Days after being included in the Northeast Council, Sikkim has received another boost with the Tamang and Limbu communities being accorded tribal status.

The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Order 2nd Amendment Bill to include the two communities as tribals was passed by the Lok Sabha yesterday. Along with Limbus and Tamangs, 140 other communities across the country have also been accorded tribal status by Parliament.

The inclusion of the two communities has been one of the main demands of the Sikkim Democratic Front government, an ally of the NDA.

Chief minister Pawan Chamling had been urging the Centre to accord tribal status to the two communities. He had submitted various memorandums to the Centre and met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister L.K Advani.

The Tamangs and Limbus were earlier clubbed under the other backward classes (OBC).

According to a communique issued by the state information and public relations department, a victorious Chamling has termed the new status for the two communities "a landmark achievement" for the SDF government. He also said this proved the sincerity of the government's commitments.

"My government believes in taking issues to their logical conclusion rather than just raising them," he said.

Chamling made the remarks after reaching the state capital from a whirlwind tour of West Sikkim, where the Janata Mela is being held. He assured that notwithstanding the inclusion of Tamangs and Limbus in the ST list, status quo would be maintained on the political rights of the Bhutias and Lepchas.

## Chamling brake on people's fair

### OUR CORRESPONDENT

Gangtok, Dec. 19 : The month long Janata mela that was inaugurated by chief minister Pawan Chamling on December 15 at a remote corner of West Sikkim, Sombaria, has been abruptly halted till December 24.

The reason: the chief minister takes off for Delhi to-

morrow to attend the National Development Council meet being chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The NDC meet has been scheduled for December 21.

This is Chamling's first visit to the national capital after Sikkim was included in the North Eastern Council (NEC). The Janata Mela will be resumed once the chief minister returns, this time starting from Geyzing, the West Sikkim headquarters, said officials at the secretariat.

The fair has already been held in Daramdin, Soreng, Chakung, Richenpong, Hee-Bermiok and Dentam constituencies. Some new schemes were also declared for this region by various government departments.

Two-hundred people from each of these constituencies were allotted rural housing schemes while a same number of women received free LPG connections. Another 100 were gifted GCI sheets for building roofs. Cheques were presented to those selected for the chief minister's self employment scheme. Other benefits distributed at the mela included compost pits by the agriculture department, green houses by the horticulture department, free rice for people living below the poverty line under the Annapurna and Antyodhya schemes.

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 December 2002

## Sikkim hails tribal Bill

Gangtok: The Sikkim government has hailed the Lok Sabha's passing of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes orders (second amendment) Bill 2002 on December 18 accommodating two communities of the state-Limboo and Tamang -in the tribal list.

Chief minister Pawan Chamling, also the president of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), thanked the Centre the taking the demand of the state seriously, an official release said here on Friday.

Coming close on the heels of Sikkim's inclusion in the North-Eastern Council, this latest move "proved the sincerity of the government's commitments," the release quoted Chamling as saying.

Chamling-led SDF government has been urging the Centre to include Limboo and Tamang along with Gurung, Mangar, Sunwar, Rai and Bhujel communities of Sikkim in the tribal list.

The Chief minister, however, assured that notwithstanding the inclusion of Tamang and Limboo communities in the ST list, he was "committed" to maintaining the "status quo" of the distinct political rights of the Bhutia and Lepcha ethnic groups (so far the two tribal groups of



the state), the release said.

Earlier, an apex committee of the Bhutia-Lepcha communities urged both the Centre and the state not to include any others into the ST list which, according to them, would dilute their special identity.

Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad and Congress also welcomed the Lok Sabha's decision. PTI

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 December 2002

# Limboos thank Chamling for tribal status

HT Correspondent

*Gangtok, December 20*

THE MEMBERS of the Limboo Action Committee for Tribal Status met Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on Friday to thank him for his contribution in securing tribal status for Limboos and Tamangs.

The Lok Sabha on Wednesday approved the Bill that has amended the relevant Act and granted tribal status to 140 communities across the country, including Limboos and Tamangs in Sikkim. Chamling said this is a resounding victory for the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF).

The Chief Minister said the distinct political rights of Bhutia and Lepcha communities would continue to be fully protected.

Others communities like Gurungs, Mangars, Sunuwars, Rais and Bhujels continue to wait for inclusion in ST list.

Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee president Namkha Gyaltzen thanked Chamling for his effort and congratulated the Limboos and Tamangs.

He has also asked the Government to hasten the process of getting other communities like the Newar Bahun and Chettri enlisted as other Backward Castes.

## The Statesman

24 December 2002

# Sikkim targets 10% growth

Statesman News Service

GANGTOK, Dec. 23- Sikkim wants to attain 10 per cent growth during the 10th Five Year Plan.

The Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling, during the National Development Council meeting on 21 December, said Sikkim has an annual target of 10 per cent growth, much higher than the eight per cent growth rate that Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee wants the country to attain.

Mr Chamling thanked the Centre for including Sikkim in the North Eastern Council. Spelling out the state's development agenda, he said it was pertinent to link Sikkim to the Prime Minister's golden quadrilateral roads project—this will make Sikkim more accessible to the rest of the country—and to open the gateway to Tibet.

The Chief Minister said it was essential to find an alternative route to National Highway 31-A, whose frequent closure due to bandhs and landslides, "is choking the state's development effort." Mr Chamling said a Central grant of Rs 100 crore is necessary for completing the airport at Pakyong, east Sikkim. He said these issues need to be addressed if 10 per cent development rate is to be achieved.

During the NDC meeting, Mr Chamling highlighted the need of a full-fledged university in the state. He said the Centre should help the state with basic infrastructure to achieve revenue of Rs 1,000 crore by the year 2015.

He thanked the Centre for having considered and passing the Bill on inclusion of Limboos and Tamangs in the Scheduled Tribe. This, he said, was a historical step and a fulfillment of a long pending demand of Sikkim.

He had a word of praise for the Centre for enabling the new industrial package for Sikkim.

## Bill on tribals

Close to the heels of Sikkim being formally included in the North Eastern Council, two of Sikkim's communities have been included in the Scheduled Tribes list.

The Lok Sabha, on 18 December, unanimously passed the Bill granting Tribal status to 140 communities in the country, including the Tamang and Limboo communities in the state.

The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) termed this as a "major achievement." The state government had been consistently urging the Centre to include the Limboo, Tamang, Gurung, Mangar, Sunwar, Rai and Bhujel communities of the state in the ST list. A number of memoranda had been submitted in the past to the Centre.

The All Limboo Youth Association (Central Committee) has also thanked all those who were instrumental in passing the amendment Bill for the inclusion of the two communities in the ST list.

Mr Kharga Vikram Subba, president of the AILYA, which has its headquarters in Kalimpong, told a Press conference here on 21 December that this was an "achievement of the entire Nepali community" and that this will certainly "help in further strengthening the community."

# The Statesman

25 December 2002

## Victorious Chamling returns, fair

**PEMA LEYDA SHANGDERPA**

Gangtok, Dec. 24: The government's biggest ever welfare jamboree resumed today with chief minister Pawan Chamling inaugurating the Janata Mela at Geyzing, the West district headquarters.

Chamling headed for Geyzing immediately after returning from New Delhi, where he had gone to attend the meeting of the National Development Council.

The fair, that was launched in Sombaria and held in four West Sikkim constituencies on December 15, was temporarily halted on December 19 as the chief minister had left for Delhi.

The mela is being held in all the 32 constituencies of the state with new welfare measures being doled out to the public.

On his return, Chamling received a rousing reception from people belonging to the Limboo and Tamang communities, who thanked him for getting them recognised as tribals.

A large gathering waited for him as his motorcade reached Melli, the south Sikkim-West Bengal border town, where he was garlanded and received by the public.

Among those who received him were his Cabinet colleagues and legislators from South and West Sikkim and Assembly Speaker Kalawati Subba.

Chamling was also felicitated by the public of Legship in West Sikkim while on his way up to Geyzing.

The chief minister said he had told the NDC meet that Sikkim was pursuing the economic reforms policy unveiled in the last few years.

A communique from the state information and public relations department further states that Chamling had told those present that the hill state had been able to generate political and social consensus on the need for reforms.

He added that a long-term vision strategy had been put in place with the two documents drafted by the government. Sikkim Human Development Report, 2001 and Sikkim "A people's Vision.

A roadmap, along with an agenda for sectoral and sub-sectoral reforms for the Tenth Plan, was based on large

scale intensive consultation

Chamling said he had also asked the Centre to take link the state with the golden quadrangle under the National Highway Development Project. This will link Kanyakumari to Kanchenjunga and fulfill both strategic and development goals, he said.

# The Telegraph

26 December 2002

## Chamling Flags of Mela on Victory Note

The Sikkim Democratic Front's Janata Mela, which resumed at Geyzing community centre complex yesterday, had all the makings of a victory parade.

The fair, termed sauliyat vitaran, suspended when chief minister Pawan Chamling left for the capital, was flagged off at the West District headquarters after he returned from New Delhi after attending the National Development Council meet.

With a clean sweep at the recent panchayat polls, and the new-found North East Council status and tribal status for the Limboos and Tamangs (LT) combine and a new industrial policy, granted by the Centre under their belt, SDF supporters had reason to celebrate.

Chamling also declared welfare measures through the recently elected representatives of the villages.

As many as 700 beneficiaries were brought under the folds of the welfare schemes, which included rural housing, LPG connections, monetary grants and free rice.

Addressing the gathering at the fair, the chief minister also took a dig at opposition members who were opposed to the NEC status.

"They are jealous because they could not achieve what we have even though they had made representations," he said adding that the NEC status would make an additional fund of more than Rs. 200 crore available to the hill state.

"Greater institutional support will also come our way," he said.

With other NEC states maintaining cordial relations with southeast Asian nations, Sikkim is looking forward to develop economic relations with them.

Speaking of the sound financial position of the state and its political stability, Chamling said the state was grateful to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government for including the LT combine into the scheduled tribe category.

Reservations for other communities would also follow suit," Chamling promised.

Apprehensions expressed by the Bhutia Lepcha

Community, of the LT status eroding their reservation and quota regime, were dismissed by the SDF.

"All the political rights of the Bhutia and Lepcha tribals will be properly safeguarded," the chief minister said.

The mela at the West District headquarters was attended by cabinet colleagues, senior government officials and district administration officials.

Chamling and his entourage today left for Yuksom, in remote west Sikkim, where they will halt for the night.

The month-long mela will be held across the 32 constituencies of the state. ■

## Assam Tribune

26 December 2002

### Second Phase of Sikkim Govt's 'Janata Mela'

Second phase of 'Janata Mela' a Sikkim government's outreach programme to distribute various largesses to the grassroot people resumed in West district's Geyzing Tuesday after a week's gap with Chief Minister Pawan Chamling addressing the gathering, reports PTI.

On its first phase of the melas, about 1000 families from each of the six constituencies in the West District were distributed government grants which included rural housing scheme, LPG connections, loans under Chief Minister's self employment scheme, land for landless, old age pension, Antodaya Yojana, Swarojgar Yojana and many others, officials said here Monday.

Chamling, who returned from Delhi after attending the National Development Council meeting, headed straight to West district to begin the second phase of the fairs. It would continue till Saturday next to resume again in January 20 next after a gap of holidays.

Various departments of the government put up stalls displaying their schemes of activities and achievements for the benefit of the rural people, they said. ■

## NOW!

31 December 2002

### Chamlings Aims 2% Higher Sikkim wants a spot in

## PM's Golden Quadrilateral roads project

While the growth rate for the country has been fixed at 8 percent, Sikkim has set its sights 2 percent higher and the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, announced here that Sikkim would achieve a 10 percent growth rate. Mr. Chamling staked the claim while speaking at the recent meeting of the National Development Council held here on December 21 to approve the 10th Five Year Plan.

The Chief Minister also stressed that for Sikkim to continue "growing" at 10 percent, the Centre will have to help out in the State's attempts at improving its infrastructure. In his 10 minute long address, Mr. Chamling urged that Sikkim will be linked to the Prime Minister's Golden Quadrilateral Roads Project. The said project is an ambitious task taken up on priority by the PMO to link the four metros of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata by 4 to 6 lane wide highways as part of the National Highways Project. This, Mr. Chamling said, would make the State more "accessible" to the rest of the country and even open the gateway to Tibet.

While on connectivity, the Chief Minister also said that it had now become necessary to find an alternative route to National Highway 31 A, since constant disruptions along the solitary lifeline to Sikkim were "choking" Sikkim's development efforts.

Mr. Chamling is also reported to have requested for another Rs. 100 crores for completing the airport at Pakyong. He said that these main issues would need to be addressed if the overall development rate of 10 percent fixed by the State Government for itself is to be achieved. These were vital pieces of infrastructure that had to be put in place if the State was to achieve a higher growth rate, he said.

He also requested for the setting up of a full-fledged university in Sikkim to enable local students the facility of complete education with the State boundaries. Such initiatives in putting the basic components of development in place, he said, would facilitate Sikkim in achieving its self-set target of generating Rs. 1,000 crores revenue by the year 2015.

The Chief Minister also thanked the Centre and Parliament for haveing considered and passed the Bill relating to inclusion of Limbus and Tamangs in the Scheduled Tribes List. This, he said, was a historical step and a fulfillment of a long pending demand of the State. He also thanked the Union Government for clearing the new industrial package for Sikkim, which he said includes all the incentives required to attract industrialists. Thanks

were also offered for the official clearance of the Bill enabling Sikkim to become the eighth member of the North Eastern Council. ■

## **LT, The New Tribal Grouping The Celebrations Begin**

The Parliament seems to have suddenly woken up to Sikkim. Coming close on the heels of parliamentary consent for the Bill amending the North East Council Act accordating Sikkim as the eighth member of the North Eastern Council comes the news of the Lok Sabha nod to the inclusion of two Sikkimese communities in the Scheduled Tribes list.

The Lok Sabha, on December 18 unanimously passed the Bill granting Tribal status to 140 communities in the country, including the Tamang and Limboo communities in the State.

The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) party is naturally jubilant over this, which it terms as a "major achievement."

The State government had been consistently urging the Centre to include the Limboo, Tamang, Gurung, Mangar, Sunuwar, Rai and Bhujel communities of the State in the ST list. A number of memoranda had been submitted to the Centre by the State government in the past.

Terming it a "landmark achievement for the SDF government," the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling said that the passing of the Bill to include the two communities in the ST list has proved his government's sincerity and commitment towards its preelection promises. He expressed his happiness over the latest achievement of his government and thanked the Central government for taking the demand of the State "seriously." He also added that his government believed in taking an issue to its logical conclusion rather than just "raising it."

Mr. Chamling, however, assured that he was committed to maintaining status quo on the distinct political rights of the Bhutia and Lepcha communities of the State, which he said would be fully protected. He said that the new inclusions would in no way dilute the political rights of the Bhutia and Lepcha communities.

The Chief Minister said that Sikkim's Rajya Sabha MP, P.T. Gyamtso and Lok Sabha MP Bhim Dahal had "played stellar roles" in getting the important Bill cleared in the Parliament.

Meanwhile, the jubilant Limboo and Tamang communities have expressed their "gratefulness" and thanked Mr. Chamling for his efforts towards this landmark achievement. Various Limboo and Tamang organisations have announced their intentions of felicitating Mr. Chamling on his return from New Delhi on December 23.

At the time of going to pring, Mr. Chamling was expected to address a mammoth public rally in Geyzing on December 24, during the Janata Mela there.

The All Limboo Youth Association (Central

Committee) has also thanked all those who were instrumental in passing the amendment Bill for the inclusion of the two communities in the ST list.

Kharga Vikram Subba, President, AILYA, which has its headquarters in Kalimpong, told a Press conference here on December 21 that this was an "achievement of the entire Nepali community" and that this would certainly "help in further strengthening the community."

"This movement for the demand for the inclusion of the two communities has been successful thanks to the efforts of Mr. Chamling," he said.

He, however, said that the inclusion of the two communities in the ST list should benefit the entire Nepali community, along with the Limboo and Tamang communities.

"This will help remove the sense of alienation amongst the Indian Nepalese. We expect the Limboo community from West Bengal to now take this opportunity to think in broader perspectives to champion the cause of the Limboo community within the Indian Nepalese community." My. Subba said.

All sobriety regarding celebrations to mark the inclusion of Limbu and Tamang communities in the Scheduled Tribes list were dropped when Chief Minister Pawan Chamling returned from his National Development Council Meeting on December 23, 2002. Representatives of the two communities greeted him not only at Bagdogra Airport, but at every stopover along the way.

Chyabrung dances by Limbus and Damphu Dance by Tamangs became a constant recurrence all along the way as even associations from neighbouring West Bengal lined up to thank the Chief Minister for his efforts which earned the two communities the ST recognition.

Mr. Chamling was greeted at the Airport by Minister PWD, R.B. Subba, Education & Law Minister, R.B. Subba, Minister AH & VS, PS Goley, UD & HD Minister, T.T. Bhutia, President, Sikkim Limbu Literary Association, B. Tamang, Chairman, Sikkim Tamang Buddhist Association, Chairman, Sikkim Limbu-Tamang Joint Action Committee and the executive body of the Association.

Also present were Limbu and Tamang Association representatives from Darjeeling and Kalimpong. En Route, the Chief Minister's motorcade was greeted by Tamang and Limbu Associations of the Dooars at the Coronation Bridge. Limbus and Tamangs from Kalimpong and Darjeeling greeted the motorcade again at Chitrey.

While entering Sikkim from Melli (the CM was headed for Gayzing), another huge crowd of members from the two communities, west and south district panchayat representatives and district officials offered a traditional welcome to the Chief Minister.

In all the low-key reception to the news were made up for with the exuberance which greeted the Chief Minister's return from Delhi. ■



HIMALAYAN

# Weekend

REVIEW

2 January 2003

## CM felicitated in Melli

MELLI : During the Chief Minister's welcome function organised here at Melli on 23 December, Pawan Chamling expressed his government's success in getting the Tamangs and Limboos included in the Scheduled Tribes list. "As I want all the communities of the state to enjoy equal facilities, my responsibility has only increased after getting these two communities their rights." Chamling said while assuring the gathering that he would strive to get the same status for the other left out communities.

The function was attended by people from all four districts, especially from South and West, who had come there to thank the CM for the success with the Limboo Tamang issue. Melli Bazaar looked entirely different on this day as it was decorated with flowers and colourful papers.

The CM landed at Bagdogra airport at around 2.00pm. Meanwhile, people at Melli Bazaar waited in thousands to greet him. The crowd included local businesspersons, all carrying Khadas. The crowd started the felicitations from Melli check post and arrived at the bazaar, all along shouting slogans. It was dusk before the programme started at around 5.00pm.

"Previous political parties only promised that they would work towards getting Tamangs and Limboos included in the tribal list but failed to deliver anything. However, Sikkim Democratic Front party has made the long cherished dreams of Tamangs and Limboos come true," a jubilant Chamling said.

"I am always prepared to sacrifice anything for the Sikkimese people," Chamling said. He added that after having procured the tribal status for the Limboos and Tamangs, his responsibilities in gettings, his responsibilities in getting the other communities their dues has increased manifold. "I believe in giving equal treatment to all," Chamling said.

The CM said that he will make his best effort to develop ecofriendly industry in the state, and endeavour to make Sikkim a poverty-free state within in the span of a decade. He also promised to make Sikkim one of the most important states in the country.

During his speech, Chamling also assured the public that there would be positive improvement in the state in

the field of industry. "Sikkim will not only be a poverty free state after a decade but it will also be one of the advanced state in the country provided I have the support of the Sikkimese people," he further added.

After the programme, the CM was escorted to the Power Guest House, Melli, from where he left for Gyalshing the same day.

The programme was also attended by were Kalawati Subba (Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly), K.N.Rai, R.S.Goley Minister for Industries: R.B.Subba, Minister for Education; T.N.Tenzing, IPS (DGP), K. Srinivas, IAS (DC South); O.H. Subba, IPS Girish Chandra Rai (the area MLA), Mingma Tshering, IPS (SP South); and the panchayats among others.■

NEPALI  
Times

3 January 2003

## Why Sikkim Works

*Kundan Dixit*

Nepal's rulers and planners may not need to go on governance junkets to the West to figure out how to run this country. The model is right there across our eastern border in Sikkim.

The erstwhile Himalayan kingdom that once lagged behind Nepal in every development parameter is now surging ahead in literacy, child survival, health services and infrastructure. And not just Nepal, Sikkim is overtaking other Indian states as well.

Sikkim is one-tenth the size of Nepal and has one-fortieth our population, and that makes it easier to get results. In terms of ethnic diversity, topography, culture and traditions there is no other place more similar to Nepal. So, theoretically, what works in Sikkim should work in Nepal. But if doesn't. Sikkim's formula is good governance, grassroots democracy, and a strong, visionary leadership. The can-do state secretariat in Gangtok couldn't be more different from the officialdom one encounters in Singh Darbar.

Sikkim's Chief Secretary, Sonam Tenzing, receives us in his oak-panelled room, and seems well-briefed about goings-on in Kathmandu. Tenzing's wife is from Nepal, but that is not the only reason. "What happens in Nepal touches us," he says. "In Sikkim's development we're trying to do everything Nepal didn't do and should have done, and what Nepal has done and should have done."

Sikkim's formula for success is appropriate planning, good governance, true devolution of power and decision-making to elected grassroots councils, and an idealistic and accountable leadership.

Sonam Tenzing gives full credit to his boss, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, "It is the vision of one man who believes in delegating responsibility but expects results."

We are ushered into the Chief Minister's official residence on a ridge overlooking Gangtok, and Pawan Chamling speaks in colloquial peoples' Nepali, not the Sanskritised officialese one is used to hearing in Kathmandu. He exudes the confidence of a man who knows where he wants to go, and what to do to get there..

It has helped that this former monarchy and Indian protectorate is one of ten special category states which receive central assistance from New Delhi. But things haven't been easy for Chamling. After ousting his mentor, Nar Bahadur Bhandari in the 1994 state assembly elections, he had to battle for political survival. After being nearly voted out himself, critics say Chamling used the ethnic card to divide the opposition. This, they say, has irreversibly harmed Sikkim's communal harmony. But his critics grudgingly admit that Chamling's strategy worked, and he is now an almost unopposed leader. Today, Chamling's SDF party has a virtual run of the 33 member state assembly, the lone opposition MLA is Bhandari himself.

Chamling exudes the down-to-earth charm of a self-made grassroots leader. He never went to college, and a conversation with him does not go into high-flying political theory or nebulous concepts of democracy. It is about what is do-able, how long it will take to do it, and how much it will cost.

"What the man has is a lot of common sense," says PD Rai, an engineer-turned-politician whom Chamling convinced to head SIDICO, a one-stop shop to entice investors to Sikkim new jobs could be created. "He has a group of managers who implement his vision, and he has deliberately staked his political career on the promises he made to the people."

And what is this vision? Chamling counts them out on his fingers. "Ethnic harmony, sustainable development, security and environmental protection." The fact that the ethnic issue still looms large is an acknowledgement that the divisiveness of the 1994 elections bruised ethnic relations between the Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali-speakers, who are collectively known as "NBC" (Newar, Bahun, Chhetri).

Chamling's long-term development goals are ambitious, but not unrealistic in a state with a population of only 500,000: universal literacy, eradicating poverty and near-zero unemployment by 2015. By that period, he wants Sikkim to be a hydropower exporter and wean itself away from special subsidy packages from the federal government in New Delhi.

Chamling has no illusions that development is linked to security, and says to his visitors. "Just look at Nepal, The security problem is actually a result of a failure of development, the lack of jobs and opportunities." Chamling's instruction to the bureaucracy is to implement development goals on a war footing.

Sikkim's literacy is higher than Nepal, but like in Nepal female literacy has lagged behind. The government's priority is girls' education and it has a unique program of financial incentives: the state deposits Rs2,500 when she graduates. But she can only take out the money when she is 21, and only if she is still single at that age. If she drops out of school or gets married, she forfeits the money.

"The idea is to keep girls in school, and to delay the marriage age, and when she does decide to get married she already has some money of her own and is more independent," explains the speaker of Sikkim's state legislature, Kalawati Subba. "Women don't need affirmative action, they need support to stand on their own feet and be treated equally," she says, citing that nearly 40 percent of all elected village leaders in the last local elections were women.

Subba is convinced the demand for development must come from the grassroots, and says this is what the chief minister is trying to do with his pro-poor programs. "Politics must come from every household, every Sikkimese must feel powerful enough to demand these services and get them from the people they elected."

When Chamling stood for re-election in 1999, his campaign slogan was. "*Janata ko raj ma janata nai raja*" and "*Afno gaun, apnai banaun.*" (Speaking to visitors from Nepal, Chamling spontaneously crafts a slogan for Nepal's own future. "Maharaja euta, raja dui karod janata.") This strong emphasis on devolution and self-reliance may just have been a slogan elsewhere, but Chamling seems to mean it. He called 2002 "The Year of Implementation" in which all projects were rushed to completion.

To outsiders, it appears as if Chamling is still on election-mode. PD Rai agrees: "As a matter of fact, he is already campaigning for the 2004 elections, by proving to the people that he has kept his promises to them." The Chief Minister has been going around the state attending a series of *Janata Mela*, development jamborees where the people get a chance to ask their elected representatives and bureaucrats about progress on health, education, roads, rural housing, or their old age pension. They can even grill local officials where the money for development projects is going, or why a road project is still stuck.

To be sure, Chamling faces a lot of hurdles. Not the least of which are opposition politicians who think he has an autocratic streak, has a history of hanging out with questionable figures including some Nepali Maoists and is someone who doesn't hesitate to use the ethnic card. Corruption is still said to be rife.

Admits one senior government official: "Our biggest bottleneck is the delivery mechanism for development. The bureaucracy is still too laid back, and motivation levels are not as high as we want them to be."

Sikkim's development has always been driven by populist-minded politicians with pork-barrel funds, and Chamling came from the tradition. But he has tried to

change course and do it systematically by commissioning economists and sociologists to write the Sikkim Human Development Report released in 2002. JNU professor Mahendra P Lama helped write the report, which is now the state's development blueprint. "There was very poor understanding about the needs of mountain people, and a belief that the same development model will work everywhere" recalls Lama. "This report is completely indigenous and looks at baseline local parameters for the first time and makes.

Lama concluded that past subsidies were used as government handouts and had spoiled the people by killing local initiative and traditional self-help. The state is implementing Lama's recommendations, and is now focussing on loans for entrepreneurship, skills-buildings and microcredit for farmers.

In the village of Rong, three hours from Gangtok, the roofs of Darjeeling can be seen glinting on a ridge across the valley. There is evidence that the plans are being translated into real development on the ground. The secondary school in Rong has a new building, well kept facilities, a drinking water system. A nearby health post vaccinates all children and keeps records, most basic medicines are free. Children of poorer families go to a nearby day-care centre which provides a daily free meal, while their parents work in the fields. Health worker SB Gurung knows almost every child by name, and tells us: "There is nothing more satisfying than working in your own village to motivate people, and see the effect of your work."

Back in Gangtok, Tourism Minister, KT Gyalsen says there are lessons for Sikkim in the way Nepal has handled tourism-- some worth emulating, others not. "We don't want to rush headlong into mass tourism," says Gyalsen. "We are satisfied with the present level of traffic and we will let it grow slowly." Sikkim gets 300,000 Indian tourists annually and 50,000 international tourists for whom it has relaxed the requirement of interline permits. Many tourists in Gangtok today are those who cancelled Nepal and came here instead. Many tourists in Gangtok today are those who cancelled Nepal and came here instead.

A new airport at Pakyong, expected to be completed in 2004, will handle ATRs and connect to Calcutta, Bagdogra and even Kathmandu. At present the only alternative to driving up from the plains is to take the daily Jetranger ferry from Bagdogra, and the helicopters also operate mountain sight-seeing flights. But while mountaineers can climb Kanchenjunga from the northern Nepal side, climbing the world's third-highest peak is banned from the Sikkim side. Many holy mountain lakes are out of bounds for tourists, and the state is promoting rural tourism by giving villagers loans to convert parts of their homes into pensions for trekkers.

Sikkim's location on the border with China and Nepal, and astride the Chumbi Valley makes it an area of great strategic importance to India, a fact that is evident in the

heavy military presence along the mountain highways which are maintained by the army.

At SIDICO's office in Gangtok, PD Rai's staff is busy conducting courses for young entrepreneurs (many of them women) keen on starting businesses through a project called the Chief Ministers' Self-help Scheme. "New kids are coming into the job market, and we need to create opportunities so they are kept busy," he tells us. "Preference is given to women and families below the poverty line. So far there hasn't been a single defaulter."

A generation after its annexation by India, Sikkim is being promoted as a model state. Its rulers want to develop without the separatist violence and security problems that plague other northeastern states. "The only way Sikkim can absorb the tensions of modernisation and a multi-ethnic society is by focussing on genuine human development in its own unique way," says Mahendra Lama. So far, it looks like there is a lot the rest of India, too, can borrow from the way Sikkim has gone about ensuring peace through development. This is why Chamling likes to say: "India is learning a lot from Sikkim. India is merging with Sikkim, not the other way round." ■

## The Telegraph

4 January 2003

# Chamling tracks rural route to success

Gangtok, Jan, 3 : Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today urged his party - All Sikkim Democratic Front (ASDF) - supporters to be "more proactive" in strengthening the institution of panchayati raj in the hill state.

Speaking at a programme, which was organised by the ASDF workers and various panchayats at the Gymnasium Hall here, the chief minister said rural self-administration held the key to Sikkim's allround growth and development.

The function was organised to felicitate Chamling because of the "two recent successes that the state has notched up under his able rule."

Sikkim has not only been included in the Northeastern Council (NEC) but also two Nepali ethnic communities the Limboos and the Tamangs from the state now figure in the Scheduled Tribes list of the Constitution.

Specaking about the twin successes, the chief minister, who was showered with khadas (traditional Buddhist scarves) and garlands by the organisers, said the "recent

achievements" spoke volumes of the hill state's progress under the SDF rule over the past eight years.

"Though the party has achieved a lot for Sikkim in the last eight years, the going has not always been easy. We had to face numerous obstacles to meet the goals," he said.

Despite the deterrents, he claimed, Sikkim has achieved what many states in the Indian union had failed to do in more than 50 years after Independence.

"The state's image in New Delhi is very good. Moreover, the cordial relation between the BJP led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre and the SDF has helped in fulfilling many of our demands," he explained.

The ruling SDF is an ally in the NDA.

"The NEC status is beneficial for Sikkim's financial health. It will not only enhance the state's annual budget by an additional Rs. 200 crore but also promises other bounties like various institutional support and seat reservations for higher studies. The state has also been awarded a new industrial package, which stipulates exemption of all central excise duties for the next 10 years, because of this status," said Chamling.

The chief minister also took the opportunity to hit out at the Opposition, claiming his rival, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad (SSP) had failed to bag the NEC status for the state despite ruling it for three successive terms.

"Huge debts and unfulfilled promises were the only legacy passed on by the previous governments," alleged the SDF chief.

He also blamed his predecessor and SSP chief Nar Bahadur Bhandari for his "gift rackets" that allegedly depleted the state exchequer. ■

## **New Church building inaugurated**

Gangtok, Jan, 3 : Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today inaugurated a new building of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim (EPCS) at Tadong, a Gangtok exurb.

The Evangelical Presbyterian - a Protestant denomination - believers in the hill state manage the financial affairs of the church on their own. "The funds for the new building, which was constructed at an estimated cost of Rs.18 lakh, were raised by us. The state government had, however, donated Rs.1.5 lakh as assistance." said G.T. Dhungel, a firm believer.

The old structure was built in 1987 when the faith evoked interest among a section of Sikkimese.

Pastor P.S. Tingbo, who is in-charge of the Northeast Presbytery, Ruben Rai, president, EPCS were present during the inauguration programme.

Former MLA Menlom Lepcha, president, church construction committee, was also present on the occasion. ■

## *The Sentinel*

5 January 2003

### **Chamling raps Opp. of Misleading People on Sikkim's entry into NEC**

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling lambasted the Opposition in the State for allegedly having failed to secure the tribals' rights and also trying to mislead the people trying to mislead the people regarding the State's entry in the North Eastern Council (NEC).

Speaking at a felicitation ceremony organized by the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) here, Mr. Chamling said the Opposition had ruled over the state for long years and kept reiterating promises of securing the tribal status for the limboos and the Tamang communities.

"Not only did they fail to do so. They had also betrayed the State's people," the Chief Minister said.

Regarding the Opposition's allegation that Sikkim's entry into the NEC would harm the State's interest, he said, "Sikkim will, on the contrary, get additional funds every year from the council, along with major help in fourism, health and transportation projects."

The State Government was also committed to safeguard the established rights of the Bhutia and Lepcha communities, he said. ■

## **THE TIMES OF INDIA**

6 January 2003

### **Chamling lauded on recognition of tribes**

Akhil Sikkim Democratic Front, a frontal organisation of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), felicitated chief minister Pawan Chamling for his "success to induct the Limboo and Tamang community in the central tribal schedule."

The decision was taken at the recent Parliament session, where it was passed unanimously in both houses.

The Limboo (Subba) tribe lost its reservation when Sikkim merged with the Indian Union as its 22nd state in 1973. Presently there are two ministers, along with the Speaker of the state assembly from this tribe. There is one minister from the Tamang community as well. They will now be given the same status as the Bhutias and Lepchas, the two main tribes of the state.



Speaking on the occasion, Chamling said the inclusion of Sikkim in the North East Council has helped the state getting extra fund for its development. Sikkim is already getting Rs. 200 crore per year. In addition, it is also receiving Rs. 1,100 crore from the plan and non plan budgets, sanctioned by the Centre. "We are confidently moving towards our goal of self-reliance by 2015." he said. ■

Business Standard

6 January 2003

## Debate over lifting tourism curbs

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has called upon the people of Dzongu, a restricted area in remote north district, to debate among themselves whether free flow of tourists to the place would benefit them or not. Addressing a rally on the occasion of traditional Lepcha new year celebrations at Namprikdang in north district on Sunday Chamling asked the people to debate over the issue of lifting restrictions on tourists visiting Dzongu. ■

SIKKIM HERALD

26 January 2003

## We have a broad vision and a strong will to accomplish the tasks pronounced in the manifesto - Chief Minister

Dear Citizens,

On the occasion of 52nd Republic Day of India I extend my hearty greetings and felicitation to all farmers, youths and all the civil society of every background who have upheld democratic values and principles and maintained peace, tranquility and harmony throughout the State. We have also achieved considerable progress in economic and social fields by means of tolerance, cooperation and involvement of all in accordance with democratic traditions. We have still many more goals to achieve and we are prepared to remove all hurdles and disquieting factors that impede the process of growth in the State.

26th January reminds me of the great sacrifices of the Indian people for the cause of Democracy and who have ultimately transformed the country into a Republic. We ought to dedicate ourselves today for service to the State

and hold in high esteem the interests of the country and the State above everything.

The greatest enemy that we face today is Poverty. The President of India APJ Abdul Kalam has said "...Poverty is the root cause of all our problems and should be the object of our fight." In Sikkim we still have 35% people below the poverty line. The past feudal practices and deprivations are the prime cause of the large scale poverty in the State. We are determined to remove every vestige of monopolization of education, health facilities and basic technologies which are means of creating wealth for the State.

The 10th plan outlay for Sikkim is provisionally fixed at Rs. 1655 crores and we propose to raise our Gross Domestic Product from the current 7% to 10% per annum. This not only calls for additional investment but also calls for effective governance and a coordinated effort from all quarters to get the best out of the potential that we possess. Today we are face to face with the challenges of globalisation. The market faces a huge vacuum of knowledge-its creation and deployment. We have launched a new scheme "Kaushal Vikash Kosh" to create an army of skilled, motivated manpower in the State. All educated youths will have an opportunity to equip themselves with professional skills in the areas of I.T., Tourism, Science and Technology, Rural Development etc. The pre-requisite to create a knowledge society is the improvement in the literacy rate which is targeted to grow to 85% by the end of 10th plan.

The Chief Ministers employment scheme is already launched and every year we propose to prepare more than 2000 educated youths for self employment ventures. I call upon all educated youth to be decisive select a trade of their choice, get trained, obtain the financial assistance and venture to stand in their own feet independently.

Another great enemy we encounter in the State is the communal and casteist ideology working in a subtle manner at different quarters. This not only destroys our oneness, tradition and cultural heritage but also can disrupt peace and tranquility of the State. Our people have seen enough of autocratic, dictatorial and selfish motives working behind communal and casteist ideologies and are prepared to rebuff and beat the ugly faces of such divisive forces. Now all believe in a common vision and a shared future of peace, prosperity and harmony.

I congratulate the Limboos and the Tamangs who as new tribals have new opportunities to develop socially and economically. We would like to see that they take great strides to make up for the lost opportunities so far Dear citizens with out membership in the NEC we are determined to push our growth up in the score board. Be it in the field of education or health, agriculture or industry, tourism and rural development, our policy is to achieve quality, reliability and efficiency. The rural housing scheme, including the distribution of GCI sheet, drinking water

facilities, distribution of LPG, Gramin Rojar Yojana will be speeded up to cover all BPL families in the State. Action is already taken to carpet all the district and subdivision roads and a project report is being prepared to improve/reconstruct the Gangtok-Siliguri National Highway. The Samdruptse project, the Chemchey and the Uttare lake projects are being undertaken to cater to the interests of tourists in the State.

Now we have turned from revenue deficit state to resource surplus state and our revenue growing at the rate of 12% per annum. The fiscal deficit has come down to as low as 3.5%. All these are positive signs of our fiscal consolidation, yet our endeavour is to curtail revenue expenditure and other unproductive wasteful subsidies. The HDR and the Vision documents have set a road map and an action plan for us within the framework of the State plan. Our policy is to ensure a well regulated system that is transparent, accountable and one that fosters competition.

I would like to ensure one and all that though we are a small state we have a broad vision and a strong will to accomplish the tasks pronounced in the manifesto. We would like to assure that this Govt. will ever give justice to the poor and never betray their interests with false assurances.

I would also like to announce that from the coming year we will implement the process of decentralization so that development becomes a people's programme. The Panchayati Raj Institutions will have all authority to plan and execute district level schemes in accordance to their own developmental needs.

In Sikkim, I have always welcomed an open debate and discussion with public on issues of development. The civil society must play a vital role in identifying factors that inhibit growth in the State and enlighten us with public interest vision that stimulates productivity, generates knowledge, skills and technology. Perhaps this can lead us to develop our own model of people centered development for in Democracy people reign supreme. ■

## The Telegraph

28 January 2003

# Top honours for Danny and Kazi

### OUR CORRESPONDENT AND PTI

Gangtok, Jan 27: Two of Sikkim's most famous sons have been chosen for the top civilian awards announced for Republic Day.

Sikkim's first chief minister L.D. Kazi had been honoured with the Padma Vibhushan while actor Danny

Denzongpa will receive the Padma Shri, the first time that the state has been chosen for the civilian awards.

"I am happy. It is good," the 98-year-old Kazi said yesterday at the Raj Bhavan here, shortly after Sikkim Governor V.Rama Rao felicitated him with a shawl and bouquet for getting the second highest civilian award of the country.

Asked whether he felt the honour should have come to him earlier, the leader, who now stays in Kalimpong, said: "There is a time and opportunity for every thing. The time is ripe now."

"Kazisahab", as he is popularly known, was born in East Sikkim's Pakyong in 1904. He began his political career in 1947 and launched the democratic movement in Sikkim when it was a tiny Himalayan kingdom ruled by Palden Thondup Namgyal, the last Chogyal of the hill state.

Known as the state's father of democracy, Kazi was the chief architect of Sikkim's merger with India in 1975.

His Sikkim Congress won the 1974 elections capturing 31 out of the 32 Assembly seats. Chief minister Pawan Chamling, whose government had recommended his name for the award, said the efforts to integrate the people of Sikkim with the rest of the country would get a boost with Kazi's nomination for the Padma Vibhushan.

## The Statesman

31 January 2003

# Chamling on Sikkim tourism

The Sikkim chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has urged the people associated with the tourism industry to keep pace with time to boost the tourism sector in the state.

He was speaking at the concluding function of a three-day intermediate training for guides and tour operators.

He also appealed to the participants to work towards protection of cultural and traditional heritage of the state to which tourists are attracted. The government believes in work and has given topmost priority to the service sector, Mr. Chamling said.

Due to hard work and sincerity of the people associated with the tourism industry Sikkim has been able to bag the best tourism performing state in the northeastern region for the fourth consecutive time, he added.

The training had been organised by the Travel Agent Association of Sikkim (TAAS) in which over 150 people including travel operators, guides and taxi drivers participated.

Speaking on the occasion, the tourism minister, Mr. K.T.Gyalsten, said that it was due to the effort of the chief

minister that Sikkim has been coming up as one of the favoured tourism hotspots for both the domestic and foreign tourists.

The focus of the training was to make the tour operators and guides well informed about the flora, fauna and culture of the state. ■

## Gangtok **TIMES**

2 February 2003

### Chief Minister On A Whirlwind Tour To Attend Janata Mela

With the rounding-off of Janta Melas at Rongli, Pakyong, Mining ground at Rangpo, Mangan, Dhajey Daran and Tashiding, two Janta Melas remain to be covered. On 28 January Janta Mela will be held at Namthang and the last Janta Mela will be concluded at Pangthang.

About 5,000 people attended the Janta Mela at Pakyong on 21 January 2003, giving a rousing reception to the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, his cabinet colleagues and senior members of the SDF party.

With the welcome address by the District Collector Mr. Pathak, the Janta Mela meeting began in right earnest. Two are MLAs, J.K.Bhandari of Losing Pacheykhani and Sonam Dorji of Bara Pathing, admitted their mistakes to remain with the opposition, when the people are always asking them to join the ruling party. They informed the gathering that with the full support of the people, they have joined SDF, because they liked the pro-poor policies of Chamling government.

In the course of his speech, Mr. J.K.Bhandari presented the following demands for the consideration of SDF government. Some of the important demands are the following: 1. Pakyong should be upgraded as a District; 2. Construction of a water supply scheme; 3. Establishment of a College; Construction of a public ground. Similarly, Mr. Sonam Dorji placed the following demands: 1. Construction of a water supply scheme; 2. Construction of footpaths; 3. Construction of rural roads.

While addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister declared that SDF government will not preach and propagate any distinction among the people. SDF government will look after the welfare of the people, specially the poor people who are deprived. The Chief Minister Chamling distributed facilities to the identified persons as chosen by the MLAs and Panchayat and party leaders. The facilities include land to the landless Sukumbasis, old age pensions, Chief Minister Self-

Employment schemes to the young entrepreneurs to establish some small scale industrial units, distribution of gas stoves to at least two hundred persons, cash loan and rice to the Panchayats etc. In every Mela the number of beneficiaries was between 200 and 700 persons from the poor families. ■

## **NOW!**

4 February 2003

### Lifetime Award for achievement in literature for Chamling

The Governor, V. Rama Rao presented the Poets Foundation Award for lifetime achievement in literature to Chief Minister Pawan Chamling on January 26 at the Republic Day parade here.

Pradip Kumar Chaudhari, the General Secretary of Poets Foundation while taking to the Press the next day informed that the Poets Foundation. Poets Foundation was a non-political not for profit, government registered literary educational social cultural organization of international standing established in 1996.

He further revealed that the Chief Minister of West Bengal too was in contention for the award when the awards committee chanced upon some English and Bengali translations of Mr. Chamling's poems. "The moment we read the poems, it was unanimously decided that the award should go to him," Mr. Chaudhari said.

The award comprises of a cash award of Rs. 10,000, a gold medal, an Uttoriyo, a citation and books and cassettes of Poet Foundation, it is learnt.

Mr. Chaudhari then informed the gathering that a Poets Village was being established on a 300 acre plot of land situated about 50 kms outside Kolkata. This village consists of a school, college, hospital, community centre, creative block, floriculture, agricultural land and an old-age-home.

He then revealed that a Poets village on similar lines has also been promised for Sikkim by the Chief Minister. Amalendu Kundu, a journalist working in Sikkim and also a representative of the Poets Foundation in Sikkim will reportedly coordinate the work of setting up this village. Mr. Chamling, its learnt, has also agreed to be the Principal Advisor of the Internal Advisory Committee of Poets Foundation.

## **POVERTY IS ENEMY NO. 1**

GANGTOK : The Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, identified poverty as the greatest enemy facing the country

and Sikkim at present. In his Republic Day address, the CM quoted the President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam words: "...poverty is the root cause of all our problems and should be the object of our fight," while reiterating his government's commitment to root poverty out from the state by removing "every vestige of monopolisation of education, health facilities and basic technologies which are means of creating wealth for the State."

The Chief Minister admitted that 35 percent of the local population was still subsisting below the poverty line due to the feudal practices and deprivations of the past.

Commenting on Sikkim's future prospects, Mr. Chamling informed that the 10 Plan Outlay for the State has been provisionally fixed at Rs. 1,655 crores. This, backed by the State's commitment to raise its Gross Domestic Product from the current 7 percent to 10 percent annum is expected to help in improving Sikkim's fiscal health in the near future.

Mr. Chamling, however, admitted that for this to become a reality, not only would Sikkim require additional investments, but also effective governance and a coordinated effort from all quarters to extract the best out of Sikkim's potential.

As Sikkim battles poverty on one front, on the other side it is faced by the challenges of globalisation, Mr. Chamling said. The state he said faces a huge vacuum of knowledge its creation and deployment. In this regard, the State government has launched the Kaushal Vikash Kosh to create an "army" of skilled and motivated manpower in Sikkim as committed with literacy targetted to grow to 85 percent by the end of the 10th Plan, the CM said.

Continuing on the State's fiscal health, the CM revealed that Sikkim has "turned" from a revenue deficit state a resource surplus state with its revenue growing at the rate of 12 percent per annum. Even though the fiscal deficit is now down to 3.5 percent. Mr. Chamling announced that his commitment to curtail revenue expenditure and other "unproductive, wasteful subsidies" remains undiluted.

"Our policy is to ensure a well regulated system that is transparent, accountable and one that fosters competition," he said.

In an obvious reference to the current political situation in the State Mr. Chamling also identified "communal and casteist" ideology as the other "great enemy" of the State. "Out people have seen enough of autocratic, dictatorial and selfish motives working behind communal and casteist ideologies and we are prepared to rebuff and beat the ugly faces of such divisive forces," he said.

The CM also congratulated the Limbu and Tamang communities on their inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes list and urged them to take this opportunity to develop socially and economically.

The CM also assured that even though Sikkim was a small State, the government was moving ahead with a "broad vision and strong will" to accomplish the promises

which brought it to power.

Reiterating his call for the development of a civil society in Sikkim, Mr. Chamling invited an open debate and discussion on issues of development. "The civil society must play a vital role in identifying factors that inhibit growth in the state and enlighten us with public interest vision that stimulates productivity, knowledge, skills and technology," he said. ■

## Janata Mela for Transparency

### Chamling warns against vested interests misleading on Limbu-Tamang issue

GANGTOK : Addressing the Janata at the Janata Melas around the State, the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling reiterated that the main aim behind the Mela was to offer transparency in the functioning of the State Government and at the same time create awareness among the people about the various pro-poor oriented schemes being implemented by his government.

Mr. Chamling maintained that Sikkim was the only State in the country where people were getting benefits on such a "large scale".

Explaining his government's decision to hand over the benefits directly to women, the CM said it was done so that the womenfolk of the State come at par with their male counterparts. It would involve them in the developmental activities of the State, he said, Urging the people to make the "best use" of the benefits, Mr. Chamling assured that more people would be covered the next year.

While commenting on the reactions to the inclusion of Limbu and Tamang communities in the Scheduled Tribes list, the CM warned the people getting carried away by the "malicious" rumours being spread by vested interests. Rather, join hands with the government to fashion a better tomorrow for Sikkim, he explained. ■

## The Statesman

8 February 2003

### Chamling urged to restore rights to Bhutias, Lepchas

GANGTOK, Feb, 7, - The Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association's apparent "concern" over "certain false rumours" on the issue of political rights of Bhutias and



Lepchas in the state in the light of the recent inclusion of the Limboos and Tamangs in the Scheduled Tribes list has led to it calling on the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling and submitting to him a memorandum in this regards.

A high level delegation of STWA, led by its president, Mr. Kunzang Sherab and general secretary, Mr. Thukchuk Lachungpa, called on Mr. Chamling at Mintokgang on 5 February and submitted a memorandum to him requesting the protection of political rights of the Bhutias and Lepchas in the State.

While welcoming the inclusion of the two communities in the ST list and appreciating the Chief Minister's timely clarification on the seat reservation issue, the STWA has asked him to "take strict and necessary actions to dispel false rumours spread for vested interests," which it says has "caused fear and apprehension amongst the indigenous Bhutias and Lepchas in the state." It, however, added that the inclusion of the Tamangs and Limboos in the ST list has in "no way diluted the special protection given to the Bhutia-Lepchas, in the form of Constitutional enactments and state legislations," and of those who are already in the ST list.

The STWA, in order to understand the basic issue, also held a general body meeting and passed a number of resolutions one of which requests the Chief Minister's commitments to ensure that the impending Constitutional changes do not in any way adversely affect the interests of the Bhutias and Lepchas."

Further, the STWA has said that the representatives from the Bhutia and Lepcha communities should be included in the process of delimitation of seats. It has also requested the state government to convene a high-level meeting of all the concerned parties and organisations to "concretise the existing government stand on reservation of Bhutia-Lepcha seats and to resolve the issue once and for all." ■

## The Statesman

19 February 2003

### Gangtok seminar on heritage conservation

GANGTOK, Feb, 18-A three-day national seminar on "Strategies for Heritage Conservation in Hills" began here from today.

Organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with INTACH, Indian Council of Conservation Institutes, Lucknow and Advanced Centre for Conservation Research and Training, Lucknow, the seminar was inaugurated by the chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, at the police conference hall here.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Chamling said that with the changing times and rapid development and technological advancements, the need for conservation and preservation of cultural heritage and traditions have also risen.

"Sikkim is unique in many ways, in terms of its natural wealth, its rich cultural heritage and its people. We are aware that in modern times, it is absolutely necessary to preserve our uniqueness," he said.

Mr. Chamling said that his government had under taken many programmes on heritage conservation. Some of them being identification of heritage sites across the state, such as the Rabdentse ruins, efforts in cultural rejuvenation by giving due recognition to traditional faith healers like Jhakri and Boomthing, construction of traditional houses belonging to the ethnic communities of the state and declaring ethnic festivals as state holidays.

While reiterating his government's commitments towards conservation of cultural heritage, Mr. Chamling said that efforts towards conservation at the right time would have far-reaching impact. Earlier, in her welcome address, the commissioner-cum-secretary, department of cultural affairs, Ms Jayshree Pradhan, spoke on the need for conservation of heritage for posterity and the future generations of the state. She also spoke on the various conservation efforts undertaken by her department. Ms Pradhan said that the department is in the process of taking up the White Memorial Hall here and converting it into a state museum.

The Director General of INTACH, Indian Council of Conservation Institutes, Lucknow, Dr. O.P. Agarwal, in his introductory address, said that conservation of cultural heritage could be done effectively through the media. ■

## The Telegraph

25 February 2003

### Tax break in Chamling revenue roadmap

#### PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA

GANGTOK, Feb, 24 : Restructuring the tax administration and exploring new avenues to mop up revenue figured high on Pawan Kumar Chamling's agenda as he unveiled the annual budget for the year 2003-2004.

The Sikkim chief minister, who also holds the finance portfolio, proposed computerisation of the entire tax administration system to ensure an effective tax management regime.

The State would undertake measures to build capacity and computerise the tax system in preparation of the uniform value added tax (VAT) regime, supposed to come into effect from April 1, 2003.

Chamling also announced that stringent measures would be taken to combat tax evasion, which has led to erosion of the scarce resource base of the state. Though he presented a marginal deficit budget this year - Rs. 54 lakh - it failed to come up with any major growth impetus.

Following the trends of last year, the budget has set forth Rs. 370 crore under the plan account while the proposed nonplan expenditure stood high at Rs. 1,675.54. Though no new taxes have been introduced, the budget has proposed several ways to collect more revenue.

Keeping in view the heavy tourist flow to the hill state, the finance minister has suggested the imposition of an entry fee for visitors at the major tourist centres to maintain the fragile ecology. However, no sops have been announced for the tourism sector, the main revenue earner of the state.

There is good news for the green lobby. The budget proposes putting together a corpus fund named Hariyo Pariyo Kosh (Green Fund), dedicated to the conservation of environment and the rich cultural heritage of Sikkim through the involvement of the people. Contribution for the funds will come from students above class IV who are required to pay Re 1 at the beginning of each academic session.

The government would then pitch in twice the amount mobilised and utilise the entire fund for awareness building programmes, pilot projects, research and conservation techniques.

The budget also proposed the creation of a Skill Development Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2 crore to be administered by the state planning commission for supporting various skill development programmes in various fields. In his budget speech, the chief minister informed the house that the annual plan size for this fiscal year had not been finalised by the Planning Commission and therefore, details of the resource estimates had not been determined.

Chamling said the trends of the fiscal performance, in terms of some key indicators, showed a significant improvement in the state's economy. ■

## The Statesman

26 February 2003

# Sikkim a 'total organic state'

GANGTOK, Feb. 25: The state government has announced a policy initiative which declares Sikkim as a "Total

Organic State."

The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, told the State Assembly in his Budget Speech yesterday, that the use of chemical fertilizers will be gradually done away with in the state.

"Uncontrolled and haphazard use of chemical fertilizers is hazardous to humans as well as to livestock," he said, Citing the example of the Ambootia Teas Estate in Kurseong, he said that the garden was gaining prominence in the tea market because it adopted organic based practices. "There is a growing number of people in favour of organic foods which also fetch better prices in the global markets. In keeping with my government's concern for preservation of our sensitive ecology and environment, we are already the third lowest fertilizer consuming state in the country with an average fertilizer consumption rate of just 5.8kg per hectare," he said Acknowledging the fact that traditionally, farmers from the state practise organic farming, Mr. Chamling said that reverting to the age-old practices would not be difficult. ■

## Chamling hopeful of economic reforms

The chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling has said that his government has taken up the implementation of the economic reform package in eight earnest, which will not only bring about the desired administrative restructuring but will also prove beneficial in its efforts to downscale non-plan expenditure as well as augment the revenue receipts. Mr. Chamling told the State Assembly in his Budget Speech yesterday that the Central government has released two withheld installment packages under the Medium Term Fiscal Reform Programme and has also awarded the state Rs. 63 lakh as Centre's contribution to the Incentive Fund.

These, Mr. Chamling said, were the results of his government's "honest and concerted efforts" in implementation of the economic reforms. One of the measures envisaged in the reform package addressed to bringing about the downsizing of the government establishment was through implementation of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme. Mr. Chamling said, for which the Central government has released Rs. 7 crore.

Mr. Chamling said that the response from prospective applicants opting for VRS has been "instantaneous and incredibly overwhelming" and indicated that the budget provided for this scheme may not be adequate. Under the rural housing scheme, 6,000 deserving families were covered in the last financial year and the same number of families will be covered in the next financial year, Mr. Chamling said.

During 2002-03, 25 housing units in each of the 27 constituencies were taken up at the cost of Rs. 20.25 crores.

The housing plan has been uniformly designed to provide the basic comforts at the cost of Rs. 3 lakh each. This scheme will spill over to the next financial year. The state government has also earmarked 35 percent of the tourism budget for promoting ethnic tourism, which will be "people-centric, environment-centric and cultural centric." This process will help people to become active partners in the socio-economic development process with the government process with the government restricting its role as just a facilitator, the chief minister said. The state government also announced a number of "progressive" measures.

One of them is initiation of the "best performing village" award for each zilla on the basis of economic parameter of performance. Similarly, all state level committees will have one representative from each zilla. The state government will also introduce a scholarship scheme for five students every year to pursue studies in rural management in professional institutes in the country. ■

## The Statesman

27 February 2003

### New industrial policy likely to benefit Sikkim

GANGTOK, Feb, 26: Announcement of the new industrial policy by the Union government, specifically intended for the North-eastern states including Sikkim, will contribute phenomenally towards spreading and consolidating industrial activities in the state.

The new industrial policy, which envisages extension of fiscal relief for all industrial units for a decade, would inevitably attract prospective investment proposals, involving major business houses, from outside the state as well as from overseas, chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling said.

Mr. Chamling said that he had taken personal interest in organising a series of meetings and investors' forums involving major investors, such as CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and PHDCCI.

These developments were followed by fact-finding visits by donor agencies such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and other business organisations. "With these positive developments, the ground for investment activities in the state has been well laid," he said.

In an obvious dig at the previous Bhandari regime, Mr.

Chamling said that care had been taken not to repeat the mistakes committed by the previous governments, particularly during the 80s, when "fly-by-night" operators swarmed into the state to exploit the special privileges of tax relief.

"The nefarious and devious operations undertaken by these unscrupulous black marketers had serious fall-outs, with the central government slapping the enforcement of Central direct taxes on the residents of the state." ■

### Era of galloping growth : Chamling

GANGTOK, Feb, 26: The formal inclusion of Sikkim in the North Eastern Council (NEC) has heralded an "era of galloping growth" for the economy of the state.

Chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, said this in his budget speech in the Assembly on 24 February.

Calling it a "landmark" development, Mr. Chamling said, contrary to what some "petty-minded critics" had to say on the issue, the state was now entitled to the benefit of massive investment inflow from NEC funds.

"The mandate of the Department of North Eastern Region (DONER), the newly carved out agency under the Union ministry of home affairs, is dedicated to the accelerated development of the North-eastern region and for this purpose several thrust areas have been identified, where the need for special investment packages was felt. Some of the prioritised areas include infrastructure development, tourism and allied sectors, horticulture, cash crops, electronic industries, etc. Many government and quasi-government agencies, particularly SIDICO has taken the lead in this by in this regard," he said.

Economic advantages aside, Sikkim also stands to gain politically under the umbrella of NEC, as sensitive issues of common concern in the region can be addressed boldly through the solidarity of the North-east family, he said.

Benefits NEC states enjoy include concessional formula of 90 percent grant and 10 percent loan in financing of State Plans. Sikkim will be permitted to use 20 percent of Central Plan Assistance for Non-Plan expenditure. Ten percent of the budget of every Central government department/ministry is required to be earmarked for the North-east states. Sikkim will continue to enjoy the benefits of NLCPR funds. Up to the period ending 7 February, 2003, an amount of Rs. 208 crores was approved for Sikkim and an installment of Rs. 140.50 crores was released under this package.

Special assistance shall be provided to the state through NEC funds, Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) and Border Area Development Programme (BADP).

The State will also benefit under the Prime Minister's social-economic agenda for the North-east region. ■

# The Telegraph

27 February 2003

## Chamling returns Bhandari Fire

**PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA**

GANGTOK, Feb, 26 :Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling deftly turned the tables on his political rival Nar Bahadur Bhandari who had tried to corner him on the Maoist-threat issue in the Assembly today.

During Question Hour, the lone Opposition member had asked Chamling, who also holds the home portfolio, whether he was aware of the security threat posed by Maoist leaders Partha Chhetri and Ram Karki, who were reportedly operating from Sikkim and Siliguri.

Chamling was further asked to explain the measures taken by his government to nab the Maoist rebels.

In reply, Chamling categorically denied having knowledge of any "operational activities" of Nepal Maoist leader Partho Chhetri, alias Ram Karki in Sikkim.

Without naming Bhandari, Chamling said a "senior political leader" of the state had links with the Maoists and had sent hand-written notes to the media in Nepal on the reported activities of the Maoist rebels in Sikkim.

He placed a bunch of handwritten notes before speaker Kalawati Subba as evidence of his statement and urged her to take action against the person.

The SDF leader slammed the move as a "conspiracy" aimed to sully the image of his government.

The Speaker assured the House that the matter would be probed.

Into the third day of the budget session, the House passed a Bill to amend the Sikkim Allotment of House Sites and Construction of Building (Regulation and Control) Bill, 2003.

The Bill introduced by urban development minister T.T.Bhutia aims to protect and preserve government quarters and offices and safeguard life and property. ■

# The Statesman

3 March 2003

## Hill state budget passed

**PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA**

GANGTOK, March, 2- The Sikkim legislative Assembly passed the Rs. 54 lakh deficit budget for 2003-04 on

Saturday, the last day of the session.

Chief minister Pawan Chamling, who also holds the finance portfolio, had presented a Rs. 3,312 crore budget for the state on February 24.

On the last day of the session, Chamling also presented the finance and appropriation accounts for 2001-02 prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

Reports of the public accounts committee and the estimates committee were also presented. Other reports presented during the session included audit reports on the Sikkim Mining Corporation, State Bank of Sikkim and State Trading Corporation of Sikkim.

Chamling reiterated the commitment of the government to increase revenue earnings through non-tax sources. He said his government would not ask for loans from the Centre and other agencies but try to generate Rs. 1,000 crore on its own by 2015.

He also said that the growth rate for the state stood at 14.30 percent this year and the per capital income stood at Rs. 16,143.

These factors would help launch the second phase of economic reforms in the state by his government, he added.

The chief minister said unlike the previous government, under which economic policies were decided by the Centre, the state government was taking up the task on its own.

He also said that the state would benefit from the Rs. 60,000 crore set aside by the government for infrastructure development. ■

# THE ASIAN AGE

4 March 2003

## Sikkim to become India's first poverty- free state

*The Sikkim Democratic Front Government completes eight years in office. With the state government trying to achieve a sustained and balanced growth in all areas - economy, education, environment conservation and tourism, Sujit Roy takes a view of past achievements and lists the peaks that Sikkim plans to scale in the coming years.*

History in Sikkim took its decisive turn in 1973. Riots against Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal (erstwhile king) rocked the hilly state. The revolutionaries were common in their demand - a democratic set up under the union of India.

The unbelievable happened when the Chogyal was reduced to a titular head. This under the historic Tripartite



Agreement in 1973. The circle came to a full when two years later, in May 1975, Sikkim acquired the status of a democracy. Thereafter, it joined the political, economic and social mainstream of the Indian Union, relinquishing to the past, its 300 year old feudal monarchy.

The foundation of this democracy was laid by Kazi Lendhup Dorjee, the first chief minister. But for the people, it took a long to taste democracy. They had to wait till Pawan Kumar Chamling, the present chief minister came to power in December 1994. Because his was a mission to make ensure democracy under the banner of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF).

The SDF Government, during its last eight years in power, has achieved a handful of goals. Progressive and pro-poor programmes launched by the ruling SDF come as manifestation of the genuine concern of Mr. Chamling towards making it a model welfare state. "New Sikkim - Happy Sikkim," his dictum is set to reap a bountiful harvest.

The SDF Government, now in its second term, has evidently brought about all-round political, social and economic development in Sikkim. Special emphasis has been laid on improving the lot of the under privileged and vulnerable sections of society by initiating a number of poverty alleviation and welfare programmes.

As promised, most communities in the hilly terrain have been granted OBC status and concerted efforts are being made to include those left out. 23 percent of seats have been reserved for Scheduled Tribes, six percent for Scheduled Castes and 21 percent for OBCs in government jobs and educational institutions of higher studies.

The Government also demands Constitutional recognition to the Bhutia, Lepach and Limboo languages. A "state language" status has been accorded to Tamang, Rai, Sherpa, Mangar, Newar and Sunwar (Mukhia) languages and steps have been taken for their preservation and enrichment.

In the field of education, Sikkim has undertaken major strides. Planned in accordance with the vision of Sikkim in 2015 which states, "Education will be our number one priority and we will increase the share of our allocations to this sector substantially," education is totally free in government schools. Text and exercise books are distributed free of cost. All students upon Class V are provided with free uniforms. Mid-day meals are also provided for.

And truly the enrolment of 1,60,000 students in government and government-aided schools is commendable. Statistics say the number say the number of school-going children run into five lakhs. Believe it or not, there is a school within walking distance for every child in Sikkim. No doubt, the literacy rate stands tall at 70 percent.

The Smart School Concept, planned to monitor the quality of education has worked wonders. When the SDF Government assumed office, Sikkim had just one college;

today, it boasts of more than half a dozen colleges including the Advanced Technical Training Centre at Bardang (East Sikkim) and Centre of Computers and Communication Technology at Chisopani (South Sikkim).

Under the Sikkim Manipal University of Medical Health and Technological Sciences, an engineering and a medical college have been established. Computer education is being made compulsory in all schools from the secondary level. The SDF Government envisages a future where every child is well equipped with knowledge, skill and confidence.

Sikkim, the fourth state in India to have prepared The Human Development Report, drafted in 2000, took a critical view of the state's progress. This alongwith the People's Vision Document, has been accepted by the state government. Consequently, implemented now are some of the recommendations, particularly, on removal of nonmerit and indiscriminate subsidies.

Health care too has registered major changes. Hospitals have been constructed in all the districts; primary and sub-primary health centres now exists in major villages. Multi-bedded community health centres are also being constructed in districts. In an attempt to augment the curative services, sophisticated at STNM Hospital and at the Namchi District Hospital. The mentioned centres also house reputed specialists in various fields.

Keeping in mind concerns for the environment, Sikkim is the first and perhaps the only state in the country which banned use of plastic bags. A massive plantation movement has been mobilised to increase green cover. In order to protect plantations, the SDF Government has banned grazing by domestic and semi-domestic animals in the reserve forest areas.

The Smriti Van (memorial forest), initiated by Mr. Chamling, involves all segments of society in planting patches of green in memory of their near ones. Perhaps, the fertile ideas won Mr. Chamling the title of the most environment-friendly Chief Minister in India (1999). ■

## The Statesman

5 March 2003

### Benefits for Limbus, Tamangs: Chamling

GANGTOK, March, 4-The Limbus and Tamangs, who have been recently included in the Scheduled Tribe list, will get all the benefits in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution, while their political rights shall be decided by the Centre, said the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, who is also president of the ruling SDF, at a

public meeting organised today to celebrate the party's 11th foundation day at Namchi, the district headquarters of south Sikkim.

While appealing to the people to shoulder responsibility towards cherishing the goal of making Sikkim a model state in the country, he stated that the ruling SDF should still get more time to realize these very objectives. The Chief Minister lashed out at the Opposition and stated that petty political parties that are mushrooming day by day are controlling the activities of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad which is headed by the former Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari. ■

## The Statesman

11 March 2003

# Spiritual uplift 'Kanchi to Kanchendzonga'

RANIPOOL (East Sikkim), March 10 -The Maha Kumbaabhishekam initiation ceremony of the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Shiva Panchayatana Temple and Meditation Centre was held at Nadok, Saramsa here, today.

The ceremony was held in the presence of His Holiness, Jagadguru Sri. Jayendra Saraswathi, Sankaracharya Swamiji of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. The Governor, Mr. V. Rama Rao, and the chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, along with his political advisor, Mr. B.B.Goorong, were also present on the occasion.

The meditation centre will not only be a home for spiritual uplift, but will also double as a community centre upholding Indian traditions and arts. It will contribute to the development of Sikkim in educational and cultural fields.

The Maha Kumbaabhishekam ceremony began at 6 a.m. with special pujas of the five sacred vases containing holy water from five sacred rivers. The actual puja had begun four days ago with rishi from the Sri Kanchi Kamaoti Peetam conducting Vedic rituals.

The maha yagna was held this morning. The maha kumbaabhishekam of the temple, which houses the Panchayatana devatas or the five deities - Shiva, Surya, shakti, Vishnu, and Ganesh - was completed in the presence of Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Sankaracharya Swamiji, with the abhishekam of the five domes of the temple with the holy water. Priests recited Vedic mantras and conducted the abhishekam with traditional South India temple music playing in the background.

The temple is the first of its kind in the entire North-east and has a National importance because it houses Shiva and Vishnu, Ganesh, Shakti and Surya under one roof.

The temple, built on land donated by the Sikkim government, follow the architectural form prescribed in the shastras, for devalayas (temples) true to south Indian traditions. The maha mandapam or the main hall of the temple is supported by 24 pillars and in the inner sanctum sanatorium, a huge Shivalinga made of black granite has been installed.

The temple has been designed by A Radhakrishnan, resident architect of the Kanchi Kamaoti Peetam, who also did the sculpture work. The stones were engraved in Tamil Nadu and even the stand was brought all the way from there. Built on the generous donations from donors in Sikkim, Siliguri and Kolkata, a magnificent gopuram or the main entrance was created for the temple.

His Holiness, Jagadguru Sri. Jayendra Saraswathi Sankaracharya Swamij arrived here on 9 March as a state guest. He was received by the Governor at the Raj Bhawan where he also met the members of the Kanchi Kamakoti Seva Samiti, Sikkim and other dignitaries, including the chief minister.

Specking on the occasion, His Holiness said that it is for the good fortune, faith and the right initiatives of the people of Sikkim that a temple of this stature has come up in the state. He said that Sikkim, is blessed by the presence of the Kanchendzonga the land of rishis and munis and the people are thereby truly blessed. He said that for the complete growth of man, focus should be on both is spiritual and educational needs. A joint effort by the state government, the Kanchi Kamakoti Peeth Trust as well as the public will ensure that both these needs of the people are fulfilled, said His Holiness.

Mr. Chamling said that Sikkim is a secular state in the truest sense of the word, where people of different faith live in complete harmony. "The people of Sikkim have the freedom to practice their faiths without any interference. The one aspect that characterises Sikkim as a secular state is the existence of a separate Ecclesiastical department. The department has been created especially to attend to the spiritual needs of the people of Sikkim. Today, the state is dotted with numerous gompas, mandirs and churches," he said.

Mr. Chamling said that a mammoth statue of Guru Padmasambhava in Samdupse in South Sikkim, a project initiated by the State Government, is in an advanced stage of completion. Similarly, a 108-foot statue of Shiva is being installed in Solophok, South Sikkim. He said that Sikkim is the only State undertaking such construction works, which he said, demonstrated the State's inherent belief in the goodness of man and Karma.

"To further strengthen the secular fabric of the State, religious festivals of the different communities of the State have been declared State holidays by the Government,"

said Mr. Chamling. He said that his Government has been taking special care to promote Dharma and make for the enrichment of the inner self and soul of the people.

The Governor, Mr. Rama Rao said in his address that with the establishment of this temple, spiritual and moral values form "Kanchi to Kanchendzonga" will be strengthened. Mr. Rama Rao said that the coming of the Swami, would lead to Sikkim being more well known to the outside world. He requested the Swami to start some of the projects of the kanchi Kamakoti Peetam in the State as well, especially in the health and educational fields for the benefit of the people of Sikkim.

The Sri. Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam is actively involved in various sectors such as religion, socio-culture, health and medicare, education and information technology, which are aimed at the resoration and promulgation of the rich cultural heritage of the country. ■

## The Statesman

15 March 2003

### Monks meet Chamling over Karmapa arrival

GANGTOK, March, 14,- A delegation of the Joint Action Committee of various Buddhist organisations of the state and Denzong Lhadey Tsogpa (monks' body) called on the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling at his official residence, Mintokgang, with their demand to press for allowing the Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorji to come to Sikkim.

About 147 people comprising core members from thirty block and subblock committees from all the four districts of the state formed the delegation which put before the Chief Minister their "single-point" demand for an early arrival of the Karmapa to Sikkim.

During the meeting, the President of JAC, Kunzang Sherab expressed his apprehension that perhaps the government of India was not giving this matter its due importance,

A memorandum was then presented by the JAC delegation to the Chief Minister, expressing therein the exasperation of the people over the "indecisiveness of the Central government" in allowing the Karmapa to come to the Rumtek Monastery. The JAC requested the Chief Minister to now put the issue before the Central government.

The members of the JAC pointed out that though the Government of India was providing necessary security to

the Karmapa, paying his rent at Gyuto Monastery and has allowed him to travel to different parts of India like Bodh Gaya, Kolkata and Ladakh, he was not allowed to come to Sikkim. The JAC was hopeful that the Karmapa would be allowed to come to Sikkim by Saga Dawa (14 June).

In his response, the Chief Minister assured the delegation that his government has made numerous representations to the Central government in writing and through other forums to grant permission to the Karmapa Orgyen Thinly Dorji to come to Sikkim. Mr. Chamling advised the delegation they should again meet the Central leaders and that he would help in arranging the meetings. ■

## The Statesman

25 March 2003

### Chamling keen on protection of old laws

GANGTOK, March, 24.- The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has said that the protection of the old laws of Sikkim, as enshrined in Article 371F of the Constitution should be done at any cost.

Mr. Chamling said this when he called on the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee at his residence in New Delhi on March 21. Mr. Chamling was accompanied by his Cabinet colleagues, two MPs MIAs and his political advisor.

While presenting the Prime Minister with a detailed letter highlighting the various pending demands of the state, Mr. Chamling said that some of the most important issues pertaining to the state that needed immediate attention of the Centre Government were ensuring protection of the 12 seats reserved for the Bhutia-Lepcha community in the state Assembly by maintaining a status quo on the issue in view of the ongoing delimitation process, reservation of seats for the Limboo and Tamang communities of the state in the Assembly and inclusion of the state's "leftover" OBC communities in the Scheduled Tribes List.

The demands of the state include more representation for Sikkim in the Parliament, restoration of all medical seat quota from the Central pool for the State, setting up Central government Public Sector Undertakings and special Economic Zones in the state and inclusion of Sikkim within the purview of Golden Quadrangle Highway Project, amongst others.

While expressing heartfelt gratitude to the Prime Minister of behalf of the people of Sikkim for meeting some of the long pending demands of the state, such as its inclusion in the North Eastern Council, inclusion of Limboo and Tamang in the ST list, extension of the special industrial

package of North Eastern States to Sikkim and its decision to confer the Padma Vibhushan to LD Kazi, the first chief minister of Sikkim, Mr. Chamling asked the Centre to assist Sikkim in its initiatives towards progress and development.

Mr. Chamling also met the deputy prime minister, Mr. L.K.Advani and Union Tribal Affairs minister, Mr. Jual Oram, and presented memorandums to them.

The Chief Minister later called on (retd.) Justice Kuldip Singh, chairman of the Central Delimitation Committee and discussed various issues relating to delimitation of Constituencies in Sikkim. The far-reaching social significance of the delimitation process was discussed during the meeting, specially in the context of the sensitive and the delicate ethnic balance prevalent in the state and the fact that Sikkim enjoys special status under Article 371F.

The Commissioner has assured the state government that the delimitation process would be carried out keeping in view the interest of the people of the state.■

## The Statesman

27 March 2003

### Annual Plan for Sikkim fixed at Rs. 405 crore

GANGTOK, March, 26,- The annual plan size for Sikkim for the year 2003-2004 has been fixed at Rs. 405 crore. This is Rs. 35 Crore more than the Plan outlay for the current financial year. In terms of percentage, the enhancement is in the order of 15.7 percent. This was decided following a meeting between the chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, and the deputy chairman, Planning Commission, Mr. K.C.Pant, at Yojana Bhavan, new Delhi yesterday.

The chief secretary, Mr. S.W.Tenzing, development commissioner, finance secretary and the secretary to the chief minister was also present on the occasion. Detailed discussions on the performance of the state and the steps taken by the state government for better resource generation and fiscal management were held during the meeting. While lauding the efforts of Sikkim government to mobilise the people at the grassroots level for environmental conservation and introducing decentralisation and devolution of powers to local bodies, Mr. Pant said that the achievements made by the state in terms of human development and social indicators were noteworthy.

Mr. Chamling requested the Centre for more assistance for the implementation of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme, tourism promotion and improvement of roads in the state.■

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# The Telegraph

4 April 2003

## Chogyal honour rekindles compensation hope

**PROBIR PRAMANIK**

Gangtok, April 3: The Pawan Chamling government has decided to honour the 12th Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal, 28 years after he lost his tiny kingdom to India.

The chief minister will inaugurate a park in memory of Palden Namgyal in front of the Namgyal Research Institute of Tibetology at Deorali, on the outskirts of Gangtok, tomorrow. It will be named the Miwang Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal Park.

By dedicating a park in honour of Palden Namgyal, who died in 1982, the Sikkim Democratic Front government has rekindled hopes for his son, the 13th Chogyal, that he may finally receive "compensation" from New Delhi for his father's property.

After losing his kingdom in 1975, Palden Namgyal is believed to have claimed compensation of Rs 110 crore for his properties, which had been taken over by the Indian government.

Sikkim chief secretary S.W. Tenzing told The Telegraph: "Tripartite talks are on between the Union home ministry, the state government and the representatives of the late Chogyal's family. The discussions are being held on the basis of claims made by the late Chogyal. Things have been sorted out regarding the private properties and private estates. Several claims have been struck out of the old list."

Senior Sikkim government officials said the talks are based on a fresh assessment made by both sides. Three attempts made by Palden Namgyal to resolve the issue between 1979 and 1981 had failed because the claims made by the Chogyal's family were unacceptable to the government of India.

The current talks are, however, silent on the signing of the "instrument of Sikkim's accession to India". Palden Namgyal had refused to "accept" the kingdom's merger with India and put his signature on the "instrument of accession".

Highly placed sources in Gangtok suggested that the question of signing the "instrument of accession" might not be "relevant" any more because the 13th Chogyal, Wangchuk Namgyal, has no legal status, "It is like settling the compensation claim of any person whose property has been taken over by the government," said a former senior Sikkim bureaucrat, who served as an official in the Chogyal's court.

Prince Wangchuk Namgyal, the younger son of Palden Namgyal, was "consecrated" as the 13th "Denzong Chogyal" on February 19, 1982, since the crown prince and his elder brother Tenzing was killed in a road accident in 1978.

However, under the Indian Constitution, the "coronation" of the 13th Chogyal has no 'legal status'. The young Prince had himself dismissed the "coronation" as an "unnecessary state ceremony". "It is for the people to accept and acknowledge me as the new Chogyal. Moreover, you can see for yourself the support I have received from my people," the grieving prince had told foreign journalists covering his "coronation" ceremony after his father's death in 1982.

Palden Namgyal, the second son of the 11th Chogyal, Sir Tashi Namgyal had to cut short his studies at Bishop Cotton School, Shimla, following the untimely death of his elder brother, Crown Prince Paljor Namgyal, in 1941. He was killed in an air crash while serving as an officer in the Royal Indian Air Force.

As the heir apparent, Palden Namgyal underwent the Indian Civil Service training at Dehra Doon in 1942. He married Princess Sangey Deki of Tibet in 1950. She passed away in 1957. In March 1963, the crown prince remarried, this time an American woman, Hope Cook. He was crowned the 12th Chogyal after his father's death in 1965.

# The Telegraph

11 April 2003

## PM Spoils *babus'* holiday

**PROBIR PRAMANIK AND  
PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA**

Gangtok, April, 10: News of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee coming down to enjoy the solitude of the Kanchenjunga amid the sylvan surroundings of the Sikkim Raj Bhavan, has not delighted government employees.

In most cases, they have had to dump their holiday plans for the extended weekend and head for office.

The hill state was getting ready for a four-day long weekend holiday, starting with Chaitey Dasain (Ram Navami) on Friday and ending with Ambedkar Jayanti on Monday.

The visit was planned on a short notice with the government being informed as late as Wednesday.

The sudden plan for a weekend holiday has sent the state into a flurry of activities. While security personnel are conducting lastminute checks, supervised by the grim-faced special Protection Group commandos, workers are sprucing up the state.

For security reasons the borders of the state which it

shares with Nepal and Bangladesh - have been sealed.

"Special forces are on the highest alert and a fool-proof security arrangement has been put in place," said inspector-general (north) Bhupinder Singh.

the special flight, bringing the Prime Minister, will touch down at Bagdogra airport at 12 noon after which Vajpayee will board an Indian Army MI-17 chopper to Sikkim. He will be received by Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling at the Army's Libing helipad on the outskirts of Gangtok and then head for the Raj Bhavan.

According to a senior state official, Vajpayee will have most of the time to himself except for a few official dinners - one each being hosted by the chief minister and the government - and two public functions.

One is the foundation-stone laying ceremony of the power house at the Teesta Hydro Electric Project near Singtam and the other a "public felicitation" at the Tashi Namgyal Academy grounds.

A cultural programme is also being hosted for the Prime Minister at the felicitation ceremony.

"Apart from a courtesy call from the state governor V.Rama Rao, the Prime Minister does not have any other "official" engagement on the first day. It seems Mr. Vajpayee wants to spend some quality time to himself, enjoying the majestic mountain peaks from the Raj Bhavan, which is itself a beautiful spot. It should give the Prime Minister something to remember about Sikkim."

This is Vajpayee's first visit to the hill state. P.V.Narasimha Rao was the last Prime Minister to visit Sikkim in 1994.

According to sources, the PMO has refused a number of appointments made by the state government. ■

## The Statesman

11 April 2003

# PM on maiden Sikkim visit

GANGTOK, April, 10 : Sikkim is all set for Prime Minister Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's three-day visit to the state. Mr. Vajpayee is expected to arrive at the Army helipad here at Libing at around 12.30p.m. tomorrow. He will first arrive at the Bagdogra airport by a special plane from New Delhi. This is the PM's first visit to the state. He will leave for New Delhi on 14 April.

The Prime Minister's visit is in response to chief minister Mr. Pawan Chamling's invitation to Mr. Pawan Chamling's invitation to Mr. Vajpayee when he met him last November.

The entire state machinery is in hectic preparation for the visit, since information about his arrival reached are

last evening. Security in the state has been beefed up and the SPG team is already in Gangtok supervising the security arrangements for the PM. Tomorrow's state holiday for Ram Navami has been cancelled and the administration put on a high level of preparedness. Mr. Vajpayee will be staying at Raj Bhavan.

Although the entire itinerary of the PM is not clear yet, sources said that he will visit the NHPC Teesta Hydroelectric Power Project Stage V at Singtam on 12 April and address the public meeting at the Tashi Namgyal Academy grounds on 13 April.

This will be the first visit of the Prime Minister of the country to Sikkim in nine years. The last Prime Minister to have visited the state was Mr. P.V.Narasimha Rao in 1994. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

12 April 2003

# PM's healing touch for Sikkim

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gangtok/New Delhi: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who arrived here on a three-day visit on Friday, said he would look into the problems being faced by the Himalayan state.

This is Vajpayee's first visit to Sikkim- which joined the Indian Union, 27 years after independence- as Prime Minister.

"During my stay here, I will discuss the problems being faced by the state and the changes that have taken place here," Vajpayee told mediapersons of Friday, on his arrival here.

Earlier in Delhi, Sikkim chief minister Pawan K Chamling had briefed Vajpayee about the problems.

The Prime Minister said he was happy to be in Sikkim as the visit was long overdue. Chamling said his government would submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister on the immediate problems of the state.

One of the demands is enforcement of the Income Tax Act in the hill state. The state government will also ask the Centre for a grant of Rs 130 crore for the construction of an airport at Pakyong- the Planning Commission has already sanctioned Rs 50 crore. It will demand Rs 110 crore for the construction of a 500 bed referral hospital and funds for the construction of an annexe building of the state secretariat.

The state government wants the present reservation of seats for different communities in the state assembly retained.

# The Telegraph

12 April 2003

## Reality test greet Atal's dream trip

**PROBIR PRAMANIK**

GANGTOK, April, 11 :The small group waiting at the army's Libing helipad heaved a sigh of relief as two Indian Air Force choppers whirred into view under a grey sky.

Bearing the same registration number, the white helicopters with strips of blue landed within minutes of each other. The men waited a while to see which one carried their guest and then towards the second one - an Indian Air Force MI-17 chopper carrying Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the first Prime Minister to set foot on Sikkim soil since P.V.Narasimha Rao in 1994.

As he got down, Vajpayee announced it was a "dream come true" for him. For the tiny Himalayan state, it was time to dream of unfulfilled promises.

Togged up in a designer cream-coloured Sherwani and his by now customary pair of Raj Ban, Vajpayee looked a bit pale as he deplaned with daughter Nandini Bhattacharjee, son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharjee a grand daughter Niharika almost an hour behind schedule.

Greeted with the traditional silk scarf, or khadas, by chief minister Pawan Chamling, Sikkim Governor V. Rama Rao, state Cabinet Ministers and top ranking officials, Vajpayee said he would definitely look into the demands of the hill people during the next three days.

Ringed by over two dozen Special Protection Group commandos, the Prime Minister said. "It was my long desire to visit the state in the lap of nature and I'm happy that I'm finally here, it is a dream come true for me."

Clarifying that his weekend visit to the Himalayan state had nothing to do with politics, Vajpayee made it clear that he intended to spend a lot of time just resting amid the sylvan surroundings.

"Now that I am personally in Sikkim, I sincerely intend to look into all the pending demands of the Sikkimese people. Sikkim is an example of tranquility for rest of India. I will take some concrete decision on certain development projects of the state. As a part of India, we will ensure

Sikkim does not lag behind the rest of the country. I will first see what developments have taken place here and in the course of the next three days, I will also find out what can be done for the state." he said, before leaving for Raj Bhavan.

Unmindful of the milling clouds, hundreds of schoolchildren, who had gathered along the road leading to Raj Bhavan, waved the Tricolour as the cavalcade passed by.

An elated Chamling said: "The next three days are very important for us as the Prime Minister has for the first time stepped on Sikkim soil and promised to personally look into the state's various pending projects. Since he is here, we expect that he will give us a sympathetic hearing." ■

## CM banks on 'big event'

**PEMALEYDASHA SHANGDERPA** GANGTOK, April, 11: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling hailed Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit as a "big event" for the state and added that Sikkim had high hopes from the "weekend holiday."

"Our hopes are as tall as the towering Mount Kanchenjunga and gradually all these are being fulfilled one by one," Chamling said. As examples of promises fulfilled, he cited the inclusion of Sikkim into the North Eastern Council (NEC) and the Scheduled Tribe Status for the Limbus and Tamangs.

After describing the upbeat mood of the state the chief minister spent the next few minutes showering praises on the Prime Minister who had chosen the small Himalayan border state for a four-day holiday.

Speaking to reporters after the arrival of the Prime Minister, Chamling said the National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre, headed by Vajpayee, had done a lot for the people of Sikkim and the state was grateful for that.

He added that he would discuss the latest issues with the Prime Minister during the course of the next three days.

Vajpayee, who reached the Army's Libing helipad at 1 pm in an Indian airforce MI-17 choper, headed straight for Raj Bhavan - his residence for the next three days.

The Prime Minister has assured that he would look into the problems of the hill state within the next three days, adding that he was aware of the state's affairs as Chamling had kept him updated.

In an impromptu briefing to the media, Chamling said Sikkim had earned the credit of being the most peaceful state in the country and would like to keep it that way.

"Whenever there has been a security threat, like the

case when the NDFB vice-president was arrested, we have taken prompt action to diffuse the crisis and we proud to have managed it," he said.

Chamling said the Sikkim Democratic Front government would form a state security commission to take care of the security problems in the border state.

When asked about the risk of insurgency spillovers from across the borders, Chamling said all preventive measures were being taken to prevent any rebel activities from sprouting in Sikkim.

Asked about the developments that had taken place on the delimitation issue, the chief minister said the process of delimitation of constituencies had already taken off.

The state is receiving a Prime Minister after a gap of nine long years - P.V.Narasimha Rao being the last. ■

## The Statesman

14 April 2003

### PM's Rs 500-cr largesse for Sikkim

#### Statesman News Service

GANGTOK, April 13- The Prime Minister announced a Rs 500-crore special package for Sikkim today aimed at infrastructure development and improved healthcare, fulfilling the long-pending demands of the state and signalling a major achievement of the Chamling government.

Speaking at public felicitation ceremony at Tashi Namgyal Academy grounds here, Mr Vajpayee announced that the Centre would grant Rs 110 crore for the construction of an airport in Pakyong, about 32 km from here, the groundwork for which has already been started by the Airport Authority of India. The Prime Minister also said that the Central government would assist the State in improving National Highway 31A, considered Sikkim's lifeline, adding that a special grant would be provided for an alternative highway along the northern banks of the River Teesta, connecting the State with the rest of the country.

- Rs 100 crore for Pakyong airport
- East-west Corridor likely to be extended to state
- Central grant for modernisation of STNM hospital

Addressing a mammoth crowd, Mr Vajpayee said that the Centre would consider extending the East-West Corridor to Sikkim and linking it with the Golden Quadrilateral project. "Roads are extremely important for development of the country, and for smaller States like Sikkim, they play a very vital role," he said, pointing out that better roads could

boost Sikkim's tourism industry, which can well turn out to be the state's biggest industry. To ensure that, he asked the State government to effect adequate infrastructure development.

The Prime Minister also announced a central grant for modernisation of the government-run STNM Hospital here at Gangtok. A detailed project report would be soon prepared in this regard by the National Hospital Construction Corporation, he said. In the meantime, the STNM Hospital would be linked with AIIMS, New Delhi through telemedicine connectivity, to facilitate instant consultation of local doctors with New Delhi specialists.

Mr Vajpayee lauded the Chamling government for the rapid pace of development in the state and implementation of various welfare schemes. He also praised the high standard of education in the state while assuring that the state government's demand for increased educational quota for Sikkimese students would be considered.

Mr Vajpayee, while acknowledging the validity of the Chamling government's demands, declared: "The Centre will always be receptive to the needs of Sikkim. *Delhi dur hai par par Sikkim hamare dil main hai.*"

Mr Chamling has met Mr Vajpayee at Raj Bhawan on Friday and submitted a memorandum outlining the various pending demands of the state.

### Vajpayee names orchid after late astronaut

#### Sarikah Atreya in Gangtok.

April, 13. - Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee today named a locally bred *Cattleya* hybrid orchid after Kalpana Chawla.

The orchid, bred by a local nursery, Wayside Gardens and Nurseries Pvt. Ltd. owned by K.C. Pradhan and his son Sailesh Pradhan, is a small flowering pot orchid in a light shade of pink. Kalpana Chawla will now be one of the hybrids among the over 500 species of orchids available in the state.

The Prime Minister suggested the name of the late India-born astronaut when he was asked to name the hybrid when he visited the flower exhibition hall at the White Hall complex here today.

Interestingly, the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, who was present on the occasion, went on to suggest that one hybrid be named after the Prime Minister himself. A hybrid of *Dendrobium nobile* orchid, a cross of the Sikkim state flower and the Japanese *Dendrobium polka* was named after the Prime Minister. The hybrid has been named: *Dendrobium Atal Behari Vajpayee*.

Mr. Vajpayee, who spent about 25 minutes in the flower show, was thoroughly impressed with the various displays of hybrids and species of exotic plants and other seasonal flowers in the complex, a permanent show in Gangtok and a major tourist attraction. ■



# The Telegraph

14 April 2003

## Vajpayee gifts crores to hill partner

PROBIR PRAMANIK AND  
PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA

GANGTOK, April, 13: He kept it short but by the time Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had ended his 20-minute speech. Sikkim was richer by a whopping Rs. 500 crore.

People had streamed into the capital from all the four districts to see Vajpayee, the first Prime Minister to set foot on Sikkim soil since P.V.Narasimha Rao's 1994 tour, and hope for a largesse.

The VIP guest, on a four-day holiday, did not disappoint the huge gathering at the Tashi Namgyal Academy, where he was given a public felicitation.

Starting his speech in Hindi, the Prime Minister asked a group of schoolchildren to "relax." "Hum aaplogko aage hi bolney chahate hai ki aaplog baith jaye, Is dhup me mera speech chhotey rakhoonga (Please take your seats. I will keep my speech short because of the heat)." he said.

Responding to NDA ally and chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling's demands for special development funds from the Centre, Vajpayee, during his 20 minute speech, unveiled a bouquet for Sikkim. "I cannot fulfil Chamling's demands in totality. However, I will try whatever is in my yatha shakti (in my capacity). I have the pleasure to announce a special additional amount of Rs. 110 crore for the airstrip coming up at Pakyong and a similar amount for the upgradation of National Highway 31A."

The Himalayan state's only airstrip is being built at Pakyong, 32 km east of Gangtok. The highway is the state's lifeline and its only link with the rest of the country.

Vajpayee said the Centre would bear all expenses for the upgradation of the Sir Thutob Namgyal Memorial (STNM) hospital in Gangtok, which will be turned into a state-of-the-art speciality medical centre. For starters, the number of beds would be increased to 500. Till the facility comes up, the STNM hospital would be linked with the All India Institute of Medical Science in New Delhi via the tele-medicine facility. This means that doctors here would consult medicos there via video conferencing and treat the patients likewise within minutes.

Stating that all help would be provided by the Centre to the hill state. Vajpayee said, "New Delhi may be far away in distance, but Sikkim will always be close to my heart." He said the development projects had to be carried out swiftly and on time. "I have asked the National Hospital

Construction Corporation to submit a report of the project at the earliest. Files take long to move. It should not happen in this case," he said.

Chamling said major development had taken place in the state under the NDA government led by Vajpayee. "Never before has any other Prime Minister done so much for the state in such a short time," he added. ■

# The Statesman

16 April 2003

## Chamling's windfall

### But emotional integration still way off

Fortune seems to be smiling on Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling. Atal Behari Vajpayee's announcement of a Rs 500- crore special package after a four-day visit may not have measured up to the expectations raised, but it comes as a windfall and recognition of the 10-year-old ruling Sikkim Democratic Party as a progressive force. The largesse comes after years of waiting and is essentially the peace bonus Chamling was demanding for maintaining communal harmony and keeping the state insurgent-free. It is to be hoped that the BJP's seeming magnanimity is no favour for a toehold the national party has been seeking since 1994. The SDF is not an ally of the NDA but supports it.

Despite financial problems, the Chamling government has been able to move fast enough on industrialisation, education (free up to the college level) and fighting poverty. The emphasis is on building and strengthening economic infrastructure. Although there has been objection to construction of Pakyong airport, for which Rs 110 crore was allotted, Chamling is keen to see Gangtok included in the air map. Tourism, the biggest growing industry, will get the required boost with two big hotel chains setting up shop. The government may allow them to run casinos. The annual earning from the state-run casinos. The annual earning from the state-run lottery, which was Rs 15 crore, has increased substantially with the entire system going on line last year.

Speedier attention to the people's grievance notwithstanding, The SDF has still not been able to convince the Centre to abide by the letter and spirit of Article 371F which confers a special status on Sikkim. Restoration of reserved seats for Sikkimese Nepalese in the Assembly is one of them. Chamling has rightly pointed out during the Prime Minister's visit that Sikkim is part of the Indian Union but a huge gap exists between Delhi and Gangtok with little prospect of emotional integration. It may serve the Centre well to take a momentous decision.

# The Statesman

17 April 2003

## 'Don't fuel communal passions'

GANGTOK, April, 16, - The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front President and Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling has warned those indulging in fanning communal passions in the state to desist from their activities or face "stringent" action.

Mr. Chamling said this while chairing a Central Executive Committee of the SDF party here at the party headquarters yesterday.

While speaking on the issues of communal politics unleashed by some political leaders, the party president warned even his own cadres against indulging in such activities. "I will not hesitate to take strong action against those fanning the communal passion. If the peace and tranquility of the state is at jeopardy, then those fanning communal passion will be held responsible and action taken against them even they happen to be the founding members of the SDF party," he announced.

"With the statement, the Chief Minister has sent a clear signal to all that communal politics will not be tolerated," said Mr. P.D.Rai, general secretary, media and publicity, SDF.

The CEC meet of the SDF party was essentially called to "review and evaluate" the recent visit of the Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee to the state.

The meeting, chaired by Mr. Chamling and attended by high-level party office bearers, took stock of the four-day visit of the PM.

While expressing "satisfaction" over the overall arrangements during the VVIP visit, the CEC passed a resolution "thanking" the PM for the visit and the largesse he announced for the state. "The meeting unanimously resolved that the present government handled the visit of the PM perfectly in spite of the short notice," Mr. Rai said.

"The PM expressed his happiness over the overall development and progress of the state and gave his word that he would continue to support the state's developmental initiatives. This is certainly a great achievement for the SDF government," he added.

The political and economic demands placed before Mr. Vajpayee by the state government and supported by the SDF were discussed in detail during the meeting.

Meanwhile, the political advisor to the chief minister, Mr. B.B. Goroong, has responded to the "breach of protocol" alleged by the Opposition Sikkim Sangram

Parishad leader, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, when the CM sat through Mr. Vajpayee's appointments with various political parties of the state during his visit.

"I told the CEC meet that Mr. Chamling was present at the Prime Minister's meeting with Opposition leaders on the insistence of the Prime Minister himself. He requested Mr. Chamling to be present there. Therefore, it is not a breach of protocol as alleged by Mr. Bhandari. Furthermore, the SDF headed by Mr. Chamling is partner of the NDA government at the Centre and no eyebrows should be raised if the PM wanted Mr. Chamling to sit through the meetings," Mr. Goroong said.

"The SDF party strongly condemns the statements made by Mr. Bhandari that Mr. Chamling was 'snooping around like an inquisitive schoolboy' during the meeting, as reported by a section of the media," Mr. Rai added. ■

## Award for Kumar Pradhan

GANGTOK, April, 16, - Well known Nepali historian and writer Dr Kumar Pradhan was conferred the prestigious Agam Smriti Puraskar by the Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Sikkim on the occasion of Baisakhi Utsav and Nepali Naya Barsha celebrations here at the Sikkim Government College auditorium here on 14 April.

Dr Pradhan was awarded a citation, a shawl and a cash prize worth Rs. 50,001 in recognition of his immense contribution towards Nepali language, literature and journalism, Dr Pradhan is the editor of Sunchari Samachar, a Nepali daily published from Siliguri.

Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling, who was the chief guest, gave away the award to Dr Kumar. Mr Chamling said that his government was committed to the promotion and preservation of language, literature, customs and traditions of all the communities in the state. The Nepali Sahitya Parishad also felicitated noted Nepali singer Dawa Tamang on the occasion. Mr Chamling presented him with a citation, a shawl and a memento. A colourful cultural programme was put up as part of the Baisakhi Utsav and Nepali Naya Barsha. Earlier, a procession was brought out from the community hall premises in which groups belonging to different ethnic sections of the Nepali community participated. ■

# The Telegraph

17 April 2003

## Chamling alert on politics of hate

GANGTOK, April, 18, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has sent strong signals that he would initiate severe action against those indulging in communal politics in the state.

In an emotional speech, Chamling warned that even his party workers - however highly placed they might be would not be spared if found indulging in communal politics. "My good nature should not be taken as a weakness," he said.

At a meeting of the central executive committee of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) held at Palzor Stadium yesterday, Chamling voiced his displeasure on individuals and organisations creating communal tension in the state.

The meeting, which lasted six hours, saw the party decide on a number of issues, including new initiatives to be launched by the party.

Emphasising that Sikkim was known as a peaceful place. Chamling said anyone found trying to disturb the situation would not be spared.

Of late, a number of pamphlets have been in circulation, creating communal tension in the state. Individuals and organisations representing various communities have also been creating rift among people in the state.

The communal divide has become more evident since the issues of seat reservation and delimitation of Assembly constituencies has resurfaced in Sikkim politics.

Claiming that there was confusion on the issue of seat reservation and the delimitation process. the Chief minister said the two should not be clubbed together.

"While seat reservation is a political issue, the delimitation process is being carried out by the central delimitation commission, which is a statutory independent body under the Election Commission. If there is any disagreement on delimitation, the commission is the only proper forum to take it up." Chamling said.

Addressing party workers the chief minister said it was time to work on developmental activities rather than inciting communal tension.

"With funds flowing in as central assistance, we should work for the development of the state," Chamling said. To achieve this, result-oriented action would be taken up by rural representatives and the party workers, he added.

Former chief minister and political adviser to Chamling, B.B.Gooroong, also briefed party workers on various political demands put up by the SDF to the Prime Minister. ■

## The Telegraph

19 April 2003

### Chamling visit

**VIVEK CHETTRI**

GANGTOK, April, 18, : Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling will visit Darjeeling on April 20 and 21 on the invitation of the All India Tamang Buddhist Association.

Thanking Chamling for accepting the invitation, general secretary of the association M.S.Bomzon said the chief minister had played a pivotal role in placing Tamangs and Limbus under the Scheduled Tribes list.

"In all probability, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee along with the minister for tribal affairs minister Dinesh Dakua will also visit Darjeeling on May 18," Bomzon added.

The Tamang Association will felicitate Chamling on Sunday at Gymkhana Hall and will also organise a cultural programme.

After attending the function, the chief minister will also visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.

According to government sources, Chamling will begin the second day of his tour by paying homage at the Mahakal Tamang. He will then drop in a Sishu Bhawan, run by the Missionaries of Charity.

The Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, the Gorkha Dukha Niwarak Sammelan and the Federation of Societies for Environmental Protection (FOSEP) will also felicitate Chamling at Loreto College Hall on Monday.

President of FOSEP, G.S. Yonzon, said, "Pawan Kumar Chamling is known as the green chief minister. We are looking forward to his visit." ■

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 April 2003

### Cold Hill put off Chamling

*Darjeeling, April, 20* : Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling as claimed that the Darjeeling District administration did not pay him the respect due to him.

"Sometimes when I visit Darjeeling or Siliguri, protocol demands that I be received by the district administration, either by the district magistrate or the superintendent of police. But in most cases, even a DSP is not present," said Chamling, who was on a visit to Darjeeling as part of a high level delegation from Sikkim.

The high-profile delegation from Sikkim included minister for animal husbandry and industries P.S. Golay, Deputy Speaker Palden Lacho, minister of Sikkim national transport H.B.Subedi. "This type of attitude should not deter you, In fact, you should strive harder to establish your identity." said the chief minister.

H. Mohan, the Darjeeling DM, countered that "sometimes the CM passes over Siliguri to reach Bagdogra airport or New Jalpaiguri railway station."

"In such cases we are not informed and are not present. Whenever he is on an official visit and we are informed,

we receive him as per protocol. It is very unfortunate that the chief minister thinks adversely of our hospitality."

On Sunday, the Darjeeling district magistrate, the ADM and other top brass received Chamling and his entourage at Richmond Hill, where the Sikkim chief minister and his delegation is putting up. ■

## CM tosses out conflict theory

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling dismissed criticism that there was an undercurrent of communalism in trying to divide the Nepali community into sects.

"This is by no means communalism, if any backward sect wants to develop like the others it should be welcomed and this will lead to the total development of nation," he said.

"Till the last decade they had been living in a melting pot without any separate identity, culture and even language," JNU professor and economical advisor of the Sikkim government, Mahendra P. Lama, said.

"Since the last decade this approach has changed and now we have the salad bowl approach where in all vegetables have their own identity but are presented as single unit."

Lama said the development of any one of the sects would help the development of the Nepalese as a whole and the backwardness of the other would affect the entire Nepali race, therefore it was a duty of all to see that their sect undergoes a positive cultural, social and linguistic uplift for the development of the Nepalese as a whole.

Lama was addressing a gathering in Darjeeling for the felicitation of Chamling by the All India Tamang Buddhist Association (AITBA) for his contribution in the recent inclusion of Limboos and Tamangs in the Scheduled Tribes List.

"It is not enough to be bir, one should also try to be gyanbir, bigyanbir and dhanbir," said the CM. He said the people of the Hills should not be deterred by the attitude of other people but strive harder to establish their identity. ■

# The Statesman

21 April 2003

## Darjeeling visit not political : Chamling

DARJEELING, April, 20 :The state government may at times complain of the stepmotherly treatment by the Centre. But is it itself free from the fault?

No, according to the Sikkim Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, "Some state leaders don't mete out equal

treatment to chief ministers of smaller states.

Even in Siliguri (which Mr. Chamling frequently passes through to reach the nearest airport, Bagdogra) the Darjeeling district administration does not bother to abide by the chief ministerial protocol when I visit," noted Mr. Chamling.

Mr. Chamling was at the Gymkhana Club for a public felicitation organised for him, by the All India Tamang Buddhist Association. The Association credited the CM for the inclusion of the Tamangs - one of the major ethnic races of Nepali - in the Scheduled Tribe list of the country.

Referring to the "discrimination against the Nepalis, which is a minority community," Mr. Chamling (who is himself a Nepali) said: "We must not be disheartened," The neighbouring CM is on a twoday visit here.

He attributed the credit for the recognition of the Tamangs, along with the Limboos, as STs to the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council, West Bengal government, Sikkim government and "most importantly, the Centre and all the MPs."

He urged the other Nepali political leaders to properly justify their demands when they place it before the Centre. "The Centre will definitely accept such demands," noted Mr. Chamling. The CM also urged the entire Nepali community to work hard to uplift their own status in the country.

In an attempt to quell speculations over the "real purpose" of his visit to Darjeeling, Mr. Chamling declared that his visit was "non-political." "I have never tried to interfere in the politics of Darjeeling; ideologically Darjeeling and Sikkim are different," he explained. "However, some vested interests want to see the relation between Sikkim and Darjeeling being broken."

Mr. Chamling disclosed that they were working with the Centre towards establishing a museum and a library dedicated to Nepali art and culture.

"Such a centre may be established either in Darjeeling or Sikkim," he said. ■

# The Telegraph

21 April 2003

Sikkim CM warns against communal politics, charms Darjeeling during 'apolitical'

## Chamling springs Gorkha ace

Darjeeling, April, 20 : Casting his predecessor and main opponent Nar Bahadur Bhandari into political oblivion, Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling looks set to emerge as the new messiah of the Gorkha.



Arriving in Darjeeling on what he called a two-day "apolitical" visit, Chamling was at his best today as politician, playing down his "achievements" as a Gorkha leader and staying clear of any controversy.

But at the packed Bymkhana Rink Skating Hall, few mistook his emerging status, especially when the All India Tamang Buddhist Association felicitated him for including the Limbus and Tamangs in the ST list in his state.

"I am a politician paying an a political visit to Darjeeling. I have come here to meet the people," Chamling said to thunderous applause. He said he had no intention of getting involved in local politics.

Chamling refused to "take the credit" for including the communities in the ST list. He said the West Bengal government and the Darjeeling gorkha Hill Council chairman Subash Ghising should also be applauded for declaring the Limbus and Tamangs as Scheduled Tribes.

"The chief minister of West Bengal and members of the Assembly have played a major role in inclusion of the communities in the ST list, as have the members of the Assembly have played a major role in inclusion of the communities in the ST list, as have the members of the Sikkim Assembly." Chamling said.

Without naming Bhandari, the chief minister issued a veiled warning to the "opportunist" political parties, which had slammed the inclusion as "a move designed to create a rift in the Gorkha community."

He said those parties should refrain from "communal politics" and help uplift the Gorkhas instead.

The All India Tamang Buddhist Association praised Chamling for the inclusion, which the organisation had been pressing for more than two decades.

Chamling held out an open invitation to the Gorkhas, saying he would do whatever he could for them as chief minister.

Until recently, Bhandari tried to project himself as a messiah of the Gorkhas. He was lauded once for the getting the Nepali language recognised under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

But Bhandari appears to have lost his pre-eminence since his dominance in Sikkim politics waned in the mid-90s.

Ghising, the Gorkha National Liberation Front chief, too, was seen once as the messiah of the Gorkhas.

But since the 2001 attempt on his life, the DGHC chairman has eschewed the spotlight, mostly staying indoors and losing his clout at national level as a Gorkha leader.

Chamling has endeared himself to the Gorkhas by recognising most of their languages such as Gurung, Newar, Tamang, Rai and Limbu in his state as chief minister.

His decision to teach the students in those languages has gone down well with the Gorkha community.

Chamling said his visit to Darjeeling gave him an

"opportunity" to exchanges cultural and other ideas.

To a burst of applause, he said he had come here to "learn from" the Darjeeling intelligentsia.

Before returning to Gangtok, the chief minister, accompanied by his Cabinet colleagues, will meet the literary figures, environmentalists and other cultural personalities at Loreto College's auditorium tomorrow. ■

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 April 2003

# Chamling clarion call to Hills intelligentsia

*Darjeeling, April, 21:* Nepalese Living in India expect a lot from the intelligentsia of Darjeeling. So the intellectuals have to play a pivotal role in creating a strong and self-sustainable society.

This was Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling's message to the masses here on Monday at a function jointly organised by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan (NSS), Gorkha Dukha Nilbaran Sangh (GDNS) and the Federation of Societies for Environmental Protection (Fosep) at the Loreto College auditorium.

"If the society is weak, powers and rewards go to a few and not to the multitude," he said. Importance should be given to totalitarian development of the society as a whole and to individuals.

The CM asked intellectuals to join active politics for the benefit of the society and the urged the young generation to break the fetters of traditional occupations as soldiers, agrarians and jobholders and venture into newer pastures such as the industrial, business and service sectors. "It is time we established a new identity in the 21st century."

Chamling was keen on setting up of a museum, either in Sikkim or Darjeeling, for preserving and conserving the tradition and culture of different Nepali sects. But he had no political interest in Darjeeling and did not even intend to interfere in its political functioning.

"Sikkim and Darjeeling are same and is just divided by a river, let us work together for the uplift of our people," he said. He skirted questions on the DGHC and particularly Subash Ghisingh, its chairman but he hailed the recent revival of the GNLF party in Sikkim.

Chamling visited the Mahakal Mandir at the observatory hill and Sishu Bhavan run by the Missionaries of Charity. He contributed Rs. 1 lakh to the Sishu Bhawan.

Chamling took the opportunity to invite industrialists to set up bases in Sikkim, promising them cheap electricity at rates as low as Re 1 per unit. Though Sikkim has the potential to generate 3,440MW of hydro-electricity by

2006, the CM expects the completion of stage 5 of Teesta Low Dam Project which will generate electricity. "We can distribute this at the present market value which would generate Rs. 75 crore for our exchequer."

Chamling decided to brand his state as a total organic state and plans to ban the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and promote organic fertilizers in Sikkim. His government, under heavy opposition fire, has stringently adhered to decisions of not allowing forest grazing, felling of trees and killing of wild animals.■

## The Statesman

22 April 2003

### Chamling fails to meet Ghisingh

DARJEELING, April, 21 : Sikkim Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Kumar Chamling ended his two-day visit to Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council chairman, Mr. Subhas Ghisingh.

The chairman was reported to have a busy schedule.

Mr. Chamling today attended yet another citizens' felicitation programme at Loreto College auditorium organised by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan. Darjeeling, Gorkha Dukh Niwarak Sangh, Darjeeling and FOSEP, a local NGO.

The CM iterated his message for the Nepali community asking them to build a new identity based on education, culture, science and technology. He said all Nepalis ought to be united in an effort to build a strong civil society.

"Nepalis should change their labour mentality and become owners of land and productive resources," he noted. He urged the youth to stop depending on the government for jobs and build an entrepreneurial attitude.

Mr. Chamling said that Sikkim had discovered great economic potential in the hydropower generation on river Teesta. He said that the National Hydroelectricity Power generation on river Teesta. He said that the National Hydroelectricity Power Corporation would generate 3,440 MW power through which Sikkim would earn Rs. 700 crore.

After the completion of the Stage V. project on the Teesta, Sikkim would annually earn Rs. 75 crore. The projects had also opened up industrial potential of the state, he noted.

Mr. Chamling urged the authorities in Darjeeling to have the plastic banned. He said his state wanted to project a "total organic" image of itself; the state has already imposed strictly the ban on felling of trees and animal grazing in its forests.

The CM also disclosed that 26,000 hectares of land will be returned by the defence to the state in the wake of glaciers receding in the highlands.■

## The Telegraph

22 April 2003

Sikkim Chief Minister offers hydro-electricity to industry at Re. 1 per unit, promises organic state in 3 yrs.

### Chamling hardsells power for business

Darjeeling, April 21 : Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling today tried to hard sell his state to industrialists, holding out the promise of dirt-cheap hydro electricity.

Speaking at a ceremony, organised by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Gorkha Dukha Niwaran Samity and Federation of Societies for Environment Protection, to felicitate him at Loreto College. Chamling also promised to turn Sikkim into an "organic" state in three years by stopping the use of fertiliser.

The chief minister urged industrialists to come to Sikkim saying his government was ready to provide electricity to industry at a highly competitive rate of Re. 1 per unit.

He said the rate was much lower since most states sold electricity to industries for Rs. 4 to 5 per unit.

Declaring that even his ministers were not aware of his electricity plans, the chief minister said Sikkim had the potential to generate 3,440 mw of electricity from the Teesta hydroelectricity project, bringing in a revenue of Rs. 700 crore.

"By 2006, when the stage V of the Teesta project is completed, we can sell the electricity to any of the power grids of the country and immediately earn Rs. 75 crore." Chamling said.

The chief minister said he had, however, decided not to sell power to the grids, but would "supply this electricity to the industries based in Sikkim at a very cheap rate."

The Stage V of the Teesta project, being implemented by the National Hydroelectricity Power National Hydroelectricity Power Corporation, is coming up at Dichu in Sikkim.

Chamling said he hoped that the cheap power would attract more investors to the state, generating not only revenue, but employment in industry starved Sikkim. "The revenue we may earn could be ten times the money invested for the state." he said.

The chief minister also unfolded his plan to create an organic brand name for Sikkim. "In three years, our

government has decided that we will completely stop the use of fertilisers and declare Sikkim an organic state."

He felt that the move would fetch better prices for organic products in the state. The chief minister said Sikkim would take all measures to market such products in a big way all over the country and abroad.

"Everybody now seems to seek organic foodstuff. There is no reason why we cannot achieve our target," Chamling said. He added that the state had already earned the distinction of using the least amount of fertiliser in the country.

On average, only 3 kg of fertiliser is used in Sikkim for every hectare. "We are confident we will achieve the target. It will be for the first time that a state will go organic completely," he said.

The chief minister said Sikkim was also exploring alternative manure to replace fertilisers. He wrapped up his two-day visit to Darjeeling, reiterating he had not come to indulge in local politics. ■

## Politics and Ghising off CM hill itinerary

Gangtok, April 21 : Ending what he called an "apolitical" visit to Darjeeling, chief minister Pawan Chamling returned to the state capital today.

In the course of his two-day visit, Chamling lived up to his words, steering clear of politics. He stayed away from politicians of all stripes, including Gorkha National Liberation Front chief Subash Ghising.

Speculations swirled in Darjeeling today that all is not well between Ghising and Chamling as both leaders failed to pay each other so much as a courtesy call. Sources on both sides confirmed that the leaders did not talk on the phone either.

Ghising, who is chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, was conspicuously absent when Chamling was felicitated by the All India Tamang Buddhist association at the Darjeeling Gymkhana. This, despite the fact that Ghising belongs to the Tamang community, which has been included in the ST list along with the Limbus by Chamling in Sikkim.

Ghising was reportedly in Mirik yesterday. He returned to Darjeeling, but "avoided" meeting the visiting chief minister.

Official sources said it would have been "a breach of" protocol and "unprecedented" for the chief minister to go and meet the DGHC chairman on his own. They said Ghising should have sent Chamling an invitation.

"Moreover, the chief minister was a guest in Darjeeling. Since he is the head of a state government, the DGHC chairman should have made the move for a meeting with him," a senior official said.

Reporters pressed Chamling about why the two leaders

had failed to meet in Darjeeling. But the chief minister declined comments. All he would say was that he respected Ghising as a senior politician and chairman of the hill council. "My visit here is essentially to meet the people and develop cordial relations with them," Chamling said.

During his visit, Chamling stayed at Richmond Hill, the official guest house of the West Bengal chief minister in Darjeeling. Official sources said Calcutta had arranged for the Sikkim chief minister to stay there.

Terming his visit apolitical, Chamling yesterday refused to take credit for including the Tamangs and Limbus in the ST list. He lauded the DGHC and the state government for inclusion of the communities in the ST list in Bengal.

Sources said the two leaders might have discussed the closure of National Highway 31, connecting Sikkim to North Bengal, during strikes if the meeting had come about.

In Darjeeling, Chamling was lauded for championing the Gorkha cause. He, however, made it clear that he had no political ambitions in the hills.

Chamling was all praise for Darjeeling and its culture. "We look up to Darjeeling as a centre of Nepali culture, traditions and literature. I have come here to learn from the people."

Before leaving for Gangtok, Chamling visited the Mahakal Temple complex housing a cluster of temples. He also visited the Sishu Bhavan on Rockville Road, run by the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity. He spoke to the children and destitute women living there. He donated Rs. 1 lakh to the bhavan. ■

## The Statesman

23 April 2003

### Chamling's ambitious plans on power

The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has said that he will not just sell the Rs. 75 crore worth of electricity that Sikkim will be generating soon, he will instead "roll" it to attract investors to set up industries in the state.

Mr. Chamling said that with the commissioning of Teesta Stage V hydel project, the state would have surplus electricity worth Rs. 75 crores.

"We could just sell it over the national power grid, but I plan to use it for more a long-standing plan. I will take this power and use it to lure investors into Sikkim by assuring the electricity at Re. 1 per unit. This infrastructural incentive should have many industries looking favourably at Sikkim since power is sold at Rs. 5 per unit at present and could be even more expensive by the time Teesta Stage

V gets commissioned," Mr. Chamling said. The Chief Minister was speaking at a felicitation function organised for him by the Darjeeling "intelligentsia" at the Loreto College auditorium on 20 April.

He made this comment when requested to speak on his plans for Sikkim.

The CM also revealed that his government planned to use the "organic" tag as the "brand image" for Sikkim.

"When we thought of applying an entrepreneurial approach to promoting Sikkim, we realised that we need a brand image. We plan Sikkim to be perceived as a completely Organic State in the world market and have declared a ban on fertilisers to make this possible," he told the audience comprising mainly of Darjeeling's intellectuals.

Mr. Chamling admitted that it could take Sikkim some time to go fully organic even though even at present it consumed barely 3 kilos of fertilisers per hectare. Once we are fully organic, not only our agricultural produce, but everything from poultry, dairy to animal husbandry can be sold as "organic."

This will definitely have a unique appeal in the open market which is becoming more and more conscious of the health benefits and environmental correctness of organic products," he said. ■

## The Statesman

26 April 2003

### HelpAge launches Sikkim chapter of campaign

GANGTOK, April, 25.: HelpAge India, a leading registered NGO dedicated to the cause of the elderly, has been working in India for the last two and a half decades. It has supported over 3,000 projects, which have made an impact on the lives of more than two million older persons in the country.

One of the projects undertaken by HelpAge India is the "Join Hands Campaign," a unique initiative aimed at involving the time, energy and resources of concerned citizens of the society. The Campaign seeks to project aging as a positive phenomenon and to preserve dignity in the lives of the elderly; to catapult ageing into the mainstream of policy formulation in India and bring about measures that benefit them; to bind people of all age groups through a common cause and to encourage their active participation in the process of development and to prevent the relegation of older people to the fringes of society.

The Sikkim chapter of the Join Hands Campaign was launched here yesterday. The Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, was the chief guest on the occasion. The

Assistant Director General HelpAge India, Mr. Joygopal Poddar was also present on the occasion.

The Speaker of Sikkim Legislative Assembly, Kalawati Subba, minister, education and law, Mr. R.B.Subba, Chief Secretary, Mr. S.W.Tenzing, secretary, department of health, Dr. T.R.Gyatso, Ms Sushmita Ghosh, Regional Director, East, HelpAge India, NGOs and a large number of school students were also present on the occasion.

Under this campaign, a person of any age group can donate a nominal sum of Rs. 1,000 or more and register as a donor participant for a year. For a sum of Rs. 10,000 a donor can become a life member. These payments are 100 percent tax exempt. Donor participants can not only participate in the activities of HelpAge India but can also avail discounts and special services being provided by hundreds of corporate supporters of the Campaign. In Gangtok there are already 12 business establishments that will provide special discounts to the donor participants of the Campaign, Mr. Poddar said.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Chamling, while lauding towards "bringing a little sunshine in the autumn of the aged," said that his government has been "striving hard to improve the lives of the elderly." "We have increased old age pension by 100 percent and senior citizens are provided with monthly ration and free transport in state-run bus services. We are also honouring senior citizens for their contributions to the society." he said. Mr. Chamling said that the state government will support the programmes of HelpAge India.

The Chief Minister donated a sum of Rs. 50,000 to HelpAge India on the occasion.

HelpAge India also started its Adopt-a-Gran project in the state on the occasion. "Under this programme, anyone can adopt an elderly person by making a monthly contribution of Rs. 400, which will take care of the daily needs of the aged persons like rice, dal, blankets and medicines and also some pocket money on a monthly basis. This way an elderly person can live a free independent life that will not only give them the confidence but will also restore their dignity in the twilight years," Ms Sushmita Ghosh, Regional Director, East, HelpAge India said.

The Adopt-a-Gran project will be implemented in the state in collaboration with an NGO, Uniproscuf. The Chief Minister handed over a cheque of Rs. 1.20 lakhs to Uniproscuf on behalf of HelpAge India on the occasion for the Project. Three beneficiaries of the Adopt-a-Gran project were also handed out provisions by the Chief Minister. ■

### Chamling honours six - year - old

Peggy Gurung, a class VI student to Tashi Namgyal Academy here has earned herself wide-ranging accolades by being the highest and the youngest aid collector from



Sikkim for HelpAge India.

Eleven-year-old Peggy was felicitated by the Chief Minister. Mr. Pawan Chamling, here at a function organised by HelpAge India for her achievements. She earned herself a life long membership in HelpAge India.

Through sheer hard work, dedication and sincerity, Peggy managed to collect a sum of Rs. 3,610, mostly from Mangan, in North Sikkim, her hometown. She has also earned for herself a Mini Cricket Bat bearing all the signatures of the Indian Cricket Team, a cap with the HelpAge India logo, a table clock, medal and a certificate. All these were awarded to her by members of HelpAge India in the Principal's office at her School here recently.

The soft spoken and shy Peggy said that it was her father Mr. R.B.Gurung who inspired her the most and that it was with his help and inspiration that she managed to achieve this goal. The Tashi Namgyal Academy is also the second highest aid collecting school in the region for HelpAge India. ■

## WICHAR WEEKLY

26 April 2003

### Chamling's ambitious plans on power

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"We could just sell it over the national power grid, but I plan to use it for more a long-standing plan. I will take this power and use it to lure investors into Sikkim by assuring the electricity at Re. 1 per unit. This infrastructural incentive should have many industries looking is sold at Rs. 5 per unit at present and could be even more expensive by the time Teesta Stage V gets commissioned," Mr. Chamling said. The Chief Minister was speaking at a felicitation function organized for him by the Darjeeling "intelligentsia" at the Loretor College auditorium on 20th April.

He made this comment when requested to speak on his plans for Sikkim.

The CM also revealed that his government planned to use the "organic" tag as the "brand image" for Sikkim.

"When we thought of applying an entrepreneurial approach to promoting Sikkim, we realised that we need a brand image. We plan Sikkim to be perceived as a

completely Organic State in the world market and have declared a ban on fertilisers to make this possible," he hold the audience comprising mainly of Darjeeling's intellectuals.

Mr. Chamling admitted that it would take Sikkim some time to go fully organic even though even at present it consumed barely 3 kilos of fertilizers per hectare. Once we are fully organic, not only our agricultural produce, but everything from poultry, dairy to animal husbandry can be sold as "organic."

This will definitely have a unique appeal in the open market which is becoming more and more conscious of the health benefits and environmental correctness of organic products." he said. ■

### Chamlin's Darjeeling Visit

#### *Tamangs felicitate Pawan Chamling*

Darjeeling: The Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling was felicitated by All India Tamang Buddhist Association (AITBA) for his active support in granting tribal status to Tamangs, on April 20 at a function organised at the Gymkhana Rink Skating Hall.

Speaking on the occasion Mr. Chamling termed his visit as "apolitical visit of a political man." "I have come here to interact with and learn from the Hill intelligentsia and pay my respect to the people of Darjeeling to whom I have high regards," Mr. Chamling said adding that the credit of getting tribal status to Tamangs does not go to an individual rather it was the collective efforts of the Tamangs of yesteryears who had struggled to preserve their rich heritage and pass on to the coming generations which paved the way for its recognition as tribal community. Mr. Chamling said that the people of Darjeeling, intelligentsia, political leaders, writers, Chairman of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council Mr. Subash Ghising, West Bengal Government, Sikkim Government and finally Central Government had equally contributed.

Mr. Chamling pointed out that he had no "political ambition whatsoever in the Darjeeling Hills." "My visit is purely to meet and interact with the local intelligentsia since we in Sikkim look towards Darjeeling as the seat of literary and cultural pursuits. It is best that we play our politics on our side and you on yours, but there is nothing stopping us from collaborating in literacy and cultural pursuits." Chamling said.

Mr. Chamling asked the Indian Nepalese to build a new identity and discard the old mentality of "Veer Jati". He noted that Nepalese should change their labour mentality and become "Maliks" (Masters) themselves by taking up different productive ventures.

Earlier. Mr. M.S.Bomzon, the General Secretary of AITBA said that it was due to Mr. Pawan Chamling's personal image and contract that helped the AITBA to take up the right approach in Delhi and secure the Tribal Status to the Tamangs.

Dr. Mahendra P. Lama, renowned Economist and the Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister said "but for the help extended by Mr. Chamling, the struggle for getting the tribal status of Limboos and Tamangs would have not been so easy."

Dr. Lama was of the opinion that the tribal status to Tamangs and Limboos will not divide the Indian Nepalese as suggested by some people. Dr., Lama said that the Limboos and Tamangs have, in the process, been able to revive their lost track. "This revival will definitely contribute in the preservation of Nepali culture as a whole. They have got an opportunity to search out their roots," he opined.

He said, "The Indian Nepalese community has taken the melting point approach thus far where other communities related to it get mixed and lose their identity." Dr. Lama suggested the 'Salad bowl' approach where each community maintains its distinct identity and contributes to the collective whole.

On April 21 Mr. Chamling was felicitated by various literacy, cultural, social and environmental organisations at the Loreto College Auditorium. Prominent among these were, Nepali Sahitya Samelan, Gorkha Dukh Nibarak Sammelan, Federation of Societies for Environment Protection (FOSEP) Darjeeling, Himachal Hindi Bhawan, Vasudha (Indian Nepali Women Writers Forum), Gorkha Jan Pustakalaya (Kurseong), Press Association of Darjeeling (PAD) to name a few. ■

**NOW!**

23-30 April 2003

■

## **DARJ TAMANGS LAUD CHAMLING AS SECOND AMBEDKAR**

o Chamling advises Tamangs not to get carried away by mechanisations of "party politics"

### **a NOW REPORT**

**DARJEELING:** The Tamangs had lobbied for tribal status for close to 23 years when it finally came about in December last year. The All India Tamang Buddhist Association [AITBA], in a felicitation programme held here on Sunday, April 20, admitted that the final push for this recognition came with the active support of Chief Minister Pawan Chamling. In fact, the Kalimpong wing President of AITBA, Lobsang Yonzon, went so far as to announce that Mr. Chamling, has now emerged as the "second Ambedkar" through the role he played in appropriating of Sikkim and West Bengal.

Explaining the role played by the CM in the Tamang struggle for tribal status, the AITBA General Secretary, MS Bomzan, stated that Mr. Chamling's "personal image and contacts" helped the Association take the right approach in Delhi and secure the status. Mr. Bomzen added that the support was even more notable since the CM "took political risks to get tribal status for Limbus and Tamangs in Sikkim."

His sentiments were echoed by the Economic Advisor to the CM, Dr. Mahendra P. Lama, who said that although AITBA started its struggle in the Darjeeling hills, the "battleground" of Delhi was alien territory for them and it was Mr. Chamling's "help" which earned them the victory there.

Commenting on views suggesting that tribal status for Limbus and Tamangs had "divided" the Indian Nepalese, Dr. Lama maintained that the opposite was true.

"The Nepali community in India has taken the melting pot approach thus far where all communities get mixed and lose their individual flavour. It is time we take the salad bowl approach where each community maintains its distinct identity and contributes to the collective whole," he said.

Mr. Chamling too commented on the "party politics mechanisations" seeking to paint the recognition as a communal divide and suggested that tribal status be viewed as the Government community as an "old and ethnic" community of the nation.

"Let us not get carried away by the rhetoric of party politics and instead seize the day of use the tribal status for bigger success," he advised.

The one good thing that came out of the struggle for tribal status according to Dr. Lama was the revival in Limbu and Tamang culture which then contributed to the preservation of Nepali culture in India. In preparing their case for tribal status, the Limbus and Tamangs searched out their roots, revived lost traditions and kept the culture alive, Dr. Lama commented while adding that it was still not time to rest since the communities had still a lot of "catching up to do."

Interestingly, while the AITBA General Secretary limited his .....Sikkim CM, his West Bengal counterpart and Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr. Chamling shared credit for the tribal recognition with the DGHC Chairman, Subhash Ghising and his councillors. The snubbing of Mr. Ghising by AITBA is conspicuous due to the fact that he himself belongs to the Tamang community which constitutes 41 per cent of the Hill Council population. The CM admitted that he could not take sole credit for winning the tribal status for the Tamangs and maintained that he had accepted the invitation for the felicitation programme only because he wanted to join the Tamangs in celebrating the event and share their joy. The CM was accompanied by some of his cabinet colleagues and senior government officials at the felicitation ceremony.

# APOLITICAL VISIT OF A POLITICAL MAN

## a NOW REPORT

The common thread running through all the public addressed that the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling delivered during his two-day visit to Darjeeling was his insistence that it was “an apolitical visit of a political man”.

“I have no political ambitions in the Darjeeling hills. My visit is purely to meet and interact with the local intelligentsia since we in Sikkim look towards Darjeeling as the seat of literary and cultural pursuits,” Mr. Chamling insisted over and over again.

Either the message was lost on his hosts or it could be that they are simply tired of their own leaders and are in search of a new icon.

The All India Tamang Buddhist Association decided to make no mention of the Tamang chief of the Darjeeling Hills, Subhash Ghising and his contribution to the Tamang cause and the moderator at the Monday felicitation of CM by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, Gorkha Dukha Nivaran Samiti and a local environmental body preferred to introduce Mr. Chamling as the “pride of the Gorkhas”. While this could be attributed to the Darjeeling weakness for colourful language, it could also be a loaded statement given the paranoid politics of the Hill Council.

The Chief Minister, however, was explicit in explaining his reasons for the visit. According to him, he was in Darjeeling out of respect, to learn and to interact .

“It is best that we play our politics on our side of Teesta and you on yours, but there is nothing stopping us from collaborating in literary and cultural pursuits,” he said.

By the second day, however, the CM had become bolder and dropped subtle hints which were not lost on the Darjeeling audience.

While speaking on his pet subject of a “civil society”, he held forth that in the absence of such a society, the general populace gets ignored and politics gets “personality driven”. “Power and prosperity then get limited to a select few,” he said.

It was, however, his not so subtle reference to the recluse that Mr. Ghising has become which evoked some giggles among the audience. “I believe in meeting the people and interact with them all the time,” he said, while adding that there were also some leaders who “never met the people”. Mr. Ghising, incidentally has not met anyone from the Press for the last four years and is rarely seen in public.

Mr. Chamling, however, maintained that he respected the “Chairman” and preferred to reserve his comments on why the two did not meet during his visit.

What is perhaps lost on the Darjeeling leaders [as also the people] is that taking swipes at the Council is one thing, but indulging in active politics there would be a come down

for a party which holds power in a State. The Council is after all even smaller than a district. Sikkim’s primary interest in Darjeeling Hills is that the national highway passes through it and is frequently disrupted by the temperamental Darjeeling bandhs. The CM, however, in his words, is looking for alternatives “over air, land and underground”.

## The Statesman

3 May 2003

### Delimitation controversy needless, says Chamling

GANGTOK, May, 2 - Terming the delimitation controversy as 'unnecessary' Sikkim chief minister Mr. Pawan Chamling laid out a few 'feel good' proposals and said that the next Assembly polls might be held on the basis of the earlier delimitation at a May Day rally here today.

With a reassuring message to his constituencies, Mr. Chamling sought to allay fears that the delimitation exercise might be loaded against any of the groups under its purview. The interrelation between delimitation and reservations in Assembly constituencies in the public perception was responsible for its misinterpretation, Mr. Chamling said.

The Centre's decision to hold delimitation on the basis of the 2001 census is expected to take more time be completed and would help soothe ruffled feathers, he said.

Fear for their political rights have unsettled the Bhutias, Lepchas Limboos and Tamangs who comprise the major ethnic groups in the state. They have in turn, suggested their own delimitation formulas to the commission turning it into a contentious issue.

Reiterating his party's commitment to the protection of the political rights of each and every community in Sikkim, Mr. Chamling said he would continue to fight to ensure that they get their dues.

The chief minister said the state government is planning to raise the minimum wage from Rs. 60 to Rs. 100 perday. About 70 percent of the state's budgetary allocation would be spent on supplying on power and roads to boost industrialisation.

In spite of the "substantial achievements of the Sikkim Democratic Front" including the Limboos and Tamangs in the ST category and the state's inclusion in the North east council, his detractors are trying to malign the image of the government, Mr. Chamling said.

Mr. Kalawati Subba, Speaker, state Assembly, deputy speaker Mr. Palden Lachungpa and the chief minister's political adviser Mr. B.B.Gooroong were also present at the rally. ■

# The Statesman

6 May 2003

## Chamling's plea for a greener Sikkim

GANGTOK, May, 5 - The chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has mooted the idea of a "unique" scheme which will not only "empower the women" of the state but will also go a long way in the conservation efforts of the state government. Mr. Chamling said this at a May Day rally at Jorethang recently.

The chief minister's call for the women of the state, especially those from the rural areas, to participate in a unique afforestation programme that will ensure a green cover of the state that would last for generations has been received well by conservators and environmentalists alike.

According to Mr. Chamling, parents should participate in afforestation programmes and leave behind trees as "fixed deposits" for their children instead of money.

A mother of the house should plant at least 100 saplings each in the name of her children during her lifetime. When the children grow up, they will inherit the trees, which they can use for any purpose. In turn, the children should plant saplings and the cycle will continue. This way not only the green cover of our state will remain intact, it will also be a source of income for the family as the trees would fetch a good price in the market." Mr. Chamling said.

"Why leave money in the banks. Leave behind trees. It makes better sense," Mr. Chamling said. He said that this idea was specially directed at the womenfolk because "they have a better sense of responsibility and can guide the entire household." ■

## SDF to issue White Paper on Sikkim PSUs

GANGTOK, May, 5 - The Sikkim Democratic Front convened a high-level meeting of its legislators on 2 May at Mintokgang, the official residence of the chief minister, which was chaired by its president, Mr. Pawan Chamling.

During the meeting a number of resolutions were adopted. The meeting decided to issue directives to all the legislators to prepare priority list of all the on-going welfare and developmental schemes in their respective constituencies.

It was also decided during the meeting to publish a White Paper on operations of all PSUs currently on in the state.

The meeting also condemned the malicious pamphlets and newsletters that were in circulation recently. The legislators were directed to issue prompt condemnation of

any pamphlet and newsletter with communal overtones.

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Chamling said that an inquiry committee has been formed, headed by the district collector, West District, to look into the incidence of defacing of the bust of the Nepali poet, Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, in Gyalshing Bazar last year.

Mr Chamling said that three legislators from the Nepali community and three from the Bhutia-Lepcha community would be members of this committee. Meanwhile, the political advisor to the chief minister, Mr. B.B.Gooroong, has welcomed the Centre's recent proposals to tighten the Anti-Defection Bill.

Speaking to reporters here recently, Mr. Gooroong said that the amendment to the Bill was "long overdue and that in the present form, "the Bill has no teeth." He said, "horse trading is against the popular mandate given by the people."

Mr. Gooroong, however, refused to comment on the decision of the Union Cabinet to limit the number of ministers within 10 percent of the state Assemblies, saying that party had "yet to decide on it." ■

## Sikkim gets country's first bio-diversity park

### Sarikah Atreya in Gangtok.

With chief minister Pawan Chamling inaugurating the state bio-diversity park and medicinal plants herbal garden in Tendong on 29 April, the state becomes first in the country to boast of a bio-diversity park.

Located 14 km away from Namchi, the south district headquarters, the bio-diversity park houses the largest variety of medicinal plants and herbs.

The park, set up under the aegis of the State department of Forests, Environment & Wildlife, is spread over 225 hectares and the altitude of the place varies from 1,400m to 2,050m above the sea-level.

Sikkim being one of the hot spots of bio-diversity, has 4,500 species of flowering plants and 424 varieties of medicinal plants and herbs. As many as 515 varieties of orchids and 36 kinds of rhododendrons are also found in the state. The state boasts of an amazing fauna 552 species of birds and 690 species of butterflies.

With such diverse and extensive flora and fauna, it becomes imperative for Sikkim to maintain the same. Hence the park. The park will not only serve as a representative conservation unit for the sub tropical and temperate flora and fauna of the state, but also be a major centre for nature education, awareness and recreation.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Chamling said that the state government was "committed towards the conservation and cultivation of medicinal plants, herbs in the state" and that necessary measures had been initiated to check illicit harvesting and transportation of these medicinal plants out of the state.



He said that conservation and cultivation of medicinal plants would be made a people-centric programme, with community-level participation in natural resource management.

The natural resource management and benefit sharing is being ensured by involving locals and the farmers. The state government is also encouraging commercial cultivation and farming of the medicinal plants.

It has already identified thirteen other areas for herbal gardens which are being funded by the National Medicinal Plants Board, Government of India.

The government has asked panchayats to register every species found in their area. While making the programme people-centric, training on cultivation aspects will be imparted by the department.

The plants are also being patented and protected under the Intellectual Property Rights and its trade related provisions. The government is resolute to take all the necessary legal and regulatory actions to check illegal extraction and marketing of the rare flora. ■

## Plea for more green

Mr. Sikkim's chief minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling, has mooted the idea of a "unique" scheme which will not only "empower the women" of the state but will also go a long way in conservation efforts.

Announcing this at a May Day rally at Jorethang recently, Mr. Chamling gave a call to the women of the state, specially those from the rural areas, to participate in the unique afforestation programme that will ensure a green cover for Sikkim and would last for generations.

According to Mr. Chamling, parents should participate in afforestation programmes and leave behind trees as "fixed deposits" for their children instead of money. ■

**The Statesman**

13 May 2003

## Sikkim plays host to Ajanta frescoes

GANGTOK, May, 12 - The Ajanta paintings in all its splendour now can be witnessed in Gangtok.

*Ajanta, The Unseen Jewel*, a special photographic exhibition of the Ajanta frescoes was inaugurated by chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling at the White Memorial Hall on Saturday.

Organised by the National Museum, New Delhi, in collaboration with department of cultural affairs, Government of Sikkim, this unique exposition has already toured Darjeeling and Guwahati. It presents an array of 68 stills by

Indian documentary film-maker and art historian, Benoy K Behl. The frescoes have had to be photographed in the dim light available inside the caves. The prints have been specially processed in Hong Kong.

The paintings of Ajanta depict the *Jataka* tales, the stories of Buddha in his previous births. These simple parables convey the teachings of the Buddha. The world of compassion as shown by the Buddha is enshrined in the paintings of Ajanta more beautifully than anywhere else in the world. These paintings are also recognised as the fountainhead of Buddhist paintings in Asia.

So it is only befitting that Gangtok plays host to this rare collection that showcases the artistic zeal of Buddhism, Mr Pawan Chamling said during the inauguration. "Sikkim lies at the crossroads of various cultures and heritages. The preservation and promotion of its multicultural ethos, languages and customs is of foremost concern to my government and we have made an all out effort in this regard. The exhibition can be aptly described as a Bharat darshan through its ancient images," he said.

Dr Chodenla T Mishra, joint secretary, department of culture, said the pictorial exhibition was brought here because Sikkim was a "unique, progressive and culturally alive state" where Buddhism has flourished.

Stressing on the need for preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, she said that it could be done using modern technology. She said Sikkim's rich cultural heritage should be encapsulated in a museum for posterity, adding that the state can benefit from a Central scheme for Buddhist and Cultural institutions, for which funds are provided by the department of culture.

Dr Mishra said Sikkim should also take up the Cultural Preservation of the Himalayas scheme. Efforts should also be made to preserve heritage buildings, she said.

The show will continue till 20 May and will be open on all days from 10 am to 4 p.m. ■

**The Statesman**

14 May 2003

## Sikkim offers power sops to woo industries

GANGTOK, May, 13 - The 12 per cent free power that the state will receive on the commissioning of the 510-MW Teesta Hydro-electric Power Project, Stage-V, should be used to attract prospective investors to set up industrial units in the state, according to the chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling.

The chief minister directed the power department to take up new projects or schemes only if they are viable,

with reasonable production and generation costs and competitive with national rates. He said the free power can serve as a cheap source for industrial units, which will in turn generate allied activities, boost local employment figures and the economy.

The chief minister said this at a review meeting of the power department, which was held at his chamber in the Tackling state secretariat.

Stressing that the focus should be on improving the existing power infrastructure in the state, he said that the department should concentrate on upgrading transformers and transmission lines and carrying out repairs and maintenance on existing ones. "This will help avoid frequent power failures, as well as transmission and distribution losses. Stating that consistent power supply is essential to industrialise the state, he said that no compromise should be made on the quality of work executed.

The department has been asked to ensure that the installed capacity of all commissioned power projects are utilized fully. Mr Chamling said that all on-going schemes of the department should be completed within three months and proposals for new ones should be taken up on priority basis. The proposals have to be submitted for Cabinet approval by 9 June, this year.

The department informed the chief minister that the 3 MW Lachung Chu Micro Hydroelectric Power Project would be completed by 2005, along with the 3 MW Ravong Chu, while the 6 MW Relli Khola and 5MW Rongli Chu Micro Hydroelectric Power Projects would be completed in 2006.

The department has clocked an increase in revenue realization with figures standing at Rs.13.31 crores in 2002-2003 from Rs.8.24 crores in 1999-2000. While expressing his satisfaction over the hike, Mr Chamling hoped that the department is able to meet the Rs.15 crore target in the current financial year.

Mr Hishey Lachungpa, the minister for power, and Mr DP Kharel secretary, power department, were present during the meeting, as also the department commissioner and the principal secretary of the finance department.

The rural development department will receive Rs.2 crores from the Non-Plan fund for the repair of bridges, water supply lines and Panchayat ghars. It was decided that ten Panchayat ghars and one multi-purpose community centre with basic amenities including libraries and reading rooms will be constructed in each constituency in the state during the current financial year. This was decided at the chief minister's review meeting with the Rural Development department.

Around 166 Panchayats will be provided with an amount of Rs.2 crores for avenue and community plantation programme, setting up nurseries and repair of water supply network under the Jaahar Gram Samridhi Yojna. An amount of Rs.20 crores has been set aside for providing potable drinking water, to the villages for which the

department has been asked to submit a need-based scheme for the Cabinet's approval.

Roof water harvesting will be taken up in semi-arid and dry areas on priority basis. Chungbong, Lungchok, Assigthang, Chakung, Phalidara, Lunkya, Rong, Vasmay, Tarpin and Mapang in the western and southern districts have been selected for this scheme for the current year.

Mr Girish Chandra Rai, minister for rural department, and secretary, RDD, Mr R Ongmu were present at the meeting. ■

## The Telegraph

14 May 2003

### Chamling call for proactive panchayats

GANGTOK, May,13 - Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling has asked the panchayats to adopt a proactive role rather than as a medium between the people and the government.

Addressing a state-level *panchayat sammelan* at Palzor Stadium here today, Chamling said the government was keen on decentralisation of power but before that the panchayats had to prove their capability by shouldering responsibilities.

The Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) had already taken steps to devolve financial powers at the district level, he added.

Financial matters, including disbursements would now be decided by the district administration.

"The task of decentralisation is slow and difficult but not impossible. We are committed to it and will do all we can for a smooth transition," Chamling said.

He also said 30 per cent of the budget was now being allocated to the panchayats.

He urged the panchayats to be "watchdogs" and leaders of the rural people, adding that all schools, primary health centres, village-level offices including libraries would be under the care of panchayats.

He also asked the panchayats to be "messengers" and "authorities" of government policy and programmes at the village level.

The gram sabhas will have to carry out programmes with "transparency", the chief minister said.

Six resolutions were passed at the meeting, which was attended by all panchayat representatives, legislators and members of the state Cabinet.

Sikkim rural development minister Girish Chandra Rai passed the resolutions, which were seconded by the other ministers.

The resolutions include creation of *smriti vans* (memorial forests), development of tourist villages, setting up of nurseries and planting trees along roads. Fertilisers and pesticides will be banned to make Sikkim an "organic state".

Various packages and schemes were also announced for the welfare of village units. Two panchayat units received computers and peripherals for computerisation. ■

## The Statesman

15 May 2003

# Chamling flays panchayats' role

GANGTOK, May, 14 - Panchayats should grow out of their role as middlemen between the people and the government and mature into leaders who involve the people in development, the chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling has said.

Mr Chamling was speaking at the State Level Panchayat Sammelan being held at the Paljor Stadium indoor gymnasium yesterday. About 1,000 panchayat members representing the 166 gram panchayats from all over the State attended the meeting. Among those present were ministers, MLAs, the four zilla adhakshyas and Mr Muchkund Dubey, deputy chairman of the Sikkim state Planning Commission.

The main aim of this Sammelan was to propose several schemes and work out means on how to implement them. Schemes like Jai Prakash Rojgar Gramin Yojna were lauded, land-based agricultural schemes like baby-corn cultivation, off-season vegetable cultivation and value addition of horticulture and agricultural products were discussed.

A six-point resolution to promote creation of Smriti Vans (memorial parks) to encourage afforestation in gram panchayats; one village in every gram panchayat as a tourist destination; nurseries for every gram panchayat; beautification of roads and routes by gram panchayat; promotion of "productive" schemes at gram panchayat level and making Sikkim an organic state were adopted.

Mr Chamling assured 30 per cent of the budget for the panchayats. While stressing that his government was committed to decentralisation of power to the panchayats, he said this could come about only after the panchayats proved themselves to be proactive and capable. Mr Chamling said the registration of land given to the landless under the land-bank scheme should be made in the name of the beneficiaries. ■

## The Statesman

17 May 2003

# Employment options can ward off insurgency

GANGTOK, May, 16 - Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling today said the only way of keeping terrorism and insurgency at bay is to provide the youth the right incentives for employment.

Speaking at the 28th State Day Celebrations here at the Community Hall today, Mr Chamling said although the government cannot provide white-collared jobs for all young talents who come out of university with degrees every year, it can certainly show them the right direction towards self-employment and self-reliance. "The Chief Minister's Self Employment Scheme is a unique loan scheme in the country that provides an alternative to the youth. We provide financial and technical back-up to young entrepreneurs and encourage them to take up various self-employment ventures," he said.

Mr Chamling said his government has decided to launch a new scheme aimed at making Sikkim a 'producer state' instead of a 'consumer state.'

Labeled "One Family One Productive Scheme," the state government plans to make it compulsory for every household to take up at least one production venture, be it agro-based, floriculture fisheries or service-sector based. "We will provide financial as well as technical support for this scheme," he said.

Efforts are on to stop migration of rural population to the towns by formulating policies that are village-centric Mr Chamling said. "We want no shanties to come up in the bigger towns. If villages are provided with all opportunities, we can control the phenomenon of rural people moving to towns for better opportunities," he said.

The chief minister said the first policy decision that his government took after coming to power was to set aside 70 per cent of the Plan fund for the villages and rural development. "We cannot talk of the development of the entire country as a whole without taking into consideration the development of the villages. If we do that, we are hypocrites," he said.

Mr Chamling announced that all the 176 Gram Panchayats in the state would have at least one tourist spot and the Panchayats would be given powers for decision-making. "All the welfare schemes in the villages would be looked after by the Panchayats and they would be responsible for their proper implementation," he said. The state government will also make afforestation programmes compulsory in every construction activity in the state, he said.

In order to tackle water shortage in some dry areas in Sikkim, the government will soon launch a rainwater-harvesting scheme, in which a grant of Rs35,000 would be provided to each household for taking it up. Mr Chamling said. He said the Centre has already approved the project for an alternative highway connecting the state that will bypass the Kalimpong sub-division. The new highway will start from Melli in South Sikkim along the left flank of the Teesta River and connect the State at Mamring, near Rangpo in East Sikkim.

In his address, the Governor, Mr V Rama Rao said that the new mantra of the state should be "peace, prosperity and progress."

A book on Mr Chamling was released today. Titled "Pawan Chamling, Daring to be Different", the book is written by journalist and writer Yogendra Bali. It was released by Mr Rama Rao. The critical reviews of the book were read out by noted Nepali writer and Sahitya Akademi award winner, Dr Lakhi Devi Sundas and Prof. Noreen Dunne, head of the English department, St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling. The chief minister released a book titled "Sikkim's Sons, Nation's Pride" published by the state department of information and public relations during the occasion.

A cultural programme was organised as part of the State Day celebrations. Later in the evening, a 20 member troupe from the Lalit Nritya Chandam, Darjeeling, put up a colourful performance.

The State Day celebrations were attended by former chief ministers, members of the State Legislative Assembly, senior officials and students. A large number of scholars, writers, publishers and literary figures from Darjeeling, Kolkata and Delhi were also present. ■

## The Telegraph

17 May 2003

### Chamling honour on state birthday

GANGTOK, May, 16 - Sikkim today completed 28 years of statehood after its merger with India but the man in the spotlight was Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling, whose biography was released at the function to mark State Day.

The chief minister's biography, *Pawan Chamling - Daring to be Different*, written by Yogendra Bali, was released by Governor V. Rama Rao at the function at the community hall at the Development Area here.

Chamling said the progress made by the hill state since the Sikkim Democratic Front came to power in 1994 had exceeded the expectations of the party.

To substantiate his claims, the chief minister presented a brief "progress report" of the state and also reiterated his

government's commitment towards all-round development of the state so as to make it a "model state in the country".

Electricity has reached more than 90 per cent of the population in the state and an equal number of people have access to safe drinking water. These, Chamling said, were only a few of the "country's first" that the state had achieved.

The chief minister also said his party would continue with its policy, giving priority to education, health and service sectors including tourism. Extra care was being taken to ensure the uplift of the poor and down-trodden, he added.

The government has earmarked 70 per cent of its annual budget for rural development, said Chamling.

A patriotic song contest for schoolchildren was held before the chief minister's speech. Governor Rama Rao also presented trophies to the winners of the state-level patriotic song competition.

Besides the biography of the chief minister, another book, *Sikkim's Sons: Nation's pride*, honouring the famous sons of the state, was also released at the function.

Rama Rao said Sikkim had embarked on its journey on the road to peace, progress and prosperity. Visiting experts from Darjeeling, professor at St. Joseph's College Noreen Dunne and Sahitya Akademi winner Lakhi Devi Sundas presented reviews on Chamling's biography.

the book, which has 26 chapters, elaborates Chamling's evolution as a "visionary and pragmatic" political leader and his stands on environment, grass-roots identity, and ideals for the poor, women, youth and children of the state.

Bali, who is the bureau chief of Asia Defence News International, said the biographical account of one of the most "humane" and "ideal" politician in the country was not a biography in the conventional sense of the term. Mentioning that as a man of the masses, Chamling's early development as a politician was closely knit with the evolution of Sikkim as a constituent democratic state of India from an independent kingdom. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 May 2003

### Sikkim keen on China trade through Nathu-La

By Mahendra Ved  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

NATHU-LA (Sikkim): Defence minister George Fernandes' recent visit to China and the likely visit next month by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee have once again raised hopes of the revival of the ancient Silk Route,



passing through this Himalayan pass.

Located in Sikkim's north-east corner near Bhutan, Nathu-La, which means "pass of the listening ear", has for centuries been a natural gateway between India and Tibet. Situated at a height of 4,290 metres, it once witnessed a flourishing border, trade in wool, machine parts, tea and other goods.

But the 1962 war and Sikkim's opting to merge with India in 1974 ended the trade.

With Sikkim wedged between mountainous Nepal and Bhutan and a "bandh-afflicted" West Bengal to its south, chief minister Pawan Chamling would like this northern route to reopen. But he too is circumspect. He sent memoranda in the past and last month urged Vajpayee to take it up with Beijing, Gangtok's business community also submitted a memo to Vajpayee. The PM's response, apparently with his China visit on the card, was *maun*, a senior official said.

"*Hamare log to chahte, hain, magar chahne se kya hota hai?* (Our people want it, but what can we do)," Chamling said.

The mule track, which was once the trade route, is now a winding cement-and-tar road and Sikkim itself has come a long way from being a sleepy, snow-bound kingdom. Firms that announce their past "India-Tibet" trade links, are ready to jump at any opportunity. But Sikkim's strategic location complicates things for them.

Encouraged by the Delhi-Lahore and the Kolkata-Dhaka bus services, Chamling in 1999 urged Delhi to open a similar Gangtok-Lhasa route. But nothing came of it.

There is also apprehension, viewed purely from the business angle: Gangtok alone has numerous "China Bazaars" selling low-priced goods. "The Chinese will benefit more than us, and smuggling of goods into the eastern region from Nepal and Bangladesh will get legitimised," a state government official points out.

There is a political side too since China has never officially recognised Sikkim being part of India. But it has not been talking of Sikkim in recent years. Officials say that Beijing has informally indicated that it would like Kalimpong in West Bengal, and not Gangtok, to be the trading post. But even a road from Kalimpong, which used to have a Chinese trade commissioner till 1962, must end up in Sikkim and lead to Nathu-La.

Chamling, on his part, says China has "no moral right" to sit in judgment over Sikkim's merger with India. "That would be interference in our internal affairs."

Yet, China indicated its subtle acceptance of Sikkim's position in 1993 after the Narasimha Rao visit and again when former President K R Narayanan, the former Indian envoy in China whom it highly respected, visited China. But Sikkim and Nathu-La, Indian strategic analysts say, form only a small, although significant, part of the Sino-Indian scene. No quick decision on opening the Nathu La trade route is expected, they say.

# The Telegraph

28 May 2003

## Kazi awarded

Kalimpong, May, 27 - Sikkim Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling today awarded the Padma Bibhushan to Kazi Lhendup Dorji on the President's behalf, at his Chakung House residence on Happy Villa Road in Kalimpong, reports our correspondent.

Kazi had failed to attend the ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in March on account of ill health.

"I was elected to confer the Padma Bibhushan on behalf of the President," said the chief minister. ■

# The Statesman

29 May 2003

## Chamling honours predecessor

GANGTOK, May, 28 - It was a historic moment when two staunch believers of democracy, the present chief minister of Sikkim and the first chief minister of the state, met each other and handed over the second highest civilian award to him.

Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling yesterday called upon the first chief minister of Sikkim, Mr Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangserpa, at his residence in Kalimpong. He was accompanied by the former chief minister and political advisor to the Chief Minister, Mr BB Goroong and members of his Cabinet.

Mr Chamling handed over the Padma Vibhushan to the ailing Mr Khangserpa, which was conferred upon him on 26 January this year by the President, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Mr Chamling also handed over the citation to him.

The 99-year-old stalwart of the democratic movement in Sikkim, Mr Khangserpa, expressed his honour and pride on receiving the country's second highest civilian award. He thanked the Government of India for the honour bestowed upon him. He said that he had full faith in the leadership of Mr Chamling, who had restored democracy in the true sense in the state. The first Chief Minister was hopeful that the present government would lead the state towards rapid development and prosperity.

While congratulating Mr Khangserpa on the award, Mr Chamling said that it was through Mr Khangserpa's active efforts and devotion that led to the establishment of democratic government in the state.

Kazi Lhendup Dorjee Khangserpa was born in Pakyong, East Sikkim in 1904. He spend his iinitial years as a Buddhist monk. After serving about eight years as the head monk of the Rumtek Monastery, he left the monastery to work with his brother, the late Kazi Phag Tshering, who founded the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Darjeeling.

The two brothers founded a number of schools in West Sikkim and were instrumental in bringing about a number of social reforms in the state.

In 1945, Mr Khangserpa started the Sikkim Praja Mandal and was its president. In 1953, he became the president of the Sikkim State Congress and held the post till 1958.

In 1973, the Sikkim National Congress merged with the Janata Congress and formed the United Party. It won the 1974 general elections with an overwhelming majority, winning 31 out of 32 seats. He was appointed as the Chief Minister on July 4, 1974. The Sikkim Congress, under the leadership of Mr Khangserpa merged with the Indian National Congress in 1975, after the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union.

Mr Khangserpa remained the Chief Minister of Sikkim till 1979. ■

## The Statesman

3 June 2003

# Sikkim fortifies Panchayati Raj

GANGTOK, June, 2, - The state government has decided to decentralise the administration to delegate maximum power to panchayats and strengthen the Panchayati Raj system in Sikkim.

All government institutions such as primary schools, primary health centres, village level officers, libraries, community information centres, rural tourism, minor irrigation works, among others, falling under a Gram Panchayat Unit, will be under the administrative control of the president of that particular GPU.

This was decided in a meeting held in the chamber of the development commissioner here. The GPU president however will be assisted by government officials in charge of these institutions. They will act as member secretaries of their respective GPU committees.

This decision was taken in pursuance of the directives of the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, who has said

that the GPUs should be "the point of convergence of decentralised administration." The state government will establish the offices of the GPU presidents immediately to empower panchayats to prepare, sanction, supervise and implement various welfare schemes and projects for their units.

The planning and development department will provide Rs 10 lakh each to all the 166 GPUs and Rs 50 lakh to the four zilla panchayats in the state, which has been already approved by the state Cabinet. The department will allocate Rs 18.60 crore to GPUs and zilla panchayats in the state within a month.

Each sub-division in the state will have an additional district development officer who will be now re-designated as sub-divisional development officer. He will assist the GPU president falling under their jurisdiction. The GPU president will also be provided with a rural development assistant. The sub-divisional development officers will be provided with two junior civil engineers, one accountant and two panchayat supervisors.

The roads and bridges and finance departments will take care of the special requirements will take care of the special requirements of these additional posts and the rural development department will work out the funds requirements.

In case of schemes overlapping with one another in the GPUs and disputes arising out of them, three sub-committees will be formed comprising senior Gram panchayat presidents, which will settle the disputes.

The principal secretary to the chief minister, secretary, and department of personnel, secretary and senior officers from the rural development and finance departments attended the meeting. ■

## The Statesman

13 June 2003

# Sikkim thrust to herb cultivation

GANGTOK, June, 12, - The Sikkim government has sanctioned Rs10 lakh to the State Medicinal Plants Board for awareness generation, capacity building and cultivation of medicinal plants in the state. The decision was taken at a SMPB meeting, where chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling also mooted herbal tourism.

The 166 gram panchayat units would have one herbal garden each. Mr Chamling who is also chairman of SMPB feels that the state should have more herb gardens with

farmers being encouraged to take up alternative farming and start the cultivation of medicinal plants so that the state becomes self-sufficient in herbal seed production.

The Board has decided to involve school children and youth for the awareness and capacity building programmes. The government has already established 13 herbal gardens on 10 acres each. The SMPB has selected 29 species of medicinal plants for cultivation over a period of five years.

A state-level workshops on conservation and sustainable utilisation of medicinal plants was organised jointly by the Department of Forest, Environment and Wild-life, Government of Sikkim and Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Tradition a Bangalore-based NGO. It was inaugurated by the Forest Minister, Mr DT Lepcha. The programme was also attended by Planning Commission member Mr KC Pradhan, Mr GA Kinhal from FRLHT, Principal CCF and Forest secretary Mr TR Sharma, delegates from different state and central departments as well as research institutes and NGOs from the state.

According to Mr Lepcha the state government has contributed towards sustainable development of medicinal plants by constituting the SMPB, and identifying 13 sites in different ecological zones. It also includes preparation of bio-diversity registers by panchayats, a state bio diversity park at Tendong and a ban on the extraction of medicinal plants from forest areas for a period of 5 years from 2001. The Minister talked about developing bio-villages where composite community bio-centres could be set up for cultivating medicinal plants under poly-houses or sheds. Community herbal nurseries, home herbal gardens and medicinal plant cultivation as cooperative farming has a good future in the state, he said.

The workshop was a part of the finalisation of an action plan for the protection of medicinal plants and the revitalisation of associated local health cultures of Sikkim. The department has conducted public hearings at 15 places in the state for feedback on the conservation and protection of medicinal plants. ■

## The Telegraph

23 June 2003

### Kranti Diwas

GANGTOK- The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front observed the party's Kranti Diwas at the indoor gymnasium in Palzor Stadium on Sunday. Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, who was the chief guest, addressed a huge gathering of party workers who had seemed to observe the event. Kranti Diwas commemorates the first public procession led by the SDF against the "despotic" Sikkim Sangram Parishad government on June 22, 1993. ■

## The Telegraph

24 June 2003

### Panchayats get power

GANGTOK, June 23 :- Come July 1, and the panchayats in the hill state will officially take charge as the final decision maker on administrative and financial issues at the grassroots level.

True to its pre-poll promise, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front government finally gave its approval of the devolution of power at the rural level.

The official date for handing over the powers was announced by chief minister Pawan Chamling at Kranti Diwas observed by the party at Palzor Stadium here yesterday.

The panchayat presidents will now function as the executive head in each village. They have also been asked to open offices in their respective gram panchayat units, which will function from 10 am to 4 pm every day.

The administrative powers include control over government institutions like primary schools, primary health centres, village-level office centres, libraries, community information centres, rural tourism, minor irrigation works, community centres and sports grounds falling under the respective gram panchayat areas.

The panchayat presidents will manage these institutions with the help of government functionaries like primary schools principals, medical officers-in-charge of primary health sub-centres, village-level officers and workers and rural development assistants.

The government has also decided to hand over power to issue local transit permits for forest produce to the rural heads.

Similarly, fisheries, small scale industry, cottage industry, food preservation, agriculture will also come under the purview of the panchayat.

The panchayats will also be empowered to prepare, sanction, supervise and implement various schemes and projects in the villages. The sub-divisions will have sub-divisional development officers to aid the panchayat president in discharging his duties.

Similarly rural development assistants will also be posted in each of the gram panchayat units.

Additional staff strength comprising of technocrats like junior engineers (civil), accountants and panchayat supervisors have already been posted in the sub-divisions.

Chamling said the SDF government intended to set up the best example in devolution of power. ■

# The Telegraph

25 June 2003

## Chamling cheer for silk route success

GANGTOK, June 24 :- The Pawan Chamling government today welcomed the historic pact between India and China to reopen the old trade route from Tibet, saying it would bring prosperity to the Himalayan state.

In a statement, the chief minister said he was "satisfied" that one of his government's long-pending demand was accepted.

Chamling said the pact would result in several "advantages" for Sikkim, which would be the focal point for trade and commerce from and to Tibet via Nathu-la.

"The decision will not only benefit both countries with regard to trade, but would help develop the relations between India and China," the Sikkim Democratic Front leader said.

He said the minister said the reopening would boost tourism and increase the commercial and export-oriented activities in this region.

B.B. Goroong, political adviser to the chief minister, said the pact would not only remove "a long-standing irritant" in Sino-India relations, but also "dramatically" raise the political comfort in New Delhi."

"More important, the Chinese decision to trade through Sikkim will give a major boost to the Himalayan region with renewed trade activities," Goroong said. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) also welcomed the landmark pact.

"It's sure to go down in history as a milestone in developing bilateral ties between the neighbouring countries," CII president Anand Mahindra, part of an industry delegation in Beijing, said.

Responding to media reports that China had implicitly recognised Sikkim as part of India, the Chinese government today said the "Sikkim Issue" couldn't be resolved "overnight."

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan, speaking to reporters in Beijing, today described Sikkim as "an enduring issue left over from history."

Chamling lauded Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for taking the initiative to reopen the route.

He said Sikkim would benefit enormously from the resultant economic growth once the routes were opened.

"It would generate employment and provide local people with business opportunities," he said.

"Sikkim should now be prepared to meet the challenges of increased commercial activities after the route is reopened," he said.

Members of the family of traders, who once carried on trade through the silk route, preferred to "wait and watch". One of them, requesting anonymity, said there were still not very clear about what the agreement entailed. "We can only tell you our reaction after a few days, he said.

The Sikkim Hotels and Restaurant Association (SHRA), however, was "overjoyed" at the agreement.

SHRA general secretary S.T. Wangdi said they now hoped that the pilgrimage route to Kailash and Mansarovar would also be opened, boosting tourism.

Though the agreement was signed essentially to open the trade, the association said it was the "closest and easiest" route to the holy places. ■

# The Statesman

25 June 2003

RESUMPTION OF NATHU LA TRADE

## Sikkim hails historic agreement

GANGTOK, June 24 :- The agreement reached between India and China to reopen the historic trade route through Nathu La in East Sikkim has sent waves of jubilation in the Himalayan state.

Welcoming the decision, the Sikkim chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling, today expressed satisfaction over the development. Thanking Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr Chamling said the decision fulfilled one of Sikkim's long-standing demands.

"A number of advantages would flow out of the decision to reopen the trade route through Sikkim," Mr Chamling said. He said the decision would also go a long way in building good relations between the two countries besides facilitating trade.

"As far as Sikkim is concerned, the reopening of the trade route would give a major boost to tourism and also increase commercial and export oriented activities in the region," Mr Chamling said.

The Sikkim chief minister also expects that the state would become a hub of activity and benefit enormously from the "resultant spin-off, which will generate employment and business opportunities for the people of Sikkim."

Expressing gratitude towards Mr Vajpayee and the deputy prime minister, Mr LK Advani, Mr Chamling said Sikkim should also now be well prepared to meet the chal-



lenges as the volume of commercial activities is likely to increase with the reopening of the trade route. Mr Chamling has now raised the demand for a dry port in Sikkim.

While the mood is a joyous one in Sikkim, it is a gloomy one in Kalimpong. The agreement on Nathu La has sent residents of Kalimpong who also traded with Tibet and mainland China through the Jelepala pass in the past, on a sulk. "It is not done," says Mr DC Khati, a Kalimpong-based businessman. According to him, trade between Tibet and Kalimpong by extension Siliguri, was on till 1962. Reopening the Jelepala route has been a long standing demand of ours as well," he said. Mr Khati was one of the few Indians who made a trip right up to Pulang in Tibet through Pithoragarh in 1992 when an effort was made to re-establish trade links with China. The CITU has come up with posters in Kalimpong demanding reopening of the Jelepala route. ■

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 June 2003

# Pawan Chamling favours Gangtok-Lhasa bus service

By Amalendu Kundu  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gangtok: With the opening of Indo-Tibet border trade through the Nathu La pass in Sikkim, a bus service between Gangtok and Lhasa might be possible, Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling said in Gangtok on Wednesday. If buses could run between Lahore and Delhi and between Kolkata and Dhakha, why should not there be a road service between Sikkim and Tibet along the historic Silk Route through Nathu La Pass, he asked.

"I am happy to know that China and India have agreed to open the trade route through Nathu La Pass. With the opening of this route, the two countries would come closer," Mr Chamling said. Regarding the indirect recognition of Sikkim as a part of India, he said, "People of Sikkim are already emotionally integrated with India, reflected in a referendum".

Since 1994, Mr Chamling had repeatedly asked the Centre to start a dialogue with China for border trade through Nathu La, which would boost the economy not only of the tiny state of Sikkim but also of the entire eastern region." Of course, we will have to improve our roads, transport services and hotels. The Sikkim government has already started work to develop infrastructure facilities," he added.

Border trade through Nathu La would also boost economic activities in West Bengal as China will use Kolkata port to bring in goods for Tibet. The distance from Lhasa to Kolkata is around 1,100 km, half that of from Beijing .

Former West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu, too, had pleaded with the Centre to open the original old Silk Route which was through Jelepala Pass south-east of Nathu La, connecting Tibet to Kalimpong in north Bengal

But, because of the availability of ready infrastructure and favourable geo-political conditions, the defence ministry favoured the Nathu La route via Sikkim. Before the Sino-Indian war in 1962, India did trade through the two high altitude passes of Nathu La and Jelepala. Yatung in south-central Tibet, 25 km away from Sikkim, was the hub of the trade, where so many Indian traders were settled before 1962 and who shifted to Gangtok later.

As part of the strategy that Tibet should grow in trade and finally globalize, China has created new infrastructure for trade at Yatung, once the home of Indian traders. Lhasa also wants India to invest in Tibet. Trading with the natural market in the south Himalayans in Sikkim then is an obvious priority.

The opening of border trade through Sikkim is an indirect recognition that Sikkim is a part of India, say observers.

## THE HINDU

28 June 2003

# Sikkim looks beyond border trade

By C.Raja Mohan

GANGTOK, JUNE 27. The excitement here over the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to China is overpowering. The talk of the town - from restaurants to newspaper editorials - is all about Mr. Vajpayee's deal in Beijing this week on opening the border between Sikkim and Tibet.

And leading the charge of enthusiasm is none other than the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling. In a conversation with The Hindu, Mr. Chamling is happy that the international acceptance of Sikkim's merger with India in 1975 is now complete." Until now China has not recognised Sikkim's integration with India. That negative approach now is over, with Beijing initiating the recognition of Sikkim as part of the Indian Union," he said.

Mr. Chamling takes some credit, rightly, for making border trade with Tibet and China part of the national

agenda. Since coming to power in 1994, he has been demanding the resumption of trade on the "Silk Road" between India and Tibet that runs through the Nathu La pass. When he first raised the issue in 1994, it was laughed off in New Delhi as either unrealistic or unrealisable. But Mr. Chamling would not give up.

The decision to reopen the "Silk Road", Mr. Chamling said, "Will not only lead to improved relations between India and China, but also enormously boost the developmental activity in Sikkim". He is grateful for Mr. Vajpayee for fulfilling on of the main demands of Sikkim during his visit of China. Sikkim had been diplomatic play in the talks between New Delhi and Beijing since the mid-1990s.

Mr. Chamling wants a rapid implementation of the MoU and to see that it is not trapped in the usual bureaucratic delays. While many procedures and creation of trade facilities on the ground will take time, Mr. Chamling hopes they can be completed shortly.

Mr. Chamling is determined to derive full advantage for Sikkim's products in the trade with Tibet and China. That would involve a dramatic upgradation of the State's transport infrastructure. "Connectivity in India", is one of Mr. Chamling's favourite themes. "Linking Kangchenzonga to Kanyakumari", as long demanded by the Chief Minister, now acquires a new relevance as Sikkim is all set to become a gateway to China.

Mr. Chamling has been demanding that Sikkim be linked to the Golden Quadrangle road network. He also wants an upgradation of National Highway 31 A that links Sikkim to Siliguri in North Bengal. He points to Mr. Vajpayee's promise to consider an alternative to NH 31A.

Mr. Chamling's proposal for an airport to Gangtok is now lying with the Airports Authority of India, but he is concerned about the delays in implementing the project.

Although the MoU signed in Beijing talks only about border trade its future scope should not be seen narrowly, says Mahendra Lama, an adviser to Mr. Chamling. Border trade in the traditional sense, Prof. Lama says, is about the exchange of commodities and daily needs between local communities across the frontiers. "But trade at Nathu La has a much larger scope- regular trade, tourism, and investments among Tibet, India, and the neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh."

Mr. Chamling is looking at more than trade with Tibet and China. He wants a bus service between Gangtok and Lhasa to promote people-to-people contact and tourism across the border between India and Tibet.

Given the huge common cultural and religious heritage on both sides of the Himalayas Mr. Chamling believes there is a huge potential for pilgrimage and tourism across the border. Pilgrims travelling to Lhasa or Lake Manasarovar and those from across who want to do the Buddhist reli-

gious circuit, Mr. Chamling believes can use the State as a transit point. Tourism then could be a great money-spinner for Sikkim.

Mr. Chamling says, 'a lot of preparation is needed in Sikkim to gain from the new prospects for improvement in Sino-Indian relations'- and urges the business community and the people of Sikkim to "rise to the challenge".

The first task, sources here say, is to effectively implement the MoU and raise the comfort levels in New Delhi and Beijing about doing things differently on their borders. Only then could the broader benefits of opening Nathu La will become a reality, they add.

While Mr. Chamling has scored big from Mr. Vajpayee's visit to Beijing, West Bengal is waking up to a missed opportunity. With the decision to make the Nathu La the main point entry, Gangtok will be the gainer and Kalimpong, in North Bengal, could be the loser.

Before hell froze over Sino-Indian relations in the early 1960s, Kalimpong was the main centre for commerce with Tibet and Jelep La in southeastern Sikkim was the main pass.

Analysts here say, Sikkim has no desire to be seen as monopolising the new gains from the opening with Tibet and China. They, suggest that the entire region of North Bengal could benefit from expanded economic engagement with China. If things work well in Nathu La, they say, economic could justify the reopening of the Kalimpong -Jelep La route as well. If Kolkata is smart it will upgrade the infrastructure in North Bengal and press the Centre for an additional trading point with China.

Siliguri, as the regional trading hub, is well poised to exploit the opening between Sikkim and Tibet. And if Bagdogra airport is made an international one, it could emerge as the transit point for the increased flow of tourists across China and the eastern subcontinent.

As the world's two largest and fastest growing economies begin to cooperate, as agreed in Mr Vajpayee's visit, the trans-Himalayan regions in China and the subcontinent are on the verge of an unprecedented economic transformation.

## The Telegraph

1 July 2003

### Chamling tiptoes on Tibet trade trail

GANGTOK, June 30 :- As India and China prepare to reopen the trade route, chief minister Pawan Chamling

treads carefully.

“Our aim is to maximise the benefits from border trade and minimise the fallout,” Chamling said, in an interview with **The Telegraph**.

He said acceptance of the demand for reopening the route to Tibet has “raised hopes of millions of people in both countries”.

With China agreeing to reopen the old route, the chief minister said the international acceptance of Sikkim’s merger with India in 1975 was now “complete”.

“Until now China has not recognised Sikkim’s integration with India. But, now it seems Beijing’s negative approach is over,” Chamling said. “Sikkim is not only an integral part of India, but has merged emotionally with India.”

China, however, has made clear that it has not yet changed its stance on Sikkim.

A Chinese government spokesman discounted media reports that the landmark agreement signed between the countries on the reopening of the trade route indicated a shift in China’s stance on Sikkim.

Chamling called the reopening of the routes a “significant” achievement of the Sikkim Democratic Front government.

“Since the SDF came to power in 1994, we have been consistently demanding the resumption of trade between India and Tibet through the former Nathu la route to Lhasa,” he said.

The chief minister said the momentous decision would not only help improve the country’s relations with China, but also boost the state’s development.

But at the same time, the chief minister warned that the country should be vigilant about national security.

“We have certain responsibility when it comes to internal security. Sikkim is a sensitive border state and the nation’s security is uppermost in our mind,” he said, when asked to elaborate on his concerns for the country’s security.

Chamling said once the trade route reopened, it might result in an influx of people into the Himalayan state. “Pollution is another concern for us, brought on by a sudden spurt of trading activities.”

At the same time, the economic gains for the state will be enormous.

“Resumption of trade will definitely open up many opportunities for the state. It is up to the people of Sikkim to take the opportunities and translate them into economic gains.”

Asked about the controversy that Gangtok was favoured over Kalimpong, which also has a route to Tibet via Jeplela, Chamling said, “There should not be any controversy over this. It was a right decision by the Centre in the greater interest of the country.” ■

# The Telegraph

3 July 2003

## Chamling loan lure for business boost

GANGTOK, July, 2 : First, the good news. If you are an educated unemployed with entrepreneurial bent, the Sikkim government is waiting to give you an interest-free loan to help you set up for life.

But bad news is, you have to be domiciled in the Himalayan state.

In an attempt to encourage educated unemployed youths to set up business units, the Sikkim government has set aside Rs 90 crore to distribute as loan under a scheme called “chief minister’s employment loans”.

“My government has launched several schemes to make the Sikkimese self-reliant. The Chief Minister’s Employment Loan scheme is one of them. We have earmarked a sum of Rs 90 crore for this scheme, which will be provided to the educated, unemployed youths,” chief minister Pawan Chamling said.

He said it was regrettable that people of Sikkim were mostly drawn to the white-collar government jobs. “But since government can these days offer very few jobs, we want to encourage the educated youths to get into small-scale business.”

Asked about the criteria for such loans, he said, “One only needs to have a Sikkim domicile certificate and a proper educational qualification.

For a youth who has studied up to Class X, we will provide an interest-free loan of Rs50,000. A graduate is entitled to Rs1 lakh. For the young men, loans are interest-free for two years and for women three years.”

Chamling said the government’s responsibility did not end with the loans only. “It will also provide basic training to set up and run the business units and also help budding entrepreneurs market the products within and outside the state.”

The Sikkim government does not want to restrict the youth to the field of manufacturing. It will, therefore, encourage educated youths to venture into the services sector too.

“With border trade between Sikkim and Tibet resuming, Sikkimese youths should be able to translate this into economic gains,” Chamling said.

“to take advantage of the situation, the government will conduct training courses on the service sector for educated unemployed youths. We foresee a boom in sectors like hotels, banking and other allied services that follow from international trade,” he added.

In an effort to make Sikkim a green state, Chamling has also launched a scheme under which two LPG cooking gas cylinders and an oven are provided free of cost to needy families. "We want to preserve the green cover of the state and discourage rural people from using firewood. Since last year, we have distributed LPG cylinders and ovens to around 7,000 rural families." ■

## The Telegraph

4 July 2003

### Chamling quota rejig for jobs

GANGTOK, July, 3 : The Sikkim government has revised the reservation quota in government jobs and in institutions for higher studies.

At a news conference in Mintokgang today, Chamling said the revision was made after discussion with cabinet ministers and members of the legislative assembly. The need to increase the quota arose after the inclusion of the Limboos and Tamangs as Scheduled Tribes.

It was necessary to see that the benefits that are accruable flow to all members of the Scheduled Tribes, the chief minister said.

I was also felt that people from economically weaker sections in the unreserved category should be provided appropriate reservation for higher studies as the government was committed to eradicate poverty and to provide opportunities to such people, he added.

The percentage of seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes in government jobs and institutions for higher studies was raised to 31 per cent - same as the percentage of Scheduled Tribes living in the state. Earlier the quota reserved for tribals stood at 23 per cent.

Six per cent seats would be reserved for Scheduled Castes in government jobs and higher studies, 21 per cent for Other Backward Classes and 11 per cent for economically weaker classes belonging to the un-reserved categories.

Children of businessmen and government employees would be allowed five per cent reservation in institutions for higher studies but not for government jobs.

for those with Sikkim subject certificate and certificate of identification, 26 per cent seats have been reserved in institutions for higher studies and 31 per cent in government jobs.

The chief minister said he would visit New Delhi in the third week of July to place some new demands to the central government as all the state's earlier demands had been fulfilled.

The team, comprising Chamling and all legislators of

the state, will call on the Prime Minister and senior ministers of the central cabinet.

The demands include an increase in number of Assembly seats from 32 to 40. The Parliament has special provision to get this demand fulfilled under Article 371(f) of the Constitution, Chamling said.

The delegation would also demand "tribal state" status for Sikkim, he added.

Maintaining status quo on delimitation of Assembly constituencies in the state would also be on the list of demands.

The central delimitation commission had recently decided to go ahead with delimitation of Assembly constituencies in Sikkim, based on the provisional census of 2001.

The chief minister said the government was taking "serious note" of the activities of "anti-people and communal forces" and would crack down on them. ■

## The Statesman

4 July 2003

### Nathu La trade to benefit country, says Chamling

GANGTOK, July, 3 : Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling has said that the opening of trade between India and China through the Nathu-La pass here in east Sikkim would lead to more activities in the state that would not only benefit the entire country, but the entire southeast Asian region as well.

Speaking to the media from his residence at the Mintokgang today, Mr Chamling said this would mean much more activities in the tiny Himalayan kingdom, for which adequate infrastructure development has to take place.

"Once trade is resumed from the Nathu-La Pass, it will open more avenues and more opportunities for Sikkim. As we are preparing ourselves for the increase in activities in the state, we are also bracing ourselves for possible fall-outs. We have to maximise opportunities while minimising fall-outs," Mr Chamling said.

Admitting that the state did not have the adequate infrastructural setup to deal with the demands of international trade, Mr Chamling said that he was hopeful that the Centre would provide the state with the required financial and logistic support. "The process of resuming trade between the two countries from Nathu-La Pass has just begun. We are yet to set up the infrastructure, which will take anything from 1 to 3 years. Only then can actual trad-



ing take place.

Warehouses and godowns have to come up, checkpoints have to be put in place, road and telecommunication links must be improved. And there are security concerns which the State government has to deal with, My government is looking into all these aspects seriously," he said. On the issue of security, Mr Chamling said that the issue was "multi-dimensional, concerning not only law and order but food, culture, and environmental pollution as well. We will accord to the guidelines of the Centre in this regard".

He said the Centre should now consider improving the basic infrastructure in the state, such as road communications.

"Since Sikkim is hilly and landlocked, the improvement in road communications will benefit the entire country as a whole. I am confident that donor agencies and investment companies will now look towards Sikkim as a favourable destination," he said.

He said that the sectors to focus on for infrastructural development would be transport, tourism, and hotel industries, among others. "We also have to ensure that locals derive maximum benefit out of this," he said.

While congratulating Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee for the steps taken by him towards "confidence building" between the two countries, Mr Chamling said that the official recognition of Sikkim as a part of India by China was a "major victory for us". ■

## The Statesman

7 July 2003

# Chamling tries to do a Vajpayee

GANGTOK, July, 6 : Taking a leaf out of Prime Minister's book, Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling enthused by the recent agreement on border trade between India and China through Sikkim, has decided to urge Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi later this month to start a regular bus service between Gangtok and Lhasa, the Tibetan capital.

This is part of Mr Chamling's agenda for his Delhi visit scheduled for 22 July, his political advisor Mr BB Gooroong said here today.

"Our perception is that a regular bus service between Gangtok and Lhasa will go a long way in bringing the two countries even closer," he said.

The modalities will be worked out at the chief minister's meeting with the Prime Minister, his first after China agreed on reviving the trade route through Nathu La in East Sikkim, Mr Gooroong said.

Security measures and infrastructural activities to be

taken up in the state besides its immediate environmental concerns in the wake of the trade agreement are the other major points of the agenda to be discussed with Mr Vajpayee, he said. ■

## The Telegraph

8 July 2003

# Gangtok readies for trade

GANGTOK, July, 7 : The hill town is readying itself for the time when trade with Tibet, along the famous silk route, would release forces of economic change.

Even before the euphoria over Nathu-la subsided, the Sikkim government has started putting its house in order.

The first step in that direction has been the selection of the state industries department as the nodal agency for all trading activities with China.

The department's selection has been verbally approved by the government.

The official announcements will be made by the state home department through a notification to be issued later in the month.

The wing would also be renamed as the department of industries and commerce. The industries department has already written to the home department asking it to notify the changes.

According to sources, the move comes in the wake of an instruction from the Union ministry of commerce and industries asking Sikkim to set up a nodal department for the purpose.

The nodal department would furnish details, review and implement the policies related to the trade, a senior official stated.

The first task of the department would be to reply to queries coming from all over the country on the reopening of the silk route.

"The state government has already been flooded with queries from investors and people interested to know about the trade route," said a senior home department official.

Secretary of the industries department A.K. Yadav said the department's official engagement as the nodal agency would begin only after the home department notified its new status.

This means the state government would have to reallocate the work of various departments in the light of this change.

Even after the notification, the department has to wait for the Centre's policy decision on trade with China, Yadav said.

“International trade”, something new to Sikkim, would have to be incorporated and defined in the rulebook of the department, he added.

“Now that the MoU has been signed between the two countries (on border trade), we want a rapid implementation of the agreement and not allow it to be trapped in the usual bureaucratic delays. While many procedures and creation of trade facilities on the ground will take place, we hope that they will be completed quickly,” Chamling had a press conference recently.

Chamling has also proposed a regular bus service from Gangtok to Lhasa in Tibet. ■

## The Statesman

9 July 2003

### Quotas in limbo, CM to call Centre

GANGTOK, July, 8 : The inclusion of the state’s Limboo-Tamang community in the Scheduled Tribes list and the question of providing them with seat reservations in the Legislative Assembly have raised enough dust in the recent past, with certain sections of the community expressing their “dissatisfaction” over the state’s failure to provide them with reserved seats in the Assembly.

At the same time, the Bhutia-Lepcha community is categorical that the 12 legislature seats reserved for them should not be tampered with in any way while reserving seats for the Limboo-Tamangs. The former feels that the latter’s demand for reservations is justified as they have been accorded tribal status.

In this scenario, the only option left with the state government is to go in for an increase in the number of seats in the Assembly to accommodate the Limboo-Tamangs. Chief Minister, Mr Pawan Chamling said that he would approach the Centre with a proposal to increase the number of seats in the Assembly.

Though the Centre has frozen assembly and Parliament seats till 2026, this will not apply to Sikkim due to its special provisions. “Article 371F of the Constitution makes special provisions for Sikkim for including different communities and for delimitation of Assembly Constituencies,” The CM said.

Article 371F(f) of the Constitution says that “Parliament may, for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of the different sections of the population of Sikkim make provisions for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim which may be filled by candidates belonging to such sections and for the delimitation of the Assembly Constituencies from which candi-

dates belonging to such sections alone may stand for election to the Legislative Assembly of the state of Sikkim.”

Mr Chamling said he would lead a high-level delegation of legislators to New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and place a proposal for increasing the number of seats in the state Assembly from the existing 32-40; under the provisions of Article 371f(f). ■

## The Telegraph

14 July 2003

### Call for peace on poet birthday

July, 13 : Residents of Darjeeling and Sikkim today celebrated the birth anniversary of Nepali poet Bhanu Bhakta, honouring three Nepali writers in Darjeeling.

Casting aside their differences, more than 1,500 people gathered at the Community Hall in Geyzing to celebrate the 189th birth anniversary of the poet.

Geyzing was in the news recently because of a deadlock, between the Gorkha Apex Committee (GAC) and the Pemayangtse Monastery monks, over the installation of the poet’s statue.

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling, who scored a victory of sorts by ending the unrest and calling for communal harmony on the poet’s birthday, presided over today’s programme as chief guest.

Welfare minister O.T. Lepcha, Speaker Kalawati Subba and Sangha legislator Palden Lachungpa also attended the function.

Taking the opportunity to dispel the controversies surrounding the installation of the statue in the Geyzing bazar area. Chamling announced that the disputed land on which the GAC had proposed to set up the statue, belonged to the government.

The monks of the Pemayangtse Monastery had earlier opposed the committee’s move claiming that the land belonged to them.

In what was seen as a step towards restoring normalcy, Chamling also said the tallest statue of the poet would be built in Geyzing.

A museum and an academic centre for Nepali art and literature would also be built, he added. He also appealed to the people to “beware of the elements bent upon bringing disharmony to achieve personal ends”.

Though all attention was focussed on the Geyzing celebrations, rallies and processions were also taken out in Gangtok to commemorate the occasion. Celebrations were also held in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. ■

# The Statesman

17 July 2003

**Editorial**

## Chamling on a roll

That God helps those who help themselves seems exceptionally appropriate in the case of Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling. In need of funds to liquidate heavy debts inherited on assumption of office in November 1994, for six years he pleaded for a Rs 3,000-crore economic package and the waiver of a Rs400-crore loan. The Centre's disregard for his desperation was, in a sense, a blessing in disguise because it hardened his resolve to mobilise resources. Although Sikkim does not fit into the North Eastern Council concept, he convinced Delhi to admit it as a member. The on-line lottery earns at least Rs35 crore annually and tourism is given top priority. This year has been particularly lucky for Chamling. Within two months of receiving a Rs500-crore special package the Centre also accepted Sikkim's proposal to reopen border trade with Tibet through Nathu-la, a decision that will boost all-round development.

The special package is by way of a "peace bonus" for the state being insurgent-free, but there are vested interests waiting to exploit communal sentiments and Chamling will have to be vigilant. The Bhutias and Lepchas want their reserved assembly seats restored - they had 16 seats which were cut to 12 after their classification as Scheduled Tribes. The state's Nepalese quotient, too, are distressed because their reserved seats have been abolished. The Centre must step in to discourage communal hatred and disharmony. Honouring Sikkim's special status can alone promote national integration. The state goes to the polls next year and the BJP-led government's magnanimity is seen as favour for being allowed a toehold in the state since both the Congress and Sikkim Sangram Parishad are all but crippled. ■

# The Statesman

18 July 2003

## Panel to gauge Nathu La fallout

GANGTOK, July, 17 : Sikkim has constituted a high-power committee, which will prepare a master plan for dealing with the logistics and infrastructure requirements of the state when trade resumes between India and China through the Nathu La pass.

The meeting was chaired by chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling. It was held at Mintokgang, chief minister's official residence here yesterday. Chief secretary, Mr SW Tenzing, principal secretary, planning and development, DGP Mr TN Tenzing, principal secretary, finance department, Mr TT Dorjee, principal secretary, rural development department, Mr R Ongmu were also present at the meeting.

The high-powered committee will be chaired by chief secretary Mr SW Tenzing.

The meeting felt that while the state should tap the opportunities that the trade route will bring about, it should also be prepared to face the fallouts. Man power managing, recruitment of police personnel and counter intelligence are some of the issues that will be looked into by the committee.

Proposals for setting up a new township between 15th Mile and Tsomgu Lake on the Jawahar Lal Nehru road from here to Nathu La was floated during the meeting for warehousing facilities. It was discussed that a new town may have to be set up between Ranka and Ranipool in East Sikkim with similar facilities.

In order to avoid traffic congestion in Gangtok, Ranka and Ranipool towns may have to be linked by an alternative road, it was felt. The state government will ask the Centre to include Mr SW Tenzing as the state nominee in the Joint Action Committee, which will be formed to finalise the details on the border trade.

The meeting also decided that the state will improve rural connectivity wherein 444 km of rural road will be built by 2007 through the Rural Development Department in a phased manner. The Centre and the state government will share the cost of construction.

In another development, the United Nation's Conference for Trade and Development (Unctad) is reportedly in talks with the Sikkim government for setting up a WTO Office Center of Excellence to help prepare the state in meeting the challenges of globalisation, according to Ms Beena Jha, project coordinator, Unctad.

Although the state government is yet to confirm this, reports indicate that the Centre will support the state's ministries of industry and commerce in particular and policy makers in general through researched technical inputs, she said, adding the project would be finalised soon.

This assumes significance in the light of opening up of border trade with China through Sikkim. ■

# The Telegraph

18 July 2003

## Chamling focus on Changu

GANGTOK, July, 17: Buoyed by the trade pace between India and China, the Sikkim government has decided to prepare a master plan for dealing with the work involved for reopening the silk route between the two countries.

A high-powered committee has been formed to draft the master plan.

At the top of the agenda is the development of a new township between 15 Mile and Changu in order to create warehousing facilities.

It was also decided that an additional township would be developed between Ranka and Ranipool with similar facilities. The idea of an alternative road linking Changu with Ranka and Ranipool is also being discussed. This will prevent disruption of traffic in Gangtok once trade begins.

the first stop for traders traveling along the Silk Route to Tibet was either Changu lake or Sheathing, some 5 km below Nathu-la.

The joint declaration signed by India and China last month says the Indian side agreed to “designate Changu of Sikkim state” as the venue for the border market. China will designate Renqinggang of the Tibet Autonomous Region as the border market on its side.

The decision to set up the committee comes days after the state industries department was designated the nodal agency to handle all queries pertaining to reopening of the trade route to China, through Nathu-la.

A meeting in this regard, chaired by chief minister Pawan Chamling, was held at Mintokgang, his official residence, yesterday. It was attended, among others, by chief secretary SW Tenzing and director-general of police TN Tenzing and other top officials SW Tenzing will head the committee.

The committee will assess the opportunities that trade brings to the state and look into its long-term implications. It will also look into manpower management, recruitment of police personnel and counter intelligence.

The committee has been asked to prepare a detailed report and place it before the government.

The Government will also request the centre to nominate chief secretary Tenzing to the joint action committee of the two countries, to formalise the final details on the nature of trade that will take place.

Besides the boost it has given to business in the region, the agreement on border trade through Nathu-la is being seen as a steppin-stone toward China’s de jure acceptance of Sikkim’s 1975 accession to India. ■

# The Statesman

22 July 2003

## Chamling Delhi-bound on quotas

GANGTOK, July, 21: Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling left for New Delhi today to approach the Central government on the issue of providing the state’s Limboo-Tamang communities reservations in the State Assembly.

Mr Chamling is being accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising his Cabinet colleagues, legislators, senior officials and chief secretary Mr SW Tenzin. The delegation, led by Mr Chamling, is expected to meet Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister Mr LK Advani on 23 July.

Mr Chamling will place the proposal for increasing the number of seats in the State Assembly from the existing 32 to 40, under the provisions of Article 371f(f) before the Central leaders, “This has been necessitated after the inclusion of the Limboo-Tamangs in the scheduled tribes list and in order to provide them with se reservations in the Assembly, which is rightfully theirs.” Mr Chamling said in the State Assembly on Saturday.

Addressing the House on the concluding day of the two-day special Assembly session. Mr Chamling said that while the Central Government had frozen Assembly and Parliament seats till 2026, this may not be applicable in case of Sikkim, due to its special provisions. “Article 371F of the Constitution makes special provisions for Sikkim for inclusion of different communities and for delimitation of Assembly constituencies,” he said. Mr Chamling was categorical when he said that the 12 seats meant for the Bhutia-Lepchas in the Assembly “will remain intact” and there was no need for the community to feel insecure over the issue.

Other issues that may come up during the chief minister’s meeting with Central leaders are border trade with China via the Nathu La Pass and discussing the logistics and infrastructure requirements of the state in this regard, the demand for granting of tribal state status to Sikkim, direct taxes issue and the delimitation process in the state. ■



# The Telegraph

22 July 2003

## Chamling heads for capital with Cabinet

GANGTOK, July, 21: It is destination Delhi for the chief minister and his men.

Cabinet members, legislators, the Speaker, his political advisor and senior government officials, Pawan Chamling has left out very few of his men in Gangtok as he left for the capital today.

After having successfully lobbied for the reopening of the once-flourishing Silk Route through Nathu-la, Chamling and his entourage will attend the monsoon session of Parliament that begins tomorrow to place fresh demands and deliver a vote of thanks.

The day after, Team Sikkim will meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to thank him for initiating dialogues on the trade route and finally making a breakthrough.

Chamling has been effusive in his praise of Vajpayee for getting one of the main demands of the state through during his visit to Beijing.

Forty one years after trade with Tibet through the Nathu-la in east Sikkim stopped, Vajpayee has rekindled hopes for the Silk Route by signing an agreement on border trade with China. Trade along this route was halted after the war with China in 1962.

Since the Himalayan state's merger with India in 1975, people of Sikkim have time and again raised the demand that the old trade route to Tibet via Nathula be reopened to give a boost to the state's trade and commerce.

Increase in the number of seats from 32 to 40 in the state legislature will be the main focus of Chamling's visit.

This, he had said earlier, would give representation to the two new scheduled tribe communities - the Tamangs and Limbus.

Sikkim will present the case under the special provisions applicable to the state since the Delimitation Act bars the increase in the number of Assembly seats in the country, said Chamling.

Another demand is to declare Sikkim a tribal state with seat reservations for all tribal communities. The government wants all communities listed under Other Backward Classes included in the Scheduled Tribe list. The Newar-Bahun Chettri who fall in the general category should be given OBC status, according to the SDF.

Chamling also plans to apprise the Prime Minister about the various initiatives launched by the state government for restarting trade along the Nathu-la route.

Ever since the MoU was signed between the two countries, Gangtok has been full of talk about how restoration of trade would release forces of economic change. ■

# The Statesman

23 July 2003

## Sikkim to spend Rs 7 cr on VRS

GANGTOK, July, 22: Sikkim will spend Rs 1.2 crore on improvement and construction of roads, while Rs 7 crore has been earmarked for the voluntary retirement scheme.

This was disclosed by Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling at the two-day special session of the state Assembly held here on 18 and 19 July. The session was unattended by Opposition members.

Mr Chamling took the opportunity to spell out some recent decisions taken by his government and the justifications behind them.

He said that the two-day Assembly session had been necessitated because of the increase in the Plan size for the state for 2003-04 that was passed in the Budget session of the Assembly earlier this year. "We had to call this two-day session because of the increase of the annual Plan outlay for Sikkim from the earlier Rs 370 crore that was passed in the Budget session. After our meeting with the Planning Commission, the Plan size was increased to Rs 405 crore," he said.

Mr Chamling said that the Plan money would be spent on various welfare schemes and projects. ■

# The Telegraph

24 July 2003

## Chamling greets PM with welfare wishlist

GANGTOK, July, 23: Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling today apprised Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee about the "immediate needs" of the hill state, which includes infrastructure recast to reap the benefits from the proposed cross-border trade.

"A gamut of issues was discussed with the Prime Minister which were basically the same that were also put up before the deputy Prime Minister. He (Vajpayee) has promised all assistance that would be necessary to improve the physical infrastructure and bring Sikkim on a par with other states," Chamling said after his meeting with the Prime Minister.

The five-member delegation, which included two MPs and two ministers, proposed the withdrawal of the Income

Tax Act, increase of Assembly seats to 40 from the present 32, declaration of Sikkim as a tribal state and accelerating the establishment of the airport at Pakyong near Gangtok.

Chamling said the withdrawal of income tax would preserve the "sanctity" of the Constitution and that the increase of Assembly seats would give the unrepresented communities a chance to make their voices heard.

Asked if the prospect of tourism through Nathu-la was discussed with the Prime Minister, Chamling said: "First let the trade agreement be fully implemented. Once both sides are fully satisfied that the agreement has been a success, then the option of tourism can be explored," he said. "We have also reiterated the sentiments of the people on the Karmapa to the Prime Minister."

Earlier, Chamling called on Union civil aviation minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy and discussed "ways and means" to hasten the setting up of the airport at Pakyong.

The government has allotted land for the airport and the Eleventh Finance Commission had also sanctioned funds for the project.

"The project is being delayed unnecessarily by the Airports Authority of India. The memorandum of understanding with the government was signed more than a year ago," said Rajya Sabha MP Palden Gyamtso.

The delegation is also expected to meet the ministers of defence, law and northeast development in the next few days.

"With the defence minister, we will mainly take up the issue of enhancement of the lease amount on the land given to the army in the state. The appointment of a Sikkimese in the Supreme Court would be taken up with the law minister as no one has been given the opportunity so far," Chamling said.

Yesterday, the chief minister, accompanied by his entire cabinet, had submitted a memorandum to the ministry of surface transport, demanding an alternative national highway from Nathu-la to Gangtok and upgradation of the existing network of roads. ■

## The Statesman

30 July 2003

### Centre may defer direct tax laws

GANGTOK, July, 29: The Centre has agreed to defer the enforcement of direct tax laws in Sikkim.

Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling managed to extract a promise to this effect from Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Union finance minister Mr Jaswant Singh when he met them separately in New Delhi, official sources said here today. Both Mr Vajpayee and

Mr Singh agreed that the matter can be delayed for some time.

The demand to exempt the state from direct taxes was at the top of the list of demands with which the chief minister met the Union ministers.

Most of the political parties in the state have opposed implementation of direct tax laws in the state arguing that it goes against the spirit of Article 371-(F) of the Indian Constitution which seeks to protect the old laws of the state prevalent before it merged with the Indian Union in 1975. ■

## The Telegraph

2 August 2003

### Chamling takes stock of trade route

GANGTOK, Aug. 1: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling today visited Nathu-la, the last border outpost in Sikkim, to make a spot assessment of the area in the wake of the reopening of trade ties between India and China.

Chamling was accompanied by cabinet ministers, state government officials, legislators and media persons. Officials from the army and Border Roads Organisation were also present during Chamling's trip to the outpost.

The chief minister was in New Delhi recently, discussing the reopening of the Silk Route and seeking the Centre's help in infrastructure development.

Chamling, who plans to chart a detailed report on the trade route, said his visit was to look into the logistics and also assess the infrastructure requirements. He said he believed the resumption of trade would lead to easing of tension between the two countries.

"Once Nathu-la reopens, both the countries will benefit immensely, not only in terms of economic gains, but also in terms of strengthening our traditional ties," he said.

Chief secretary SW Tenzing also accompanied Chamling.

The chief minister said a "comprehensive and thorough" report would be prepared after looking into all the aspects concerned with the reopening of the pass. He had discussions with Central cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister and had asked that all requirements of the state be viewed comprehensively. Amid bad weather, Chamling also looked into aspects like widening of roads, area for building warehouses and essential communication links in the area. The two small hamlets of Sherathang and Kupup have been identified as places where the warehouses will come up. He met general officer in command (GOC), 17 Mountain Division, Maj.Gen. Deepak Anand to discuss various security aspects. ■

# The Statesman

2 August 2003

## Chamling surveys Nathu La corridor

NATHU LA (Indo-China border), Aug.1: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling today visited Nathu La to conduct a spot assessment of the situation ahead of Sino-Indian trade through the pass.

He was accompanied by members of the high-level committee constituted by the state government on Nathu La, Cabinet members, MLAs, senior party members, senior officials from the district administration and representatives from the Border Roads Organisation and the Army.

The chief minister was here to look into the logistics and infrastructure requirements of the state and conduct a thorough survey of the area and prepare a master plan, which will be submitted to the Centre within the next two months.

While talking to the media at the historical border check post today, Mr Chamling said reopening of the trade route will contribute immensely to easing of tension between Sino-Indian relations and foster better understanding between the two countries. Mr Chamling said it was imperative that the entire process of setting up the infrastructure for trading should be "comprehensive and thorough." "We will make a suggestion to the Centre to ensure that the preparation of the logistics and infrastructural requirements of the state should be a comprehensive one and should include all sectors into consideration.

"Both the countries have already constitutes high-level committees in this regard which will study in detail the requirements for trading to resume. We would also look into other areas that might benefit from the opening of Nathu La and not just the trade. The whole outlook should be holistic," he said.

Despite a heavy downpour, the chief minister and his team today investigated areas such as setting up of warehouses along the Jawahar Lal Nehru Raod from Gangtok to Nathu La, widening of the road and setting up essential communications links and environmental concerns.

Mr Chamling had a closed-door meeting with the GOC, 17 Mountain Division, Maj.-Gen. Deepak Anand. The meeting dealt with security concerns and adequate arrangements of the strategic border area once trading resumes. The chief minister later said that two warehouses will come up at Sherathang, about 5 km below the Nathu La post and at Kupup, about the same distance from Nathu La post.

Mr Chamling said that there should be an alternative

highway from Siliguri to Gangtok to facilitate easy movement of traffic, "The National Highway 31-A is the only road connecting Sikkim with the rest of the country. We need an alternative highway that will act as a buffer to the existing one in case of natural calamities." Sikkim will approach the Centre with the proposal, which Mr Chamling said, could cost anything from Rs500 crore and above, he said.

In order to avoid traffic disturbance in Gangtok town arising out of the increase in vehicular movement, an alternative road bypassing the Capital will also be considered, he said.

Stating that there is a huge trade deficit for India in Indo-China trade, Mr Chamling said there is an urgent need to bridge the gap. He attributed the trade deficit to inaccessibility.

The Chief Minister said border trade will provide locals with immense opportunities. "Our focus should be now on capacity building and human resource management," he said. ■

# The Telegraph

4 August 2003

## Chamling sees diplomacy role for state

GANGTOK, Aug.3 : Buoyed by the trade pact with China, Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling today said his government was willing to do anything to help the state play host to international diplomacy.

"It is Sikkim's chance to play host to international diplomacy. With the Nathu-la trade resumption, we would like to start a trans-border bus service between Gangtok and Lhasa. It is the shortest trade route, the distance between Nathu-la and Lhasa being only 426 km. The distance between Calcutta and Lhasa is only a little over 1,200 km," Chamling said at a news conference here.

"The Nathu-la trade would help close the trade deficit between India and China. During the 2001-2002 financial year, while the volume of Indian exports to mainland China was \$925.94 million, China's export to India stood at a staggering \$2338.65 million. This deficit will certainly be bridged once trade resumes through Nathu-la. China and India would both benefit from the new pact," he added.

The chief minister was in Siliguri to take stock of the Himalayan state's properties in the trading hub. "Once trade between India and Tibet resumes through Nathu-la, Siliguri

will play the most vital role as the starting point for the entire gamut of trading activities. We want to put into place an entire trading infrastructure in Siliguri. Sikkim owns property and land in the town and we want to put them to good use once trading activities start.”

Giving details of his talks with Central ministers during his visit to New Delhi recently, the chief minister said: “We will submit a study report on the proposed trade route to the Centre within two months. The government has requested Delhi to grant Rs500 crore to build the surface infrastructure between Rangpo, on the Bengal-Sikkim border, to Nathu-la. This apart, we intend to build a bypass from Cichhey in lower Gangtok to Ranipool and another 19-km bypass from Melli in south Sikkim to Mamring near Mungpo bazaar in the Darjeeling hills.”

Chamling said apart from building warehousing facilities at Sherathang, some 5 km south of Nathu-la, the government intended to develop a full-fledged market at the tourist spot on the banks of Lake Tsomgo.”■

## The Statesman

4 August 2003

■  
BYPASS ROADS FROM SICHE BASTI TO  
RANIPOINT & MALLI TO MAMRING ON THE ANVIL

### Sikkim ready for Nathu La trade

GANGTOK, Aug. 3: The resumption of Sino-Indian trade through Nathu La will be to the country’s benefit, Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling said here today. He said the state government will open two by pass roads - connecting Siche Basti to Ranipoint (34 km stretch road) and Malli to Mamring (19 km stretch road) - which, according to him, will accelerate trade activities in the region.

Mr Chamling said the proposed trade route can serve as a stepping stone for both countries to improve their relations. He said business through Nathu La will be to North Bengal’s advantage as it will usher in new opportunities for the region.

Mr Chamling, who recently visited the pass along with members of his ministry, said, extensive infrastructural development was required for Sikkim and Nathu La in particular to make flourishing Sino-Indian trade a reality. “I have asked the officials of my government to prepare a comprehensive project on how to develop the state’s infrastructure,” the chief minister said. With the opening of the trade route via Nathu La, the development of Sikkim should be done from the defence and security angles, he said.

Mr Chamling said that with the opening of the trade route, trade activities on National Highways as well as between Kolkata and Nathu La would increase. He said development activities were yet to be started and this would require time.

“The state ministers have started holding talks with the traders of Sikkim for their suggestions on the development of infrastructure in the state regarding trade,” the chief minister said, adding that he will also hold talks with Siliguri traders.

Asked about the requirement of funds from the Centre, Mr Chamling said the government has been organising a two-month long study to finalise the required allocation. After the completion of the study, the state government would make a master plan, he said.

He said the government will make a master plan to develop a market and tourist spot at Changu. He said Sikkim’s idea was to assure maximum benefit and minimum fall out.

Mr Chamling evaded comments on the type of trade that may be expected. He said: “If China can produce quality products and sell them at a lower price, why not our country? Now we are also a part of the global market. So we will have to try and compete with China in terms of both quality and price.” He said that in the year 2001-2002 India had exported products worth \$925.94 million to China where as during the same period India had imported products worth \$2,038 million from China.

It can be mentioned that recently the Union Nation’s Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had asked the Sikkim Government to set up a World Trade Office Centre of Excellence to help preparing the state in meeting the challenges of globalisation.

The UNCTAD project coordinator Ms Veena Jha recently said the centre would support the state’s ministers of industry and commerce and the policy makers through researched technical inputs.■

## The Telegraph

9 August 2003

### Chamling toast to Lepcha festival

GANGTOK, Aug. 8: Members of the Lepcha community, attired in their traditional best, gathered at the community hall at Development Area to celebrate *Tendong Lho Rum Faat*.

The festivities began after morning prayers were delivered by bongthings (Lepcha priests). An audiocassette of Lepcha folk-songs, Punol, and a literary journal *Sakchun A-A-L* of the All India Lepcha Students’ Literary Devel-



opmental Organisation, were also released.

The celebrations were organised by the state cultural affairs department in association with the Calcutta-based eastern zonal cultural centre and the Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association.

The chief guest, Governor V. Rama Rao and the guest of honour, chief minister Pawan Chamling also handed over the Mayal Marnew award to Namsey Lepcha for her contribution towards the development of the community. The other award, Late La Tshering Kunchu Dyangmoo Literary award, was given to Diki Zangmu, a Class X student of Modern School, Gangtok, for securing the highest marks in the Lepcha exams for Class X.

Addressing the gathering Chamling declared that six of the 12 seats reserved for the Bhutia and Lepcha communities will be for Lepcha and added that he would do his best to fulfil all their demands.

Lepcha associations had demanded "primitive tribe" status and 50 per cent reservations for higher studies and employment.

After coming to power, the government had recognised the festival of the indigenous Lepchas and declared the day a state holiday. "The celebrations should not be confined to Lepchas but all other communities because of its historical significance," Chamling said.

He said a Lepcha museum and a replica of the "stairway to heaven", depicting the legend of the community in trying to reach heaven through a staircase of earthen pots, would be built in two areas.

A traditional Lepcha house has been built at Nampridang in North Sikkim. To enrich the Lepcha language, it is being taught up to the college and university level, he said.

"Anti-democratic forces have been spreading rumours and bringing ill will. No one should listen to what they say," he said, urging the people to judge how their status had improved in the nine years of Sikkim Democratic Front governance.

Chamling also sanctioned the fencing of Mount Tendong area, South Sikkim, a concrete footpath to the hill from Damthang and a meditation centre as demanded by the *Tendong Lho Rum Faat* Celebration Committee.

Mount Tendong holds religious significance for Lepchas and many legends are woven around the place.

Folklore has it that two rivers, Teesta and Rangeet, had flooded *Mayal Lyang* (as Sikkim was called by Lepchas) after earthquakes broke the two lakes, Naho and Nahor, the rivers source. When floods heightened, Lepchas living in the vicinity of the hill climbed Mount Tendong to escape the fury of the floods.

There, they prayed to *It-Bu-Rum* (god) with brewed millets. *A Kohompo* (partridge) prayed with them. Another earthquake that created mountains allowed the water to flow southwards saving the Lepchas. The worship of Mount Tendong is said to have begun soon after. ■

# The Telegraph

11 August 2003

## Experts offer trade route tips

GANGTOK, Aug. 10: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling today called a meeting to discuss the various aspects of the re-opening of the silk route through Nathu-la.

Members of the business community and various state organisations attended the interactive session held at the conference hall of Hotel Tashi Delek.

The meet was also attended by chief secretary SW Tenzing, SIDICO chairman PD Rai, Gangtok MLA NK Pradhan and heads of various state government departments. Members of the Sikkim Chamber of Commerce, the Sikkim Hotels and Restaurant Association, the Travel Agents Association of Sikkim and NGOs, put forward many suggestions that they said would help the state reap the benefits of the re-opening of the silk-route.

Chamling was also felicitated by the travel agents' association for his active role in getting the Nathu-la opened. Last week Chamling had toured Nathu-la, Tsanghu and Siliguri to study the infrastructure requirements for trade with China. Addressing the conference, Chamling said Sikkim had benefited very little during the first phase of the trade with China but wanted the state to get the maximum during the second phase. ■

# The Statesman

20 August 2003

CP THAKUR VISIT ON SINO-INDIAN TRADE

## Sikkim ready for new reality

GANGTOK, Aug. 19: With things looking sunny on the Indo-China front, Sikkim has reason to cheer. And justifiably so. When the Nathu La is the talking point of Sino-Indian trade, this sleepy north-eastern state will be pushed into the centre stage of economic moves. Mr CP Thakur's expected visit to Bengal and Sikkim underscores the flurry of pre-trade visits to the state.

The minister will visit the states in September to discuss modalities for the resumption of Sino-Indian trade

through the Nathu La, sources close to Mr Pawan Chamling said. It is aimed at clearing the decks for resumption of trade between India and China.

It would be the first high-profile ministerial visit to Sikkim after the two countries decided to resume trade through the Nathu La, which has been closed since 1962.

Sources said the visit would provide a momentum to planned infrastructure development in the state at the administrative, diplomatic and entrepreneurial level.

Issues relating to the reopening of the Sino-Indian trade route was discussed at the 13 August meeting in Delhi which was attended by senior officials from 12 Union ministers.

The issues discussed related to surface transport, border security, immigration and trade. The national security advisor, Mr Brajesh Mishra, is scheduled to visit China to discuss these aspects with his Chinese counterpart, sources said.

Elsewhere, the Sikkim government is gearing up to project the Nathula issue at the next inter-state council meeting to be held on 26 and 27 August in Delhi. "We will submit a special study report on border roads, telecom and other issues to the Centre before the council meeting", Mr Chamling said.

Also, the Confederation of Indian Industries chairman, Mr A Mahindra's visit to the state comes close on the heels of Mr Chamling's discussions with business associations on 10 August, according to Mr RK Mittal, treasurer, Confederation of Sikkim Industries (CSI).

While referring to the Delhi meeting, a home ministry source revealed that like the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, a separate security wing is likely to be developed for the Sino-India border. However, SSB may look after Indian check posts at Tshango and Serethang, where the Army would continue guarding the border as usual, the Director-General of SSB, Mr VL Vorah said. ■

## The Statesman

21 August 2003

# Chamling for panchayat empowerment

GANGTOK, Aug. 20: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling has reiterated his government's commitment to the decentralisation of power in the state and stressed that

"true development" could be brought about only by strengthening the panchayat raj institutions at the grassroots.

Addressing a panchayat meet at Namchi, Mr Chamling said that the recent decision by his government to allocate 70 per cent of the budget to the panchayats was a step towards honouring this commitment. "The main purpose behind this decision was to ensure proper planning and development at the village level and make people at the grassroots equal partners in governance," Mr Chamling said.

Panchayats in Sikkim are authorised to control the functioning of all the government institutions falling under their jurisdiction, including primary schools and primary health centres. ■

## The Statesman

26 August 2003

# Sikkim NBCs to get OBC status

GANGTOK, Aug. 25: Irked by Centre's repeated refusal to include the non-backward class (NBC) communities of Sikkim in the OBC list, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) - an ally of the NDA, has decided to do it on its own.

Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling said OBC certificates would be distributed among chhetris, bahuns, sanyasis and newar communities before the end of next month.

He said the state government was forced to take this step as it failed to convince the Centre about the need for inclusion of the NBCs in the OBC list, sources said today. ■

## The Telegraph

26 August 2003

# Chamling OBC card trumps Opp.

*PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA*

GANGTOK, Aug. 25: The Pawan Chamling-led Sikkim Democratic Front government scored a victory of sorts over a "restructured" Opposition by including the Newars, the Bahuns, the Chhetris in the Other Backward Classes category.

Sources said Chamling's decision is aimed at wooing the NBC communities, most of whom have voted for Nar Bahadur Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad in the past two elections.

Bhandari, whose SSP merged with the Congress recently, heads the Sikkim unit of the party.

The communities were previously included in the general and unreserved categories.

The announcement was made by Chamling last week, during the inauguration of the Samman Bhavan in Gangtok.

Chamling has said the official announcement of the inclusion of these communities in the OBC list would be made sometime in September.

The OBC recognition of the communities would, however, be limited to the state as the change is yet to be recognised by the Centre.

This means reservation of jobs and education seats would be applicable to the Newars, the Bahuns and the Chhetris only within the state. The communities have long been demanding OBC status.

With this change, there are no general categories left in the state apart from a small number of *Vyaparis* (businessmen), who are domiciles of Sikkim and enjoy certain benefits like reservations in educational institutes.

The SDF government had also managed to get the two ethnic communities, the Tamangs and Limbus, listed in the Scheduled Tribes category last year.

The communities were earlier included in the OBC bracket.

Bhandari may not like it but Chamling has already started earning the appreciation of the Newars, the Bahuns and the Chhetris, who will benefit from their new-found status.

A press communique issued by the state information and public relations department stated that soon after the announcement a joint delegation, comprising members of the Newar, Bahun and Chhetri communities called on the chief minister to thank him.

A delegation, comprising members of the All Sikkim Bahun Chhetri Kalyan Sangh and the Sikkim Newar Association, also dropped in at the inauguration ceremony of the Bhavan to convey their gratitude.

The decision has, however, not gone down well with the Congress.

Spokesperson KN Upreti, a senior leader hailing from the NBC community, had recently issued a press release that Chamling decision to confer OBC status on these communities was a mere "political gimmick and an eye-wash". It was aimed at gaining the support of these people before the elections.

"If the chief minister is serious enough, he should get the recommendations of the OBC commission approved by the Cabinet," he added. ■

# The Statesman

27 August 2003

## Sikkim to raise daily wages

GANGTOK, Aug. 26: Daily wages will be raised from Rs85 to Rs 100 in Sikkim from 1 September, chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling has said.

Announcing this at the inaugural function of the Limboo culture house at Tharpu in West Sikkim recently, Mr Chamling said rural development was on top of his government's agenda.

The Sikkim Chief Minister claimed it was due to his government's commitment to the upliftment of the rural masses that the panchayats had been made more powerful and 70 per cent of the annual plan budget diverted to rural development.

He urged panchayat authorities to ensure proper implementation of development schemes in the areas under their jurisdiction.

Listing the pro-poor programmes launched by his government, the Sikkim chief minister mentioned the Balika Samridhi Yojana, the chief minister's Antyodaya Annadan Yojana and also the schemes under which free LPG connections, textbooks and school uniforms were being distributed among the beneficiaries. ■

# The Statesman

30 August 2003

## Chamling declares gifts galore

GANGTOK, Aug. 29: It's raining welfare schemes in Sikkim.

Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling has announced that free electricity would be provided in the rural areas from September this year. In addition, Gram Panchayats will handle an annual budget of Rs50 lakh for their Plan programmes instead of the current Rs10 lakh.

Similarly, the annual Plan size for Zilla Panchayats has been increased to a whopping Rs5 crore this year from Rs50 lakh at present.

Mr Chamling also announced several new schemes during his Independent Day speech. The Antodaya Annadan Yojana will be launched from September 2003

under which poor people will get 35 kg rice as free monthly ration. The daily wages for MR employees and daily wage earners has been increased from 1 April 2004.

Mr Chamling had some good news for police personnel as well. Calling the benefits "long overdue," the chief minister said monthly ration allowance to Police personnel has been raised from Rs200 to Rs400, adding that their uniform allowance has also been raised.

Mr Chamling said all due promotions will be effected shortly, along with those for other government officials.

He also announced plans to start reservations in government jobs for sportsmen and artisans.

Under the Prerna Yojana, girl students topping the merit list in board examinations in Class V, Class VIII and Class X will be provided special scholarships.

Every Panchayat in the Gram Panchayat Units will now have the responsibility to identify priority areas, prepare projects, sanction, supervise and implement various schemes in their respective areas, which will be discussed and passed in the Gram Sabhas in active consultation with the villagers, the Sikkim chief minister said.

He said the state government has made "every individual a partner in governance, policy-making and final implementation of welfare schemes."

the chief minister said from 1 2003, each Gram Panchayat had been provide with an office in the villages.

Panchayats will also be required to create employment opportunities at the village level for the educated unemployed village youth so that the village to city migration can be controlled, Mr Chamling said.

"All this has been initiated to ensure that the Panchayats act as a bridge between the people and government departments and agencies for the smooth functioning of local self-government," he said.

"Decentralisation is basically aimed at making the people equal partners in the art of governance. All that is needed is a sense of cooperation, nutual help and understanding," he said.■

## The Statesman

11 September 2003

### Sikkim remembers its colourful past

GANGTOK, Sept. 10: Gangtok today refreshed the memory of Sikkim's rich cultural heritage by celebrating "Pang Lhab Sol," also called "Unity Day".

Being an official holiday here in Sikkim, a colourful function was organised today by the Pang Lhab Sol committee at MG Marg, the heart of the town.

Sikkim Governor Mr Rama Rao and chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling, also the chief patron of the PLS committee, paid tribute at the Statue of Unity, which is also situated at the same venue.

Legend has it that in the 13th century, Prince Khyee Bumsa of Kham Minyak in Tibet forged a blood brotherhood with Lepcha chief Thek Kong Tek at Kabi Longtsok in North Sikkim. The event went down as a Red Letter day in Sikkim, initiating eternal unity among the Bhutias and the Lepchas.

"The function is unique to Sikkim. Earlier it used to be observed at the royal palace and some monasteries, but became an annual event with everybody congregating before the Statue of Unity since 1996," the PLS committee president Mr Thukchuk Lachungpa told The Statesman.

True to Mr Lachungpa's claim, MG Marg in Gangtok turned into one lagre colourful assembly this morning as school kids, politicians, officials and countless foreign tourists sampled the spirit of Pan Lhab Sol.

Everything, including the weather looked perfect for the celebrations. Gangtok woke up to a bright and sunny morning today, a real development from yesterday's gloomy and overcast conditions. Dance groups representing different cultural groupings and attired in bright and innovative dresses, bands, posters depicting slogans of unity and wisdom - the function had it all as a very disciplined crowd stood patiently to hear out the speakers.

"The long rallies and the huge turnout proves that democratic conditions prevail in Sikkim. It also says that people here are free to express their views," Mr Chamling said while addressing the gathering.

He also said: "Social equality in the form of equal rights and opportunities can only bring about unity, which is the spirit of Pang Lhab Sol."■

## The Telegraph

11 September 2003

### Chamling sets pace at NEC meet

SUSHANTA TALUKDAR

GANGTOK, Sept. 10: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling today urged industry captains to facilitate more investment in his state, setting the tone for the 48th North Eastern Council (NEC) meeting here tomorrow.

Showcasing Sikkim's potential for private participation at the CEOs' conclave and interaction with chief min-



isters of the Northeast, at the meet organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) today, Chamling expressed hope that a border trade centre at Nathu-la would not only boost trade between India and China but also generate investment opportunities in the region.

Chamling said his government had identified power, agriculture, tourism and healthcare as focus areas to woo investors. He also said that apart from China, Sikkim and other Northeastern states have vast potential of trade and commerce with Bangladesh and southeast Asian countries.

C.P. Thakur, the minister for development of North-east region, soon rewarded Sikkim's efforts. The Union minister announced that the state would soon have an airport.

Dipankar Chatterjee the chairman of CII (Northeast committee), called upon the chief ministers of the North-east to give them more success stories of entrepreneurship to showcase outside the region.

Speaking at the meeting chaired by Assam Governor Lt. Gen. (retd) Ajay Singh, Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi stressed the need for more investment in the health and education sector.

Nagaland chief minister Nephium Rio and chief minister of Manipur Ibobi Singh, however, insisted that unless investors come forward for setting up industries in the region, the insurgency problems would remain unsolved.

Sikkim appealed to all the states in the region to work towards the development of the entire area.

Tomorrow's meeting is expected to be dominated by the NEC's appeal to coordinate efforts to tackle insurgency in the region.

To aid policy makers of the region in having a better perception of the security scenario coupled with the need for coordinated efforts, the NEC has arranged a presentation by director general of Assam Rifles in tomorrow's meeting.

Apart from security, the chief ministers will also raise the demand for equal distribution of NEC resources to all the states.

Nagaland and Manipur shared the view that the NEC was "discriminating" against some states while allocating the lion's share to two or three states.

Rio claimed Nagaland's share of NEC's resources was only three per cent.

NEC secretary PL Thanga expressed hope that the presentation would help the governors and chief ministers evolve a method of coordination.

The governors and chief ministers however, indicated that they were more keen to share intelligence than a joint operation. ■

# The Telegraph

12 September 2003

## NEC road map for development

*PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA*

GANGTOK, Sept. 11: The North-eastern Council (NEC) passed a resolution to prepare a "master plan" to build a road map for the region at its 48th meeting at Chintan Bhavan here today.

Amid elaborate security arrangements, Sikkim hosted the first NEC meet since becoming a part of the council just six months ago.

This is the first time that a master plan is being shaped after the NEC was accorded the status of a regional planning body, upgrading it from its earlier role as an advisory board.

The master plan would be based on a time-bound, resource-based action plan. It would have an in-built monitoring mechanism to ensure timely and proper implementation of projects as well as a review mechanism to measure the impact of the projects. The plan would respond to the aspirations and needs of the Northeast.

Speaking to reporters after the meet, chief minister Pawan Chamling described it as "fruitful" and beneficial for Sikkim. Chamling also said the outcome of the meet had enhanced the prestige and glory of the state reinforced Sikkim's position as a major player in the region and the country.

Chamling emphasised that the meet provided an excellent opportunity for Sikkim to familiarise itself with the rest of the Northeast. He also said it gave the Governors and the chief ministers of other states a first hand experience of Sikkim and the opportunities it can offer.

Governor of Assam and chairman NEC Lt.Gen. Ajai Singh, paid a compliment by saying that Sikkim was the most developed among the eight states.

On being asked if a special package awaited Sikkim after its recent inclusion, the Governor said such a package was in the offing. He also complimented Sikkim for the peace and tranquility in the state.

While Sikkim endorsed today's resolution, the state also furnished a proposal of Rs383 crore to NEC for various projects in 2003-2004. It also requested maximum support and assistance from institutions under NEC's purview.

The state also asked for formalisation of all institutional links and sought adequate representation in the NEC secretariat.

Among the most important demands raised by Sikkim

today was the demand of affiliation of all its colleges to the North Eastern Hill University till such a time came up with its own university.

It also requested assistance to help develop a full-fledged university.

Chamling also said the meet gave entrepreneurs a first hand knowledge of the business potential in the region and high-lighted Sikkim as an ideal investment destination. ■

## The Statesman

12 September 2003

# Sikkim development plans sans WB

GANGTOK, Sept. 11: Sikkim appears eager to break free from certain constraints that has forced the Himalayan state to remain dependent on neighbouring West Bengal.

For starters, Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling today urged the North Eastern Council to affiliate all the colleges of Sikkim with the North Eastern Hill University. Mr Chamling wants to have a NEHU campus in Sikkim.

Incidentally, all Sikkim colleges are currently affiliated with the North Bengal University. The NBU has recently adopted certain steps to encourage distance education in Sikkim. An affiliation with the NEHU would automatically detach Sikkim's educational ties with West Bengal - at least at the post graduate level.

That's not all. Mr Chamling asked for an exclusive telecom circle for Sikkim along with technological upgradation. Till now Sikkim telephones is under the jurisdiction of the Siliguri Telecom Circle.

The 48th NEC meeting ended here today providing another feather to the SDF government's cap, especially with the Assembly elections scheduled in Sikkim next year.

"Winning an election is simple," Mr Chamling said today but labeled Opposition Congress leaders in the state as anti-nationals. He, however, restrained from elaborating the Opposition in the development related schemes in Sikkim as declared by him today.

Earlier, in his welcome address at the inaugural session of the 48th North Eastern Council (NEC) meeting here today, Mr Chamling said Sikkim is an integral part of the North East with its political history and developmental achievements in a backdrop of peace and stability. The chief minister also had word of caution for Sikkim, admitting that while the state's per capita income is going up, the quality of life is going down.

"Even as a relatively new state, we have contributed much to the nation-building process," he said, adding that

the state has ensured environmental and human security which were the core and substance of Sikkim's development strategies.

Highlighting the state's roadmap for development, the chief minister said several reform measures and state-level structural adjustment programmes have been implemented with fiscal discipline and prudence. The state has embarked upon selective privatisation through divestment and designed a progressive investment and designed a progressive investment policy under a high-level Board of Investment, he said. The entire reform process is aimed at being friendly, effective and people-centric, Mr Chamling said.

He said the state fits very well into the Centre's "Look East" policy. He formally "thanked" the Centre as well as the other states in the North East for their "immense contributions and substantive support" in making the case for Sikkim's inclusion in the NEC, which he described as the "fulfilment" of Sikkim long-standing demand.

On the several challenges faced by the North Eastern States, Mr Chamling said they varied from yet unknown impacts of reforms and globalisation to migration and conflicts, from pressure on natural resources to unemployment and poverty and from security concerns to governance.

The chief minister said while Sikkim's per capita income is going up, the quality of life is going down. "We have to examine the root causes of violence, instability and insurgency and wage a war against them," he said, adding that many of these challenges require a collective thinking and planning, approach and policy intervention.

While stating that the NE region cannot afford to harbour "such destructive hurdles" to its road to development any longer, a new set of abilities, strategies and resources, a new generation of institutions and a fresh outlook is needed urgently. "We all agree that poverty, inequality and employment continue to remain our major concerns. These are likely to become much wider and deeper in the coming years. We need to look back and introspect as to what went wrong in our development policies and priorities." Mr Chamling said.

He said that the NE states effort especially in generation of employment should be on directing the youth from traditional sources of employment to newer avenues such as self-employment and the private sector.

There is the need to refocus and reappraise the region's education pattern, training, skill development and capacity building institutions.

Mr Chamling called for evolving a common stand on issues that directly affect the NE region.

The states need to harmonise its policies and coordinate its actions, he said. During the main discussions later today, Sikkim's agenda is likely to focus on the use of NEC funds. The state government has submitted proposals for schemes worth Rs300 crore under the NEC for 2003-2004. ■

# The Telegraph

16 September 2003

## CMs to meet for border trade talks

GANGTOK, Sept. 15: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling and his Bengal counterpart Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee are likely to meet soon to discuss various aspects of trading with Tibet through Nathu-la.

Though no official dates have been finalised for the meet, it is likely to take place in Calcutta.

Chamling has already expressed his eagerness to head for Calcutta to hold talks with his counterpart. Earlier, Bhattacharjee had written to Chamling to decide on a time and place to meet and discuss trade through the famed silk route. Bhattacharjee had also sought an early reply from Chamling.

Speaking about the Bengal chief minister's request, Chamling said he had responded positively and indicated his availability for such talks at the earliest. "I have also asked Buddhadebji when I should come to Calcutta," he said.

The Sikkim chief minister is now waiting for a confirmation from writer's Buildings for a time and place to meet.

Although a faxed request for a meet had reached Chamling more than a fortnight ago, public engagements and other official programmes, including the Northeast rural development conference and the Northeast Council meeting, had kept him busy over the past few weeks.

While Sikkim can benefit immensely from trade with China, the benefits for Bengal could be no less.

Siliguri is already being viewed as a major transit point for the trade route. The trade also has a huge potential for West Bengal as a whole.

Last month, Chamling carrying out his 'comprehensive' study on trade prospects, had visited Siliguri to inspect the Sikkim government properties there. ■

# The Statesman

16 September 2003

## Chamling guns for NEC funds

GANGTOK, Sept. 15: Sikkim has put forward a proposal of Rs383 crore to the North Eastern Council for the year 2003-2004.

Chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling, while placing the state government's proposals during the afternoon session of deliberations at the 48th North Eastern Council Meeting here on 11 September, had said that Sikkim needs to

expand and consolidate its infrastructural development. He requested maximum support and assistance from the institutions that are under the purview of the NEC, imploring that some of the "crucial concerns" of the state needed its urgent interventions.

Sikkim's proposals primarily focussed on the demand for affiliation of all its colleges to the North Eastern Hill University and also for setting up its campus in the state till Sikkim sets up its own university.

The hill state wants to access all the financial and fiscal benefits and opportunities that are extended to the agriculture, industries and the service sectors in the North Eastern region. Sikkim is seeking adequate representations in the NEC secretariat.

Later, addressing a press conference, Mr Chamling said he was hopeful that the proposals would receive NEC's green signal. Out of Rs383 crore, Sikkim demanded Rs 122 crore for construction and maintenance of roads; Rs 53 crore for education, Rs 22 crore for industries, Rs 27 crore for developing the health sector, Rs10 crore for horticulture, Rs51 crore for power, Rs43 crore for sports and Rs20 crore for tourism.

While all the demands placed by Sikkim during the meet were taken up for discussion and "agreed in principle," it will be some time before the proposals are accepted and funds released.

Mr Chamling highlighted some of the "urgent requirements" of the state during the meet. The "urgent need" for an alternative highway, upgradation of health care facilities, an independent telecom circle and expansions of the power sector and tourism infrastructure development were some of the requirements that were put up at the meet.

Mr Chamling requested the NEC to release the proposed funds "at the earliest".

The chief minister said the schemes of financing show that as much as 25-30 per cent of the Annual Plan Fund are either centrally earmarked or Externally Aided Projects, requiring further contribution from the state to supplement the schemes. This leaves very little room to manoeuvre and allocate funds to priority sectors, since the percentage of normal Central assistance is only 60-65 percent. Therefore, the state would central assistance adequately raised to mitigate its constraints, he said. ■

# The Telegraph

17 September 2003

## OBC stamp on trio

GANGTOK, Sept. 16: Newar, Bahu Chettri and Sanyasin (NBCS) communities have got official status as other backward classes.

Chief minister Pawan Chamling announced this at news

conference at Mintokgang, his official residence today.

Chamling said the decision was endorsed at a Cabinet meeting this morning at the conference hall of the Tashilling secretariat.

The NBCS communities, who were earlier in the unreserved category, will get 14 per cent reservation in the state, taking the quota regime for the OBCs from the existing 21 per cent to 35 per cent.

The chief minister, however, said the creamy layer from these communities would not avail the facilities as OBCs. "With this, we now have only two categories of communities in the state, tribals and other backward classes," Chamling said.

The chief minister added that the government had gone through the reservation scheme prevalent in other states while drafting the quota policy. He said the decision to include the upper castes was the first in the state. "They might be upper castes but these communities are economically and socially backward like any other."

The Cabinet also decided to grant 2 per cent reservation to sportspersons and artisans in government jobs. This is for the development of sports and arts, the chief minister explained.

Chamling will hand over the certificates of the new-found status for the Newar, Bahun Chettri and Sanyasin communities on September 22.

The new reservation regime for the tribals and other backward classes, including the 2 per cent for sportspersons and artisans, now stands at 74 per cent leaving just 26 per cent for open competition at the state level. ■

## The Statesman

18 September 2003

CHAMLING MOVE TO BENEFIT NEPALI  
COMMUNITY

### CM hikes quota in jobs, education

GANGTOK, Sept. 17: The Chamling government in Sikkim has raised the quota of reservation in higher education and government jobs from 69 to 74 per cent, extending their benefits to the entire Nepali communities living in the state.

The announcement was made by chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling at a press conference here last night. Earlier, only castes belonging to OBC and scheduled caste categories among Nepalis could avail of reservation in the state.

Now that the left-out communities among Nepalis, including Bahun, Chettris, Newars and Sanyasis have been

granted OBC status in the state and reservations extended also to the economically weaker sections among upper-caste Nepalis, the range of reservations covers the entire Nepali community which constitutes the majority of the state's population.

Giving the break-up of the new quota of reservations, the chief minister said that the scheduled tribes would get 33 per cent, the scheduled castes 6 per cent, the OBCs 21 per cent and the economically weaker sections among upper-caste Nepalis 14 per cent.

Admitting that the quota of reservations announced by the state government went against the Supreme Court ceiling of 50 per cent, the chief minister said that precedents in this regard had already been set by states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Bihar, where the quantum of reservations far exceeded the limit imposed by the apex court.

"This (quantum of reservation) can of course be challenged in the court of law but we have done it in the larger interest of the people of the state," Mr Chamling said.

Seeking to justify the increase of reservations for scheduled tribes from 31 to 33 per cent, the chief minister said, with the inclusion of the Limboo and Tamang communities in the ST list, raising their share of reservation in government jobs and higher education was necessary. Expressing his satisfaction over the manner in which the North Eastern Council (NEC) meet was held in Gangtok recently, Mr Chamling said that it was a matter of pride for the state that within less than a year of its induction into the NEC, it had successfully held a programme of this scale. "I am told that Tripura, despite being a member of the NEC since the 70s, has not yet hosted a meeting of the council," he said.

Pointing out that Sikkim's induction into the NEC would add fresh momentum to development activities in the state, the chief minister said its demand for a grant of Rs383 crore from the NEC fund had been accepted by the council.

While the entire amount will be released to the state in a phased manner, the first instalment of Rs60 crore has already been released by the council, he said.

Out of this sum, Rs50 crore would be spent in the road sector and the rest for the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology and the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences, he said. ■

## The Telegraph

20 September 2003

### Apex court relief for online lottery

GANGTOK, Sept. 19: The Supreme Court has allowed



Playwin, the country's first online lottery promoted by the Sikkim government, to continue its operations until a final verdict.

The breather comes three months after Sikkim High Court ordered the directorate of lotteries, under the state finance department, to cancel the marketing agency of Tashi Delek Gaming Solutions, a subsidiary of Playwin Infravest, belonging to the Mumbai-based Essel group. The appointment had come after Tashi Delek Gaming Solutions won an open tender and later appointed Playwin as its sub-agent.

In its June 24 ruling, the high court had directed the government to terminate Playwin's agency within three months and call fresh tenders to appoint a new marketing agency.

Playwin was to close operations by September 24.

Under the seven-year contract with Playwin, launched with fanfare in March 2002, the Sikkim government was to get a revenue of at least Rs780 crore. Chief minister Pawan Chamling has repeatedly said the money generated would be spent on education and health.

Hearing separate special leave petitions filed by the Sikkim government and Tashi Delek Gaming Solutions against the order, the Supreme Court told the state on September 12 to make interim arrangements for Playwin to continue with its operations until it delivers its final order.

The high court ruling had come in response to two separate writ petitions - one filed by the Mumbai-based Modi Entertainment Networks Private Limited and the other by two residents of Sikkim, J.K. Bhandari and Rajendra Upreti.

The high court said it found out after hearing all sides involved in the case that the government had not followed the rules while inviting the tender. The court told the government to float fresh tenders following "rules, norms and procedures". It said the bidding companies should be given "sufficient time to purchase tender forms" and suggested that the successful bidder of the "properly held" tenders be made the marketing agent this time. The government has to publish the tender notice in at least two major national dailies.

Modi Entertainment, in its writ petition, had complained that it had not been given enough time to fill in the tender forms. However, in the order, the high court had said the government had the "liberty" to either appoint a competent "selectee" or "interim" marketing agent until a new agent was appointed.

Advocate-general SP Wangdi said the Supreme Court took cognisance of this and allowed Playwin to continue operations until a final verdict. Sikkim lotteries director L.P Barphungpa said Playwin would now continue till further orders. ■

# The Telegraph

22 September 2003

## Nirman awards

GANGTOK, Sept. 21: Sikkim's lone representative to the Lok Sabha Bhim Dahal was today conferred the 2003 Asharani Nirman Purashkar for literature.

Dahal was awarded a sum of Rs.25,000, a citation and a memento for his contributions to Nepali poetry and literature at a function organised by the Namchi-based Naiman Prakashan, at the community hall of the Development Area.

Asharani Chamling, mother of chief minister Pawan Chamling, handed over the award to Dahal who has been a regular contributor to Nepali literature for the past 34 years. The felicitation ceremony also saw social worker and litterateur from Darjeeling R.P. Lama receive the first Ashbahadur Nirman Purushkar. Lama was honoured with Rs25,000 a memento and a citation by Ash Bahadur Chamling, the chief minister's father. Writer Pempa Tamang was given the Gopal Gaunley Nirman Purushkar for his contributions to Nepali literature.

Nirman also felicitated 14 other people. Among them were Nepali poets, singers, musicians, novelists, publishers and writers from Sikkim, Darjeeling and Nepal. Nirman, a publishing house from Namchi, the South district headquarters, was set up in 1977 by chief minister Pawan Chamling as a non-profit organisation. ■

# The Statesman

23 September 2003

## Chamling hands out OBC certificates

GANGTOK, Sept. 22: Despite widespread reservations from some sections of society about whether the Chamling government would be able to pull this one off, the newly-inducted left-out communities of the state were today distributed OBC certificates.

Chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling handed out OBC certificates to members of the Newar, Bahun, Chettri and Sanyasi Communities at a public felicitation programme held at the Tashi Namgyal Academy grounds here today, which was organised by the Newar, Chettri Bahun Sanyasi Samanway Samiti. The Day also coincided with the "Garibi Unmulan Diwas" (Poverty Alleviation Day) of the ruling

Sikkim Democratic Front party.

The programme was organised by members of the Newar, Bahun, Chettri and Sanyasi communities to felicitate and express their "gratefulness" towards Mr Chamling for including them in the state's OBC list. More than 5,000 people from all over the state, especially those belonging to the Newar, Bahun, Chettri and Sanyasi Communities, had gathered at the TNA grounds for the function.

Mr Chamling was felicitated by the new OBC communities for taking the "historic decision", by presenting him with a citation and a memento. Representatives of the NBC communities from all over the state also felicitated him on the occasion.

OBC certificates to a select few members of the Newar, Bahun, Chettri and Sanyasi Communities were then handed over by Mr Chamling in a symbolic gesture. The rest are to be handed over the certificates later by the DC's office in their respective districts.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Chamling reminisced on the events that led to his going underground in 1993, after his fallout with the then Bhandari government. September 22, the day when he came out of hiding to form the SDF party, is observed as the "Garibi Unmulan Diwas". He said, the "revolution" which had begun on that day to "completely eradicate poverty and establish a democratic state" was still going on. He called for a consolidated effort from all sections of society in the "reconstruction of Sikkimese society".

Mr Chamling also spelled out the many policies and programmes of the state government, aimed towards the upliftment of the downtrodden. He said that the OBC status for the left-out communities would have perhaps come earlier, had it not been the "inefficiency of the previous Bhandari government" in putting up the case before the Centre. He said that it was only through the concerted efforts of his government that this "dream of the Sikkimese people" had seen light of day. "In spite of the Centre rejecting our demand, we have gone ahead and included the left-out communities in the state OBC list," he said.

Earlier, in her welcome address, SDF executive committee member and coordinator, NCBSSS, Ms Manita Pradhan, while expressing her "thankfulness" on behalf of the four communities, said that this latest initiative of the state government had come about through the sole efforts of the chief minister. "Despite the Central government rejecting the demand of the Sikkim government for the inclusion of the left-out communities in the OBC list, the chief minister went ahead and used his own capabilities to fulfil this long-pending aspiration of Sikkimese people," she said. ■

# The Statesman

4 October 2003

## Sikkim floasts on Nathu-La bubble

Sarikah Atreya in Gangtok

GANGTOK, Oct. 12: The thawing of tensions between India and China, which subsequently led to the bilateral decision of resuming trade through the Nathu La, is perhaps the biggest development for Sikkim since the merger.

Not only Sikkim ceases to be an issue with China, following the de facto recognition as a part of India, the move promises to trigger an unprecedented industrial and economic boom for the state.

The Chamling government is now in the middle of conducting a thorough study on all the logistic and infrastructural requirements of the state and the arrangements that need to be put in place once trade resumes. Based on this study, a master plan will be prepared within the next few months which will be handed over to the Centre.

While the state government is in the process of identifying the key areas and sectors that need special attention for international trade, not much have been said about the actual bilateral agreement that was signed between the two countries, which actually led to the Centre's decision to re-establish trade links with Tibet over Nathu-la.

Significantly, the most important documents signed, amongst the various others between India and China during Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to China in June this year was the memorandum between Government of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Expanding Border Trade on 23 June 2003.

This memorandum was in pursuant to the memorandum between India and China on the Resumption of Border Trade signed on December 13 1991, and Protocol on Entry and Exit Procedures for Border Trade signed on July 1 1992, with a view to promote friendly relations between the two countries.

"Desirous of opening another pass on the Sino-Indian border and setting up an additional point on each side for border trade," the two countries agreed that the Indian side would designate Tsomgu in Sikkim as the venue for border trade market; the Chinese side will designate Renqinggang of the Tibet Autonomous Region as the venue for border trade market.

The two sides agreed to use the Nathu-La as the pass for entry and exit of persons, means of transport and commodities engaged in border trade.

Each side would establish checkpoints at appropriate locations to monitor and manage their entry and exit through the Nathu-La.

Similarly, all provisions of the memorandum on the Resumption of Border Trade and the Protocol on Entry and Exit Procedures for Border Trade signed between the two countries under the memorandum shall also be applicable to the border trade through the Nathu-La.

This memo may be amended or supplemented by agreement in writing between the two sides.

The memo will come into force from the date of its signature and would be valid during the validity of the memorandum on resumption of border trade.

The task of working out the modalities is now Sikkim's prerogative and faced with this daunting responsibility, the state government has constituted a high-power committee, headed by the chief secretary, which will oversee the preparations.

A high-power panel has also been formed at the Centre, which is working in close coordination with the state committee.

Even China has started preparations for the trade on their side of the border.

Chief Minister Mr Pawan Chamling went on a spot-assessment of the area, which became necessary after the Centre's nod to the reopening of trade links on 1 August this year.

Mr Chamling was accompanied by a power-packed team, comprising members of the high-level committee recently-constituted by the state government on Nathu-La trade, headed by chief secretary, Mr SW Tenzing. The team comprised Cabinet members, MLAs, panchayats, senior party members, senior officials from the district administration and various government departments and representatives from the Border Roads Organisation and the Army in the state.

Mr Chamling went through the logistics and infrastructure requirements of the state in light of the resumption of trade between the two countries through Nathu-La and conducted a thorough survey of the area in order to prepare a master plan, which will be submitted to the Centre within the next two months.

Areas such as setting up of warehouses along the Jawahar Lal Nehru road from Gangtok to Nathu-La, widening of the road and setting up essential communications links and environment concerns were looked into by Mr Chamling during this tour. He had a closed-door meeting with the GOC, 17 Mountain Division, Maj.Gen. Deepak Anand which on security issues and adequate arrangements of the strategic border area once trading resumes. It was decided that two warehouses would come up at Sherathang, about 3 km below Nathu-La.

Mr Chamling felt that was a dire need for an alternative highway from Siliguri to Gangtok to facilitate easy movement of traffic. "The National Highway 31 - A is the

only road that links Sikkim from the rest of the country. We would require an alternative highway that would act as a buffer to the existing one in case of natural calamities on NH-31A." The Centre would be approached with the proposal for the alternative highway which, Mr Chamling said, could cost anything from Rs500 crore and above, he said.

In order to avoid traffic disturbance in Gangtok town arising out of the increase in vehicular movement, an alternative road by-passing the Capital town would also be considered, he had said. ■

# The Telegraph

4 October 2003

## Meet to set domicile date

GANGTOK, Oct. 3: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling will hold a meeting with the Vyaparis to decide on the cut-off year for the business community so that they can be identified as original domiciles of the state.

More than 300 Vyaparis will participate in the discussions to be held on October 13 at Chintan Bhavan in Nam Nang. Since the status and the identity of these old settlers have not been defined so far, it has become the most important political and social issue concerning the community.

Many old Vyaparis are into their third and fourth generations and are still facing an identity crisis. The meet will discuss and record suggestions and also come up with a database to fix a cut-off year, so that settlers prior to that particular year can be declared domiciles of Sikkim.

While there has been an influx of the business class in the last decade, the older lot has been persistently demanding that a cut-off year be declared so there is no confusion regarding the "original" business settlers. Benefits like voting rights and reservation in seats and jobs would be applicable only to those who are bona fide Vyaparis of the state.

With the inclusion of the Newar, Bahun and Chettri communities into the other backward classes category, the Vyaparis were left alone as unreserved community.

The decision to hold a meeting with the chief minister came up when a delegation of the business community accompanied by Gangtok legislator N.K.Pradhan called on Chamling last week, sources said.

After Sikkim became the 22nd state in 1975, the category of the business community and people of the plains was undefined and remained so for the last 28 years. Although the Vyaparis pre-date many others who possess

the Sikkim Subject Certificates given during the rule of the Chogyals, they are still not considered on par with them. Increase in developmental activities and the prospects of reopening Nathu-La are attracting more businessmen to the state. The older business community feels threatened, as there is no clear-cut precedence to identify the original traders from recent entrants.

Secretary of Sikkim Chamber of Commerce Ramesh Periwai said all Vyaparis - Marwaris, Biharis or Bengalis - have shown their enthusiasm to participate in the meet. "A joint action committee consisting of representatives of the various business communities will be formed on Tuesday to submit a joint representation," he said.

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10 October 2003

## 'Chinese gesture should hasten re-opening of Nathu La route'

By Marcus Dam

KOLKATA, Oct. 9. The removal of Sikkim as an "independent county" from the official website of the Chinese Foreign Minister should hasten the re-opening of the Nathu La trade route linking China with India, the Sikkim Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, told The Hindu in an interview from Gangtok.

Mr. Chamling said he believed that the route should be ready for trade between the two countries within "two years". "There is no room for any further doubt," he added.

"It [Sikkim's removal from the Chinese website] is a major development which is expected to have an immediate and positive impact on the proposal to re-open the route. It is also a formal recognition by Beijing of our State being an integral part of India," the Chief Minister said over the telephone.

Mr. Chamling said: "All credit should go to the Prime Minister for his efforts to impress upon his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao the indisputable fact that Sikkim is a part of India." The status of this Himalayan State has been a bone of contention between the two countries ever since Sikkim's merger with India in 1975.

"The removal of Sikkim as an "independent country" from the official Chinese website is also "a crucial step in the improvement of relations between China and India," the Chief Minister said. He added: "As for my Government, we are delighted over the development. The reality of Sikkim's status as an Indian State has now been accepted by the other side. There has been no question of doubting this status since the referendum that converted the Himalayan kingdom from an Indian protectorate to a State of the country."

For the past decade, the Sikkim Government has been requesting the Centre to initiate moves to re-open the Nathu la trade route which had been closed for more than four



decades. The route will link Ranqinggang in the Tibet region of China to Changu in east Sikkim. The demand also featured prominently in the manifesto of Sikkim's ruling party- the Sikkim Democratic Front.

Prior to its closure, traders used to traverse the route via Nathu La linking Gangtok with Lhasa- a distance of nearly 500 km- carting their commodities on mule-back across a rough and mountainous terrain. Today, to make the route serviceable, there is need for building the required infrastructure .

The road from Gangtok to Nathu La had already been broadened since the route was last used, a senior Sikkim Government official said.

Once the route is re-opened, the economies of both Sikkim and West Bengal will be given considerable boost, even though the gain to the Chinese economy might be more. It will facilitate the transit of Chinese commodities through Nathu La into Sikkim and on to the Kolkata port as well as export of Indian items to China, he added .

## The Telegraph

10 October 2003

### Chamling cheers China change

**PEMALEYDA SHANGDERPA**

GANGTOK, Oct. 9: Sikkim today welcomed China's decision to accept Sikkim's accession to India and hoped that the irritants in the bilateral relations between the two neighbours would gradually fade away.

China's decision to recognise Sikkim as a part of India came hours before Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee met Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao for talks at Bali Inter-continental Hotel yesterday. As a result of the change incorporated in the Chinese foreign ministry's official website, Sikkim is no longer given the status of a separate country.

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling, through a press release issued by the state information and public relations department, said the decision was a welcome move although there was no denying the fact that Sikkim was already an integral part of India.

Chamling said the move would strengthen the relations between the two countries and eventually help solve the decades-old border dispute.

The chief minister said the reopening of the once-flourishing Silk Route through the border outpost of Nathu-la would do a world of good for Sikkim. The route has been closed since India went to war with China in 1962. There were also some words of praise for his government for

singularly pursuing the demand for revival of the trade route.

A jubilant political adviser to Chamling and former chief minister BB Gooroong said: "The Chinese decision to recognise Sikkim as a part of India will not only remove a long-standing irritant in bilateral relations but also raise the level of political comfort in New Delhi about Beijing."

When the Prime Minister visited China in June this year, Sikkim was given "de facto" recognition through the agreement on border trade between the two neighbours that will result in the opening up of the Nathu-la.

Former chief minister and state Congress president Nar Bahadur Bhandari, however, said the Chinese decision had come too late since Sikkim was a part of India since 1975.

"The merger of Sikkim with India is a fait accompli. The people of Sikkim identify themselves with India and it does not matter whether China accepts the accession or not," Bhandari said.

He also pointed out that it was during his tenure as the chief minister that Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, had decided to reopen the historical Silk Route. The process was stalled after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. ■

## Sikkim

## EXPRESS

12 October 2003

### CM becomes the first 'hill man' recipient of honoris causa

**By Staff Reporter**

GANGTOK , October 11: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling has been conferred the Doctor of Philosophy (honoris causa) by the Sikkim Manipal University in recognition of his vision, leadership and contribution in the field of social upliftment of weaker sections, backward classes and all round development of Sikkim. He has now become the 'first hill man' in the world to get this Degree.

Dr Venkatasubramaniam, Member, Planning Commission, was also conferred the same honour along with the Chief Minister by the Sikkim Manipal University at its annual convocation held today at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology campus Majitar.

In his speech during the convocation, Chamling said, "For me specially, this is a special, great and rare occasion. I have been awarded Doctor of Philosophy, Honoris

Causa, by such a prestigious institution on the basis of the cause I have been propounding and the work I have been doing for the welfare of the people state and nation as a whole. When I received a note from the Pro Chancellor conferring this degree on me, my immediate reaction was that of pleasant surprise.”

He said that he was surprised because he was a simple politician who possibly never thought of earning a degree of such high order. He also said that he was yet to give his best to his people, to the state of Sikkim and to his motherland India.

“However, I have accepted this Doctor of Philosophy with all humility and respect at my command for two fundamental reasons. Because I firmly believe that this act of acceptance will ennoble the entire Sikkim society and the work done by the people’s government. Secondly, this degree will encourage many other young Sikkimese to come forward and rededicate themselves to building both their beloved state and country,” he added.

At the press conference organised for the occasion, he said that he was happy with the honour he had received and that it has inspired him to work more for the people.

Asked for his message for the youth for the occasion he said, “Youths should work more and better than me.”

When asked about his most prominent achievement, he said, “My government has brought democracy in Sikkim in its true sense” and added that making Sikkim a prominent state in the national map was also a major achievement. Now his most urgent target was to make Sikkim a model state, he added.

He also said that the North Eastern Council has promised the state Rs 100 crores for the first phase, an amount more than what was projected by the state.

Congratulating the CM on the occasion, Dr Mahindra P Lama said that the conferment of the prestigious Degree of Doctor of Philosophy on the CM will “set standards for the hill politicians.”

## The Telegraph

13 October 2003

### Doctorate honour for Chamling

GANGTOK, Oct. 12: Chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling became the first important person from the hill region to be conferred a doctorate of Philosophy (honoris causa).

The honour was bestowed on him to reward his vision, leadership and contribution to the field of social upliftment of weaker sections, backward classes and all-round development of Sikkim.

The degree was conferred on him yesterday by the

Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) at the third convocation of the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology in Majitar.

President of thePai Foundation and Manipal Group, Ramdas Pai and the Vice Chancellor of Sikkim Manipal University handed over the degree to the chief minister.■

## The Statesman

13 October 2003

### Manipal University fetes Chamling

MAJITAR, (East Sikkim), Oct. 12: Chief minister of Sikkim Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling was conferred an honorary degree of Doctorate of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) yesterday by the Sikkim Manipal University.

Governor Mr V Rama Rao, who is also the SMU Chancellor, handed over the Doctorate to Mr Chamling at the third convocation of the Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology (SMIT) under the SMU held yesterday.

SMU pro-Chancellor Dr Ramdas Pai said Mr Chamling was the “right recipient” as he exempoified “great statesmanship, leadership and far-sighted vision to lead the state into prosperity.”

In this acceptance speech, Mr Chamling called the occasion “rare, special and great” and said: “I have accepted this Doctorate with all humility and respect for two reasons. First, I firmly believe that this act of acceptance will ennoble the entire Sikkimese society and the work done by the government. Secondly, this degree will encourage many others to come forward and dedicate themselves to the development and progress of the state and country,” he said.

Mr Chamling dedicated the Doctorate to the “people of Sikkim, without whose support, blessings and good wishes I would not have been able to contribute my bit to the making of modern sikkim.”

Dr K Venkatasubramanian, member, Union Planning Commission, was also conferred with an honorary degree of Doctorate of Philosophy. In his address, Mr Venkatasubramanian congratulated the Chamling government for the progress made by the state and said that for Sikkim to earn the tag of the mose peaceful state in India wa “no small feat”. He said that the border states deserved to be treated well by the Centre and shouldn’t be deprived of any development programme or policy.

Later, 167 engineering students were handed over degrees by the pro-Chancellor. 82 of them graduated with top honours whilel 71 others got a first class. For the first tiem, six students became the first local batch to roll out of SMIT, since its establishment in 1997.■

# The Statesman

14 October 2003

## Sikkim traders seek quota in higher studies

GANGTOK, Oct. 13: The business community in Sikkim has demanded a 15 per cent reservation in higher studies.

Presenting their two-point memorandum to chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling, the traders demanded a "suitable" cut-off year for the members of the community residing in the state for generations and Certificates of Identification to provide them "adequate social and political protections and safeguards, especially in education, employment and trade and commerce."

The The Sikkim Vyapari Samaj today felicitated chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling for his contributions towards the social and economic upliftment of the people, pro-poor policies and his efforts to address the needs of the under-privileged.

The traders presented Mr Chamling with a citation, a memento and a shawl at a function held at the Chintan Bhawan here today.

Octogenarian Khyaliram Singhi, who is also one of the earliest members of the business community to have settled in Sikkim, handed over the shawl to Mr Chamling during the function which was attended by members from the plainsmen business community based in Sikkim.

It was during the times of Indo-Tibet trade in the 1930s through Nathu-La that many businessmen, especially, those from Marwari and Bihari communities came to Sikkim and settled here and played a vital role in the trade and the economy of the region.

Mr Chamling in his address called upon the business community to take up a more "pro-active" role in the decision-making process of the government. He said that the business community should get involved in the policy making process by deliberating on key issues of development in the state. "The reopening of the Nathu-La for trade has brought numerous possibilities and prospects for the business community to invest and expand their business. But I see no debate or meeting amongst the business community in the State to discuss this very important development. I see no urgency or the need to involve yourself in fervent discussion and planning to cash on to this great opportunity," he said.

The chief minister said the two demands of the business community will be looked into but first called for a public debate to discuss the demands raised. Mr Chamling

said that his government had always worked for the betterment of all the communities of the state, including the business community and expected congenial atmosphere between the government and the business community for co-operation and partnership.

Mr Chamling took the opportunity to felicitate eight senior members of the business community who were "instrumental in the development" of the State. Calling them the "netas" (leaders) of the business community, Mr Chamling felicitated Sri Khyaliram Singhi, Sri Chiranjilal Khatri, Sri Motilal Lakhota, Sri Tirath Ram Oberoi, Sri Kailash Prasad, Mr MN Parikh, Sri Kundanmal Sarma and Sri Ram Deo Prasad. ■

## Chamling mulls more reforms

GANGTOK, Oct. 13.- Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling said the state government would soon embark upon the second generation of reforms aimed at changing the mindset of politicians, improving the functioning of the political institutions and consolidating the symbiosis between democracy, development and participation.

Speaking at an Indo-Bangladesh workshop on this theme here on Saturday, Mr Chamling said that the devolution of major powers to panchayat bodies in the state by his government was meant to strengthen the democratic institutions at the grassroots so that they could ensure direct participation by the common people in the development process.-PTI

Gangtok

# TIMES

13-19 October 2003

## "Rebuilding Nation" urged in SMU Convocation Address

*HON. DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY TO MR. CHAMLING*

FIRST INDIAN POLITICIAN TO RECEIVE THE HONOUR

GT Bureau

Gangtok: The third Convocation of Sikkim-Manipal University of Health and Technological Sciences was held at the University premises at Majitar (East Sikkim)

**on Saturday, October.**

Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian in his Convocation Address recalled the Prime minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's "insistence on ringing Human Well Being (HWB)". He said, "HWB simply means education and health primarily". He added, "Engineers are in charge of infrastructure sector which will ring in these two benefits and it is the foundation sector for growth so to say".

Dr. Venkatasubramanian Member, Union Planning Commission, referred a recent interview of the chief minister, Mr Pawan Chamling by the Time of India and said, "I was very happy to read that his (Chamling's) government has undertaken a massive awareness campaign and had stepped up investments in education and health areas".

As to the task ahead for the outgoing graduates, Dr Venkatasubramanian said, "They have to rebuild the nation" by attending to the "infrastructural needs to make India strong....". He pointed out that "Vast disparities in per capita income levels between and within India's states persist", adding "India's social indicator remains weak...."

**On the occasion, the Chancellor of the University and Sikkim governor, Mr V. Rama Rao, conferred upon Dr. Venkatasubramanian and the chief minister, Mr. Chamling, the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph. D), with Citations.**

Mr. Rao in his speech said, "Two distinguished and illustrious national personalities namely Shri Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister of Sikkim, and Dr. K. Venkata Subramanian, Member, Planning Commission are recipients of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) conferred by the University in recognition of their outstanding and noteworthy contributions to the Society. I am proud to state that they are first two recipients of this honour from this University and join the select band of luminaries namely Dr. Abdul Kalam, our beloved President, Dr. C Subramanian, Dr. Azim Premji, Dr. N.R. Narayana Moorthy and Dr. Nani Palkhiwala who are recipients of similar honour from the other Manipal Group of Educational Institutions. I extend to both of them my warm felicitations and wish them long years of healthy and eventful life in public service in the pursuit of their cherished goals.

The occasion is also an important and memorable milestone in the lives of the new graduates and their proud parents as well, many of whom are perhaps unable to be present here due to reason beyond their control. To each and everyone of them I extend my heartiest congratulations and wish them bright and successful future, particularly to the medal winners and rank holders."

Mr Chamling in his address said:

"Let me first extend my warm personal greeting to all the distinguished guests present here and their families. I especially extend good wishes to the young students here. Let this light of joy always be with us in both time of hap-

piness and sorrows.

"For me personally this is special and rare occasion. I have been awarded Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) by such a prestigious institution on the basis of the cause I am propounding and the work I have been doing for the welfare of the people. State and the nation as a whole. When I received a note from the Pro-Chancellor proposing to confer this degree on me, my immediate reaction was one of a pleasant surprise. Surprised because I am a simple politician who possibly never thought of earning a degree of such highest order.

"However I have accepted the Doctor of Philosophy with all humility and respect at my command for two fundamental reasons. Because I firmly believe that this act of acceptance will ennoble the entire iety and the good works accomplished by the people's government. And secondly, the degree will encourage many other young Sikkimese to come forward and rededicate themselves to building both their beloved State and the country.

"There are three main challenges to us in Sikkim today. In tackling all these three challenges of globalization, political reforms and youth management, we need to get total institutional support. This is also the concern I find among the top intellectuals, senior media people and other civil society members in the country today.

"In Sikkim our government has been taking all these three formidable challenges as the best opportunities to bring about peace, progress and stability in the State. In the heart of every problem of globalization, we find opportunities galore to make our state divergent and robust. In the core of every political complexity, we see a very bright light to eliminate inequalities and deprivation generated by the past political practices.

"And in the subconscious, we see a burning desire among our youth to be more outward looking and self-sustainable. These are the fundamental differences in our thinking, approaches and goals. We are different in all these and we would always like to be innovative, novel and far reaching.

"My appeal to the youths of Sikkim is enumerated as under.

- (1) Firstly, never forget your roots. The more attached you are to your roots, the more strength you will have.
- (2) Secondly, there is no short cut to success. You may get one or two quick successes but they will not last long. Therefore, hard work, consistency and perseverance are the key to success.
- (3) Thirdly, nothing is greater and richer than knowledge. The difference you can make anywhere is only through your knowledge and wisdom.
- (4) And fourthly, simple living and respect to elders are our brand identity. Maintain this wherever you go. You will be known for this little manner.

"I am sure the graduates of Sikkim Manipal Univer-



sity are already practicing these four modest suggestions of mine. I only look forward to see you all come out of the University with new vision, unconventional outlook and a firm conviction to serve the State and the nation.

“Let me once again pledge my full cooperation and support to the Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences. We are keenly looking forward to making the University a harbinger of professional, technical and intellectual progress in the State. We all want the Institute to be development as a Centre of Excellence in the whole of Eastern and North-Eastern India and also for the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal. This will bring pride to the State and the country.

“While expressing my personal views let me once again express my sincere thanks to the authorities for bestowing this honour on me. In this august gathering, let me dedicate this Doctor of Philosophy honour to the people of Sikkim, for without their support, blessing and good wishes. I would not have been able to contribute my bit to the making of modern Sikkim and thereby contributing to the nation building process.

“Let me once again congratulate all the graduate students and wish you all for successful career in your future ventures. May you climb from peak to peak, and scale the highest obstacles and difficult hurdles.”

## The Telegraph

5 November 2003

### Chamling demand

GANGTOK, Nov. 4: Chief minister Mr Pawan Chamling has sought modifications in the existing devolution formula of the finance commission.

He has suggested that the state's share be increased from 29.5 per cent of net proceeds to 45 per cent of gross collection, including surcharge in the revenue receipts.

Chamling placed these demands before the chairman of the 12th Finance Commission, C. Rangarajan, who is on a three-day visit to the state to interact with the state government prior to finalising its recommendations.

The commission is currently entrusted with the responsibility of recommending transfer of resources from the Centre to the states. The chief minister has also demanded that one-third of the central funds be earmarked exclusively for special category states.

The commission met the chief minister and other state government officials yesterday. The commission also had sittings with the accountant general, representatives from local bodies, political parties and trade and industry associations.

Rangarajan said the commission was working towards evolving a suitable and acceptable procedure. ■

## The Statesman

13 November 2003

### Central funds for Sikkim

GANGTOK, Nov. 12: The Centre has sanctioned funds to the tune of Rs31.76 crore, in a move aimed at the rapid industrialisation of Sikkim as envisaged under the recently-formulated 'New Industrialisation Policy for Sikkim'.

Disclosing this, Union minister of state for commerce and industry Mr Vidyasagar Rao said the Centre would contribute Rs 15 crore and the rest would be given by the state government.

Mr Rao, who was speaking at a one-day interactive seminar organised here by the state commerce and industry department yesterday, said Sikkim had the ideal investor-friendly environment, but the state government should take proper steps to encourage local entrepreneurs and business talents, while inviting investors from the rest of India and abroad.

Lauding the present government for actively promoting tourism as the main area of development and economic activity in Sikkim, Mr Rao stressed upon the need for an adequate publicity and awareness campaign by the state government to showcase Sikkim's potential in attracting investments.

Speaking on the occasion, the Sikkim chief minister, Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, highlighted the various aspects of the new industrial policy and informed that his government was in touch with various international organisations who provided necessary inputs to state governments.

The chief minister further said that several new policies and schemes formulated by his government were in the offing. These would ensure optimum utilisation of human and natural resources of Sikkim.

Underlining the need for sustainable development in Sikkim, Mr Chamling said that the main focus would be put on attaining development and industrialisation, along with the conservation of the environment and maintenance of the ecological balance.

While seeking the Central government's assistance for the development of the state, the chief minister also sought Central help for specific areas, including infrastructure development, marketing of domestic products, incentives and concessions for industrial activities.

Mr Chamling also sought the Centre's approval for setting up an entrepreneurship development institute and an investment management institute in the state, which, he said, would serve the interests of the entire north-eastern region in providing trained manpower and technical expertise, vital for any major industrial activity. ■

# The Statesman

19 November 2003

## Thrust on power devolution

GANGTOK, Nov. 18: A renewed thrust on the devolution of powers was of primary importance on the agenda of the fifth meeting of the Sikkim state planning commission which began at Gangtok's Chintan Bhavan today.

The devolution of power will guarantee more autonomy to the panchayati raj through enhanced capacity-building measures pertaining to decentralised programmes, projects and functions, and further divestment from sick and inefficient public sector undertakings.

According to senior state planning department officials here, the two day meeting will undertake an indepth review of the current status of this year's plan, while formulating plans for the coming year.

The meeting, inaugurated today by Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling, was also attended by Dr Vijay Kelker, who was recently inducted as a member of the state planning commission. While highlighting the progress in core sectors under the current plan, Mr Chamling said that the visit of Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee to Sikkim this year, the proposed reopening of the Nathu La and the 48th meeting of the North Eastern Council (NEC) this year were some of the major achievements of the state in this current year.

Mr Chamling further said that these events were also a positive aspect of the Centre's 'Look East' policy, aimed at strengthening the north-eastern states through rapid development, along with an active interest in improving bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. He also urged the planning commission to pursue more developmental projects under the NEC and implement Centrally-sponsored schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhyan.

Visibly upbeat at the prospect of the reopening of the 'Silk Route', Mr Chamling, however, cautioned that utmost care was needed in the formulation and implementation of schemes and policies once the trade route across the Nathu La became operational.

Senior officials said here that the governments of Sikkim and West Bengal were under active consultation over the proposed course of action in view of Nathu La trade. Officials in the state home department said that both West Bengal and Sikkim would initially hold bureaucratic-level talks headed by the respective chief secretaries to work out the modalities, which include joint decisions on revenue sharing, list of importable goods, among others.

The final decision to this effect would be taken in a meeting between the chief ministers of the two states to be held once the bureaucratic-level talks end and a report is submitted. Both states also plan to approach the Centre for additional funds for necessary infrastructure. ■

# The Statesman

29 November 2003

## Chamling's plea

GANGTOK, Nov.28: Sikkim chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling has expressed concern over the security of the state's residents travelling by trains which pass through Bihar. In letters to "Deputy Prime Minister Mr LK Advani, Union minister Dr CP Thakur, Bihar chief minister Mrs Rabri Devi and Assam chief minister Mr Tarun Gogoi, he said some residents of Sikkim travelling by Brahmaputra Mail and Guwahati Dadar Express on 12 November were allaulted and robbed near Bhagalpur by residents of those areas. He gave a list of the victims and the damage caused to their property. ■

# The Statesman

19 December 2003

## Chamling may axe his band of babus

GANGTOK, Dec.18: The Assembly polls are scheduled for next year, but the ruling party is already feeling the heat. Stung by the Congress campaign against the lackadaisical attitude of the state bureaucrats, chief minister Mr Pawan Kumar Chamling today gave a wake-up call to his band of babus, asking them to shape up or ship out. According to sources, some of them may even be offered "Golden Handshake".

In a hard-hitting statement, Mr Chamling said: "If decision makers outnumber those who implement them, then the bureaucracy becomes top-heavy."

Blaming government officials for the slackened pace of development in some areas, Mr Chamling said if needs be, the 'babudom' would be pruned and the state administration would be streamlined.

Mr Chamling, who is also the president of ruling Sikkim Democratic Front, was speaking on the 10th anniversary of the SDF government in the state. He said some bureaucrats had failed to understand the democratic process. "The

success of any government is largely dependent on the level of cooperation extended by the government servants. We must not let administrative hurdles cripple our state,” he said.

While the chief minister’s dissatisfaction with the performance of some bureaucrats is well known, sources close to Mr Chamling said that with the approaching Assembly elections, the bureaucratic non-cooperation is being felt more than ever in the ruling power circles.

More so because rival parties such as the Congress have stepped up their rhetoric to corner the government over a number of economic and development-related issues.

“The government wants to ride the poll campaign on development plank, with emphasis on the SDF’s achievements during Mr Chamling’s tenure. These include a remarkable rise in the level of basic utilities such as roadways, water supply and power generation” a senior SDF member said.

“Although the reforms have come in, the benefits have hardly trickled down to the masses in some sectors”, he admitted.

Senior ministry officials here felt that some core sectors have suffered owing to dearth of proper implementation initiatives. “Take the power sector for instance. While there is no shortage of power generation right now and the situation is set for improvement with the NHPC Hydel Project at ‘Teesta’ coming up in near future, the state of power distribution is in a shambles” a senior member of the SDF ministry said, referring to frequent power failures in the state, especially in Gangtok.

The government has already started exploring possibilities. According to a ministry insider, the mammoth bureaucracy that we see today in Sikkim is not entirely the government’s doing. “The problem which we are facing now were actually inherited from the erstwhile government of ‘Chogyal’ the Sikkimese King and also owing to the inaction of successive state governments,” he said.

According to Mr Chamling’s political advisor, “There were a considerable number of bureaucrats in King’s government, many of whom were accommodated in state government latter. Once Sikkim became a part of India, there were the usual inflow of civil servants from various administrative services in Sikkim. For instance, IPS officers outnumber the existing police stations.”

“We are working on a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) to phase out the ‘deadwoods’. We would offer a ‘Golden Handshake’ and a substantial amount will be paid to those willing to accept it,” he said. ■

