

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO HCM, FROM NEW DELHI, 26.07.2017

Shri Pawan Chamling, Chief Minister, called on the Hon'ble Prime Minister today and apprised him of the latest situations in Sikkim due to the agitations in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal, continuing for about 2 months now resulting in shortage of essential food and other commodities compounded further by landslides, heavy rainfall, hardships, inconveniences, uncertainties, risk to life and property of the people of Sikkim in their movement on National Highway (NH) 10 from Siliguri to Sikkim and vice-versa. In the last 33 years or so Sikkim registered 5000 vehicles have been vandalized and damaged apart from the loss of lives of 50 drivers and passengers during this period in movement on National Highway 10. NH 10 is the only lifeline for Sikkim without any other land route access to land locked Sikkim with neither rail or air link.

The State has suffered not less than Rs.60,000 crores financial loss due to these bandhs and disruptions on NH 10 during the aforementioned period. Presently, with the agitation continuing for more than a month situation seems to be aggravated by the unloading of Sikkim bound trucks at the FCI or Oil depots at New Jalpaiguri and Siliguri by miscreants there in the full knowledge and vicinity of the Bengal Police. Even ordinary passengers bound for Sikkim buying anything in Siliguri like vegetables and other items have been humiliated and their goods unloaded. In most of the cases the Sikkim registered trucks and smaller vehicles for carriage of goods have been made to load and thereafter unload. Our perishable goods like flowers and vegetables exported on the basis of their movement on NH 10 have already been ruined due to the restriction on movement of vehicles. Tourism in Sikkim has suffered huge loss due to cancellation of more than one lakh tourist reservations this season. The Chief Minister therefore requested the Hon'ble Prime Minister that the Central forces be deployed at New Jalpaiguri, Siliguri and other crucial points upto Rangpo, West Bengal border with Sikkim, to give protection to the life and property and food commodities meant for the people of Sikkim.

The Chief Minister emphasised that unless the problem of the Darjeeling Hills is addressed and permanent solution is provided by the Central Government, the problems of the people of Sikkim would continue. The Chief Minister requested for finding permanent solution to the agitation and demand of Darjeeling Hills in West Bengal so that the problems of Sikkim also comes to an end.

Further, the Assembly seats for the Limboo & Tamang Scheduled Tribes communities was another issue which still remained to be given its logical conclusion so that the long wait finds its final fulfilment. Similarly, he requested the Hon'ble Prime Minister to grant permission to 17th Karmapa, His Holiness Ogyen Thrinley Dorje to visit Sikkim at an early date, a matter of deep and serious anguish to the followers of Buddhism and for the general people of Sikkim. Finally, the Hon'ble Prime Minister was invited to visit Sikkim after the rainy season came to an end this year. The Hon'ble Prime Minister listened to all the problems and difficulties and issues to be resolved by the Government of India and gave positive assurances for early resolution of those. The Hon'ble Prime Minister agreed to visit Sikkim as invited by the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister also called on Union Hon'ble Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh and apprised him of the entire situation about the agitation in Darjeeling Hills and the resultant suffering of the people of Sikkim. The Chief Minister thanked the Hon'ble Union Minister for helping Sikkim at the time when West Bengal Government was not responsive to providing protection to Sikkim bound vehicles and passengers travelling on National Highway 10. The personal interest of Hon'ble Home Minister taken in solving the problems of Sikkim was profusely thanked by Chief Minister. Unless the demands and agitation of Darjeeling Hills was permanently solved the sufferance of the people of Sikkim would also never end. This pending demand and agitation in Darjeeling Hills and difficulties have been seen by Sikkim for the last 33 years. Similarly, the demand with regard to grant of Assembly seats to Limboo and Tamang Scheduled Tribes communities and permission to His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa and other pending demands of Sikkim were also discussed by the Hon'ble Chief Minister for early resolution.

The Chief Minister also met Dr. Jitendra Singh, Hon'ble Minister of Development of North Eastern Region at the Hon'ble Prime Minister's Office. He was also apprised about the existing Sikkim's situations and the agitation in the Darjeeling Hills continuing for so many days now which needed to be permanently

solved as the Bengal Government was not taking any interest in taking care of the difficulties of Sikkim and its people nor that to finding any solution to the long pending demand of Darjeeling Hills.

