

Pakyong, September 24 (IPR): The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the first airport in Sikkim and the 100th functional airport at Pakyong, East Sikkim.

Shri Narendra Modi unveiled the plaque of the Pakyong Greenfield Airport thereby declaring the airport open for operations which was followed by a book release '100 Airports of India' by AAI. Union Minister for Commerce & Industries and Civil Aviation/Shri Suresh Prabhu also presented a memento to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on the occasion. Shri Narendra Modi was accompanied by the Governor of Sikkim Shri Ganga Prasad, Chief Minister of Sikkim Shri Pawan Chamling, Union Minister for Commerce & Industries and Civil Aviation/Shri Suresh Prabhu, Minister of State for DoNER/ Dr. Jitendra Singh and Shri S.S Ahluwalia MoS GoI, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, Shri R.N. Choubey, Cabinet Ministers and representatives from BJP state unit.

After inaugurating the airport, Shri Narendra Modi along with the entourage headed to the St. Xaviers School playground at Pakyong where a massive gathering of Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, HODs and officials, students and the public of Sikkim had been waiting in anticipation of the Prime Minister.

The Chief Minister of Sikkim Shri Pawan Chamling welcomed the Prime Minister by offering of flower bouquet. Similarly, Shri D T Lepcha offered flower bouquets and welcomed the Chief Minister and the Union Ministers and the MoS's.

In his address to the Sikkimese people, Shri Narendra Modi vocalized his appreciation for Sikkim, the people and the bounty of Mother Nature that the state is blessed with. He stated that today is a historic day for the state as the long awaited Sikkimese dream of air connectivity has finally been realized and furthered his statement by adding that the country has hit a century of airports with Pakyong Airport. He voiced that the Pakyong Airport is part of the UDAN Scheme which will ensure that it is useful to the common man and that out of the 100 functional airports in the country, 35 have been operationalized in the last 4 years. "I dedicate Pakyong Airport to the nation and hand over its command to the Sikkimese people", he said stressing that the Pakyong Airport would significantly ease connectivity to and from Sikkim while also ushering in a new wave of economic growth and development for the state, esp. in the field of organic farming and the thriving tourism sector here. He

mentioned how he has been touring the North East Region for the past few days and that he has been fortunate enough to inaugurate infrastructures dedicated in the service of the nation. He asserted that emphasis is being given to both infrastructural and emotional connectivity with the north east region and established that he has personally visited the region several times to review developmental works. He also informed that Union Ministers regularly visit the region, the results of which are visible on the ground with enhanced air and rail connectivity and bigger and better roads and bridges. Shri Modi also stated that since setting foot in Sikkim last evening, the state's natural splendor and the majestic Mt. Khangchendzonga has inspired him to be a photographer. In conclusion, Shri Narendra Modi highlighted the young cricketer from Sikkim, Nilesh Lamichanay who became the first cricketer from the state to score a century in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri Pawan Chamling, while welcoming the Prime Minister and his entourage to the state, expressed deepest gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister on behalf of the Sikkimese people for the gift of air connectivity to the state. He also placed forward his congratulations to the Hon'ble Governor of Sikkim/ Shri Ganga Prasad for this achievement of the state. He stated that Sikkim has made a significant entry into the flourishing aviation sector of the country and that today's historic occasion has made the state and the country proud. He unequivocally reiterated the thankfulness and affections of the Sikkimese people towards the Prime Minister for this major boost and furthered that the whole Sikkimese people stand together as proud Indians due to the dynamic leadership of the Prime Minister. Shri Pawan Chamling brought to light the fact that despite being a land locked Himalayan state, Sikkim has excelled in its region and is free from conflict and strife. He affirmed that peace, progress and prosperity has been the only way forward for the state and that patriotism for the tricolor runs in the blood of the Sikkimese. He also took this opportunity to recapitulate on certain demands placed forward by the state government at the centre and expressed positivity that they would be addressed at the earliest.

Earlier, Shri Suresh Prabhu, Union Minister for Commerce & Industries and Civil Aviation delivered the welcome address wherein he stated that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has travelled all the way to Sikkim to gift the state a lifelong support in terms of air connectivity. He stated that this marks the beginning of a new era in the aviation history of

Sikkim and that it will boost connectivity, tourism and trade by linking this prodigious state to the rest of the country by air. He added that this will greatly decrease travel time which will benefit the tourists and the locals in the state.

The Pakyong Greenfield Airport has been built at a total area of 201 acres at an altitude of 4500ft at an estimated cost of Rs.605 crores and the terminal building is spread at an area of 3000 square meters

