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Inter-Department Cricket Tournament Quarter Finals commences



Pakyong, February 21: Chief Minister, Mr Prem Singh Tamang attended the first quarter finals of the Inter-Department Cricket Tournament, organised by Sikkim Cricket Association (SICA), in collaboration with Government of Sikkim, at Sikkim Cricket Ground, Rangpo, today.

The event also had the presence of Mr Sanjit Kharel MLA-cum-Advisor for Power

Department; Mr Phurba Wangdi Bhutia MD SBS; Mr Tika Subba President SICA; Mr Anil Raj Rai Secretary RDD along with representatives from various sports associations of the state, executive members of SICA, stakeholders and public.

The inter-Department Cricket Tournament was participated in by 28 Government departments and PSUs, which

aimed to promote team spirit and sportsmanship among Government employees while strengthening the culture of sports in the State.

Amongst the 28 Departments and PSUs, 18 teams were qualified after the league stage for the knockout match, and a total of 8 teams are participating in the quarter-finals of the tournament.

The first match was played between Commerce and Industries Department and SBS, wherein the former team won by 9 runs. The player of the match was accorded to Mr Sonam Tamang from Commerce and Industries Department.

Likewise, the second match was played between CMO and RDD, wherein the latter won by 5 wickets and the player of the match was titled to Mr Pranil Pradhan from RDD Department.

It may be mentioned that the winning team of the tournament will be awarded a cash prize of ₹10 lakh, while the runners-up will receive a cash prize of ₹5 lakh, sponsored by State Bank of Sikkim (SBS).

Chief Minister interacts with young Cricketers



Rangpo, February 21: Chief Minister Mr Prem Singh Tamang spent an afternoon with the young talents of the Sikkim Cricket Association at Mining Cricket Ground, creating moments that blended encouragement, mentorship, and genuine joy.

The gathering was more than just a luncheon, wherein the Chief Minister engaged in light-hearted conversations, listened to their aspirations, and applauded their dedication to the sport.

The young players, brimming with passion, spoke about their ambitions of making a

mark in the world of cricket. Their determination reflected the growing sporting spirit of Sikkim. The Chief Minister's warm presence and words of encouragement left the athletes visibly motivated and inspired.

The interaction stood as a powerful reminder that nurturing young talent requires not only infrastructure and opportunity, but also belief and personal support. For the aspiring cricketers, the day was one they will cherish, an affirmation that their hard work is seen, valued, and supported at the highest level.

NABARD releases State Focus Paper 2026-27

Gangtok, February 23: State Credit Seminar 2026-27 organised by Sikkim Regional Office of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), was held at a local hotel in Gangtok, today.

The inaugural session of the seminar was attended by Mr R Telang Chief Secretary and was accompanied by Mr MCP Pradhan Controller of Accounts & Secretary, Finance Department, Mr Jigme Dorjee Bhutia Commissioner-cum-Secretary Agriculture and Horticulture Departments, Mr Rodney Valentine Deputy General Manager Reserve Bank of India, Mr Alok Jain Deputy General Manager, Local Head Office, Kolkata, State Bank of India and Mr Ajay Kumar Sinha General Manager/Officer in Charge, NABARD Sikkim.

On the occasion, the State Focus Paper (SFP) 2026-27, an annual credit planning document prepared by NABARD for Sikkim was released.

The document estimated the aggregate credit potential for 2026-



27 assessed at ₹1701.42 crore, comprising ₹589.04 crore (34.62%) for agriculture and allied, ₹968.99 crore (56.95%) for MSME and ₹143.39 crore (8.43%) for other priority sectors.

Chief Secretary stressed on the critical role of credit in driving economic growth and human development.

He described the State Focus Paper as an important guiding document that would determine the credit outlay for the coming financial year and shape the state's developmental priorities.

Highlighting the broader

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Chhattisgarh press fraternity meets Chief Minister

Gangtok, February 20: A 12 member delegation from Chhattisgarh press fraternity led by Mr Manas P Sharma, Assistant Director PIB Gangtok, paid a courtesy visit to Chief Minister Mr Prem Singh Tamang at Mintokgang, today.

During the interaction, the Chief Minister shared detailed insights into various developmental initiatives and progressive policies undertaken by the State Government. He highlighted the State's serene ecology and its strategic importance as a border State sharing international boundaries with China, Nepal and Bhutan. Emphasising sustainable development, he spoke about the ongoing organic farming practices in Sikkim and their successful impact on the economy of the

State. He further underlined the importance of environmental conservation measures and extensive forest cover, which have collectively strengthened Sikkim's identity as a Green State of the Nation.

The Chief Minister further elaborated on key welfare measures and infrastructure development projects implemented across sectors including health, education, rural development and tourism. Special emphasis was laid on the successful implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes and flagship programmes of the Government of India in convergence with State initiatives.

The journalists engaged in a constructive exchange, raising queries regarding policy execution,

Contd. on page 4

Pearls of Wisdom

"Pursue what catches your heart, not what catches your eyes."

- Roy T. Bennett

Three-Day high-value Catfish training concludes under Pakyong District

Pakyong, February 21: Three-day training programme on 'Culture of High-Value Catfish (Singhi and Magur) for improvement of livelihood' under the North East Hill (NEH) Scheme (2025-2026) organised by ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Kolkata Centre, in collaboration with Department of Fisheries concluded at Namcheybong GPK Hall, Pakyong, today.

The training aims at equipping progressive fish farmers with scientific knowledge and technical skills in the breeding and rearing of Singhi and Magur, while promoting sustainable and improved aquaculture practices in the region.

The training held from February 19-21, equipped twenty progressive farmers of the district with scientific knowledge and technical skills in the breeding and rearing of high-value catfish varieties, Singhi and Magur. As part of the initiative, each participating farmer was supported with 500 Singhi fingerlings and 100 kg of feed to strengthen their entrepreneurial journey in aquaculture.

The programme was attended by Mr Bum Tshering Yonzon OSD, IT Department as the chief guest, in the presence of Mr BP Sharma Joint Director, Education Department; District Fisheries Development Officer, Fisheries Department and ATM Rhenock.

During the programme, OSD, IT Department emphasised on the Chief Minister's vision of uplifting farmers through various schemes and initiatives aimed at empowering them and creating opportunities to be self-reliant. He appreciated the initiative undertaken by the department for implementing such programmes to encourage progressive farmers in the aquaculture sector.

He stated that the production of high-value fish would not only increase the incomes of the farmers but also contribute to the state's economy. He further assured to provide necessary assistance in strengthening the entrepreneurial journey of the farmers and urged to disseminate the information for more participation in the industry.

Furthermore, Ms Gauri Mukhia District Fisheries Development Officer highlighted the high nutritional and market value of Singhi, underlining its potential as a sustainable source of income generation. She informed that the farmers would also be provided with exposure visits to gain practical insights into fish breeding and culture practices in the coming days and the institute would provide handholding support of three years to guide them in their journey.

She advised the farmers to use high-quality feed to enhance productivity and improve the market value of their produce.

Additionally, she

encouraged the farmers to work diligently, highlighting that the State Government annually honours fish farmers in recognition of their performance and dedication to the sector, further adding that the department has proposed various provisions under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) 2.0 to strengthen the fisheries sector and improve the livelihoods of the farmers.

Prior to it, Dr Dhalongsaih Reang Scientist from the ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education, Kolkata Centre presented a brief overview of the production cycle of stinging Catfish (Singhi). He elaborated on seed production, broodstock management, hatchling rearing, feeding schedules, and best practices in water and environmental management for larvae and fry growth.

He also discussed site selection, pond preparation, feeding management, harvesting techniques, and common diseases affecting Singhi such as swim bladder disorder, saprolegniosis, red spot disease, dropsy, and bacillary necrosis, along with preventive measures.

During the programme, a calendar showcasing native fish species of Sikkim's pristine rivers was also unveiled, followed by the distribution of certificates to the participants.

The event concluded with an interactive feedback session.

District-Level coordination meeting on water crisis and forest fire preparedness convened

Namchi, February 19: A district-level coordination meeting on the emerging water crisis and preparedness against forest fire incidents was convened at DAC, Namchi, today.

The meeting was held in compliance with the directive of the Chief Secretary to deliberate on the shortage of drinking water and the increasing instances of wild/forest fires in Namchi District.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the current status of drinking water availability across the district, identification of vulnerable areas facing acute shortages, and measures to ensure uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water. The Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department briefed on contingency plans, including deployment of water tankers, restoration of defunct sources, and strengthening of supply lines under the Jal Jeevan Mission to ensure long-term sustainability of drinking water resources.

Special emphasis was laid on avoiding any confusion or monopoly over privately or

community-owned water sources. It was directed concerned departments to ensure transparent and equitable distribution of water, with proper coordination among line departments and local authorities. Particular concern was expressed regarding the need to ensure 24-hour availability of water at the District Hospital, Namchi. The PHE Department was instructed to address any supply-related issues through thoughtful planning and timely implementation so that essential services remain uninterrupted.

The meeting also deliberated extensively on the rising incidents of wild fires in fire-prone areas of the district. Departments were directed to undertake controlled assessments of vulnerable zones, prepare area-specific action plans, and strengthen early warning mechanisms. Emphasis was laid on timely prevention, immediate reporting of incidents, and coordinated response to prevent any future mishaps.

Mr Subhash Ghimirey ADC (Hq) stressed on the importance of inter-

departmental coordination, timely information sharing and proactive preventive measures to mitigate the dual challenges of water scarcity and forest fires, especially during the dry season. Directions were issued to all concerned officers to remain alert, conduct field-level assessments, and ensure swift action in case of any exigency.

Emphasising a strong preventive and sensitization approach, it was further directed all Departments to intensify public awareness campaigns at the Gram Panchayat and ward levels, with special focus on educating citizens about the judicious use of water, prevention of wastage, and the dangers of deliberate or accidental forest fires. Departments were also instructed to actively engage local communities, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Self-Help Groups, and youth volunteers in spreading awareness and ensuring vigilance.

The meeting was attended by SDMs Namchi and Ravangla, BDOs Ravangla, Sikkim and Temi, Divisional Engineer (PHE) and representatives from various line departments.

District level training conducted in preparation for Census 2027

Pakyong, February 20: A meeting-cum-training programme in preparation for Census 2027 was held at the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Pakyong, today.

The programme was attended by Mr Karma R Bonpo Director, Directorate of Census Operations Sikkim; Mr Rohan Agawane DC Pakyong; Mr Pulkit ADC Pakyong; Mr Sabindra Rai ADC (Hq) Pakyong; Mr Sangay Gyatso Bhutia ADC (Dev) Pakyong; SDM (Hq); SDM Pakyong; SDM Rongli; DFO (T); Joint Director, DISME; Assistant Director of Census Operations, Sikkim along with MEO, Rangpo; BDOs and concerned officers from various departments.

Director, Directorate of Census Operations, Sikkim, provided an overview of Census 2027. He elaborated on its objectives, significance, methodology and responsibilities of key stakeholders involved in the nationwide exercise. He stated that the meeting was aimed at sensitising officers about the importance of the Census and ensuring coordinated efforts for its smooth implementation.

He informed that the upcoming Census is being conducted after a gap of sixteen years, with the previous Census having been held in 2011. Highlighting the significance of this interval, he noted that the Census is a collaborative exercise carried out with the support of State Governments and various agencies, and that the data generated serves as a vital resource for policy formulation and developmental planning at both the Central and State levels.

The Director also emphasised the need for officials to familiarise themselves with the provisions of the Census Act, 1948, the Census Rules, 1990, and other relevant guidelines governing Census operations. He underscored the importance of understanding the procedures related to self-enumeration under the House Listing Operation (HLO) and urged officers to carry out their duties with utmost sincerity and responsibility.

He further informed that the Census of India will be conducted in two phases. Phase I, scheduled for 2026, will consist of the House Listing and Housing Census, focusing on housing conditions and household amenities. In Sikkim, Phase I is proposed to be carried out from April 16 to May 15, 2026. Phase II, to be undertaken in 2027.

Additionally, he stated that Census 2027 will mark India's first fully digital Census. The exercise will utilise digital tools, including GPS tagging, offline data collection in low connectivity areas, cloud-based data uploading, and the Census Management and Monitoring

System (CMMS) for near real-time supervision and monitoring.

During the technical session, Assistant Director of Census Operations, Sikkim, delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation explaining the roles and responsibilities of District Charge Level Officers. He provided an overview of the Census framework and underscored its significance as a major national initiative incorporating digital innovation.

He elaborated on the core concepts, definitions, and operational procedures of the Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO), which constitutes the first phase of Census 2027. The session covered the methodology of data collection, preparation of layout maps, building and census house numbering, and the systematic approach required to ensure complete coverage. Detailed explanations were provided on key census terms such as Houselisting Block, Premises, Building, Census House, Household, Head of Household, and persons to be covered during enumeration.

Participants were also briefed on the schedule of questions to be canvassed during the HLO, including details regarding building usage, construction materials, number of rooms, ownership status, and availability of basic amenities such as drinking water and electricity.

The session further outlined the communication strategy to be adopted at the local level, involving coordinated awareness campaigns across National, State and District platforms. Outreach efforts will utilise print and electronic media, digital platforms, outdoor publicity and grassroots engagement activities. Measures to address misinformation through timely and targeted communication were also discussed.

Additionally, Mr Rohitish Bhardwaj Statistical Investigator delivered a presentation on the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS), explaining its objectives, functional modules, user hierarchy and its application in HLO management. The system's user friendly interface and monitoring features were demonstrated to familiarise officers with its operational aspects.

A practical session on self enumeration under the HLO was also conducted to provide hands-on exposure to the digital process.

The programme concluded with an interactive discussion, during which queries were clarified to strengthen coordination and preparedness for the effective conduct of Census 2027.

**KEEP SIKKIM
CLEAN & GREEN**

**Government of Sikkim
Roads & Bridges Department
Nirman Bhawan, Gangtok.**

No.139/GOS/R&B/25-26/163/P

Date: 21/2/26

INVITATION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

On behalf of the Governor of Sikkim, the Principal Chief Engineer, Roads & Bridges Department, Government of Sikkim invites Expression of Interest (EOI) along with sealed financial bids from amongst the **Class I-AA Contractors empanelled with the Roads & Bridges Department, Government of Sikkim** for the work, "Improvement of riding quality of various roads in the State of Sikkim using Standard Mastic Asphalt Bitumen including maintenance for 7 years".

The details of work are as under: -

Sl No	Name of Work	Length of Roads (in KM)	Bid Value (In Crores)	EMD @ 2.5% (In Crores) in favor of Principal Chief Engineer, R&B Dept.	Cost of Bid documents in the form of Bank Receipt (In Lakhs)	Completion Time
1	Improvement of riding quality of various roads in the State of Sikkim using standard Mastic Asphalt Bitumen including maintenance for 7 years.	485.43 KM	₹312.25	₹7.81	₹.20.00	24 months

The EOI for the above work along with the financial offer and the duly filled up BoQ is to be submitted to the office of the undersigned according to the following time schedule: -

Sl. No.	Particulars	Date	Time
1	Date of issue of Bid Documents, BoQ and Bid Form on submission of Bank receipt and 2.5% EMD.	02/03/2026	11:00 am to 3:00 pm
2	Submission of Financial bids and BoQ to the Authority	05/03/2026	11:00 am to 3:00 pm
3	Opening of Financial Bids	06/03/2026	11:30 am

(B.K. Tamang)
Principal Chief Engineer
Roads & Bridges Department
(24)

**Central Workshop & Stores
Sikkim Nationalized Transport Division
Transport Department
Government of Sikkim
Jalipool, Ranipool**

MEMO NO: 444/SNT/JPL/CS

DATED: 24/02/2026

POSTPONEMENT OF TENDER

Reference: Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) for the supply of spares, miscellaneous hardware items, and tools for Financial Years 2026-27 & 2027-28 (Memo No: 432/SNT/JPL/CS dated 03/02/2026)).

In reference to the Notice Inviting Tender advertised in the following newspapers:

- Sikkim Herald (Vol. 69, No. 06, dated 06/02/2026)
- Summit Times (Vol. 13, Issue 33, dated 04/02/2026)
- Hamro Prajashakti (dated 04/02/2026)

This is to inform all prospective bidders that the tender opening/submission scheduled to take place on **4th March 2026** has been **postponed**.

Revised Schedule:

The tender will now be held on **10th March 2026**. The timing and venue for the submission and opening of bids remain the same as originally advertised.

All other terms and conditions of the tender remain unchanged.

**Additional Chief Engineer (M/S)
Central Stores/Workshop
SNT Division, Transport
Department
Govt. of Sikkim
(25)**

**Before the Learned Oath Commissioner, at Jorethang, Namchi District Sikkim
AFFIDAVIT**

I, **ANJANA CHETTRI**, aged about 22 years, daughter of **Shri Prakash Chettri**, resident of Lower Samdur 6th Mile Gangtok, Sikkim, P.S. Gangtok, District Gangtok Sikkim.

1. That I am the biological daughter of **Shri Prakash Chettri**.

2. That my fathers name has been recorded as **Prakash Chettri** in my other relevant documents including in my Unique identification Card bearing Aadhar No. 9962 3239 8718 and also in my entire academic records including in my Marks Statement cum Certificate bearing Roll no. 16160239 passed out from School 37248 Government Senior Secondary School. Lingdok Sikkim issued by Central Board of Secondary Education, Secondary School Examination 2020 and also in my Birth Certificate bearing Registration No. c-6015/2003, dated 17.12.2003 issued by Registrar Births and Deaths Revenue Block Gangtok, District Gangtok Sikkim.

3. That my fathers name has been recorded as **Prakash Kumar Chettri** in my Certificate of Identification Card bearing Serial No. 2609/DC/E dated 7.12.1993 under Block issued by District Collector, East District Gangtok.

4. That this affidavit has been sworn by me to declare that **Prakash Chettri** and **Prakash Kumar Chettri** are the names belonging to one and the same person i.e. myself and further declare that I am the natural daughter of **Shri Prakash Chettri**.

VERIFICATION

I, do hereby declare that the statements made in the above paragraphs 1 to 4 are true to the best of my personal knowledge. Sworn and signed this affidavit on this the 28th day of August, 2025 at Jorethang, Namchi District Sikkim.

Identified by:
Bina Chettri

Deponent

**Before the Sub Divisional Magistrate, Gangtok District,
Sikkim
AFFIDAVIT**

I, **Krishna Bahadur Pradhan**, son of Late Purna Lall Pradhan, resident of Upper Singhik under P.O and P.S. Mangan, District-Mangan of Sikkim and presently residing at Lumsay under P.O Samdur and P.S sadar Gangtok, do hereby solemnly affirm and state on oath as follows:

1. That I am a permanent resident of Sikkim, holding Certificate of Identification (COI) bearing serial number 1213 issued by the Office of the District Collector, Gangtok

2. That in my Certificate of Identification (COI) and various other official documents, my name has been recorded as **Krishna Bahadur Pradhan**.

3. That i am the father of **Barun Pradhan**, whose birth was registered with the Office of the Chief Registrar of Births and Deaths, Government of Sikkim.

4. That in the Birth Certificate of my son, Barun Pradhan, my name has been recorded as **Krishna Pradhan**.

5. That I state that **Krishna Bahadur Pradhan** (as recorded in my COI) and **Krishna Pradhan** (as recorded in my son's Birth Certificate) are the names of one and the same person, i.e., myself..

6. That I am executing this affidavit to be produced before the concerned authorities for the purpose of establishing my identity and for any other official requirements.

DEPONENT

VERIFICATION

I, Krishna Bahadur Pradhan, the deponent before-named, do hereby verify and state that the contents of the foregoing affidavit in paragraph 1-6 are true to best of my knowledge and belief. Nothing in material has been concealed or suppressed there from

Verified and sworn to this Affidavit at Gangtok on this 12th day of February 2026.

DEPONENT

**Before the Sub Divisional Magistrate of Gangtok, Sikkim
AFFIDAVIT**

I, **Krishna Bahadur Pradhan**, aged about 44 years, son of Late Purna Lall Pradhan, Hindu by faith resident of Upper Singhik under P. and P.S. Mangan, District Mangan of Sikkim and presently residing at Lumsay under P.O. Samand P.S. Sadr Gangtok and District Gangtok do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as follows:

1. That I am natural and legal son of **Purna Lall Pradhan @Purna Lal Pradhan @Purna Kumar Pradhan** and bonafide resident of above-mentioned address.

2 That my father's name "**Purna Lall Pradhan**" which has been recorded in his **Old Sikkim Subject** bearing Register Sl. No. 473, Volume No. I under Block Lingdok issued by Secretary, Land Revenue Department, Government of Sikkim and same has been recorded in other relevant documents "**my Certificate of Identification, Electoral Identity Card etc.**

3. That in the **Landed Parcha** of my father bearing Khatiyon No. 82, Plot No. 436 total measure & Arta in Hector 3440 situated at Lingdok Block, Elakha Lingdek, District Revenue Circle Gangtok, Sikkim wherein my father's name has been recoded as "**Purna Kumar Pradhan**"

4. That however in **Aadhaar Card** bearing. No. 6751 0408 6761 issued by Unique Identification Authority of India wherein the column of father's name his spelling of middle name has been recorded "**Purna Lal Pradhan**"

5. That hence this affidavit is made on oath and to declare that the person by the all names i.e. "**Purna Lall Pradhan**", "**Purna Lal Pradhan**" and "**Purna Kamar Pradhan**" denotes and refer to the one phd the same person Le my father (Since Deceased).

6 That this Affidavit is made bonafide.

DEPONENT

VERIFICATION

I, **Krishna Bahadur Pradhan**, the deponent before-named, do hereby verify and state that the contents of the foregoing affidavit in paragraphs 1 to 6 are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Nothing in material has been concealed or suppressed there from.

Verified and sworn to this Affidavit at Gangtok, Sikkim on this the 7th day of February 2026.

DEPONENT



Delegation of film producers and directors from Nepal call on Chairperson IPR Department

Gangtok, February 20: A delegation of film producers and directors from Nepal called on Mr Ashit Rai, Chairperson Information and Public Relations Department, at his office in Soochna Bhawan, today.

The meeting was attended by Mr Tashi Tshering Bhutia, Chairperson Sikkim Film Production Board, Mr Shekhar Sewa Chairperson Sikkim Scheduled Caste Welfare Board and others.

The interaction focused on

exploring avenues for collaboration in the film sector and strengthening cross-border cultural engagement. Discussions centered on developing and promoting Sikkim as a film production-friendly destination by showcasing its scenic locations, supportive administrative framework, and potential to facilitate both domestic and international film projects. The participants also deliberated on initiatives to enhance institutional cooperation, streamline filming

procedures, and create opportunities for local talent and technical professionals.

The interaction concluded with a shared commitment to fostering meaningful partnerships and strengthening Sikkim's position as an emerging hub for film production and cultural exchange.

The meeting was also attended by Mr Gautam Tiwari, Suryabangshi writer and Mr Yam Bdr Tiwari, social worker along with others.

PM Vishwakarma Mela organised

Gangtok, February 19: The inaugural event of the two-day PM Vishwakarma Mela is being organised by MSME Development and Facilitation Office, Ministry of MSME, Government of India from February 19-20, 2026 at MG Marg, Gangtok.

The programme was attended by Mr Padam Sharma, Chairperson, Farmer Welfare Board as the chief guest.

Chairperson, Farmer Welfare Board highlighted the significance of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme as an initiative designed by the Government of India, to empower farmers and traditional artisans by linking their skills with modern market platforms. He noted that while Sikkim was once self-reliant in food production, the gradual lack of structured market access over time contributed to the decline of traditional skills and agricultural practices. He stated that the creation of platforms by departments such as the MSME Development and Facilitation Office has enabled local products and indigenous crafts to reach online and global markets.

Emphasising the need to move from 'soil to sale', he underscored the importance of understanding both production and market dynamics to ensure fair value for local produce, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable growth in the State's agricultural ecosystem.

Earlier, Mr Nirmal Chowdhury, Assistant Director,

Grade I, MSME-DFO, highlighted the event as a platform to empower local craftspeople by offering them a high-visibility venue to display their products, following similar initiatives held previously in the region.

Dr Raj Lama, President, Seed Cell, expressed his gratitude to the MSME Development and Facilitation Office for creating a platform where even small farmers from villages and artisans from the far flung corners of Sikkim can come to Gangtok and showcase their products free of cost. He mentioned that the objective of the scheme is to help artisans and small traders enhance their skills so that they can better market their products and increase their sources of income.

Mr Gopal Lama, AGM, State Bank of India and SLBC, emphasised that under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, artisans' skills are linked with the banking system through structured institutional support. He informed that the beneficiaries are provided training by empanelled agencies, followed by certification and a daily stipend of ₹500/- to support their participation and travel expenses. Post-training, they are onboarded onto the official portal and also receive a non-refundable incentive of ₹50,000/- to purchase a full toolkit.

The initiative aims to help local artisans enhance production, access the right market platforms to showcase their products, and

eventually grow as independent entrepreneurs through financial linkage and institutional backing. Under this scheme, traditional trades rooted in the traditional mentor, apprentice system, such as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, potters and others across 18 identified trades, are formally recognised and issued ID cards. Beneficiaries are then provided with five days of basic training, after which they become eligible to avail institutional credit.

Banks play a crucial role in this process by facilitating collateral free loans of up to ₹3 lakh at a subsidised interest rate of 5 percent, enabling artisans to strengthen their livelihoods and scale their traditional enterprises.

Ms Aita Maya Artisan, shared her experience that with the permission and support of the concerned authorities, she was able to set up her stall at the exhibition, where she showcased a range of self made products including handwoven dolls, cloth-based items and handmade fabric bags.

Also present were Mr Suresh Cintury Advisor GMC, Mr Sisum Wangchuk Bhutia ADC Gangtok, Mr Santosh Meena Director KVIC Gangtok, Mr Akshay Murkute AD Grade I MSME, Mr Rodney C Valentine DGM Reserve Bank of India and Ms Nisha Rani Assistant Director, MSME.

that proper upkeep and management of tourism infrastructure can significantly enhance employment opportunities for the local population. She called upon stakeholders and line departments to adopt a mission-mode approach, underscoring the importance of teamwork and coordinated efforts to achieve sustainable tourism development. She further emphasised that project approvals must be guided by necessity and long-term viability.

Also present were Mr Samdup Tshering Bhutia Area MLA, Mr Ballaram Adhikari Zilla Adhyaksha, Gangtok District, Mr Keshab Nepal OSD to MLA Tumin-Lingee, Mr Pratap Gautam, Chief Engineer, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, Panchayats, and officials from various line departments.

Press Conference held for State's First 3x3 Basketball event

Gangtok, February 19: A press conference was held to announce Sikkim's first professional 3x3 basketball tournament and unveil its official logo at a local hotel in Gangtok, today. The event is being organised under the patronage of Mr Aditya Golay, MLA Soreng-Chakung Constituency in association with the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gangtok District Police, Freedom Rehabilitation Facility and Ravens Basketball Club.

The tournament is being conducted as a youth engagement initiative under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA).

Mr Aditya Golay MLA thanked the organisers and dignitaries present including Mr Delay Namgyal Barfungpa MLA Gangtok, Ms Pamin Lepcha MLA Gnathang-Machong, Mr Erung Tenzing Lepcha MLA Rinchenpong and Mr Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha Additional Political Secretary to the Chief Minister. He acknowledged the support of the District Administration, Sikkim Police (Gangtok District), Freedom Rehabilitation Facility and Ravens Basketball Club.

MLA Mr Aditya Golay commended Mr Paljor Rilon Wangdi, Captain of Ravens Basketball Club, for leading the initiative. He stated that the 3x3 format marks a progressive shift from traditional 5x5 basketball and provides a strong platform to engage youth and combat substance abuse. He also recognised the contribution of the Basketball Association of Sikkim in promoting basketball in the State and thanked Mr Raju Basnet, Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Department along with the Sports and Youth Affairs Department for their cooperation. He reaffirmed his full support for the tournament.

Mr Delay Namgyal Barfungpa MLA Gangtok congratulated the organisers and said such sporting initiatives promote a healthy lifestyle and support the vision of a drug-free Sikkim.

Providing technical details, Mr Paljor Rilon Wangdi informed that the FIBA-endorsed tournament will be held at Paljor Stadium Indoor Court from March 27-29, 2026. The event will be conducted to international standards under the guidance of Technical Director and Meghalaya State Basketball Coach Mr Andrew

Suting, in coordination with Tournament Director Ms Tenzin C Tashi and Mr Karma Chewang Nima of Freedom Rehabilitation Facility.

Officials from the Basketball Federation of India will officiate the matches, led by FIBA-certified referee Mr Mohan Kumar. Vector X has been named the official ball sponsor, offering a 45 percent discount to local teams, while Sportscast India will manage live streaming.

He stated that the tournament will feature 32 men's and 16 women's teams from across India, Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim. The prize money includes ₹2 lakh and ₹1 lakh for men's winners and runners-up, and ₹1 lakh and ₹50,000/- for the women's category. The 3x3 format will be played on a half court for 10 minutes or until a team scores 21 points. Arrangements including a medical team, physiotherapist, ambulance services, digital infrastructure, DJ and food stalls have been ensured.

Mr Sisum Wangchuk Bhutia ADC Gangtok highlighted that NMBA is a flagship programme of the Government of India aimed at combating drug abuse, particularly among youth and women. He stated that promoting sports under NMBA helps build discipline, positive role models and community awareness.

He further noted that the State Government under the leadership of the Chief Minister, continues to strengthen sports infrastructure through initiatives such as the Tarundeep Rai Archery Academy, Jasal Pradhan Boxing Academy and Reshithang Sports Complex. He appealed to citizens to actively participate in NMBA activities and support rehabilitation efforts.

Mr Karma Chewang Nima of Freedom Rehabilitation Facility spoke on the role of sports in recovery and rehabilitation, noting that 12 to 13 rehabilitation centres in Sikkim integrate sports into their programmes. He emphasised that competitive platforms like basketball can effectively reinforce anti-drug awareness among youth.

The programme concluded with the unveiling of the official logo of the 3x3 basketball tournament followed by an interactive session with the media.

Contd. from front page

Chhattisgarh press...

monitoring mechanisms and grassroots outreach of various schemes, to which the Chief Minister responded with comprehensive clarifications and examples from field-level implementation.

As a mark of mutual respect and goodwill, the Chhattisgarh delegation presented a commemorative token to the Chief Minister. The visiting members were also presented with souvenirs and offered traditional khadas as tokens of respect and hospitality.

Also present were Press Secretary to the Chief Minister, Additional Director IPRD.

ITS conducts extensive field visit

Gangtok, February 19: A team from the Institute for Transforming Sikkim (ITS), led by Mr Chandra Prasad Sharma, Vice Chairman along with Ms Namrata Thapa and Dr Neeraj Adhikari, Members conducted an extensive field visit to several non-operational and inactive tourist destinations under Tumin-Lingee Constituency, today.

The ITS team inspected Hotel Teesta Valley at Makha, Tourist Facilitation Centre at Suntaley, Saptakanya Falls near Kau Khola, Eco-Organic Tourist Village at Chowridara, Tourist Facilitation Centre at Lingee, Tourist Facilitation Centre at Leesong Ney, Paragliding and Archery Infrastructure at Nalipong Dara, Way-Side Amenity at Kokaley, and Jurassic Park at Samdong Kamble.

The team was accompanied

by Mr Samdup Tshering Bhutia Area MLA Tumin-Lingee. The team held interactive sessions with Panchayats and local stakeholders to deliberate on strategies for revival, maintenance, and optimal utilisation of these tourism assets.

Mr Chandra Prasad Sharma Vice Chairman emphasised the need for timely maintenance and preservation of tourism infrastructure. He reiterated that ITS remains committed to transforming non-operational and inactive assets into sustainable and revenue-generating ventures. Highlighting a need-based development approach, he assured that projects would be prioritised based on ground realities and practical requirements. He also urged citizens to work collectively for the overall progress of the constituency and the State.

Ms Namrata Thapa stressed

DC Namchi chairs DTFI and TB Forum meetings

Namchi, February 21: Ms Anupa Tamling DC Namchi chaired meetings on DTFI (District Task Force Immunization) and TB (Tuberculosis) Forum, with the committee members at the chamber of District Collector, DAC Namchi, today.

During the meeting, DRCHO, Dr B K Chauhan, briefly highlighted the performance of the district up to the 3rd quarter 2025-26, where he mentioned that 66.65% ANC registrations, out of which 92% were registered during the 1st trimester and further mentioned that 793 (98.88%) institutional deliveries, with at birth sex ratio of 1015:1000, were recorded during the 3rd quarter.

Further, the DRCHO highlighted that 99% BCG and 88% Hepatitis B-0 vaccinations have been achieved in the process of Child Immunisation. Accordingly, he also highlighted that the overall immunisation coverage was recorded at 78%, with achievement in other vaccinations at par with the targets and also mentioned that zero maternal death was recorded in the district during the 3rd quarter.

In her presentation, CNO, Ms Bijay Laxmi Rai, presented the upcoming programmes, mainly introduction of HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) Vaccination. She informed that HPV vaccination shall be carried out through the mode of campaign for a tenure of 3 months and shall later be incorporated with routine Immunisation programmes. She stated that the age group for the vaccination, to prevent cervical cancer is 14 years (girls). She also highlighted the vaccination strategies and pre campaign preparedness of the district, further informing that the vaccination campaign shall be rolled out as per the directives of the state and the central government. Lastly, the CNO also apprised about the upcoming 1st round of NDD (National Deworming Day), scheduled on 9th March 2026 and the Mop-up day on 16th March 2026.

DTO, Dr Pratik Rasaily, gave a brief presentation on the TB elimination targets within the district, highlighting that the district witnessed 30% reduction in the TB cases as compared to the

previous case load of 2015, and also mentioned that the district has recorded a significant decrease in the Pulmonary TB cases.

Further, the DTO stated that free diagnosis for identification of tuberculosis is carried out within the district, with CBNAAT testing at District Hospital Namchi and CHC Jorethang, TRUENATT testing at Temi and Melli PHCs and sputum microscopy being carried out in all CHCs & PHCs. He further mentioned that free treatment and care are provided to all the patients of DSTB and DRTB, with provision of Ancillary drugs and periodical testings. Lastly, the DTO also briefed about the TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (TBMBA) and the procedures followed up within the initiative for the identification and the treatment process for tuberculosis.

The meeting also had the presence of CMO (Namchi) Dr Junita Yonzon, CEO (Education) Mr GP Sharma, CDPO (W C S C & D W D), MO/IC (Yangang), MO/IC (Temi), MO/IC (Namthang), Paediatrician (DHN), DPHNO (DHN) and Health Educator (DHN).

Minister Pintso Namgyal Lepcha distributes forest fire tools and equipment

Gangtok, February 19: Mr Pintso Namgyal Lepcha Minister for Forest and Environment Department distributed forest fire tools and equipment to Territorial Divisions at Forest Secretariat, Gangtok, today.

Organised by Forest and Environment Department as a part of the State's ongoing efforts to strengthen forest fire prevention and emergency response mechanisms.

The distribution was carried out under the Annual Plan of Operation of the Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FFPMS) for the year 2025-26, aimed at enhancing fire safety measures and improving the operational preparedness of frontline forest personnel.

The equipment included rechargeable LED torch lights, fire balls, LED headlights, fire-proof gloves, fire beaters, fire racks, heavy knives (Bamfok), fire-retardant field jackets, reflector t-shirts, chainsaws, fire blowers, half-face respirator masks, and sickles (Katchya). The provision of these tools is expected to significantly augment field-level capacity for early detection, containment, and control of forest fires.

The Minister highlighted the importance of strengthening field operations and improving response efficiency during forest fire incidents. He stated that the current phase of distribution focuses on providing light and quick-access equipment to enhance firefighting capabilities and operational mobility. He elaborated on the practical utility of the tools and noted that the Department has incorporated lessons learned from past field experiences to further improve ground-level response mechanisms.

He observed that as a precautionary measure, such distributions are carried out regularly to address the challenges faced by field staff while dousing forest fires, particularly in difficult terrain. He informed that this year special emphasis has been placed on the distribution of fire balls, which are especially useful in Sikkim where several forest areas face accessibility constraints.

Emphasising the challenges faced by frontline personnel, the Minister acknowledged that combating forest fires is a demanding task, particularly under difficult terrain and environmental conditions. Referring to the State's ecological significance, he noted that nearly 82 percent of Sikkim's geographical area is covered by

forests and expressed pride that, owing to the proactive efforts of the Department, forest cover in the State continues to increase while incidents of forest fires have been reduced to the extent possible. He further informed that due to lack of rainfall, the State is currently experiencing a prolonged dry season, increasing the risk of forest fire incidents.

Regarding this, the Minister appealed to the public to exercise caution while using fire and adopt necessary preventive measures to ensure that forest fires do not occur due to negligence. He also informed that the Department is undertaking measures to ensure safe human-wildlife interaction through the use of AI-enabled cameras and drones for monitoring and management. He also urged citizens to hand over any peacock found or caught to the Forest and Environment Department for safe rescue, release, and rehabilitation. He further appealed the public to refrain from feeding wild animals, stating that such practices create dependency and adversely affect their natural ability to source food from the wild. In this regard, he informed that the Department has planted various wild fruit species in forest areas to support animals in their natural habitat.

Dr Pradeep Kumar, PCCF-cum-Principal Secretary, Forest and Environment Department, highlighted that the State is leveraging advanced technologies to enhance forest fire management. He informed that satellite-based fire detection systems are being utilised for quick response, enabling field teams to receive alerts immediately, following which Quick Response Teams (QRTs) are mobilised without delay.

He further stated that predictive fire modeling devised by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune, is being used to anticipate fire-prone areas and strengthen preparedness measures. Assuring that high-end technology is being deployed to safeguard forest resources, he also emphasised the adoption of adaptive learning approaches and user-friendly equipment to ensure ease of use for frontline personnel in field conditions.

Dr P Senthil Kumar Additional Chief Conservator of Forest, Mr Karma Legshey CCF Territorial, Mr Uday Gurung CCF Wildlife, officers of the Forest and Environment Department, Territorial Divisions, and field functionaries were present during the programme.

DC Gyalshing chairs first preparatory meeting for Annual Bumchu Festival

Gyalshing, February 21: The first preparatory meeting for the annual holy festival of Bumchu at Tashiding Monastery was convened today at the Conference Hall of the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gyalshing.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Tenzing D Denzongpa District Collector Gyalshing, and was attended by Mr Birendra Gurung Zilla Member; Mr Namgay Bhutia CMO Gyalshing; Mr Bikash Pradhan, SE (Roads & Bridges); Mr CS Limboo SDM Yuskam; Ms Laden Bhutia Joint Director Cooperation Department; Mr Uttam Basnet, DE (Roads & Bridges); Mr Kalzang T Bhutia DE (Power); Mr Sonam G Bhutia Panchayat President, Mr RS Bhutia Member of the Gumpa Committee; and officers from Fire and Emergency Services, Excise, Urban Development, Tourism, and other line departments.

The meeting focused on essential preparations for the

smooth conduct of the festival, with specific responsibilities allocated to concerned departments and the organising committee.

Addressing the house, the District Collector, Gyalshing assured full administrative support and briefed participants on the significance of the Bhumchu Ceremony, noting the large numbers of devotees each year. He highlighted priority areas requiring departmental intervention and outlined key issues to be addressed for the convenience and safety of devotees.

With regard to security and law enforcement, discussions were held on the deployment of forces to manage traffic congestion, secure critical areas, and maintain law and order during the festival. Emphasis was also laid on cleanliness and hygiene.

Stressing sustainability, the District Collector directed officers, Zilla Panchayats and Gram

Panchayats to sensitise stall operators on hygiene, cleanliness, and adherence to a zero-waste policy. The use and sale of plastic items within the festival premises will be strictly prohibited. The Roads, PHE, and Power Departments were instructed to extend full cooperation and necessary support.

The meeting also deliberated on arrangements for light installations, Tents, drinking water and garbage disposal during and after the festival. A comprehensive garbage management plan was discussed to ensure proper waste collection and disposal, minimising environmental impact and maintaining cleanliness throughout the celebrations.

As part of the preparatory measures, a joint spot verification and a follow-up meeting has been scheduled on February 26.

Press Release from Labour Department

Gangtok, February 21: The Labour Department has initiated Training and Orientation Programme for its Officers and members of the staff to be held in the afternoon of every Saturday. This aims at bridging the performance gap between the current performance level and expected performance level among the officers and employees.

The Labour Department has also expeditiously been undertaking onboarding the officers and employees in the iGOT Karmayogi platform for undertaking different online trainings.

During the MoU signing programme with Capacity Building Commission on February 11, 2026, the Chief Secretary mentioned about idea of undertaking such

training every afternoon of Saturday. On this line, though Karmayogi is an online platform, which has equally been undertaken by Labour Department, the Department has also initiated training programme on physical mode every Saturday in the second half. Officers from within the Labour Department will be imparting training to the Officers and Staff members on labour related laws, enforcement matters, office procedures, noting, drafting, filing system and other soft skills like effective communication. If need be, experts from Administrative Training Institute and other fields will also be invited to impart training.

Mr Bhim Thatal Secretary undertook training sessions on Effective Communication Skills

and the Right to Information Act, 2005. The programme was attended by Labour Commissioner, Additional Labour Commissioners, Deputy Labour Commissioners, Assistant Labour Commissioners, Labour Inspectors, and subordinate staff members.

Mr Bhim Thatal Labour Secretary instructed the district offices also to undertake such programmes. Further, if need be, officers and employees of the districts and subdivisions of the Labour Department will be invited to the headquarters for such sessions. It will be ensured that during such training programmes on Saturdays, regular public works and office activities are not disturbed and works continue smoothly.

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Poster for Sikkim Book Fair 2026 released

Gangtok, February 21: The official poster of Sikkim Book Fair 2026 was unveiled at the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gangtok by Mr Sriram Taranikanti Director of Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA).

The programme was attended by Mr Tushar G. Nikhare

District Collector, Gangtok, Mr Abhijeet R Patil SDM (Hq), Mr Bhawesh Khyalia Assistant Collector, Gangtok and Mr Dewakar Basnet, Proprietor, 24 Hours Inspired.

The Sikkim Book Fair 2026 will be held from March 13 to 15, 2026 at MG Marg, Gangtok. The event is being organised by 24

Hours Inspired, in collaboration with DAC Gangtok and powered by Oxford Bookstore.

The three-day fair aims to promote reading culture and bring together authors, publishers, and book lovers from across the region.

Awareness programme on State and Central Government MSME schemes

Pakyong, February 20: An awareness programme on State and Central Government Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises schemes under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) was held at Chujachen Community Hall, Rongli, today.

The programme was organised by District Industries Centre (DIC), Pakyong, under Commerce and Industries Department, in collaboration with the Sikkim Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (SEED) Cell.

The objective of the programme was to create awareness on various State and Central Governments MSME schemes being implemented by the department for existing and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Mr Damber Pradhan Officer on Special Duty to MLA, Chujachen Constituency, reiterating the Chief Minister's vision of 'One Family One Entrepreneur', emphasised the concept of one entrepreneur in every household to support income generation and self-reliance.

Mr Jigme W Bhutia, General Manager, DIC Pakyong informed that the goal of the DTC is to promote entrepreneurship and industrial development to support economic growth in the district. He urged Panchayat members and attendees to disseminate information on the schemes presented by the scheme-specific consultants and encourage eligible individuals to approach the department for assistance. He also cited successful cases from the State achieved through schemes of the Ministry, highlighting their impact on enterprise development. He also apprised participants of various Central and State Government initiatives, including the Sikkim Start-up Policy, 2025.

Dr Raj Lama President, SEED Cell, stated that the primary focus of the Cell is to promote and strengthen local entrepreneurship. He elaborated on its working mechanisms and outlined various activities undertaken to support entrepreneurs across the State. Referring to the motto of the SEED Cell, 'One Family One Entrepreneur', he emphasised the

need to encourage at least one entrepreneurial initiative in every household to enhance self-reliance and income generation.

He underscored the importance of motivating the younger generation to explore business opportunities and stated that the cell provides guidance and facilitation support. He also spoke on various State and Central Government MSME schemes aimed at promoting new enterprises and strengthening existing units.

A series of technical presentations were delivered during the programme covering multiple schemes and digital platforms.

Mr Janmajit Das, Consultant and Procurement Expert, RAMP scheme, delivered a presentation on the implementation of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) under RAMP. He provided an overview of the programme and outlined its objectives aimed at strengthening the MSME ecosystem. He informed participants about the approved SIP interventions for Sikkim and the list of trades identified under the Capacity Building component, along with key support measures under RAMP.

A brief overview of the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) and the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal was delivered by Ms Hemlata Subba Inspector, DIC Pakyong. She explained the objectives of ONDC, the onboarding process and required documents, and shared examples of sellers from Sikkim who have onboarded on the platform. She also outlined the purpose and registration process of the GeM portal for Government procurement.

Additionally, she briefed participants on onboarding products on e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart, covering product listing, pricing, logistics and compliance requirements.

A presentation on the UNNATI (Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme), 2024 was delivered by Mr Jikmee Lepcha Inspector, DIC Pakyong. He informed that UNNATI is a Central Sector

Scheme aimed at industrial development and employment generation in the North Eastern Region, contributing to socio-economic growth. He outlined the eligible sectors, key components of the scheme, categorisation of districts into two zones, and explained the registration process along with the required documents.

Likewise, Mr Sukram Rai, Consultant, PM Vishwakarma scheme, briefed the attendees on the PM Vishwakarma scheme, Permanent Account Number (PAN) and Goods and Services Tax (GST). He informed that the scheme covers various traditional trades, including tailoring, cobbling, sculpting, goldsmithing and blacksmithing, and provides support for capacity building along with collateral-free loans. He also outlined the eligibility criteria and required documentation for availing the benefits.

A presentation on Udyam and FSSAI registration was delivered by staff Ms Purna Pradhan DIC Pakyong. She explained the importance of Udyam registration for MSMEs in availing Government benefits and subsidies.

The session also covered the procedure for obtaining FSSAI registration for food-based enterprises, licensing categories, and compliance norms. Further, an overview on the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), outlining its objectives, eligibility criteria, and application procedure, was delivered by DIC Pakyong staff. He detailed the range of eligible activities under the scheme, including service, manufacturing, and animal husbandry sectors, and also clarified the categories of ineligible activities.

An interactive session followed the presentations, during which participants raised queries regarding the schemes.

Also present were Zilla Panchayat, Panchayat members from Chujachen GPU, Organisation Secretary, SEED Cell, Block Project Manager, Regu, Rural Entrepreneur Secretary, SEED Cell, Coordinator, SEED Cell, and Joint Coordinator, SEED Cell Pakyong.

Press Release from Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom

Namchi, February 19: Ms Karma Doma Youtso Secretary Commerce and Industries Department along with Mr Tshering Topgay Bhutia Director Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (DHH) and Ms Pema Sangmo Bhutia Joint Director (Trg)-II, visited several Branch Training Centre's (BTC's) at Temi, Kewzing, Melli, Upper Goom, Handloom Common Facility Centre (CFC) and Namchi District Office, wherein she inspected the ongoing repair and maintenance of the District Office Namchi.

During her visit, she emphasised on proper inspection of the Branch Training Centre's (BTC's) and directed (DHH) to bring the passed-out trainees under production unit.

It has come to the notice that the passed-out trainees after getting training is reluctant to join the production unit due to several reasons.

She further assured and encourages the passed-out trainees that the Sikkim Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited (SHHDC Ltd.), a sister organization of Directorate of Handicrafts and Handloom (DHH) is ready to procure or

provide wages to the artisans and the weavers.

Secretary DHH took stock of the status of the Heritage museum and suggested steps for the better presentation of the heritage museum which has been acknowledge by the Museumologist, Ms Pema Sherpa.

Concluding the tour at Melli Branch Training Centre, she visited Melli, Hand Made Paper Unit (HMPU), in-charge of the Branch Training Centre (BTC) appraised that the Hand Made Paper Unit (HMPU) is ready to operate after successful trail run with adequate man power.

However, the Secretary was informed that there is no provision for the reckoning expenses like procurement of raw materials, electricity expenses, repair and maintenance expenses etc. If the unit fully becomes operational the Hand Made Paper Unit (HMPU) has a capacity to generate Government revenue of at least ₹20,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Lakh) only.

In this connection, she has assured to take the matter to the government for fruitful deliberation.

Organising Committee meets to finalise roadmap for upcoming Comedy Show

Gangtok, February 20: A meeting was convened today at the conference hall of Soochna Bhawan to constitute a committee for the upcoming first ever Comedian Show in Sikkim.

The meeting was attended by Mr Ashit Rai Chairman, Information and Public Relations Department; Mr Tashi Tshering Bhutia Chairperson Sikkim Film Promotion Board, Mr Shekhar Sewa Chairperson Sikkim Scheduled Caste Welfare Board, senior officers from the Information and Public Relations Department; members of Anant Institute, Gangtok; along with artists, influencers and vloggers from across the State.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on various aspects to ensure the successful organisation and smooth execution of the event. Discussions focused on comprehensive planning, inter departmental coordination, clear

allocation of roles and responsibilities, logistics management, audience engagement and overall event management. Emphasis was also laid on advance preparations, finalisation of the artist lineup, mobilisation of sponsorship support and formulation of an effective publicity strategy.

Focus was laid on promotional initiatives through social media platforms. Influencers and vloggers were encouraged to actively contribute to digital outreach by producing engaging content, creative jingles and interactive campaigns to build public interest and ensure wider visibility across the State.

It was further informed that auditions are being conducted through digital mode and that the selection process has already commenced. The shortlisted participants will be invited to compete in the semi final rounds.

Lachung Dzumsa celebrates Losar

Mangan, February 20: A three-day cultural programme to commemorate Losar, also known as Gyalpo Losar, the Tibetan New Year, commenced today at Lachung Thomchi Ground. The three-day festival is organised by Lachung Dzumsa.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Mr Pintso Namgyal Lepcha Minister for Forest and Environment Department.

The programme commenced with the formal reception of the chief guest, followed by a welcome address and a welcome song presented by the Lachung Young Cultural Group. The cultural segment featured performances by Dream Dance Studio, Mangan, Tumlong Ongditse Welfare Association, and the Lachung

Young Cultural Group.

The audience witnessed a vibrant display of traditional Lepcha, Tamang, Nepali, Bhutia, Tibetan and Bhutanese dances. The performances also included Gorshey dances, contemporary cultural presentations, and solo songs, reflecting the diverse cultural identity of the region.

A significant highlight of the event was the release of a Lachungpa song album by the Pipons.

The programme was also attended by Mr Hissey Lachungpa former MP Rajya Sabha, Chairmen Tourism, SIMFED and Forest and Environment Department, SDM Chungthang, SDPO Chungthang and officials from various line departments.

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Coordination meeting to review urgent Gangtok

District issues

Gangtok, February 20: District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gangtok, convened a coordination meeting to review issues requiring urgent attention in Gangtok district, today.

The meeting was chaired by the District Collector, Gangtok, Mr Tushar G. Nihare, at his chamber.

The meeting deliberated extensively on matters including water scarcity in urban areas, reported cases of Avian Influenza in the State, and incidents of forest fire in the Tumin-Lingee area.

Addressing the issue of water scarcity, the District Collector advised officials of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department to ensure that hydrologists accompany field teams during expeditions to identified water sources. He reviewed the status of ongoing initiatives undertaken by the Department to mitigate the urban water shortage and sought updates on the Bhusuk project

aimed at augmenting alternative water sources for Gangtok District. The DC also highlighted the importance of water conservation measures being implemented in rural areas of the district.

During the meeting, Ms Emila Shenga Additional Director Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services (AH & VS), delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation on Avian Influenza. She briefed on the symptoms, modes of transmission, and cases detected in the State. Emphasising the need for a coordinated response, she highlighted the importance of adopting the 'One Health' approach. The One Health approach is an integrated, collaborative, and multi-disciplinary strategy aimed at sustainably balancing and optimizing the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. She also elaborated on the Action Plan for prevention, control and containment of Avian Influenza

(2021), precautionary measures, and the roles and responsibilities of various line departments.

The District Collector urged all concerned departments to disseminate general awareness messages to sensitise the public about Avian Influenza, its symptoms, and precautionary measures. He further called upon to issue advisories promoting preventive steps to avoid forest fires and enhance fire safety awareness among the public.

District Collector also sought details from Block Development Officers (BDOs) regarding preparedness at the block level and reviewed the action plan of the Fire and Emergency Services to effectively respond to such emergencies.

The meeting was attended by the ADC, Joint Director District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) and senior officers from various line departments.

PHE Department clarifies concerns regarding Ratechu water supply system

Gangtok, February 21: Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department today convened a press conference to address public concerns regarding water scarcity from the Ratechu River source.

Mr Shailendra Sharma Secretary, PHE, informed that the briefing was organised to place factual and technical details before the public on the functioning of the water distribution system. He presented comparative pictorial evidence of water levels at the Ratechu intake point from January 2025 and January 2026, indicating a noticeable decline in discharge. He explained that in compliance with environmental regulations, the department cannot fully harness the river source, as a mandatory environmental flow must be maintained to protect the aquatic ecosystem and ensure downstream sustainability.

Elaborating on the technical aspects, the Secretary explained that the steep and undulating terrain prevents uniform pipeline gradients, resulting in turbulence within the system. He noted that such turbulence generates forward pressure, back pressure and suction forces, requiring systematic regulation. The Secretary clarified that pressure-regulating mechanisms have been installed at multiple points along the distribution network and that the 'Pressure Releasing System' has been misconstrued as leakage. He pointed out that a 14-inch pressure release valve has been strategically installed to regulate excess pressure and prevent pipe bursts, particularly in high-gradient sections. He clarified that the mist-like spray visible in photographs actually reflects controlled pressure release and not leakage.

Highlighting maintenance constraints, the Secretary explained that due to the stacking and interconnection of pipelines across varying elevations, permanent rectification requires complete shutdown of the supply line for 12-18 hours to stabilise internal pressure and ensure safe repairs. He stated that such shutdowns are not feasible during dry spells without severely affecting water supply to consumers. The Secretary informed that daily plugging and routine monitoring are undertaken to manage minor leakages and maintain operational stability. He added that during the rainy season, when additional water from seasonal streams in the lower belts supplements the system, upstream pipelines can be temporarily shut down to carry out comprehensive maintenance and permanent repairs.

Addressing monsoon-related disruptions, the Secretary stated that intake channels frequently get obstructed by debris due to bank erosion at Tharo Khola above the Ratechu intake point. He explained that accumulated silt and debris must be manually cleared, necessitating temporary suspension of supply. The Secretary added that landslides and erosion are natural challenges in hilly terrain and directly impact intake efficiency and pipeline safety.

On the distribution network, the Secretary informed that High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipes are used to supply water to areas above 8th Mile. He explained that while these pipes perform efficiently under stable and straight flow conditions, steep uphill sections create suction leading to decompression of pipe walls. He cautioned that repeated

compression and decompression cycles may weaken the pipes over time. The Secretary informed that air-release nozzles have been installed at critical points to release trapped air and stabilise internal pressure within the system. He reiterated that minor discharge through these air vents during full-capacity flow is part of normal pressure regulation.

On supply management, the Secretary asserted that through rationalisation of supply hours, pressure balancing and systematic monitoring of the distribution network, water availability for domestic consumption has improved despite reduced discharge at the source. He expressed appreciation to consumers for their cooperation in ensuring equitable and judicious use of water.

Regarding long-term augmentation, the Secretary informed that the Bhusuk River has been identified as an alternative water source. He stated that a minimum period of three years is required to assess its adequacy, sustainability and potability before finalisation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR). The Secretary further informed that surveys have been underway since 2020-21, the DPR has been approved by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the final Bill of quantities has been submitted for concurrence. He added that upon approval, the project will proceed to the tendering and implementation stages.

The Secretary concluded by reiterating that water is presently equitably available for domestic use and urged the public to practise responsible and conscious consumption.

Press Release from Police Department

Mangan, February 21: A Legal Literacy Programme under the Pan India Initiative titled 'Protect Today, Secure Tomorrow' was organised at Government Senior Secondary School, Hee-Gyathang, Lower Dzongu.

The Programme was jointly organised by Police Department, Forest and Environment Department, Education Department, Water Resources Department of Mangan and District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Mangan under the aegis of Sikkim State Legal Services Authority.

The programme witnessed the presence of distinguished resource persons including Mr Supendra Subba Range Officer Forest and Environment Department Mangan, Ms Samikcha Thapa, Sikkim Police Mangan/Special Juvenile Protection Officer Mangan Police Station, Mr Singhi Dadul Lachungpa Panel Advocate Sikkim State Legal Services Authority, Ms Sonam Ongmu Bhutia Junior Engineer Water Resources Department Mangan, Mr Akash Rai Mental Health Counsellor, Public Health and Wellness Centre Hee-Gyathang, Ms Diki Doma Bhutia Coordinator for Children with Special Needs and students and teachers of the host school.

Ms Samikcha Thapa, Sikkim Police/Special Juvenile Protection Officer, sensitised the students on the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, explaining the various forms of offences covered under the Act and the stringent punishments prescribed to safeguard children from sexual abuse and exploitation. She emphasised the importance of reporting offences without fear and assured that child-friendly procedures are followed during investigation and trial.

She also spoke in detail about the Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act, 2015, outlining the legal framework for children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection. The students were informed about their rights, functioning of the Juvenile Justice Board and Child Welfare Committee and the mechanisms in place to ensure rehabilitation and social reintegration of affected children.

Mr Singhi Dadul Lachungpa Panel Advocate, delivered an informative session on the provisions and objectives of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. He explained how the Act ensures free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society and promotes equal access to justice for all citizens. He also highlighted the role of Legal Services Authorities at the district and state levels in conducting legal literacy programmes, organising Lok Adalats and providing legal aid to eligible persons.

Further, he elaborated on the NALSA Financial Assistance for Dropout and Disadvantaged Children Scheme, 2025, aimed at supporting children who have

dropped out of school or belong to disadvantaged backgrounds. The scheme seeks to provide financial assistance and facilitate their reintegration into the education system, thereby ensuring that socio-economic challenges do not deprive children of their right to education and development.

Resource persons Mr Supendra Subba from Forest and Environment Department Mangan, delivered insightful lectures highlighting the pressing environmental concerns relevant to Sikkim, including deforestation, climate change impacts, water scarcity, waste management and increasing human-wildlife conflict. Special emphasis was laid on the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees the Right to Life. The speakers elaborated that Supreme Court of India has consistently interpreted Article 21 to include the right to live in a pollution-free and ecologically balanced environment, thereby making environmental protection not only a moral duty but also a fundamental right.

The participants were sensitised about various landmark judgments and directions of the Supreme Court aimed at the protection and preservation of forests and wildlife across the country. The session also covered key legislations such as the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, explaining their objectives, provisions and penalties for violations. Students were made aware of the importance of biodiversity conservation in ecologically fragile regions like North Sikkim and the legal consequences of illegal activities such as poaching, encroachment, and deforestation.

Resource person Ms Sonam Ongmu Bhutia from Water Resources Department, elaborated on the sustainable development of water resources, including watershed management, rainwater harvesting, riverbank protection and flood mitigation measures. The importance of scientific planning and community participation in preventing soil erosion, landslides and flash floods common challenges in hilly terrains was emphasised. The session encouraged students to adopt water conservation practices and act as ambassadors of environmental responsibility within their communities.

Mr Akash Rai Mental Health Counsellor, highlighted the connection between environmental well-being and mental health, stressing that a healthy environment contributes significantly to physical and psychological wellness. Students were encouraged to manage eco-anxiety positively by participating in constructive environmental activities and awareness campaigns.

The programme concluded with an interactive session.

Awareness-cum-capacity building and inputs distribution programme under NEH component

Soreng, February 21: ICAR-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), Lucknow in collaboration with the Fisheries Department, Government of Sikkim, organised an awareness-cum-capacity building and inputs distribution programme under the North-Eastern Hill (NEH) component at Rurban Complex, Soreng, today.

Mr Am Prasad Sharma Advisor (Fisheries Department) attended the programme as the chief guest, while Mrs Anuradha Gurung Chairperson Fisheries Department graced the programme as the guest of honour.

Advisor emphasised the importance of time management and urged fish farmers to actively contribute towards its growth. Applauding ICAR Lucknow for its initiative, he encouraged participants to fully utilise the interactive session conducted by the expert team. Highlighting Government schemes exclusively meant for fish farmers, he informed that the Government would extend continued support to the Fisheries Department. He further urged farmers to prepare for upcoming Government initiatives and stressed the need to maintain an

unbroken supply chain.

Ms Roshni Rai Secretary Fisheries Department expressed gratitude to ICAR Lucknow for organising the programme in Soreng. She informed that the distribution programme would cover 60 fish farmers, including 30 farmers each from Gyalshing and Soreng Districts. She further stated that scientifically prepared fish feed would be distributed to the beneficiaries. Informing that World Fisheries Day is observed annually on November 21, she highlighted various Government initiatives, including fish festival to promote fisheries, support local fish farmers and celebrate the region's rich aquatic heritage. She also acknowledged the district's continued support to the Fisheries Department and encouraged farmers to promote fish farming and consume locally produced fish within the State.

Initially, Dr LK Tyagi Principal Scientist (ICAR-NBFGR, Lucknow) provided a brief introduction to the National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), stating that its research activities directly and indirectly benefit farmers.

Mr Lobsang Tamang Joint

Director, Fisheries Department Soreng also expressed appreciation to ICAR Lucknow for organising the programme in the district. Terming the initiative crucial for fish farmers, he urged participants to remain attentive and clear their doubts. He also briefed on the progress made by the Fisheries Department in the State.

An interactive session was conducted by the ICAR Lucknow team and department officials, during which, fish cultivation practices and related issues were discussed in detail.

Dr Rejani Chandran Senior Scientist (ICAR-NBFGR, Lucknow) delivered the introductory remarks and welcomed the dignitaries and participants.

The programme was also attended by Mr KK Shrestha Principal Director Fisheries Department, Mr Gaayas Pega ADC (Dev), Mrs Karma Doma Bhutia Additional Director Fisheries Department, SDM (Hq), OSD Culture Department, Deputy Director Fisheries Department, Soreng, Assistant Director (Fisheries Department along with officers, officials and stakeholders.

GMC launches WOW GANGTOK -War on Waste

Gangtok, February 19: The Gangtok Municipal Corporation (GMC) formally launched its flagship cleanliness and waste-management drive, 'WOW-War on Waste' at Lal Bazar, marking a decisive step towards strengthening solid waste management, public awareness, and enforcement mechanisms in the city, today.

The programme was graced by Minister for Urban Development Department (UDD) Mr Bhoj Raj Rai as the chief guest and MLA Gangtok Mr DN Burfungpa as the special guest. The event was also attended by Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Advisor GMC, Chairman Drivers' Association, Councillors GMC, Secretary UDD, Project Director

SBM (Urban) UDD, Municipal Commissioner, SP Gangtok, Presidents of various organisations, NSS volunteers and others.

The programme commenced with a comprehensive overview of the WOW-War on Waste initiative by Mr Gary Chopel Municipal Commissioner, outlining its objectives, strategy, and phased implementation plan. This was followed by an IEC (Information, Education and Communication) awareness session on the responsibility of waste generators delivered by Mr Tsewang Bhutia, SBM GMC, emphasising source segregation, citizen responsibility and behavioural change.

In his address, Minister Mr Bhoj Raj Rai declared the launch

of 'War on Waste' and called upon citizens to treat waste management as a shared civic responsibility rather than solely a municipal function. He emphasised that sustainable urban development begins with disciplined waste segregation at source and active public cooperation.

The Minister stated that Lal Bazar Ward will be targeted under the WOW initiative and that the Corporation will adopt a firm and structured approach combining awareness drives, intensive cleaning operations and strict enforcement. He highlighted that this initiative represents not just a campaign, but a determined movement towards accountability, environmental responsibility and improved public health.

DIC Soreng commences awareness programme on State and Central Government MSME Schemes

Soreng, February 20: District Industries Centre, Soreng under Raising and Accelerating MSME's Performance (RAMP) programme organised by Commerce & Industries Department in collaboration with the SEED Cell (Sikkim Entrepreneurship and Economic Development Cell), commenced a two-day Awareness Programme on State and Central flagship Government schemes at Kamling-Suldung (Gram-Panchayat Kendra Hall) and will continue tomorrow at Mabong GPK Hall.

The initiative aims to intimate a comprehensive information on beneficiary-oriented schemes, promote stakeholder engagement, and enhance outreach among entrepreneurs, self-help groups, youth and public.

Mr Deepen Chettri District

Coordinator, SEED Cell, highlighted the significance of SEED Cell and the Government's continued efforts to promote entrepreneurship in the region. He elaborated on the objectives of Cell in implementing policies and schemes that support startups and enterprise development and discussed financial assistance opportunities available under various Government initiatives.

He further encouraged participants to explore self-employment and innovation-driven ventures. He also addressed prevailing social perceptions that often discourage entrepreneurship, emphasizing its potential to expand opportunities beyond salaried employment. He further cited prospects in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and digital technology, and spoke about the State Government's

"One Family One Entrepreneur" initiative as a pathway for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Highlight of the programme were PowerPoint presentations delivered by DIC, Soreng Inspectors Mr Yougash Karki and Mr Kincho Palden Tamang, who provided detailed briefings on schemes such as UNNATI (Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme) and PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme). Their presentations covered subsidy benefits, incentives linked to manufacturing and service sectors, eligibility criteria, required documentation, and categories of exempted businesses. Participants were advised to contact DIC Soreng or Sikkim Entrepreneur platforms for further guidance on registration and application procedures.

Hee-Yangthang SS School conducts Disaster preparedness Training

Gyalshing, February 23: A comprehensive disaster preparedness training programme on flood, earthquake and landslide management was conducted at Hee-Yangthang Senior Secondary School, Gyalshing district, today.

The programme was organised by Rescue and Relief Team (RRT) of 36th Battalion SSB Gyalshing in collaboration with the school's NCC/NSS unit and its feeder schools.

The training was attended by Mr Hari Bhandari School In-charge-cum-Vice-Principal, teachers from feeder schools, students.

The primary objective of the programme was to enhance awareness on disaster response and to develop life-saving skills among students and local residents.

During the session, detailed information was provided on safety measures to be adopted during landslides, earthquakes and floods. Participants were also given practical guidance on precautionary actions to take before, during and after an earthquake to minimise risks and

prevent injuries. The training included demonstrations on personal safety measures, rescue techniques, basic first aid, CPR and safe methods of transporting injured persons to medical facilities.

Resource person HCGD Bhup Singh highlighted the urgent need for preparedness and community awareness in high-risk seismic zones. He emphasised that such programmes equip individuals with the knowledge and skills required to make informed decisions during emergencies. He further stressed the importance of conducting regular mock drills and capacity-building activities, especially prior to high-risk periods. He appreciated the proactive coordination and efforts of 36th Battalion SSB.

The programme was supported by HCGD Bhup Singh, HCGD Mahendra Chettri, ASI/GD Omkar Singh and other team members.

The programme concluded with an interactive drill and active participation from students and local residents.

Launch of 1st Residential Training Programme under Sikkim INSPIRES and Flag-off of LMV training

Namchi, February 21: Skill Development Department inaugurated the 1st Residential Training Programme under Sikkim INSPIRES along with the driving of Light Motor Vehicles (LMV) Training under the Grant-in-Aid Scheme at the campus of the State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB), Jorethang Division.

The programme was graced by the Area MLA-cum-Advisor, Transport and Skill Development Department, as the chief guest and the Advisor, State Bank of Sikkim, as the guest of honour, in the presence of Ms Tashi Cho Cho, Secretary, Skill Development Department, Sub-Divisional Officer, Jorethang Sub-Division, Regional Transport Officer, Transport Division Jorethang, senior officials, partner institutions, and trainees.

Earlier, the chief guest formally flagged off the LMV Training Programme at the SICB campus, marking the beginning of skill enhancement training for temporary Government employees of Jorethang Sub-Division.

The formal programme commenced with a welcome address by the Principal Director-cum-Chief Administrator, SICB. This was followed by an overview of the Residential Training Programme by the representative from Visan Foundation, who encouraged trainees to make the most of the structured residential model and highlighted placement opportunities upon successful completion. The emphasis was placed on industry linkage, competency-building, and sustained livelihood pathways.

An overview of the driving training was presented by the

representative from Buddha Jyoti Enterprise, outlining the training structure and institutional support being extended to the temporary Government staff, aligned with the broader vision of the Government of Sikkim.

The Special Secretary-cum-Nodal Officer, Sikkim INSPIRES Programme, highlighted the financial assistance provided under the initiative and described the training as a stepping stone toward long-term success, achievable through dedication and hard work.

Secretary Ms Tashi Cho Cho underscored the importance of aligning skills with market demand, reminding trainees that with the right focus and aspirations, there is no looking back.

In his address, the chief guest emphasised that the true success of any programme ultimately depends on the youth themselves. While the Government continues to create opportunities and provide the necessary support systems, it is the determination, discipline, and initiative of the trainees that will transform these opportunities into lasting success. He also stressed the importance of road safety, urging the LMV trainees to undergo the training with sincerity and responsibility. He reminded them about safe driving, encouraging them to learn thoroughly, follow traffic rules strictly, and become responsible drivers who prioritize safety at all times.

The launch reflects the State's continued commitment to ensuring that learning transforms into earning, empowering individuals and strengthening livelihoods across Sikkim.

Press Release from DAC Gangtok

Gangtok, February 22: Seventh Workshop of Project PAILA (Programme for Aspiring Innovators and Local Achievers) was conducted at SC Bhawan, Development Area, Gangtok, as part of the ongoing efforts to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in the district, today.

Project PAILA is a joint initiative of District Administrative Centre (DAC), Gangtok, under the banner of Sikkim INSPIRES, in collaboration with CSR Department of Sun Pharma and is being implemented by Stars of Hope.

Project PAILA continues to nurture entrepreneurship, innovation and self-reliance by providing aspiring entrepreneurs with a structured platform to transform their ideas into sustainable and impactful ventures through mentorship, interactive workshops and hands-on learning experiences.

The seventh workshop was conducted on the theme 'marketing, branding, sales and negotiation', with the objective of equipping participants with practical tools and strategies to effectively position, promote and scale their businesses in competitive markets. The session covered key topics, including building a strong brand identity, fundamentals of digital marketing, offline marketing strategies, customer acquisition and retention techniques, understanding the sales funnel and sales strategies, and effectively pitching products and services to potential customers and investors.

Ms Sonam Choden Katsopa Founder of Taste Bud-Homemade Chocolate shared her entrepreneurial journey and experiences in building a homegrown brand and highlighted the importance of consistency, customer trust, and innovation in establishing a successful enterprise.

The technical session was led by Mr Nitish Poudyal, Marketing Expert from the Department of Commerce and Industries, who provided in-depth insights into marketing frameworks, strategic branding, negotiation skills and practical sales approaches suitable for startups and small businesses.

The programme was also attended by Mr Wasif Ali from the CSR Department of Sun Pharma, whose presence reaffirmed the organisation's continued support for fostering grassroots entrepreneurship and innovation under the PAILA initiative.

As with previous workshops, the programme was attended by the presence of Mr Tushar G Nihare DC Gangtok, who remains steadfast in his commitment to the long-term vision of Project PAILA. He encouraged to apply the marketing and sales strategies learned during the session to strengthen their ventures.

He shared that adverts, banners and a promotional video announcing a pitching session will soon be displayed across Gangtok District and its Blocks, inviting applications from aspiring entrepreneurs. The tentative dates for the pitching session are between March 9-16, 2026. Multiple winners will be selected and will receive limited seed funding, subject to the availability of funds under Sikkim INSPIRES, for their startups. The judging panel will comprise local entrepreneurs who have been part of the project as mentors and speakers associated with the workshops under Project PAILA.

The pitching session will be open to all, with preference given to regular workshop attendees. The opportunity is open to all. Participants will be required to prepare a brief presentation of their business idea and register through the links and information provided

in the official adverts.

Participants who may not meet the specified criteria during the pitching session are encouraged, as the DAC team will continue to guide and connect them with other suitable schemes and opportunities aligned with their aspirations in the future. The initiative reflects a broader commitment to building for the future, with a long-term vision of fostering sustainable entrepreneurship and economic self-reliance in the district.

The topics covered to date in previous workshops consisted of: I. Workshop 1 theme: Onboarding Session

II. Workshop 2 theme: LISTEN • ASK • THINK – "From Challenges to Ideas, From Ideas to Action"

III. Workshop 3 theme: Market Research and Validation

IV. Workshop 4 theme: Business Planning, Legal & Compliance

V. Workshop 5 theme: Financial Management

VI. Workshop 6 theme: Product Development & Operations

Upcoming proposed sessions consists of:

I. Workshop 8 theme: Team Building, Leadership, Growth & Scaling (Sunday 1st March, 2026)

II. Final Workshop: Preparation for the Pitching Session.

The workshops under Project PAILA remain completely free of cost and participants are not required to pay any fees at any stage. Individuals from all age groups and backgrounds are encouraged to participate in and benefit from this transformative platform.

For further details, please contact: +91 7864899235 (DAC Gangtok), +91 8900225195 (Stars of Hope).

Paper 2026-27.

He described the document as a comprehensive roadmap for the state's development, stating that it provides sector-wise credit potential and serves as an important guide for banks in preparing the Annual Credit Plan.

Highlighting the significance of agriculture in the state's economy, he encouraged banks to support the transition from subsistence to commercial farming by promoting improved practices, value addition and better market linkages.

He underlined the importance of coordinated efforts to strengthen priority sector lending and rural development, while reaffirming the banking sector's commitment to working closely with NABARD and the Government of Sikkim to support inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the State.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Agriculture and Horticulture Departments said that the State Credit Seminar is an important platform for aligning financial support with the state's developmental priorities.

Medical Camp organised at Chungthang

Mangan, February 23: A Medical and Dental Camp for civilian population and workers was conducted at Chungthang today by the Indian Army in collaboration with Health and Family Welfare Department and other line departments.

The camp was organised with the aim of providing essential healthcare services and promoting health awareness among residents of the region.

The camp was conducted by a team comprising four Medical Officers, two Dental Officers, and one Medical Specialist. During the camp, laboratory investigations, dental screening, general medical

examinations, health awareness lectures, and distribution of essential medicines were carried out.

A total of 207 civilians benefited from the camp, including 61 males, 37 females, and 98 school children. The camp witnessed enthusiastic participation from the local population and contributed towards improving access to quality healthcare services in the area.

The programme had the present of Zilla Panchayat, ADC (Dev) Chungthang, Deputy Director, AH&VS Department, Medical Officer, Chungthang PHC, CO Army Medical Core and others.

He appreciated the efforts of NABARD in preparing the State Focus Paper and termed it a key driver for sectoral growth, particularly in agriculture and allied activities.

He added that effective implementation of the credit plan would require close coordination between stakeholders so that the document translates into tangible outcomes on the ground.

Highlighting ongoing initiatives in the agriculture sector, he spoke about the importance of strengthening value addition, processing, branding and structured market linkages to enhance farmers' income.

He stressed the need to move towards a more organised and market-oriented agricultural ecosystem while ensuring that small and marginal farmers remain adequately supported.

He further underscored the importance of integrated development of agriculture with allied sectors such as fisheries and animal husbandry, adding that a holistic and inclusive credit approach would benefit the majority of farmers in the State.

He called for continued collaboration among stakeholders to improve credit absorption, address challenges at the grassroots level and ensure that financial support reaches intended beneficiaries in a timely and effective manner.

Deputy General Manager, RBI highlighted the significance of priority sector lending and urged banks to work towards effective achievement of sectoral targets, particularly in agriculture and allied activities, MSMEs and other priority segments.

He also encouraged greater credit outreach in districts with lower credit penetration.

Stressing the need for stronger financial literacy and compliance, DGM stressed the importance of Know Your Customer (KYC) norms to ensure smoother access to banking services and Government schemes.

He called for continued synergy among all stakeholders to promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the State.

During the course of the event, NABARD's Sikkim Regional Office ceremonially handed over sanction letters and disbursement support to partner institutions

under various initiatives through the Chief Secretary.

These included direct financial assistance to Sikkim State Cooperative Bank Ltd to strengthen and diversify its lending portfolio; support for Tribal Development Fund project at Kitam Manpur GPU in Namchi District and Naga GPU in Mangan District; incentives to promote customer service points and business correspondents for expanding last-mile banking outreach; and assistance for deployment of micro-ATMs to enhance digital financial inclusion through cooperative institutions.

During the technical session, a series of presentations were made highlighting key development initiatives.

Mr Anil Kumar Yadav Deputy General Manager, NABARD, gave a comprehensive presentation on the credit plan and projections under the State Focus Paper 2026-27.

Likewise, NABARD representative presented an overview of initiatives undertaken by NABARD in the state, including interventions aimed at strengthening rural infrastructure, financial inclusion and livelihood promotion.

A presentation on Geographical Indications (GI) focused on NABARD's efforts in supporting GI-related interventions in Sikkim to enhance value addition, branding and market linkage for local products.

Subsequently, another presentation highlighted the status of cooperatives in the State and elaborated on NABARD's role in strengthening cooperative institutions and promoting sustainable credit and institutional development.

Beneficiaries of various NABARD-supported initiatives also shared their experiences during the seminar.

Among them, Mr Ugen P Lepcha presented the Geographical Indication (GI) certificates granted by the Government of India for the traditional Lepcha musical instruments, Tungbuk and Puntong Pulit.

He underscored the significance of GI recognition in preserving indigenous heritage, ensuring legal protection, and enhancing the identity and market value of these culturally significant instruments.

Contd. from front page

NABARD releases...

philosophy of credit, the Chief Secretary said that credit is fundamentally built on trust and belief in a better future. He stated that when credit flows adequately, it reflects society's confidence in growth and progress.

Conversely, inadequate credit flow weakens economic motivation and limits entrepreneurial aspirations, he added.

The Chief Secretary stressed on the importance of linking welfare initiatives with credit-based growth models to encourage self-reliance and long-term economic sustainability.

Thereafter, he called upon banks, Government departments and other institutions to collectively create an enabling environment where individuals feel confident in accessing credit, investing productively and generating returns higher than borrowing costs.

Referring to agriculture and

allied sectors, he highlighted the need for focused, cluster-based development instead of fragmented and shifting approaches. He stated that lack of consistency and collective action often dilutes economic impact.

Emphasising Sikkim's unique strengths, he urged stakeholders to concentrate on high-value, niche products where the state has a comparative advantage, rather than competing in mass markets.

He also highlighted the importance of developing reliable market linkages so that producers, including Self-Help Groups (SHGs), can scale up their activities beyond exhibitions and limited local sales towards sustainable income generation.

He further expressed confidence that collective efforts by Government institutions, banks and development agencies would unlock the state's untapped potential and ensure more inclusive and meaningful economic growth.

Mr Alok Jain DGM, SBI Kolkata congratulated NABARD on the release of the State Focus

Former Governor of Sikkim visits Buddha Park Ravangla

Namchi, February 23: Former Governor of Sikkim Mr Ganga Prasad visited Buddha Park, Ravangla, during his ongoing personal tour of the State.

His visit to the state, scheduled from February 20 to 24 will include Gangtok and Gyalshing Districts.

The former Governor was accompanied by Mr Bishnu Prasad Sharma Additional Political

Secretary to CM, Mr Shiva Kumar Rai OSD to MLA Barfung, Mr DP Dahal ADC (Dev) Ravangla, Mr Roshan Rai SDPO Ravangla, Mr Tsheten Bhutia OSD Buddha Park, Mr Rinkzing Lepcha SHO Ravangla, Panchayats and Police personnel.

During his visit, Mr Ganga Prasad is scheduled to attend various engagements and interactions.

District Administration reviews Avian Influenza preparedness

Namchi, February 23: A preparatory meeting to review the district's readiness to tackle any potential outbreak of Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) was convened at the District Administrative Centre (DAC), Namchi, under the chairpersonship of Ms Anupa Tamling District Magistrate, today.

District Magistrate urged all concerned committees and departments to remain fully prepared and to undertake all necessary precautionary measures in view of the threat posed by Avian Influenza. She stressed that any suspected case must be reported and investigated without delay, and directed that no related incident be overlooked or neglected.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services (AH&VS) was instructed to constitute a Rapid Response Team (RRT) and to form dedicated committees at the block and district levels to ensure swift and coordinated action.

The department was further directed to coordinate with BDOs and Gram Panchayats to organise awareness meetings at the block level, with the objective of sensitising public and promoting greater vigilance regarding Avian Influenza.

District Magistrate also directed that any unusual deaths of birds or mammals be reported immediately to the AH&VS Department for prompt action, followed by timely sample collection and testing. Emphasising public awareness, she instructed the department to conduct awareness programmes on Avian Influenza and appropriate disinfection measures in the event that infected areas are detected.

Officials were directed to strictly monitor bird-feeding activities and ensure that feeding is permitted only within identified zones. Any violation in designated no-feeding zones will invite penalties and appropriate action as per established norms. All concerned departments were asked to submit a status report on Avian Influenza preparedness within the week to enable effective monitoring and timely interventions.

Informing that no cases have been reported in the district so far, the DM nevertheless cautioned that continuous vigilance and proactive

monitoring remain essential to prevent any potential outbreak.

The Health Department was also directed to earmark a separate isolation room to manage suspected or confirmed influenza-related cases.

Deputy Director, Department of AH&VS gave a detailed presentation on Avian Influenza, outlining key aspects of the disease. It was informed that Avian Influenza is a highly contagious viral infection affecting both domesticated and wild birds, with certain strains being zoonotic and capable of infecting humans. The two principal types Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI), causing mild respiratory symptoms and reduced egg production and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), leading to severe illness and high mortality were highlighted.

Modes of transmission include direct contact with infected birds, inhalation or ingestion of the virus, exposure to contaminated feed, water and equipment, short-distance airborne droplets, migratory wild birds acting as reservoirs and movement of humans and vehicles. Key risk factors identified were poor biosecurity practices, mixed rearing of ducks and chickens, live bird markets, contact with migratory birds and high stocking density.

Symptoms of Avian Influenza in humans include fever, headache, muscle ache, cough and sore throat, eye infection, pneumonia and acute respiratory distress. Advisory measures for prevention, control and containment of Avian Influenza (H5N1), along with reporting protocols and Government of India guidelines for suspected and confirmed outbreaks, were also shared during the presentation.

The Department of AH&VS has designated helpline number 1962 for reporting avian-related incidents. Public have been urged to promptly report any unusual occurrences through the helpline to facilitate immediate action by the authorities.

The meeting was attended by the ADC (Hq), Director-cum-Chief Medical Officer, District Surveillance Officer, Joint Director (AH&VS), representatives of Municipal Council, officers from DDMA, AD/BAC, BDOs and MEO, among others.

Adventure Tourism Stakeholders' Meet

Gangtok, February 23: Tourism and Civil Aviation Department (T&CAD) conducted Adventure Tourism Stakeholders' Consultation Meeting at Conference Hall of the Department, today.

The meeting brought together stakeholders and department heads to discuss adventure tourism training under the Sikkim INSPIRES programme.

The meeting was attended by Mr Lukendra Rasaily Chairman, Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation (STDC); Mr Norgay Lachungpa Chairperson Tourism and Civil Aviation Department; and Mr CS Rao Additional Chief Secretary, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department.

Mr CS Rao Additional Chief Secretary, highlighted the State's commitment to maintaining its leadership in adventure tourism with the support of the World Bank-funded Sikkim INSPIRES programme, which prioritises infrastructure upgrades and capacity building for rural women and youth. He encouraged stakeholders to make full use of the facilities and resources available at the Indian Himalayan Centre for Adventure and Ecotourism (IHCAE) through frequent visits and active engagement. He further suggested that experienced professionals interact with current trainees to share their expertise, which would significantly benefit youth pursuing careers in adventure tourism. He invited stakeholders to submit formal written requests for any support required by their teams and

emphasised the necessity of regular knowledge updates and high-quality training.

During a session on market demand and skill gap analysis, Chairman, STDC highlighted the identification of priority skill areas, assessment of industry needs and bridging of training gaps. He suggested various measures to address market issues, emphasising the need to make training programmes lucrative and sustainable to retain professionals. He noted the growing trend in ecotourism and health-centric tourism and advocated focused initiatives and unity among stakeholders. He also stressed the importance of training experienced tour operators, market development through workshops and conferences, and strengthening marketing and promotional efforts. Additionally, he recommended conducting marketing surveys, instituting incentives for top performers, protecting trainees through appropriate policies and fostering stronger collaboration with experienced stakeholders.

Mr Kazi Sherpa Joint Director (Adventure), Tourism and Civil Aviation Department and Principal, IHCAE, presented an overview of the Sikkim INSPIRES training initiatives for 2024-2026, highlighting IHCAE's training programmes. He reviewed statistics of previous trainings, participant coverage and upcoming initiatives, noting a shortage of trained manpower and experts as well as the challenge of retaining trainees. He emphasised

the importance of feedback in designing effective training programmes and detailed the 112 activities planned for 2024-2029 under the Sikkim INSPIRES programme, including statistics and training categories.

The second half of the session involved thematic discussions wherein stakeholders were divided into groups to deliberate on training and capacity building, marketing and branding, and institutional and policy support.

Each group presented its recommendations, followed by an open house consultation during which stakeholders shared feedback, suggestions and challenges. Key recommendations included the development of religious tourism initiatives such as a Buddhist circuit, conducting more frequent meetings and ensuring broader district representation to enhance stakeholder engagement.

Mr Tenzing Gelay Additional Director, Tourism and Civil Aviation Department highlighted the objectives and overview of the consultation meeting and the scope of Buddhist circuit development alongside adventure tourism promotion.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Director Tourism and Civil Aviation Department; Assistant Director (IT), Tourism and Civil Aviation Department; senior officials of the Department and stakeholders and others.

District-level meeting-cum-training in preparation for Census 2027

Mangan, February 23: A district-level meeting-cum-training in preparation for Census 2027 was held at DAC Mangan, today. Senior officers and key stakeholders gathered to review the roadmap for the forthcoming national exercise and to strengthen coordination at the district level.

The meeting had the presence of Mr Karma R Bonpo Director, Directorate of Census Operation Sikkim, Mr Anant Jain DC-cum-Principal Census Officer Mangan, Mr Pema Wangchen Namkarpa ADM Mangan, Dr V Das Gupta JD, Directorate of Census Operation, SDMs, BDOs, ACFs, ROs of the district, DCSO, MEO MNP and officials of concerned line departments.

The Director outlined the methods, processes and responsibilities of various stakeholders. He noted that the upcoming Census, being conducted after a gap of 16 years, will be the eighth Census since Independence. He described it as historic, as it will be India's first fully digital Census. For the first time, households will be able to submit their details online through a dedicated Self-Enumeration portal, marking a significant step towards technology-driven governance.

The Census will be conducted in two phases. Phase I-

House Listing and Housing Census (HLO) will take place from April 16 to May 15, 2026, while the Self-Enumeration portal will remain active from April 1 to April 15, 2026. Phase II-Population Enumeration (PE) is scheduled for February 2027, during which every individual will be counted to present an accurate and comprehensive picture of the population.

Emphasising the importance of the exercise, the Director stated that Census data forms the foundation of planning and governance. It supports the design of welfare schemes, the demarcation of constituencies for Parliament, State Assemblies and local bodies, and the framing of policies relating to housing, infrastructure and the public sector. Accurate data, he stressed, ensures fair distribution of resources and informed decision-making. "We are not merely conducting a Census, we are shaping the course of India's development for the next decade," he remarked.

The Joint Director presented an overview of the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990, explaining the legal responsibilities and functions of the Principal Census Officer, District Census Officer, Charge Officers, Additional Charge Officers and Urban Charge

Officers. He also detailed the procedures for appointment, training and certification of supervisors and enumerators, describing enumerators as the backbone of the operation, as they are directly responsible for collecting field-level data. The penalties prescribed under the Act and Rules were also discussed to ensure adherence and accountability.

The meeting underscored the need for careful planning to achieve reliable and accurate data. This includes appointing competent and dedicated personnel, conducting thorough training, ensuring continuous monitoring by the Principal Census Officer, and carrying out precise demarcation of House Listing Blocks (HLBs) and Enumeration Blocks (EBs) with geo-tagging. Proper coverage of each block, without omission or duplication, was highlighted as essential to maintaining data integrity.

Officers were also introduced to the CMMS and Self-Enumeration portals, designed to be secure, multilingual and user-friendly. The shift to digital monitoring through the CMMS portal will enable real-time oversight, thereby improving administrative efficiency and strengthening data quality.