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Sikkim's first Tulip Garden inaugurated in Ravangla

Ravangla, Mar 12: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling attended the Tulip Festival cum Inspirational Talk programme for school and college students at the congregation hall of Thathagata Tsal, Ravangla, South Sikkim today. Organized by the Thathagata Tsal Committee in co-ordination with HRDD, the programme had the presence of SIA Speaker K.N. Rai, Area MLA cum Minister D.D. Bhutia, Minister GM, Gurung, Chairmen, Advisors, School Heads, HODs and students at large.



At the onset of the program, the Chief Minister inaugurated Sikkim's first Tulip Garden in the premises of Thathagata Tsal. Thereafter, the CM along with his spouse attended the three-day purifying ceremony and offered their prayers at the main shrine of Thathagata Tsal.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Pawan Chamling spoke about the education scenario in the state and highlighted the various components of modern age and technology namely human rights, democracy, artificial intelligence, sustainable development and many more.

The CM emphasized that the State Government has provided equal rights and ample opportunities

for the youths in the field of education and that the aim of the government is to create educated youths who can take responsible decisions and stand against any challenges in life.

He also shared his vision of transforming Sikkim into a progressive model state in terms of development, quality health, education and standard of living.

The CM underlined that the State Government has consistently focused on providing improved facilities and infrastructure, ensuring adequate number of trained and capable teachers with good professional skills and improving the curriculum and teaching practice in the state.

Further, the CM reiterated how all Sikkimese students are entitled to avail free education in the state at CCT Chisopani and ATTC Bardang. He also announced various vacancies being created by the State Government to provide avenues of employment for the youths.

Tea plucking disrupted in 3 gardens over bonus

Darjeeling, Mar 12: Ahead of the Hill Business Summit starting on Tuesday in Darjeeling, plucking operations in at least three tea gardens were disrupted on Monday as the Darjeeling Terai Doosars Plantation Labourers Union agitated against non-payment of Paja bonus.

The CM also spoke about the State Government's start-up scheme and urged the youths to understand the imperativeness of skill based education and emphasized the need for them to tap business opportunities in Organic Farming. He further enumerated about the various pension plans conceptualized by the State Government catering to varied categories.

Singhvi, five others file nominations for RS polls from West Bengal

Kolkata, Mar 12: Trinamool Congress nominee Abhishek Manu Singhvi and five other candidates on Monday filed their papers for the March 23 Rajya Sabha elections for five seats from West Bengal.

Subhashish Chakraborty, Abir Biswas, Santanu Sen and Nadimul Haque from the Trinamool, and Communist Party of India-Marxist's Rabin Deb were the others to file their nominations at the Assembly during the day, making a contest inevitable in case none of these candidates opts out.

He claimed that only 14 out of 87 gardens in Darjeeling have cleared the dues. After a tripartite meeting between unions, tea garden owners and the government in September last year, it was decided that the bonus for the financial year 2016-17 would be paid at 19.75 per cent of the annual wage earnings.

"Disruption of plucking operations in three gardens was reported today (Monday) and officials in these gardens were also gheraoed. Estate management are bound to pay bonus at the agreed amounts.

We sought more time as the industry is facing financial crisis. We have promised to pay dues of bonus by March 23," the Darjeeling Tea Association's principal advisor Sandeep Mukherjee told IANS.

The 87 gardens in the hills produce around 8 million kg of tea annually. However, production as well as the industry were severely hit last year following a 104-day strike demanding a separate state of Gokhaldan.

Lack of opportunity in state causing exodus of trained nurses: TW Lepcha

Gangtok, Mar 12: Sikkim is witnessing exodus of its trained nurses to neighboring Bengal owing to the lack of employment opportunities in Sikkim, alleges Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha the former Sikkim Pradesh TMC general secretary.

"Most of the aspiring nurses from Sikkim are getting regular jobs in West Bengal in areas like Malda, Jalpaiguri, Islampur, Murshidabad etc. Our skilled human resource is draining outside our home soil due to lack of opportunity," read a press note from Lepcha alleging the government of rampant mismanagement in employment sector.

"In 2012, Sikkim Public Service Commission (SPSC) created 32 job vacancies for staff nurses and the youths had to pay Rs.100 to apply for the

same to which the interview was not conducted.

The same post was carried forward and advertised on August 10, 2015 and the last date to submit the forms were declared on September 2015" adds the press note as Lepcha laments that the exams are yet to be conducted even after lapse of more than two years time.

"Nearly 1100 educated unemployed youths had applied for the post. This exam was never conducted. It's really annoying to see our capable daughters and sisters after studying rigorously for many years have to go outside the state to look for regular govt. jobs in the health sector when their services as a nurse, a noble profession, could have healed many in our homeland," Lepcha further states.

'Mamata's outrage at Lenin statue destruction is crocodile tears'

Kolkata, Mar 12: A CPI(M) Politburo member in West Bengal has alleged Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee's outrage at the destruction of a statue of Russian revolutionary Lenin in Tripura last week was nothing but "crocodile tears".

Surya Kanta Mishra, CPI(M)'s West Bengal secretary, says the TMC, after coming to power in 2011, had demolished multiple statues of Lenin in West Bengal.

"The chief minister now thinks that Lenin statues should be there. But how could we forget that after two Assembly elections in 2011 and 2016, her party had, along with attacking leftists, destroyed Lenin's statue in (Kolkata's) Jadavpur and Garbeta (in West Midnapore)," Mishra said.

He further said, "There is no reason to be happy seeing her concern towards leftists. In fact, we are not (happy)," said the senior CPI(M) leader.

No Trinamool Congress leader could be found to be accepting the fact that the party workers had destroyed Lenin's statues in Bengal.

A TMC MP said, "Had such incidents taken place, it would have been the direct reflection of people's anger. We did not do anything like what BJP did in Tripura—destroying a statue and raising slogans like Bharat Mata ki jai," said the MP.

Meanwhile, the CPI(M) is also miffed at the cooperation between Trinamool Congress and Congress in a fifth Rajya Sabha seat that is due for elections.

While the CPI(M) state committee had openly asked for a non-political candidate for the seat, so that both CPI(M) and Congress could cast their vote in favour of that candidate, Congress wanted the candidature of CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury to contest the seat, so that we could support him. But he told me that he would not be able to contest, the reason for which I should have known. I understood that his party would not allow him," state Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said.

However, sensing a deal between Congress and the comrades in Bengal, Banerjee dialled Sonia Gandhi and offered support. Shortly after the phone call, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who fights many cases of Trinamool Congress leaders in Supreme Court, has been declared as a Congress candidate and Banerjee lost no opportunity to announce support for his candidature, Rahul Gandhi was away in Singapore then.

The coordination between Congress and Trinamool Congress, which Singhvi has maintained to be nothing but an 'adjustment', could lead to a broad alliance between Congress and Trinamool Congress in next year's Lok Sabha election. Even if the left seems to be going into oblivion, the Congress has some vote share in Murshidabad and Malda districts in West Bengal and few 'enclaves' of influence in North Bengal, where Trinamool Congress is pitted against a raging support base of the BJP.

It remains to be seen whether Congress in Bengal accepts the TMC's support or not.

However, a state Congress leader and member of AICC said, "If BJP is the main enemy here in Bengal, we will support TMC."

table in case none of these candidates opts out. Singhvi's nomination had 40 proposers—20 each from the Congress and the Trinamool.

After completing the formalities, Singhvi called for preventing any division in the anti-BJP votes in the country in order to "stop the march of divisive forces".

"In the present situation, it is our task to stop the march of divisive forces and the Bharatiya Janata Party in the country. And, for this, we need to

ensure there is no division in the anti-BJP votes," he said. West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee has announced her party support for Singhvi.

Elections to the five upper house seats have been necessitated as the terms of Kunal Ghosh, Vivek Gupta, and Nadimul Haque of the TMC and Tapan Sen of CPI-M will end on April 2.

Mukul Roy, who left the Trinamool last year and joined the BJP, has resigned from the upper house of Parliament.

NIA summons ex-Nagaland CM in 'terror funding' case

New Delhi, Mar 12: The NIA has summoned former Nagaland Chief Minister T.R. Zeliang for questioning in connection with an alleged "tax collection and terror funding" case, an official said on Monday.

The case pertains to alleged extortion by groups such as NSCN(CK), NSCN(IM) and Naga National Council from at least 14 government departments.

Zeliang has been asked to appear at the National Investigation Agency headquarters here on Tuesday with relevant



documents. Ahead of the Assembly election in the state, the NIA had summoned Zeliang's Officer on Special Duty and two

of his office staff for questioning in connection with the alleged terror funding case.

49 dead in Nepal plane crash

Kathmandu, Mar 12: At least 49 people were killed and 23 injured when a passenger plane of the US-Bangla Airlines crashed and exploded into a ball of flame at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) here on Monday, authorities said.

"Forty-nine people were killed in the incident. Now we are carrying out rescue operations," Biswajit Pokharel, a senior police official involved in the rescue operation at TIA, told Xinhua news agency.



The 78-seater Bombardier Dash 8 aircraft, with 71 people on board, was flying from Dhaka to Kathmandu. It veered off the runway and caught fire while landing at 2.20 p.m., said TIA spokesperson Prem Nath Thakur.

All flights in and out of the Tribhuvan International Airport were cancelled. The airport was reopened later.

Pandey, adding that the plane was flying very low, just enough to be above the control tower. A survivor, Nepalese travel agent Basanta Bohora, recounted from his hospital bed his experience during the fateful crash-landing.

After a normal take-off from Dhaka, the plane began to behave strangely as it approached Kathmandu, he said. "All of a sudden the plane shook violently and there was a loud bang," he was quoted as saying by the Kathmandu Post.

"I was seated near the window and was able to break out of the window," Bohora said.

"I have no recollection after I got out of the plane. Someone took me to Sinamangal Hospital and from there my friends brought me to Norvic (Hospital). I have received injuries to my head and legs, but I am fortunate that I survived the ordeal."

Director General of Civil

Aviation Authority of Nepal Sanjiv Gautam said the plane lost control when it attempted to land on the runway. "The aircraft was permitted to land from the southern side of the runway flying over Koteswor but it landed from the northern side," said Gautam, adding that the aircraft might have sustained technical glitches.

"We are yet to ascertain the reason behind the un-

usual landing," he said.

Photos and videos posted on social media showed smoke rising from the airport runway. Witnesses said the plane crashed when trying to take a sharp turn over the runway. My Republica reported, "I saw the plane make a sharp turn over the terminal back towards south and then disappeared towards the runway. Then immediately a large plume of smoke was seen," said Arnico

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Contd. on Page 8

Contd. on Page 8