

LEARN IT from Sikkim

Schools in the state are successfully providing nutritious and locally-flavoured diet to children at the primary and upper primary levels, fulfilling the goals of the food-at-school scheme

BY SHALINTA RAI

On a lonely hill far from the bustle of the city stands Gangtok's Enchey Senior Secondary School. Come noon, the hill reverberates with the happy chatter of excited children — all clad in brown *Bakkhus* — as they rush out of their classes and make their way toward the “kitchen window”. Here, they queue up with steel bowls in their hands, waiting for their daily meal. On a meat-serving day, the excitement levels are a notch or two higher.

Enchey Senior Secondary School, and many more in and around Gangtok and across the state, became part of the ambitious Mid-Day Meal Scheme in 1995, when the country realised the need to feed its schoolchildren — in order to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improve nutritional levels among them.

Eighteen years down the line, Sikkim has become a role model in implementing this scheme. Every school-going child in the state gets his or her mid-day meal — even children in schools in far-flung areas close to the Indo-China border.

The Enchey Senior Secondary School is as good an example as any of the way the scheme is implemented on the ground.

A small, unpainted kitchen serves as the hub of the operation to serve the children wholesome meals. Today, it is the turn of potato curry and steaming hot rice. The

quality of the food is controlled and strict guidelines are followed to maintain its nutritious value. As a routine exercise, before the food is served, staff boy Gyan Bahadur takes the cooked food to the principal for a personal quality check. Once the students from lower classes are done with the meal, upper primary students and the rest take over, and the exercise is repeated.

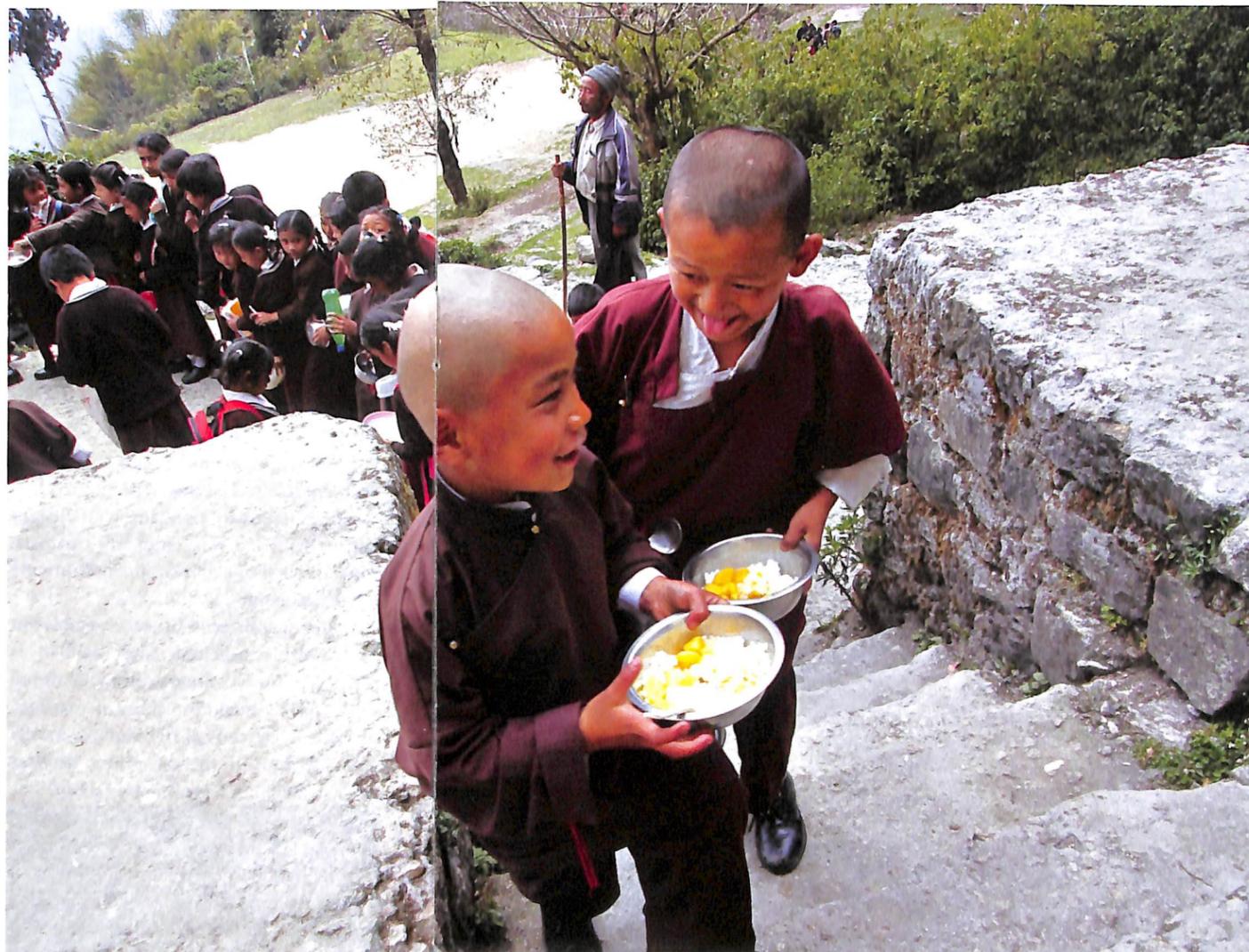
“We serve a different menu each day that includes various kinds of lentils (pulses) and vegetables; Saturday is the day for chicken or eggs, prepared in a proper Sikkimese way,” say the cooks, Suren Manger and his wife Dawa Doma, while serving the hot food to children.

“Children like our preparations as they are done in the local way, keeping the indigenous taste and flavour. For the record, the attendance at the kitchen window is maximum on the meat days,” says Suren with a broad smile.

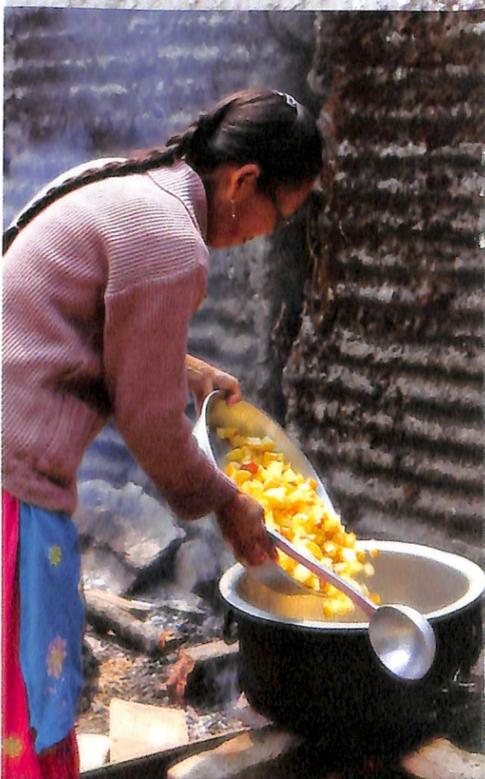
And how has the response of the parents, who sometimes escort their children to the food serving outlet, been? “So far, no complaints,” says the cook, with considerable pride.

There are, however, problems that the duo face.

“During winters, there is scarcity of water, which makes things difficult at times. As far as stocks are concerned, the vegetable contractor brings it every Sunday. The rest of the items, including LPG cylinders, are



PHOTOS: SHALINTA RAI



ACCORDING TO C.S. RAO, SECRETARY, STATE HRDD, “THE SCHEME IS BENEFICIAL FOR RETENTION AS WELL AS PROVIDING NUTRITIOUS FOOD TO THE CHILDREN. THE MOST CRUCIAL LINK IS THAT THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION AND MILLIONS OF STUDENTS ARE NOW PART OF MID-DAY MEALS.”

being provided by the Women's Cooperative Society, Upper Chanmari, headed by Aruna Mukhia,” says the school manager. The foodgrain is brought in by private transporters from the Food Corporation of India's godown.

The kitchen shed looks clean. It has two big drums filled with water and a gas oven with an electric heater. There are also large cooking pots with lids. On the shelves are a few plates and bowls for members of the staff and senior secondary students.

“Kids, especially in Sikkim's towns, are well off. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is for children who come from the rural hinterland and remote places,” says Sonam Denzongpa, principal of Enchey Senior Secondary School.

Water supply is erratic and it is a hindrance sometimes in cooking and maintaining cleanliness. As a solution, he suggests that “instead of any other agency arranging for MDM Scheme, the task should be given to school teachers for the better management of resources”.

SIKKIM SHOWS THE WAY

The Mid Day Meal scheme was implemented in Sikkim on August 15, 1995 for boosting Universalisation of Elementary Education. To begin with, students were provided three kilos of uncooked rice which they had to carry home. Later, this facility was extended to students up to Class 5. It was only from October 2002 that the provision for cooked meals to students was made.

Sikkim, like any other state, is allocated foodgrains and has to get infrastructure like kitchen sheds. Out of 859 kitchen sheds to be constructed, 96 were earlier said to be incomplete. However, according to state HRDD, those have been completed by now. The HRDD releases funds for execution of work to the schools and procures material like GCI sheets.

In the year 2006-07, only 245 kitchen sheds sanctioned by the central government in the first stage were completed within the stipulated time. Whereas in the second stage, out of 555 sanctioned, 518 were completed till 2011.

As per 2006 records, average number of children who actually availed Mid-Day Meal was 1,02,520. The quantity of foodgrains recorded to have been utilised stand at 1,6857 metric tonnes and the meals served were 1,9068,720 during 180 working days.

The numbers showed a decreasing trend in the 2007 academic session, when average number of children who availed of MDM daily stood at 88,124.

During 2008, Primary School and Upper Primary School students both were served cooked meals. Here, average number of children who availed of the facility daily at Primary level was 79,312 and 22,925 at Upper Primary level. During 2009, the figures show only 63,391 children availing it daily. In 2010, at Primary level, 67,395 children and at Upper Primary level, 27,554 children could be covered daily.

The rate of cooking cost was Rs.1.8 per child per school day in 2006; Rs.3.05 in 2007; Rs.4.03 in 2008; and Rs. 4 in 2010. At times, less cooking cost against the foodgrains utilised is said to have been recorded.

— Nita Nirash

SIKKIM'S OWN KITCHEN GARDEN

At the Government Secondary School in Namcheybong, Pakyong, mothers of the students have a larger role to play as far as the quality of mid-day meal is concerned. The school has made a committee of mothers that ensures the proper serving of the meal to children.

What's more, seasonal vegetables are procured directly from the school's own kitchen garden — thus fulfilling the motive of serving healthy and nutritious food to the children.

According to school in-charge Ratan Gurung, the number of children provided with meals at the Primary level is 88, and for the Upper Primary level it is 167.

"Here, people don't send their wards to school for free meals; education is the top-most priority for them," says Gurung.

A suggestion box hanging by the kitchen draws one's attention. "This box is for students and parents to share what they feel about the meal being served, on how to make it more tasty and appealing," says Gurung.

The school authorities try their best to manage and serve better quality of food everyday. And this is well appreciated by children who feel the meal quality is good. There are two main centres for the distribution of foodgrain in Sikkim — Jorethang and Rangpo. While Rangpo caters to schools in the East and North districts, Jorethang caters to schools in the South and West districts.

Foodgrains are supplied free of cost by the central government through the Food Corporation of India (FCI) at the rate of 100 grams per child to Primary School children and 150 grams to Upper Primary children.

However, there are certain observations which can be considered to make the MDM Scheme more successful. For instance, the cook's stipend is just Rs.1,000 a month, which is negligible. Keeping this in mind, the school contributes an extra Rs.2,000 a month.

There are also problems with maintaining budgets of the MDM Scheme. To remove such bottlenecks, we need to understand the whole concept. The states need to pitch in to make this a great success. —Shalinta Rai



According to the state Human Resource Development Department (HRDD), the School Managing Committees have been authorised to appoint responsible local women, Self-Help Groups or NGOs as cooking agencies for providing nutritious meals to the students. The head of the institution in every government school has been assigned the responsibility of issuing the required quantity of rice every week.

According to C.S. Rao, Secretary, HRDD, "The scheme is beneficial for retention as well as providing nutritious food to the children. The most crucial thing is that there is no discrimination and millions of students are now part of the MDMS."

Pema Bhutia, assistant project officer, MDM, was all praise for the scheme, though he admitted to some problems. The honorarium of Rs.1,000 being paid to each cook, for instance, is too low. On the delays in construction of kitchen sheds in some schools, he said that in the Lachung and Dzumsa areas some schools don't have land for constructing sheds. Some schools have enrolment issues. Otherwise, the scheme is a thumping success in the state, he says.

"What is needed is sensitising authorities regarding cooking cost and quantity of foodgrain to be provided to children. The University of North Bengal is the monitoring agency and professors visit schools to take stock of the ground reality across Sikkim," he states.

MDM IN SIKKIM: SOME FACTS

Institutes to be covered under the scheme in the state in the academic year 2013-14 include government schools, monastic schools and Sanskrit pathshalas.

Besides, private unaided Scheduled Tribe schools have also been included. There are 438 primary-level government schools. Out of which 114 primary schools are in the east, 136 in the west, 46 in the north and 142 in the south.

Altogether, 85 monastic primary-level schools and 13 Sanskrit pathshalas at the primary level are being covered now.

Twenty-three private-unaided Scheduled Tribe institutions too have been proposed to be covered under the scheme. The upper-primary level schools include 332 government schools, one monastic school, two Sanskrit pathshalas and two Scheduled Tribe unaided private schools.

According to C.S. Rao, "During the year 2012-13, the allocation of foodgrain was such: 1,430 metric tonnes of rice for primary-level students and 1,062 tonnes of rice for upper primary-level students. Of the total 2,492 tonnes, 1,152 tonnes of rice was actually utilised for the primary level, whereas 801.52 tonnes was utilised for the upper primary-level."

The average number of students who availed of MDM Scheme was 52,817 and 32,117 at primary and upper primary levels respectively.

The cooking cost varied from Rs.3.25 per child in April-June 2012 to Rs.3.45 between July 2012 and March 2013 for primary level and Rs. 4.35-4.65 in July-March (2012-13) for Upper Primary level. — Nita Nirash

POWERLESS IN THE N-E

Prolonged dry spells leading to falling water levels in rivers and reservoirs of all the major hydel power projects have resulted in a severe power crisis in the North-East. Sikkim, however, shows the way

BY SUJIT CHAKRABORTY

“With continual improvement of infrastructure and communication facilities, the North-Eastern region stands to become the Power House of India by utilising its surplus power potential, especially in the hydel sector.”

— Excerpt from a North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) document

Despite having the potential to generate over 70,000 MW of hydro power, as the NEEPCO document suggests, the electricity crisis in the North-East has worsened during the current summer season due to prolonged dry spells leading to falling water levels in rivers and reservoirs of all the major hydel power projects.

Due to the severe power crisis, drinking water supply, irrigation facilities and industrial activities have become irregular across the region, spanning seven states — excluding Sikkim, which is the

only state with a power surplus (see boxes).

“The power-starved North-Eastern region has been hit by a severe electricity crisis since the beginning of March following dry spells,” Tripura Power Minister Manik Dey said, adding: “Most of the hydel power plants in the region have either stopped or reduced generation to a large extent due to severe shortage of water in their reservoirs, making the situation worse. Gas- and coal-based power projects also sharply reduced generation capacity due to numerous reasons.”

has been 60-70 percent deficit in rainfall in the North-Eastern region so far. However, rainfall is almost normal in Arunachal Pradesh.”

The power crisis has affected industries, irrigation and drinking water supply, but priority from the available supply has been given to hospitals, drinking water, irrigation sector and other emergency services, officials said.

The Tripura State Electricity Corporation Ltd.’s (TSECL) chairman-cum-managing director Niladri Sekhar Chakraborty said the current demand-supply gap of electricity ranges between 60-70 percent in most of the North-Eastern region.

“The electricity crisis has also been affecting industrial and business activities,” Chakraborty said, adding that the demand has also risen by 25-30 percent due to mounting temperatures.

The peak hour demand of power in the North-East is around 2,300 MW.

According to officials monitoring the situation, the region’s major hydel projects — Nagaland’s Doyang (generation capacity 75 MW), Assam’s Kopili 1 and

ACCORDING TO THE METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT, AFTER THE FOUR-MONTH MONSOON PERIOD (JUNE TO SEPTEMBER) LAST YEAR, THERE HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY NO RAIN IN THE REGION OR, AT BEST, ONLY SCANTY AMOUNTS, LEADING TO DECREASED WATER FLOW.

“The situation might deteriorate further if the region did not receive rain within the next few weeks.”

According to officials of the Meteorological Department, after the four-month monsoon period (June to September) last year, there has been practically no rain in the region or, at best, only scanty amounts, leading to decreased water flow.

Dilip Saha, Director, Meteorological Department, said: “The ongoing dry spell during the pre-monsoon period (March-May) is an unusual phenomenon. There

Kopili 2 (200 MW and 25 MW) and Khandong (50 MW), Manipur’s Loktak (105 MW) and Arunachal’s Ranganadi (405 MW) — have seen their generation dip by a fourth to one-fifth.

Moreover, these projects are being run only a few hours a day, they added.

Assam has been reeling under acute power shortage. While the average peak demand for power has reached about 1,100 MW — a two-fold increase over the last five years due to increased economic activity — the availability is a little more than 800 MW from all sources.

AMID SHORTAGE, SIKKIM LOOKS AT FREE POWER

With an ambitious target of establishing an additional 4,000 MW of hydropower producing projects by 2015, the Himalayan state is going to ask for higher percentage of free share of the power output from these projects to ensure high amount of additional gain.

“Against usually agreed free share of 12 percent of output by the developing agencies for us as host state, we are preparing to ask for higher percentage as our own free share. We are preparing papers to take up this issue with the Centre,” Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling has said.

Under the present system, private or public entrepreneurs developing hydropower projects in Sikkim are supposed to give 12 percent of the output to Sikkim free of cost for the first 10 years. In the following years, this share is to increase to 15 percent. “Now we will ask for minimum 15 percent from the very first year and also, maybe, subsequent escalation of that afterward,” the Chief Minister said.

According to the Central Electricity Authority’s latest status report, against present peak demand of 117 MW and total annual demand of 440 Million Units of power, Sikkim already has a steady supply of near 100 MW at peak demand or around 400 Million Units in total. By 2016, the demand is likely to go up to 144 MW or 528 Million Units. The state hosts 800 MW of financially viable potential.

But by then, the new 4,000 MW installed capacity will add an additional 480 MW of free power (at the present 12 percent rate) to Sikkim’s bag, making it a state with over 300 percent excess power in hand to trade for financial gain.

But, at the proposed 15 percent rate, this excess figure will touch 400 percent, giving an even greater boost to Sikkim’s exchequer.

“Hydropower is our compulsion. Without much of other resources in hand, we have no alternative other than proper management and utilisation of our hydropower potential,” said Chamling.



Assam is mainly dependent on hydro generation. Most of these hydro generators are sourced through Run on River (RoR) hydel projects which are solely dependent on the rainfall in the respective catchments areas. As far as the gas-based thermal power stations are concerned, they are generating far below their full capacities due to inadequate supply of gas.

The situation is no better in Meghalaya where only one-third of the total electricity is available to domestic consumers. The rest is used by industries. Meghalaya has a total requirement of around 630 MW that is likely to grow many times in the coming

THE REGION'S MAJOR HYDEL PROJECTS — NAGALAND'S DOYANG (GENERATION CAPACITY 75 MW), ASSAM'S KOPILI ONE AND KOPILI TWO (200 MW AND 25 MW) AND KHANDONG (50 MW), MANIPUR'S LOKTAK (105 MW) AND ARUNACHAL'S RANGANADI (405 MW) — HAVE SEEN THEIR GENERATION DIP BY A FOURTH TO ONE-FIFTH. THESE PROJECTS ARE BEING RUN ONLY A FEW HOURS A DAY.

years. The state is giving power to industrial units at a subsidised rate. At present, Meghalaya is producing around 186 MW, besides the 42 MW being generated from the Myntdu-Leshka Hydel project in the Jaintia Hills. The total power generated, including those from central sectors, is around 397 MW.

In Manipur, while consumers are reeling under 16-20 hours of load shedding a day, the small-scale industry has almost died for want of power. While the power requirement is 170 MW, the state is getting barely 50 MW from different sources.

The power generation at the 105 MW

Loktak hydroelectric power project — on which the state had been pinning high hopes — has been affected due to low water levels in the Loktak lake. Manipur is getting only a minuscule 3 MW out of this crucial project. The state is additionally getting 2 MW from the North Eastern Hydroelectric Power Project that used to supply 36 MW to Manipur earlier.

Arunachal Pradesh, which, ironically, has the potential to generate an estimated 58,000 MW hydro-power generation, is also facing a severe power crisis for the last few months.

The state is said to be suffering from a supply shortfall due to rapidly drying river sources — a factor that is affecting the supply to the whole of North-East. The hilly state receives between 84 MW and 34 MW during peak and non-peak hours, respectively, against a peak-hour demand of about 130 MW.

Tripura's lone mini Dambur hydel power project (8 MW capacity) has

Eastern states. "The region must think in terms of having a uniform hydel power policy so that the power sector can be developed in a coordinated manner," he said, reiterating Arunachal Pradesh's potential for producing 50,000 MW of hydel power — but most of the proposed hydel power projects in the state have hit

ACCORDING TO EXPERTS, NORTH-EAST INDIA HAS THE POTENTIAL OF PRODUCING 70,000 MW OF HYDRO ELECTRICITY, ENOUGH TO LIGHT UP HALF OF INDIA. BUT THE REGION IS REELING UNDER POWER SHORTAGE DUE TO SLOW DEVELOPMENT OF NEW POWER PROJECTS. THE REGION IS PRODUCING POWER AT JUST 2-3 PERCENT OF ITS ACTUAL POTENTIAL DUE TO VARIOUS BOTTLENECKS.



stopped functioning for several months due to the water crisis.

Even as the experts contend that the North-East has the potential of producing 70,000 MW of hydro electricity, enough to light up half of India, the region is reeling under power shortage due to the slow development of new power projects. The region is currently producing power at just 2 to 3 percent of its actual potential due to various bottlenecks.

Earlier, the state-owned NEEPCO, under its then Chairman and Managing Director I.P. Barooah, had advocated a uniform power policy for the eight North-

roadblocks of various kinds, he said.

The North-Eastern region's potential of about 70,000 MW is almost 30 percent of the country's total hydro potential. Additionally, the region has abundant resources of coal, oil and gas for thermal power generation. In spite of such huge resources, the region ranks lowest in the country in terms of per capita energy consumption. This has mainly been due to inhospitable climatic conditions and inaccessibility of geographical locations.

It's high time the Centre intervened and took initiatives to plug the electricity deficit in the North-East.

SIKKIM TEESTA HYDRO POWER PROJECT TO GO ON STREAM

A prestigious project of the Sikkim Government and Teesta Urja Limited, Teesta-III, is all set to begin functioning from June this year.

The state government, through Sikkim Power Investment Corporation Limited, obtained 26 percent shareholding in the SPV that is executing the 1,200 MW Teesta-III hydro power project — the largest in the six cascade projects on the Teesta river run.

Experts say Sikkim has set a new trend for developing hydropower projects as the state is blessed with a bounty of rivers flowing from the Himalayan glaciers during summer, when power consumption is at its peak.

Development of hydropower projects along the Himalayan river courses, thus, could be a win-win situation for the people and the government.

According to Sudip Bandyopadhyay, leading analyst and CEO of Destimony Securities: "Hydro-electricity is one of the leading sources of clean energy. For an energy-starved nation like India which has been blessed with enough rivers, the potential of generating hydro-electricity in a cost-effective manner is significant."

"At present with only 40 percent of hydropower potential being tapped, India as a country has a huge scope of exponentially increasing hydel power capacity and reducing pollution through this clean and green power," he points out.

Experts say increasing hydropower generation capacity would help in strengthening India's energy security.

Current Hydro-Projects in Sikkim

- RANGIT
- TEESTA- V Power Station
- TEESTA LOW DAM - III Project
- TEESTA LOW DAM - IV Project
- LACHEN Project
- TEESTA- IV Project
- 99MW CHUZACHEN POWER PROJECT
- 51MW BHASMEY POWER PROJECT
- 71MW SADA-MANGDER HYDRO ELECTRIC POWER PROJECT
- 500 MW Teesta VI Project
- RANGIT II POWER PROJECT (66 MW)
- RANGIT STAGE-IV PROJECT

A new beginning

During his two-day visit to Sikkim, President Pranab Mukherjee laid the foundation stone for a new campus of the Sikkim University at Yangang and dedicated the unique Siddeshwara Dham, a cultural-cum-religious centre at Solophok Hill, to the nation

BY NITA NIRASH

The people of Sikkim had something more to celebrate this Nepali New Year. They had a special guest — President Pranab Mukherjee — who visited the Himalayan state on April 16 and 17.

Sikkim Governor Balmiki Prasad Singh and Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling received the President at the Libing helipad in Gangtok. After reaching the helipad, he inspected a Guard of Honour.

Later, on a spiritual note, the President inaugurated the Siddeshwara Dham at Solophok Hill, Namchi, in South Sikkim and dedicated it to the nation.

Addressing the gathering, Mukherjee spoke about the unity of all religions. He underlined the fact that all religions teach the same messages of peace, humility, love, compassion and service to the humanity at large.

With replicas of all four important pilgrimage centres (*char dhams* at Jagannath, Dwarka, Rameshwaram and Badrinath) of the Hindus, the construction of the pilgrimage-cum-cultural centre at Solophok

aims at making Sikkim a focal point of religious tourism in the country. Conceptualised in 2005, this unique Pilgrim Centre has an 87-foot-high statue of Lord Shiva in a sitting posture.

Apart from Shiva statue, the Pilgrim Centre also has replicas of the 12 Jyotirlingas to offer one platform for Shiva devotees, a 135-foot statue of Guru

Padmasambhava, the patron saint of Sikkim, and a two-storey temple dedicated to Sai Baba. Spread over an area of approximately seven acres, the Siddeshwara Dham was dedicated to the nation by President Mukherjee to place Sikkim in the very conscience of India and the world.

On the same day, the President laid the

foundation stone of the Sikkim University's new campus. The President said the Sikkim University has the potential to emerge as a hub of knowledge, research and innovation for countries of South East Asia as well as the rest of India. He was happy that the university was trying to link the local with the universal.

Speaking of the country's glorious traditions of learning and the great educational institutions of ancient India, which attracted students and teachers from across the world, the President said India could again achieve its ancient glory if education was given the attention that it deserved.

The President called upon the authorities, students and faculty of Sikkim University to play a leading role in taking the university into the ranks of the best in the world.

Pointing out that there is no Indian



APPRECIATING THE STATE GOVERNMENT FOR CREATING AN APPROPRIATE AMBIENCE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, THE PRESIDENT CONGRATULATED THE CHIEF MINISTER FOR EMPHASISING ON ACADEMICS IN THE STATE.

University in the top 200 universities of the world and that India lags behind China and the United States in the filing of patent applications, he said there was a need for collective efforts to ensure that our Universities emerge as top class institutions.

Appreciating the state government for creating an appropriate ambience in the field of education, the President congratulated the chief minister for emphasising on the academic scenario in the state.

"Atmosphere has been created in the state and you are going in the right direction," he added.

The President also conveyed his best wishes to the Vice Chancellor of the University, faculty and the students.

Terming the moment as a new beginning for Sikkimese youth, the chief minister thanked the President for laying the foundation of the campus. While high-

lighting the activities of the state government in the education sector, Chief Minister Chamling talked about various incentives being provided to the students by the state government.

While complimenting the state government for realisation of the dream of Sikkim University, the Governor said the new campus will give a new identity, intellectual space and a sense of belonging to students. He termed the occasion a momentous one not only for the students, but also for the people of Sikkim at large.

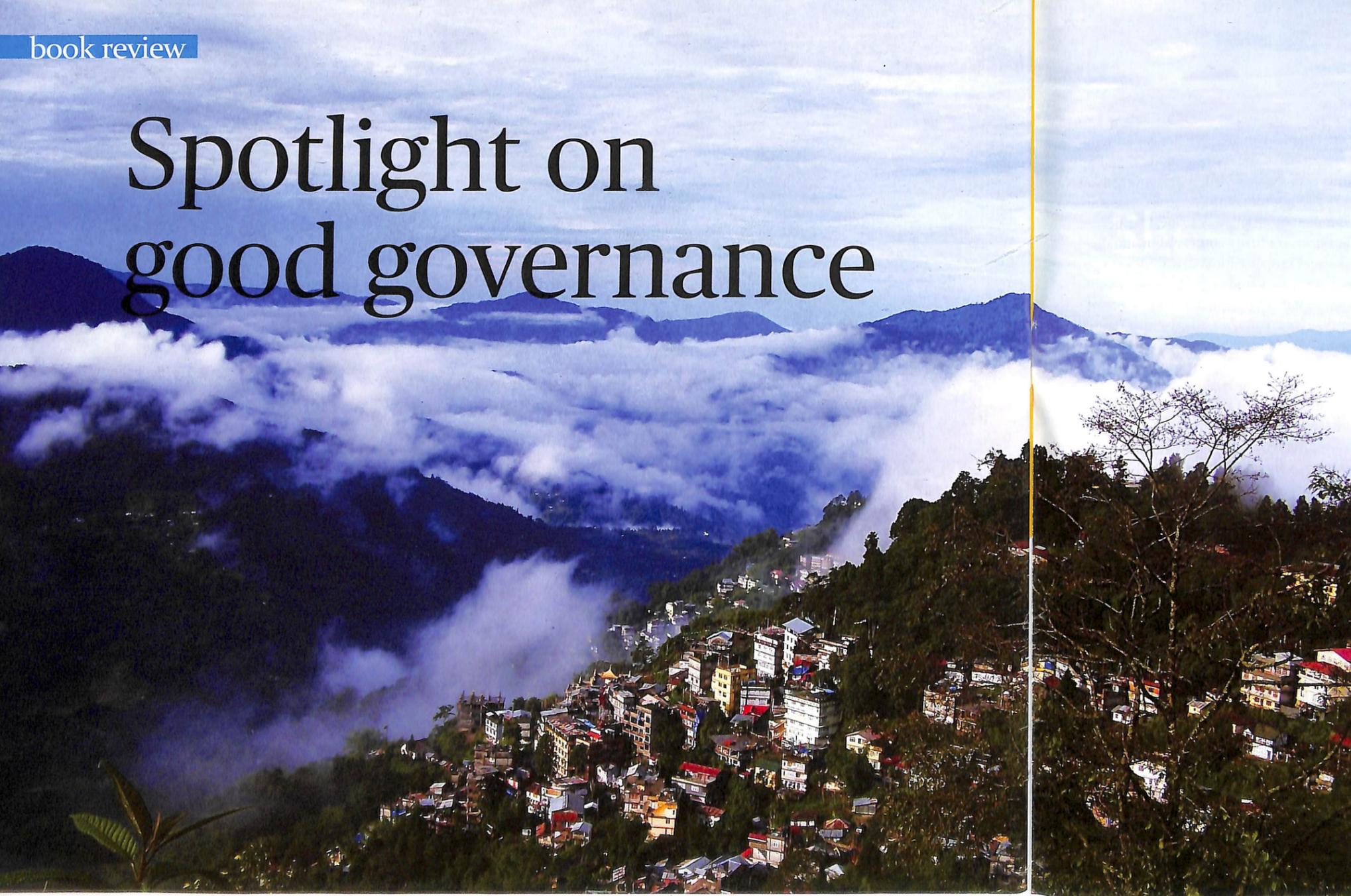
Sikkim University came into existence on July 2, 2007. As of now, it has 11 colleges affiliated to it in Sikkim. It is currently running from hired buildings situated in and around Gangtok.

Work on the new campus at Yangang, 56 kms from Gangtok, has already started on a 300-acre piece of land. The state government has handed over 265.94 acres of land for the purpose and is in the process of handing over an additional 34.06 acres.

From Yangang, the President reached Gangtok in the afternoon where he attended a cultural programme put together by the Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department at Mannan Kendra.

The President bid farewell to the state on April 17. This was the first, and very fruitful, visit of Mukherjee to Sikkim after being elected as President of India.

Spotlight on good governance



‘The Sikkim Model 1994-2013: People and Development’ makes it apparent that the fruits of good governance can overpower all other problems that a state may face, including its locational disadvantages

BY GOKUL BHAGABATI

Being at the periphery is not always easy. And for a small “mountain” state that shares international borders with three countries, one would imagine trouble simmering at all times, ready to explode at the slightest provocation. Add to that the delicate Himalayan ecosystem and you have a place naturally suited to embrace chronic under-

development and backwardness.

Sikkim, though, is an exception. It is a border state, and yet peaceful; only 14 percent of its land is fit for habitation and, yet, this hilly state has registered a double-digit growth rate for almost a decade now.

What makes Sikkim stand out from the rest of the country is not merely its success in managing the political equations of the

state quite well or ensuring a sustained high rate of economic growth, but its pioneering initiatives in the realm of social justice.

How has this been made possible? You can find the answers in ‘The Sikkim Model 1994-2013: People and Development’, which charts the path Sikkim has treaded in the past 18 years.

Chamling-led governance model — Sikkim’s tryst with democracy. Although Sikkim joined the Indian Union as late as in 1975, people came to learn and respect the democratic values enshrined in the Indian Constitution in no time. The era that this report deals with marks the consolidation of the democratic institutions at the grassroots levels. Following the formation of the State Election Commission in 1997, party-based elections in the panchayats were held for the first time. And at a time when the rest of India is still found debating 33 percent reservation for women in Parliament, one can easily look up to the example that Sikkim set by reserving 50 percent of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The atmosphere of peace and flourishing of free and open

ment and arts and crafts are quite comprehensively covered in the report. It also brings to light the commitment of the SDF to the principles of the Indian model of positive secularism. Sikkim is today the only state in the country to have a separate and independent Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs with the task of giving due recognition to the religious and cultural diversity of the state.

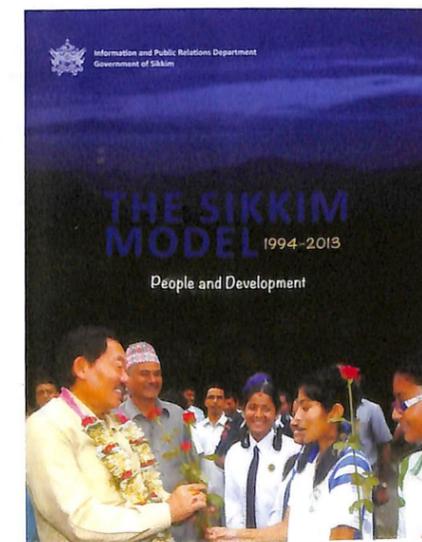
Over the last 18 years, Sikkim has undoubtedly made remarkable progress in terms of improving literacy, health and in other indicators counted in preparing the Human Development Index. Its innovative policies have also led to a drastic drop in the share of people living below the poverty line (from 41.4 percent in 1993-94 to 13 percent in 2009-10). This, the report says, has been made possible due to the government’s commitment to a model of “inclusive growth”.

Shedding further light on the Sikkim model, Chief Minister Chamling, in an interview to *The New York Times* (which is also incorporated in the report), says, “Our development mantra is innovative, based on natural resources, hydropower, organic farming, eco-tourism, floriculture and clean industries... We have turned our locational disadvantage into an opportunity by protecting our biodiversity.... If the world adopts Sikkim’s model, global warming can be tackled.”

The report makes it apparent that the fruits of good governance can overpower all other problems that a state may face. Such an approach has much to teach the rest of the nation, especially those who tend to attribute all its problems to market failures, overlooking glaring governance deficits.

As noted political scientist Pratap Bahnu Mehta, in his Foreword to the report, rightly says, “...The greatest value of this volume is that it shows how states can, with some imagination, artful political mobilisation and leadership, march ahead. Like Sikkim, I hope India will learn that the problems common to us need more attention than the dramas that divide us.”

We can only hope that the ‘Sikkim Model 1994-2013’ will help bring the experiences of this Himalayan state to the mainstream of Indian politics.



For anyone interested in understanding Sikkim’s development trajectory, this report would be a very handy starting point as it does not simply collate dispersed data but offers a perspective on how Sikkim is positioned in relation to global development narratives and how well it is prepared to face the challenges of the future. Interspersed with pictures and brief analysis of the data whenever required, the report bears a very pleasant and inviting aura, strikingly different from the imposing nature of many such government publications.

The report also highlights another very important aspect of the Pawan Kumar

media during Chamling’s tenure as chief minister has also contributed towards the strengthening of the state’s democratic institutions.

This is despite the absolute majority of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) in the Assembly for four consecutive terms. And perhaps because of such an unlikely combination — dominance of one party and strengthening of grassroots democratic institutions — that the report starts with a chapter on local self-governance. In nine chapters, the state’s role in ensuring social justice, development of infrastructure, creation of human capital, rural development, urban resurgence, sustainable develop-