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**TOUR REPORT OF SHRI ANIL KUMAR AGARWAL, IAS, SECRETARY,  
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES, GOVERNMENT OF  
INDIA, NEW DELHI IN RESPECT OF HIS TOUR TO SIKKIM FROM  
26.06.2016 TO 01.07.2016.**

Shri Agarwal, Secretary, NCST on 26.06.2016 evening reached Pelling, Sikkim by road from Bagdogra airport. He on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 morning visited Denzong Pema Choling Academy. It's Founder-Director Mr. Sonam Yongda welcomed the Secretary, NCST and showed him around the Academy. The Academy, set up in 1980, was currently providing education to children from nursery to class 10. It had 197 students, of which 50 were day scholars and the rest were hostellers. About 50 of these students belonged to West Sikkim district and the remaining 147 students belonged to East and North Sikkim districts. The school had 16 teachers and 27 staff.

2. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs provided grant to the Academy of about Rs. 28 lacs per annum. The State Government provided one teacher. Rest of the expenses were met through donations. The Founder-Director of the Academy gave lectures in the monastery and the donation received through such lectures were ploughed back to the Academy. The infrastructure of the Academy needed improvement, both in terms of building and furniture. The kitchen needed gas supply as well as new utensils. The Founder-Director requested that this Academy be supported on the pattern of Eklavaya Model Residential School. It appeared from the discussions with Mr. Yongda that the Academy was catering to very poor children from three districts of the State. They needed support to improve the quality of education. The State Govt. may look into it.

3. Thereafter, the Secretary, NCST visited Yuksam Primary Health Centre, which was catering to four villages having largely tribal population. Dr. Rina Tamang, the GDMO-in-charge of the PHC welcomed the Secretary, NCST and showed him around the PHC. It was a single doctor dispensary. The Secretary, NCST was told that the average OPD attendance was about 30 per day. However, on checking the OPD registration, it was found that the OPD registration during the last 7 days was only about 10 to 15 patients per day. The PHC had 10 beds. Dr. Tamang mentioned that on an average 25 patients were registered for in-patient treatment every month. They conducted on average 7 deliveries per month. Medicines were

generally available. In case of shortage, the GDMO purchased the same from out of funds available under Røgi Kalyan Samiti.

4. The PHC was quite neat and clean. It had adequate building infrastructure, including on-campus quarters for the doctor and nursing staff. The patient load appeared to be quite comfortable for one doctor. However, Dr. Tamang mentioned that due to various programs of the Health Ministry, she has to very often go to the field and during that period medical attendance at the PHC suffered. She also mentioned that the PHC needed fencing to prevent ingress of cattle. The State Government may look into in these two issues.

5. The Secretary, NCST interacted with villagers of Yuksam village at the PHC premises. On enquiry, the villagers mentioned that they did not have any particular problem of drinking water. However, they did mention that drinking water was brought through pipes to the tank in the village. There was no intermediate siltation tank. Also, there was no system of testing of this water. The villagers mentioned that 100% Aadhaar Coverage had been achieved. Jan Dhan coverage was also 100%. Aadhaar seeding was also 100%. Also, most of the people had got themselves enrolled under Prime Minister’s Jeevan Suraksha Yojna. Under NREGA, 100 days of work was available.

6. The villagers did not have any particular problem relating to public distribution system. However, the villagers mentioned two specific problems. Firstly, at times during monsoon, food grain supply was disturbed due to dislocation in road communication. Secondly, kerosene supply was inadequate. The villagers mentioned that substantial amount of kerosene was apparently diverted toward black market. They mentioned that power supply was very erratic.

7. Enrolment in Government school was poor as people were sending their children to either other government schools, such as Eklavaya Model School or Kasturba Gandhi Girls School or to private schools. Government schools were apparently the last option. Children were finding good work opportunities in as porters or as drivers, etc. due to high level of tourism activities. This led to considerable drop out of children from schools.

8. They mentioned that cardamom cultivation was the most important crop in the area. However, plants had become old and new plants were required to be planted. The saplings

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were costing rupees 7 per piece in the market. State Government may look into it, so that assistance could be provided to the famers under the National Horticulture Mission.

9. The villagers expressed concern that the reservation of additional tribes as Scheduled Tribes and delimitation of Assembly constituencies for newly added Scheduled Tribes were very motive issues and had the potential to divide the society.

10. Thereafter, the Secretary, NCST visited Eklavaya Model Residential School (EMRS), Gangyop. The School was setup in 2006. It currently had 354 students. About 50% of the students belonged to the local area and the remaining 50% came from other areas in West Sikkim district. Only Tribal students were eligible to be admitted in this school. It covered classes 6 to 12. The intake of students at class 6 was about 60. They had 22 students in science stream and 20 students in humanities stream in classes 11 and 12. Some of the students had dropped out before reaching class 11. The size of each section in the school was 60 students and they had one section each for classes 6 to 10. Laboratory and library facilities were just about manageable. They had 15 teachers. However, they didn't have teachers with post graduate qualification in Physics and Chemistry.

11. On the day of the visit, entrance test was going on for admitting students to class 6. There were 111 applicants for 60 seats- 30 for boys and 30 for girls. There were 55 male applicants and 56 female applicants. It did indicate that the people in the area felt that this school was providing better education than other schools.

12. The Secretary, NCST interacted with the Headmaster, teachers and some member of the managing committee of the school. The school had a number of administrative problems, particularly relating to the salary and increment of the teachers. The building infrastructure of the school building and boy's hostel were incomplete. The girl's hostel was functioning in a hired premises. As per EMRS Scheme, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs was to provide an all inclusive grant of Rs. 42,000 per student per year. This grant was to be increased after every 2 years, which had not been done. The Secretary, NCST advised that the State Government may look into these issues and also take up the matter with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, so that the school could function as envisaged under the EMRS Scheme.

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13. The Secretary, NCST also interacted with the students of classes 11 and 12. The students were very happy to be studying at this school and they had all praise for their teachers. Thereafter, the Secretary, NCST left for Namchi and halted there.

14. The Secretary, NCST on 28 June, 2016 visited District Hospital Namchi. The medical Superintendent of the hospital welcomed the Secretary, NCST and took him around the hospital. Thereafter, Secretary, NCST had a discussion with Medical Superintendent and some of his colleagues. It was a 130 bedded hospital having bed occupancy of about 92%. The total OPD attendance during the previous year was 114000. They had 8 beds in the causality ward, which appeared to be adequate. They had 5 OT tables and additional 4 tables in the Labour OT. They were doing about 90 deliveries per month. The expansion of the hospital to a 300 bedded hospital was under process. The present hospital did not have piped oxygen supply in wards. Currently, they were using oxygen cylinders. This facility was proposed to be provided under NHM as a part of the expansion of the hospital to 300 bedded hospital. The backup power had multiple sources- generator, inverter and solar power. They were in the process of getting one more generator.

15. The hospital was getting the services of one dermatologist twice a week, from the State hospital. They had one sanctioned post of paediatrician and they felt that they needed one more. Similarly, they had one sanctioned post of anaesthetic and they felt they needed one more. They had 3 gynaecologists. They had sanctioned strength of 84 ANMs of which only 70 were available. They felt that they needed additional 7 persons in the categories of male and female ward attendants. Four posts of sweepers were vacant as the earlier incumbents had retired recently. They felt that they needed four more persons in the category of security staff. The hospital was facing some shortage of water. The Secretary, NCST was informed that Namchi was generally short of water. The hospital did not face any problem regarding supply of medicines. Whenever there was occasional shortage of medicines, the hospital could purchase it locally. Tender formalities for the purpose had already been completed. They felt that they needed 5 more GDMOs.

16. Overall, the hospital appeared to be a well-functioning hospital. They were getting lots of patients from the neighbouring districts, particularly from the neighbouring areas. The hospital needed to complete the planned expansion to 300 bedded hospital quickly and it should have requisite equipment and man power.

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17. Thereafter, the Secretary, NCST visited Jaubari village in South Sikkim district and interacted with the villagers. The villagers mentioned that the state government had declared the entire state to be organic. As they were not allowed to use chemical fertilisers or pesticides, the agricultural production had gone down. They needed poly-houses from government. They were selling their agricultural produce to tourists passing through the village as well as in Sunday hat in Namchi. The villagers informed that the local youth were given training in organic cultivation and it was expected that they would continue to undertake organic cultivation. In the process the local youth had, as reported, exceeded the age limit for government job, and therefore, they needed the government to relax the age limit. As they were not allowed to use chemical fertilisers or pesticides they were mainly using cow dung and cow urine.

18. The villagers informed that the state government had by a circular decided that villagers would not get any government facility unless they had got toilets constructed at home. This had led to 100% coverage of toilet construction in the village. The implementation of several of government schemes was quite excellent. The villagers mentioned that they were getting 70 days job under NREGA. All the villagers had Jan Dhan account and Aadhaar numbers, which had been seeded into the Jan Dhan accounts. All the villagers had got coverage under Prime Minister's Jeevan Suraksha Yojana. However, they mentioned that the coverage under Prime Minister's Jeevan Jyoti Yojana was not encouraging.

19. The villagers were getting drinking water through natural sources. However, there was a problem of availability of perineal sources of water. They did not have any grievance about the quality of water. They also did not have any grievance regarding the public distribution system. The functioning of ICDS Centres was monitored by the Deputy Commissioner and his officers through weekly field visits and the villagers were satisfied with the functioning of the ICDS Centres. The villagers informed that the BPL families got free medicines from the hospitals. The BPL families were also being sponsored for treatment outside Sikkim, if it became necessary.

  
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20. The villagers requested that the Tribal Bhawan, which had been under construction for the last 10 years, should be completed at the earliest. They were also facing a very severe problem of monkey menace. The Government should do something about it.

21. Thereafter, the Secretary, NCST visited Government College in Gangtok. It had 2819 students of which 43 were PG students. About 44 % students belonged to tribal community and about 60% students were girls. In the science stream, about 40% students belonged to the Scheduled Tribe community. About 90% students came from the feeder schools in the government sector and not many students came from the NGO run schools. Admission at the college was based on marks obtained by the students in class 12. Sikkim had free education up to undergraduate level for all students. The Scheduled Tribe students studying at the college were found to be generally good in studies and financially also they were reasonably well off. There was one boy's hostel for ST students having capacity to take 52 students. Another similar hostel for girl students was under construction.

22. The ST students got scholarship from one of the two sources. One was ISHAAN UDAY scheme of the ministry of HRD under which each student got Rs. 5500 per month. The eligibility for this scholarship was based on income criteria as well as merit. The second source of scholarship was scholarship scheme of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. However, the Principal of the college mentioned that the funds under the schemes of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs were not adequate. The college had otherwise good infrastructure and teaching compliment. 57% of teachers were on regular posts while the remaining 43% were on adhoc posts. The Principal mentioned that the ST students were being given free laptops by the government. They were also being given coaching classes for preparing themselves for competitive exams. In general, all students were weak in English. She suggested that there was a need to have some more language labs and vocational courses. The college also needed more hostel facility. Their computer lab had only 7 computers which was highly inadequate. The college did not have a proper playground. The Secretary, NCST halted in Gangtok.

23. The Secretary, NCST on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 left Gangtok and visited Ray Mendu Tempy village. The villagers mentioned that the junior high school in the village needed additional class rooms and additional hostel facilities. The building of the school also needed repairs.

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There was a health sub-centre in the village doing institutional deliveries as well. As Gangtok was not very far, lots of patients were going to Gangtok for treatment. One NGO by the name United Progressive Organisation was promoting SHGs in the village. The SHGs were being trained in making candle, chalk, etc. The training was funded by NABARD. This village also reported good performance in construction of household toilets, opening of Jan Dhan Account and enrolment under the Aadhaar. However, the villagers mentioned that coverage under Prime's Minister Jeevan Suraksha Yojana was limited. The villagers did not have any grievance regarding the public distribution system. However, the villagers demanded that they may be brought under the category of particularly vulnerable tribal group.

24. Thereafter, the Secretary, NCST visited Padma Odzer Choeling Secondary School run by the Human Development Foundation of Sikkim. The Foundation and the school were started by Miss. Kipu Pshering Lepcha, who was subsequently awarded Padamshri. The Secretary, NCST was welcomed by the Executive Director of the foundation Mr. Baichung Lepcha and the headmaster of the school. They took the secretary, NCST around the school after which he had an interaction with them and other teachers of the school.

25. The school was started in 1995 by Miss Kipu with 20 children. She provided land for the school. Today, the school had 365 students, of which only 50 were non-tribals. They had 105 day scholars and the remaining 260 were hostellers. The school was covering from lower K.G. to class 10. The headmaster mentioned that they continued to provide support to students till the undergraduate level. The headmaster further mentioned that the school had full complement of teachers. However, it emerged during the discussion that the teachers were being paid very small amount of money. Senior teachers were getting only about 10,000/- per month. Salary for a fresh teacher was around Rs. 5500 per month.

26. Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) provided grant of Rs. 26 lacs per year to them. There was no financial support from the State Government. The school was getting substantial amount of financial contribution from foreign donors to the tune of Rs. 60 lacs per year. The headmaster mentioned that the MOTA grant for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16 was yet to be received. Regular and timely receipt of funds from MOTA was one of the biggest problem they were facing. The school was providing education to children from most remote areas. 10 batches of class 10 had passed out and the headmaster was happy to report

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that twelve children who had passed out from the school had completed their B. Tech form Sikkim Manipal University or ICFAI.

27. Later in the day, the Secretary NCST visited State General Hospital Gangtok. It was a 300 bedded hospital with over 100% bed occupancy. Infact, during the visit, the Secretary, NCST saw that a very large number of beds were arranged in the emergency ward. The OPD attendance was about 1000 per day and, during peak seasons, it reached up to 1500 per day. The hospital was doing about 2400 deliveries per annum. The hospital was in general short of specialists and other personnel. They were short of nursing staff by 86 numbers. They needed additional 5 GDMOs and additional 35 Safai Karamcharis, etc. They had CT and MRI machines. The non-invasive cardiology were being done by one medical officer. They had two radiologists who did ultrasound scan. They had 5 dialysis machines. They had 6 ambulances which were used mainly for transfer of patients from Gangtok or Sikkim to outside-Sikkim and also for sending patients back home after they had recovered after treatment. The Secretary, NCST was informed that the State Government had approved a proposal for upgradation of this hospital to 575 bedded hospital and later on 1000 bedded hospital. The State Government had targeted that 575 bedded hospital would be completed by December, 2016.

28. A large number of organisations on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 met the Secretary, NCST.

- a) The representatives of Eleven Indigenous Ethnic Communities of Sikkim met the Secretary, NCST and gave a representation to him requesting for grant of scheduled tribe status to left out eleven indigenous ethnic communities of Sikkim. This group was led by Dr. S.K. Rai, Chairman of its steering committee.
- b) Prof. B. K. Roy Barman, Chairman of Commission for Review of Social And Environmental Sector Policies, Plans and Programmes gave a copy of their representation addressed to the Chief Minister of Sikkim regarding inclusion of Gurung (Tamu) community in the list of scheduled tribes.
- c) Shri C.B. Subba, former Speaker of Sikkim Legislative Assembly and Chairman of Sikkim Limboo-Tamang Apex Committee gave a representation



to the Secretary NCST regarding de-limitation of seats for Limboo-Tamang community in the State Legislative Assembly and for their inclusion in the category of particularly vulnerable tribal group.

- d) Mr. L.T. Lepcha, President of Renjyong Mutanchi Rong Tarjum (Sikkim Lepcha Association) led a delegation and gave a representation to the Secretary, NCST regarding the inclusion of Lepcha tribe in the list of particularly vulnerable tribal group.
- e) Mr. Yapo S. Yongda, Chief Executive of Moyal Liang Trust met the Secretary, NCST and gave him two representations. One representation requested financial support from the Ministry of HRD under the scheme Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutions, for girls hostel at their institution. The second representation related to the coverage of Denjong Pema Choeling Academy under the Eklavaya Model Residential School of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

29. The Secretary, NCST gave a patient hearing to all the delegations and had fruitful discussions with them. In conclusion, he mentioned that these representations would considered at NCST for appropriate action.

30. The Secretary, NCST on 30<sup>th</sup> June had a meeting with the Chief Secretary and other officers of the State Government. He thanked the Chief Secretary and his officers for extending all the courtesies to him during his visit to the state. He mentioned that he was sure that the State Government was doing its best to provide quality services to its people. However, the visits like the one by the Secretary, NCST provided an opportunity to get unfiltered feedback from the ground and that too from an independent person. He briefed the meeting about his observations from his field visits to different district and advised that the State Government may take remedial action to remove deficiencies. He also advised the state government to submit the action taken report within three months.

31. It was recalled that the Commission had visited the state in April, 2011. The Action Taken Report on the Tour Report of the Commission in 2011, was given to the Secretary, NCST during the meeting. The report was discussed. The Secretary, NCST advised the State

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Government that the ATR may be updated based on discussion during the meeting and sent to the Commission at the earliest.

32. In the end, he again thanked the State Government for extending all the courtesies to him. Soon thereafter, the Secretary, NCST left Gangtok for Siliguri and halted in Siliguri. He left Siliguri on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2016 by air and reached headquarters in the afternoon.

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