

**SINGH IN ITANAGAR** ■ 1840-km trans-Arunachal highway from Tawang to Tirap, new power projects, upgradation of airports among string of measures for state

# PM sends China a clear signal: Arunachal our land of the rising sun



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**D**AYS after returning from China, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today sent a veiled yet strong message to Beijing from Itanagar where he called Arunachal Pradesh "our land of the rising sun". China stakes territorial claim over portions of the state which is at the centre of the boundary dispute between the two countries.

"The sun kisses India first in Arunachal Pradesh. It is our land of the rising sun," Singh told a large crowd which, despite inclement weather, gathered at the Indira Gandhi Park to listen to a Prime Minister in Itanagar after a gap of nearly nine years.

"It is my sincere hope that like the sun, Arunachal Pradesh will also rise from the east as a new star and become one of the best regions of our country," he said.

The Prime Minister spoke in Hindi for nearly half-an-hour but did not mention China even once. Nor did Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu who made a welcome speech. Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State in the PMO, later told reporters: "It is not a foreign affairs trip. It is a developmental trip

## What he promised in Itanagar

- 1,840 km trans-Arunachal highway from Tirap to Tawang.
- A greenfield airport at Itanagar and development of several other existing airstrips in the state.
- Daily helicopter service between Guwahati-Tawang.
- Planning Commission to give Rs 265 cr this year for completion of all the pending projects.
- A new secretariat building.
- Two major hydel power projects at Pare and Dibang.
- Rs 77 cr water supply scheme in Itanagar.
- Itanagar-Harmuti railway link.
- Rs 550 cr for electrification of all villages in the state, including those along the border, in the next two years.
- Rs 400 cr for flood control and re-construction.
- Rs 10 cr from the Prime Minister's relief fund for Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, which is one of the biggest in the Northeast.

to one of our own states."

Singh announced a slew of development measures for the state, the many schemes estimated to cost over Rs 67,700 crore. These include a two-lane 1,840-km long Trans-Arunachal highway from Tirap in the east to Tawang in the west, a Rs 550-crore programme to bring power to every home with non-conventional energy, a Rs 400-crore flood relief package, and a Rs 245-crore railway project over 32 km from Harmoti in Assam to Itanagar.

Speaking about the two-lane highway, the Prime Minister said: "This will be a priority project which will cost around Rs 5,500 crore. It will be a flag-

ship highway and one of the most important new road projects to be taken up by my government. In three to four years, Itanagar will also get connected to the rest of the country with a four-lane highway."

In addition to laying the foundation stone for a 3000-MW mega multipurpose project on the Dibang river and a 110-MW hydel project at Pare, Singh announced that Itanagar would soon have an airport of its own.

He said the Defence Ministry would also upgrade its airlink infrastructure in the state, including upgradation of several advanced landing grounds (ALG) in the state. Arunachal Pradesh, which

**Manmohan Singh in Itanagar on Thursday. This is the first visit by a PM to the state capital after nearly nine years.** Express photo by Subhamoy Bhattacharjee

has at least 85 helipads and 11 ALG will soon have a new greenfield airport at Itanagar. Disused airports at Pasighat, Ziro, Along, Daporizo and Tezu will be revived and upgraded.

"It is only through development measures and through all-round development of Arunachal Pradesh that we can ensure that the nation moves ahead in step towards a glorious future," Singh said.

After an overnight stay at Itanagar the Prime Minister will visit some Defence posts close to the China border tomorrow and interact with Army personnel. He is also scheduled to visit Kibitho in Anjaw district and Lohitpur in Lohit district — Kibitho, situated just 7 km short of the Line of Actual Control, was the scene of a bloody battle between Indian and Chinese troops in 1962. In Lohitpur, he will visit the headquarters of the Army 82 Mountain Brigade. A visit to Tawang, the picturesque district town in west Arunachal which China claims as its territory, is not on the Prime Minister's itinerary.