

Tour Report

Visit to Arunachal Pradesh by Smt. Spalzes Angmo, Hon'ble Member from 13th November to 19th November, 2010

My tour to Arunachal Pradesh began on a long, arduous journey from Guwahati to Tawang, the northern most districts with a majority of Buddhist population, in a state which had a diverse demography since it was inhabited by at least 117 tribes and sub-tribes. I was wise enough to travel by road than take the deadly helicopter route. Sure enough the road to sela pass at an altitude of 13700 feet was nerve wrecking along the narrow mountaineers terrain; which remained under a blanket of fog forever. It was a treacherous road journey made safer by the escort vehicle. We reached Tawang by late evening and a host of officials headed by the Deputy collector awaited me at the very comfortable guest house which provided the best of facilities at such a height. This was one of the numerous examples of the contributions made by the departed Leader Shri Dorje Khandu, Chief Minister who hailed from this region and passed away in one of the worst chopper crashes in the country.

Meeting with officials at Tawang

A meeting was held in which the district officials headed by the Deputy Collector, gave a brief review of the developmental plans for the district of Tawang. Education needed prior attention and focus and though the state was giving scholarships to students; still 41.14% of the people were illiterate in Tawang as per 2001 census. Girls were lagging behind in the education sector as they seemed to be kept behind for household chorus. Thus was clearly showing gender discrimination. There were about 109 schools in Tawang. Stress was laid on the need to include Bhoti language from the primary to high class level since it was the language spoken by the people. Also it was important to include Bhoti in the school curriculum so as to preserve and protect its unique culture and identity.

Visit to Tawang Monastery:

The Tawang Monastery is considered to be the second largest monastery in the world after the Potala palace in Tibet. It was indeed majestic with more than 700 monks residing. The guru Rimpoche head lama of the monastery welcomed me warmly in a gathering of around 300-400 monks and discussed in detail about the functioning of the monastery and its monastic education. These days stress was also laid on modern education work special emphasis on English, science and computer so that the monks could

well equipped to deal with modern style of functioning too. I felt honoured to be at the Tawang monastery. The 6th Dalai Lama was also born in Tawang.

Visit of West Kemang

West Kemang district with Bomdila as its headquarters is en-route while travelling from Tawang to Bomdila by road. West Kemang is a much lower plateau with fertile topography and is famous for kivi fruit which is grown and exported as cash crop. It is also a Buddhist dominated district inhabited largely by the monpa tribe as in Tawang.

Both Tawang and West Kemang have been identified as minority concentrated district by the centre but the MSDP scheme have yet to start off.

Meeting with officials and representatives

I had a fruitful meeting with monks, men and women who brought forth the problems of employment and access to higher education. They cited these two reasons for their backwardness. Also they feared the threat of missionaries who promoted conversion in the garb of providing free education.

I had a meaningful discussion with the Deputy Commissioner and official of West Kemang district regarding all areas of development like health, education, housing facilities and employment opportunity. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Tashi seemed a dedicated civil servant, who was very much in tune with the problems faced by the people of the region.

Meeting with Chief Secretary and officials

The meeting with Chief Secretary and other senior high level officials took place at the secretariat at Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. A thorough and detailed review meeting took place. It seems out of the 16 districts only 7 districts have been identified as minority concentrated district. The Multi Sectoral Development Plan were not started yet as the state share had not been accorded to implement these schemes but the Chief Secretary informed later that the state government had taken decision to implement these schemes in the MCD districts.

Though the state was providing tribal scholarships, it seemed to be un- aware of minority scholarships, which needed to be availed of. It seems the state was putting a lot of emphasis on agriculture and horticulture schemes since it was emerging to be a fruitful economy sector.

Meeting with Representatives of minority community:

I had a meeting with representatives of Christians, Buddhist, Sikhs in Itanagar districts. The Christians wanted to get the institutions certified as minority educational institutions. There seemed to be cordial relation among various communities through there seemed to be tension about forced conversion of Buddhist by NSCN (IM) in Changlang districts as pointed out by the Buddhists residing there.

Recommendations:-

1. Tawang and West Kameng district were lagging behind in education, which needs to be given a thrust by the state Government. A polytechnic needed to be opened in both regions since employment opportunities seemed few.
2. Bhoti language should be introduced in the school curriculum from primary to Higher Secondary level in Tawang and West Kameng districts which have a majority of Buddhist population.
3. There should be a state minority commission although Arunachal was a unique and curious amalgamation of tribes and sub tribes and therefore the concept of minority in the strict sense of the term was not known.
4. Sanitation and basic health amenities needs to be given top priority especially in backward border regions like Tawang, West Kameng where the people did not have access to proper toilet facilities.
5. Road and connectivity was another area of priority. To reach from one part of the state to another, one had to pass through Guwahati, which is in the state of Assam.
6. There should be an airport in the state so that small aircraft could be used for travel. It was also important from the security point of view, since the state shares borders with China. This would also reduce travel by helicopters which have nine and again proved lethal especially in the wake of the recent tragic crash which claimed the lives of Ex-Chief Minister, Shri Dorje Khandu along with 4 other members on board.

(Spalzes Angmo)
Member
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