SINGH IN ITANAGAR I 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

DAYS 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 to one of our own states.”

Singh announced a slew of development measures for the state, the many schemes estimated to cost over Rs 67,000 crore. These include a two-lane 1,840-km long 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.

What he promised in Itanagar

- 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 reconstruction.
- Rs 100 cr from the Prime Minister’s relief fund for Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, which is one of the biggest in the Northeast.

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 helicopters and 11 ALGs and will soon have a new greenfield airport at Itanagar. Disused airports at Pasighat, Ziro, Along, Daporijo and "Rupa will be revived and upgraded."

"It is only through development measures and through all-round development of Arunachal Pradesh that we can achieve 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 blood bath between Indian and Chinese troops in 1962. In Lohitpur, he will visit the headquarters of the Army’s 82 Mountain Brigade. A visit to Tawang, the picturesque town in west Arunachal which China claims as its territory, is not on the Prime Minister’s itinerary.