

CM seeks professional advice to package Sikkim's exportable commodities into economically robust industry

SAGAR CHHETRI

GANGTOK, 28 Aug: A day-long seminar on Export Potential of Sikkim was organised by Export-Import Bank of India [Exim Bank] in association with the department of Commerce & Industries and the Sikkim Chamber of Commerce today at Hotel Rendezvous.

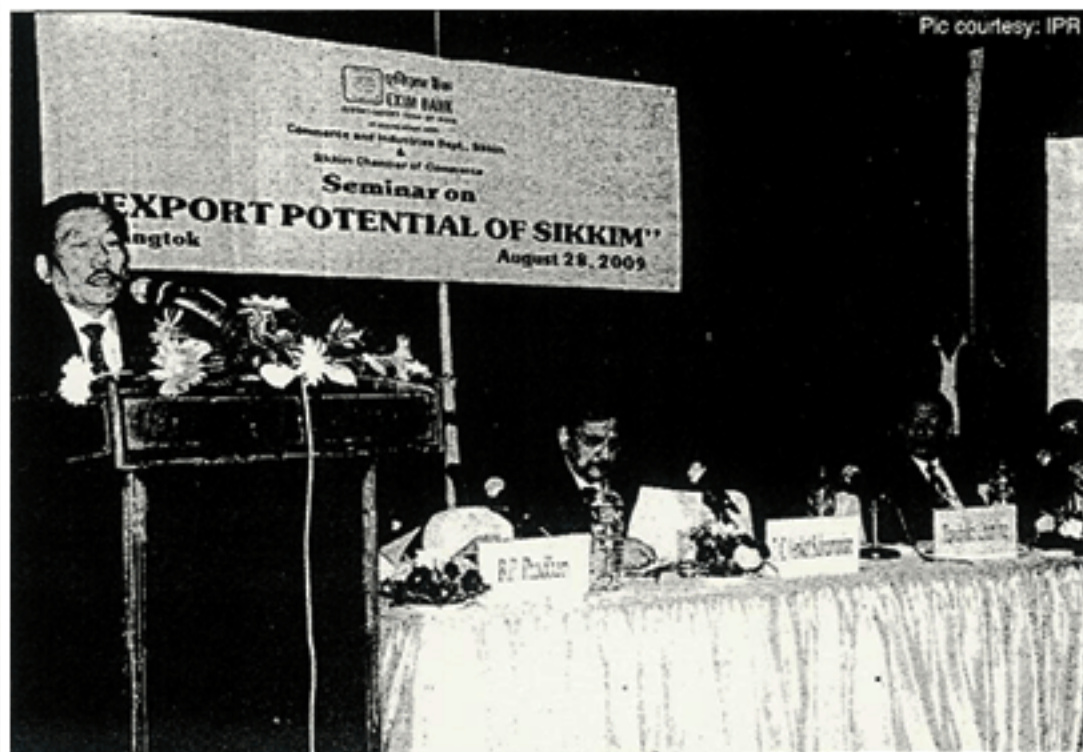
The seminar was chaired by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling as the chief guest, accompanied by Lok Sabha MP, PD Rai, Chairman and Managing Director, TC Venkat Subramanian and other delegates of Exim Bank, Secretary, BP Pradhan and officials from Commerce and Industries department, President, SK Sarda and other members of Sikkim Chamber of Commerce.

In his keynote address, the Chief Minister pointed out that Sikkim was the hub of some very "exportable commodities" like ginger, cherry pepper [dalle], large cardamom, mandarin orange, passion fruit and cut flowers and also rich in medicinal herbs and mountain grains.

He further mentioned that Sikkim has also been declared as the Agri Export Zone for cardamom, ginger, cherry pepper and cymbidium orchids and the State and prospective investors need to take advantage of this status.

On the same, he mentioned that the State government will do everything required provided expert guidance showed the right way to harness the economic potential of indigenous practices.

The CM further informed that his government was planning to concentrate on one or two such commodities and initiate all necessary steps to ensure success for such undertakings.



Pic courtesy: IPR

He further mentioned that the most of the cash crops of the State were not complement with the infrastructure required to transform the local produce into finished products and hence local growers had to depend on markets outside the State.

"This requires us to tie up with stable market linkages outside the state so that our farmers do not dump the products in the valley and rivers for want of any potential buyers. This happened some years back in the case of passion fruit," he shared.

On the same, he mentioned that Government Fruit Preservation Factory at Singtam has been doing some good business through value addition in terms of packaging of produce into finished products.

He further stated that the State required a robust process from institution like EXIM Bank to enable farm-

ers to grow quality commodities in adequate quantity for the international market.

He also expressed his hope that the EXIM Bank would provide assistance with technology and knowledge transfer to harness the cash crops of Sikkim into viable industry level production.

CM highlighted that after the efforts of his government, the traditional Nathula trade route was reopened in July 2006 and now it had to ensure that the people of Sikkim and especially the traders were able to make the best of the opportunities that may come.

He also stated that in due course, the Nathula border will become one of the most important land trade corridors in the country.

"We are negotiating with the Chinese government through the central government to upgrade the list of

tradable items and do away with some obsolete items contained therein to make cross-border trade more robust and need-based," he added.

The chief minister has also released the Exim Bank Study report.

The technical session of the seminar deliberated on issues like the export potential of Sikkim and role of Exim Bank, export credit insurance- risk coverage, potential for export of handicrafts from Sikkim etc.