Sikkim’s Statehood Day.

Introduction

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has greeted the people of Sikkim on their Statehood Day on April, 16th.

Greetings on Sikkim’s Statehood Day. Home to talented and compassionate people, Sikkim has enriched national progress in many sectors. Sikkim’s progress in areas like organic farming have been admired all over.

Formation of Sikkim

On 16 May, 1975, the Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim became the 22nd state of India, ending the monarchy there.

Background

- The present erstwhile monarchy in Sikkim started in the year 1642 with the coronation of Phuntsog Namgyal as the Chogyal or king. The king was also a consecrated Buddhist priest.
- The country was frequently attacked by the Gorkha army of Nepal. Initially, the British establishment in India had good relations with Sikkim. Relations with the British deteriorated and finally in 1861, the British acquired the regions of Darjeeling and the Terai.
- The Treaty of Tumlong in 1861 made Sikkim a protectorate of the British.
- After India’s independence in 1947, the guarantees of independence that Sikkim had acquired from the British were transferred to the new Indian government.
- The then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave special protectorate status for Sikkim, which was to be a ‘tributary’ of India. This meant that India had control over Sikkim’s external defence, communications and diplomacy.
- A semblance of a constitutional government was established under the ruling Chogyal in Sikkim, who was otherwise an absolute monarch.
- During the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Sikkim was seen as a problematic area for India as skirmishes occurred in the Nathu La pass which connects Sikkim with Tibet.
- Trouble started brewing in the Himalayan kingdom in 1970 when there were anti-monarchy demonstrations led by the Sikkim National Congress Party.
- India was worried that China would use this situation and claim the tiny country as part of Tibet.
- India appointed a Chief Administrator for Sikkim to oversee the political instability there. Indian troops were also placed.
- The Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal himself requested military help from India to quell the uprising against the royalists.
- The elected Prime Minister of Sikkim Lhendup Dorji was himself an anti-monarchist. He had been elected by the Council of Ministers which was opposed to the continuance of the monarchy in Sikkim.
- Dorji asked the Indian Parliament to change the status of Sikkim to that of statehood. A referendum was conducted on 14th April, 1975 in which about 97% of the population voted for merger with India.
On 26th April, the Indian Parliament approved the constitutional amendment making Sikkim a state of India.

The amendment was ratified by the President on 15 May and Sikkim was finally admitted to the Union of India on 16th May 1975 as the country’s 22nd state.

Dorji was made the **Chief Minister of Sikkim** and the monarchy was abolished.