

Sikkim became India's first fully organic state in 2016

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Khangchendzonga National Park in Sikkim. (Representational Image)

2016 turned out to be a great year for Sikkim as it became India's first fully organic state besides being adjudged the cleanest state, overall best in education and tourist destination while the famed Kanchenjunga National Park was inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Around 75,000 hectares of agricultural land were gradually converted to certified organic land by implementing practices and principles as per guidelines laid down in National Programme for Organic Production.

It took the state 13 years to fully implement organic farming since the idea was mooted way back in 2003. 2016 also saw the Pawan Chamling government amending the state gambling and casino rules banning all locals from entering casinos in the state starting July.

Kanchenjunga National Park in West Sikkim was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site by the world heritage site committee at its 40th session held on July 17 at Istanbul. August was a dampener after a freak landslide blocked a portion of Kanka river, a tributary of river Teesta in North Sikkim's Dzongu which created an artificial lake submerging five houses and affecting hundreds of families in the area.

The threat of the lake bursting and causing a flash flood down river triggered panic along the Teesta river belt towards West Bengal. Achievers from the state who made news were Meriya Subba who bagged the Mega Miss North East title in June along with kickboxer Sushmita Rai who made the country proud by winning a bronze at the World Martial Arts Masters Championship held in South Korea in September.

Sikkim also had its share of lows in 2016. The rape of a student from Kolkata who was on a vacation here in May shocked the state. Sikkim was awarded the cleanest state in India by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in September. The result was announced by Union Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar based on a survey for the year 2015.

All four districts of the state figured among top 10 ranked districts of hill states of the country. Simultaneously, in October, Sikkim was also adjudged the cleanest tourist destination in the country by the Ministry of Tourism. The award was handed over by the Prime Minister. On June 7, maintenance of Sevoke-Gangtok highway, the “life-line of Sikkim” was handed over to PWD, West Bengal by BRO which had been in-charge of maintenance of the highway since the devastating landslides of 1968.

The highway now rechristened NH-10 is significant since it also leads up to Nathula along Indo-China border. In June, Chamling submitted to Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) four separate memorandums including demands of a special financial package of Rs 43,589 crore for development. In the same month, Bermiok-Tokal Senior Secondary School in a remote village in south Sikkim became the first school in the northeast to have smart classes and smart TVs. Sikkim was once again conferred with the overall best state in education.

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