

Sikkim Express 14-07-14



Vehicles pass through the Seti Jhora stretch of NH10 on Saturday afternoon as the road was cleared after almost five hours of closure which had completely halted traffic between Kalimpong, Sikkim and Siliguri. SE Pic

Seti Jhora slide cleared after 40 hours

Monsoon havoc across Sikkim, Darjeeling hills

SE Bureau

GANGTOK/DARJEELING, July 12: Sikkim and Kalimpong continued to remain cut off from the rest of the country for the second day Friday after landslides at several places along the NH10 snapped the region's connectivity to Siliguri.

The NH10 remained closed throughout the day due to the landslide at Seti Jhora, about 45 km from Kalimpong with landslides reported in other places of the hills also.

Following the closure of the route, vehicles travelling from Sikkim and Kalimpong had to make a detour via Jorebunglow and Latpanchar to reach Siliguri as landslides blocked the highway at three places. Incessant rain since Wednesday night had caused landslides at Setijhora and Sevoke near Kali Mandir in NH10 on the West Bengal side.

Clearing work at Seti Jhora was hampered by mud and boulders falling continuously because of the rainfall. Kalimpong district officials said it would not be possible to clear the road of the huge boulders and mud debris because of the danger to the lives of the workers by falling boulders. Sikkim Chief Minister P.S. Gony had to



take the Jamuney-Goke road through Darjeeling town at around 4.30 in the evening to reach Jorethang and then to Gangtok. Normal vehicular movement however resumed later on Friday evening almost after 40 hours of closure, it was informed.

Taxi operators at the Siliguri mainline taxi drivers syndicate at Deorali, Gangtok informed that commuters are face severe problem travelling from Siliguri, Darjeeling, Kalimpong to Gangtok and vice-versa. The vehicles are taking route of Darjeeling to reach Siliguri whereas the road between Rangpo and Gangtok was also blocked at several places due to slide forcing the commuters to take the

Pakyong and Sang-Martam route. "There has been increase in the fare too but the duration of travel is making the passengers suffer," said the booking personnel. Only about 30-40 taxi left the syndicate for Siliguri unlike 200-300 taxis plying between Siliguri and Gangtok and other places of Sikkim in normal days.

Singtam police station SHO Santa Bahadur Gurung informed that landslides hampered normal traffic movement between Gangtok and Singtam. The stretch was blocked at Martam till late afternoon forcing commuters to take a detour via the Rumtek-Martam route. Some vehicles took the Pakyong-

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Seti Jhora slide cleared...

Rorathang route to reach Rangpo and Siliguri.

"The road was blocked due to heavy rainfall at Martam slide zone due to which the vehicles travelled via Rumtek-Martam to reach Siliguri and Darjeeling. Singtam police and NHIDCL were present in the spot looking after the restoration of the road for the convenience of the public. The road was opened after 3 pm. Two to three vehicles were damaged due to shooting stones. If the rainfall occurs, there might be danger for the public due to shooting stones in the area so they are directed to take alternative routes for safety. Drivers are also appealed to be responsible and not to overtake and make double lines," said Gurung.

In Gangtok, East district collector Kapil Meena informed that the situation now is under control in the district as rainfall receded. "Major roads are open and few smaller roads in Rongli and Pakyong are damaged where the concerned SDMs have reached the spot and are working for the restoration with the help of NHIDCL and other agencies around." Meena informed that the transportation of fuel and essential commodities has been prioritised by the administration. The Food and Civil Supplies department and all other line departments are on high alert and well prepared if any major calamity strikes, he added.

Many Gangtok to Siliguri bound taxis were seen ferrying from Ranipool-Pakyong-Rorathang-Rangpo route.

More than 30 NDRF personals are on standby at Pakyong. "In case of any disaster like situation, we are ready to reach out for rescue

operations, after we get orders from the concerned officials," said a NDRF official.

G.N. Raha of Gangtok MET office said the rainfall warning alert is for two-three more days. "Due to trough of low pressure area runs along the foothills of Himalayas, East and South districts will witness very heavy rainfall while West and North districts will witness heavy rainfall", he said.

In Kalimpong district, Today-Tangta in Jaldhaka was cut off due to a landslide at Goflay Dara near the zero point. The road between Chisang and Today was also completely blocked. Landslips also occurred between Rongo and Gairibas near Jaldhaka. A vehicle with eight passengers including the driver met with an accident near Birik Dara in Kalimpong district. The injured people were taken to Rambhi hospital for first aid treatment. However, three among the seriously injured have been referred to a hospital in Siliguri.

Several houses were damaged in Mirik sub-division due to landslides although there were no reports of loss of life. There were reports of minor landslips in the stretch between Sonada and Kurseong but it did not affect vehicular movement from Darjeeling to Silig.

The Met department today morning issued a warning of heavy to very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy rain over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, including Alipurduar, Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. In last two days, rains have played havoc in several pockets of North Bengal including Siliguri, Alipurduar, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling.

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SETI JHORA CLEARED, FOR NOW: Finally, after five days of uncertainty two-way traffic was restored at Seti Jhora on Sunday afternoon. A break in the rain and the courage and diligence of West Bengal PWD's JCB pilots helped clear the debris enough for vehicles to get unimpeded travel through the area.