The world is witnessing growing number of cases with regards to novel coronavirus resulting in a nationwide lockdown in our country too. Similarly, the tiny Himalayan state of Sikkim is also following the same course as directed by the central government to combat this disease and are doing a commendable job as presently nil cases of this virus has been reported in the State. Now, Sikkim is a landlocked State and people can enter from two major check post which is located at Rangpo and Melli respectively. Rangpo checkpost caters to people entering towards East and North and Melli checkpost to South and West Sikkim.

At present one look at Melli Checkpost will give an idea of how strictly the officials are following the lockdown. During other times this place is usually bustling with vehicles entering or leaving Sikkim but since the State Government has announced to seal the inter state borders, essential goods ferrying trucks, officials from police, health and transport department are the most regular feature that one can see. Movement of general public has been prohibited at this place and strict measures are being undertaken if anyone is found violating the lockdown restrictions.

It is interesting to see, how Melli Checkpost is functioning during this pandemic situation when any heavy goods vehicle enters via the Jawaharlal Nehru Bridge which is also one of the longest bridge of Sikkim over the river teesta connecting West Bengal, the vehicles are stopped at a distance of approximately twenty meters from Melli gate and the automobile is quickly sanitized. Thereafter the driver and the accompanying person has to mandatorily wash their hands in a wash basin fitted with soap and sanitizers in one corner. Then they head over to the screening centre where medical practitioners checks the temperature through thermal scanner, records their condition and if they have fever then these individuals are not allowed to enter Sikkim. The medical team also enquires about installation of Aarogya Setu which is India’s official contact tracing mobile application. After furnishing the required details the driver again heads over to the Melli checkpost office in which documents such as Identity Card, Permit and other necessary papers are thoroughly checked by the police personnel before authorizing the vehicle and its occupants to enter the state. Approximately twenty to twenty five vehicles daily carrying essential commodities including oil marketing products for petroleum supply in the state are arriving in South and West Sikkim through Melli checkpost. The people in the vehicle setting foot from out of the state are advised to unload at the earliest and if due to any circumstance they cannot return than these people are allowed to stay at the identified transit camps recognised by the respective district authority.

Additionally, the South Police department has taken up solid security measures which includes fixing of extra closed circuit television cameras,
intensified border patrolling, minute surveillance system and uncompromising inspection of vehicles while following the guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The department has augmented scrutiny process at this checkpost so as to avert any illegal movement across the border of the two regions. It maybe also mentioned that administration stationed at the checkpost gives the day-to-day report of motorist ferrying to and fro the checkpost covering both medical, law and order to the administration so as to keep a vigil and to map these people’s actions once they are inside the state.

The Sikkim Government has enlisted officials from Police, Health, Transport and many more departments and adopted stringent strategy to prevent COVID-19 from spreading in the state. These officials are monitoring the Melli checkpost 24x7 and all those conveying between this thoroughfare are scrutinized rigorously.

These frontline executives are holding the fort at border areas, and are giving their best efforts in mitigating this crises. As for the general populace they can assist these frontline officials by staying home and following the protocol laid down by the government and medicinal council to prevent this disease.