

**News from the
Namgyal Institute of Tibetology
Gangtok, Sikkim**

Since its establishment in 1958, the NIT has sponsored and promoted research on the religion, history, language, art and culture of the people of the Tibetan cultural area which includes Sikkim. The NIT's library holds one of the largest collection of Tibetan works in the world outside Tibet and a museum of Tibetan iconography and religious art. It has published the *Bulletin of Tibetology* since 1964 and numerous books over the years.

The site on which the institute was established was donated by the late Chogyal (king) of Sikkim Sir Tashi Namgyal in memory of his departed son Paljor Namgyal. The foundation stone of the institute was laid by the 14th Dalai Lama on the 10th of February 1957 and the institute was declared open by the late Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the 1st of October 1958. The building of the institute is an imposing monument and a splendid example of Sikkimese architecture.

In the summer of 2002, the NIT's new director, Mr Tashi Densapa, has undertaken to expand the institute, restructure its research wing and open its doors to international collaboration. This will be done through the creation of new research programs, monthly lecture series, seminars, language classes, fellowship programs, publications and collaboration with foreign scholars. It is hoped that the institute will actively promote Tibetan studies, including its sub-field of Sikkimese studies, and become a dynamic research centre in the Eastern Himalayas. In order to help him achieve this, Mr Densapa has requested Tashi Tsering (Amnye Machen Institute, Tibetan Centre for Advanced Studies, Dharamsala) as part time Consultant and appointed Anna Balikci Denjongpa (PhD London) as Research-Coordinator.

Among its new research programs, the NIT's Research Officers have undertaken a project to document the social history of Sikkim's 60-odd monasteries in order to publish an illustrated book on the subject. A second project proposes to locate, digitalize and document old and rare photographs of Sikkim, both in India and abroad. The aim is to create

a digital image bank at the NIT and organize a permanent photographic exhibition. The NIT has also established a visual anthropology project in order to produce an enduring digital record of Sikkim's vanishing indigenous and Buddhist cultures. From its publication department, the NIT has undertaken to make Sikkim's rare and old histories and sacred guide-books available to the public.

An international inter-disciplinary seminar on Sikkim will be held at the institute in 2004 in honour of famous Sikkimese scholars in Tibetan studies. Scholars interested to participate should contact the NIT on: nitsikkim@yahoo.co.in. It is hoped that the seminar will generate interest in Sikkimese studies and facilitate the establishment of an international association for Sikkimese studies based at the institute.

The NIT will soon undergo a general expansion of its infrastructure and facilities. The construction of a new building which will house a library, study rooms, a conference hall, studios and an administrative wing is to begin before the end of the year. A grant to modernize the NIT's exhibition hall has been approved by the American International Centre, India.

Our web-site: www.tibetology.com is still under construction but please visit it in the future for updates on NIT's activities.