

MIDWEEK

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

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sikkim.midweek@gmail.com

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COME SEPTEMBER 30 AND THE FIRST PHASE OF TRADE OVER THE NATHULA WILL CLOSE FOR THIS YEAR. THE INITIAL EUPHORIA SURROUNDING THE RESUMPTION OF TRADE HAS GIVEN WAY TO A MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT. SARIKAH ATREYA REVIEWS THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF TRADING AND LOOKS AT THE LOOPHOLES AND BOTTLENECKS THAT CONTINUE TO DETER TRADE.

NATHULA



GANGTOK: Given the hype and the historic significance of the historic trading links with Tibet, expectations were high when Nathula finally opened for trade on June 6. But three months later trading has not really taken place in the scale that was planned. Trading in the first month itself witnessed several impediments. The first hurdle was the Import-Export Code for required for the traders. When the trading began, the traders were then told that they needed the IEC for international trade. And for that, one had to furnish his Personal Account Number (PAN), which is not issued to the Sikkim residents as there are not Central Direct Taxes extended in the State. With no IEC, trading was stalled. The Sikkim Chamber of Commerce approached both the Sikkim as well as the Central Government on the issue of IEC clearance and after much persuasion, the Centre decided to temporarily waive the IEC requirement for trade over Nathula, which took

HYPE vs REALITY

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DELIMITATION DRAMA PLAYS OUT

Opposition harps on non reservation for Limboo-Tamangs

by PEMA L. SHANGDERPA

GANGTOK: The studied silence that followed the announcement of the final notification on the delimitation of assembly constituencies in the state, with no reaction forthcoming from either the opposition camps or the ruling party has now erupted into a flurry of charges being made by both. While the State Congress has dubbed it 'communal' and

RULING PARTY TAKES REFUGE UNDER ARTICLE 371 F

'anti-people', the government has turned to Article 371 F to bail itself out.

The main issue of contention, and which the opposition can be expected to play up to the hilt is the non-reservation of the Limboo and Tamang communities. Soon after the notification was

announced, State BJP President H. R. Pradhan dashed off to Delhi to 'consult the high command' and also take legal opinion on the matter. Pradhan had submitted a petition in the Supreme Court in February this year seeking reservation of seats for the two communities.

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"All doors closed for us" - SLTJAC



KEEPING SIKKIM GREEN?

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HC dismisses teacher petition with fine of Rs. 10, 000

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The Sikkim high court, on 11 September, dismissed the writ petition filed by Subhodip Dey, the teacher-cum-student counsellor of Tashi Namgyal Academy accused of misbehaving and molesting three girl students of Class IX.

In an order passed by the division bench of Chief Justice BK Roy and Justice AP Subba, the HC observed that the petitioner had not come up with clean hands and correct facts and that there was fit case in which the court should impose exemplary cost upon the petitioner. The court dismissed the petition with a cost of Rs. 10, 000 which has to be deposited to the State Legal Services authority within 90 days. The court also ordered that the police will proceed with its duty of investigation in relation to the allegations. Further, the court also made it clear that any observation made by the court shall not be construed to be settler of the issues involved before the school authorities.

Dey, a post graduate teacher who taught English, had approached the court with a petition on 5 August last month to restrain and prohibit the Principal of the school A. C. Rai from demanding his resignation. He had also requested in the petition that the Board of Governors of TNA be restrained from terminating his services and that it be declared that he has a right to continue in his service.

This petition was made after he was charged of misbehavior and molestation of three girl students. Dey was arrested by the police based on a First Information Report lodged by the girls and their parents at the Sadar police station here. He was later released on bail. However, after being granted bail he had returned to duty and was prevented by the principal to do the same. The principal had allegedly threatened him with termination of service if he failed to tender his resignation.

Dey in his petition had contested that the Principal had no authority to demand the resignation without establishing the allegations against him. He had claimed that he was innocent and falsely implicated by a third person to spoil his career.

Meanwhile, the High Court had on 7 August passed an interim order that his services should not be disturbed until further orders.

The High Court had also initiated contempt proceedings against the TNA principal for disobeying the interim order passed by the court asking him not to disturb Dey's services. However, later the court satisfied that the court orders were not disobeyed by the principal, had dropped the contempt proceedings.

The school had also set up an internal enquiry committee to investigate into the allegations. With the petition dismissed it is now left to the school authorities to decide on the next course of action to be taken against the teacher.

Abduction in south Sikkim

GANGTOK: A case of abduction has been reported in Lingmo in South Sikkim where a 19 year old married woman was taken hostage and forced into matrimony.

Police are on the lookout for a 40 year old driver Nima Sherpa, a cab driver who forcibly abducted Temi Devi Sharma, a married lady, earlier last week while she was returning from her aunt's house at Middle Lingmo.

Speaking to MIDWEEK, Deputy Inspector General of Police [Range] Akshay Sachdeva said that she was then taken to Kalimpong and kept captive in a hotel room for four days where the accused is said to have molested her and also forced her to marry him. She was later taken to Jorethang and kept by Sherpa in a relative's house. He had told his relatives that they had entered into a wedlock. The accused had also threatened to kill her and commit suicide if she went against his will to get married, police said. He had also forced her to write letters to her parents that she had eloped with him willingly.

Finding that she could not be coerced further to marry him, he then took her to the house of one Mina Dhakal at Ranipul in East Sikkim on Sunday and abandoned her. He then fled and is still absconding. Police have registered a case against him at Rabong in South Sikkim and a look out notice has already been issued.

Feasibility study conducted for tourism

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: There has been a paradigm shift in the focus of tourism in recent times. Although seen as a means for sustainable development, tourism has larger role to play, given the dictums of the changing times.

Today, tourism is seen as an important tool for poverty reduction and taking cue from this latest buzz word, the Sikkim government has been actively planning to focus on sustainable tourism development for poverty alleviation. Its main tourism products are based on trekking, mountain climbing, and rafting. The Sikkim Government commissioned a fifteen-year Master Plan for Tourism Development in 1997, which contains short, medium and long term phases. The initial phase was viewed as a consolidation phase, where the emphasis was on providing new infrastructure in addition to upgrading existing attractions and infrastructure.

New legislative measures have also been taken to protect both the natural and manmade environment. Rural cultural heritage has been identified as having the potential to diversify the existing tourism product, based on the ethnic variety of the population. In order to further the



concept of tourism development for poverty alleviation, the Sikkim Government's Tourism Development is undertaking a feasibility study to come up a poverty-reduction oriented sustainable tourism development plan, in collaboration with SNV and ICIMOD coordinators.

For this, the Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECCOSS) has been appointed as the institutional advisor for the feasibility study. In the feasibility study the institutional adviser has to study the institutional arrangements for support to poverty-reduction oriented sustainable tourism development in Sikkim, study possible institutional arrangements and implementation modalities, develop a capacity strengthening plan, and organise and conduct

stakeholder workshop to discuss and agree on institutional arrangements and implementation modalities for the project. It has to support the development a project document for the coming five years for the State Government.

The goal of the project is to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources for communities in Sikkim through tourism development.

In this regard, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis workshop for Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism project feasibility study was conducted here on September 12. A number of tour operators and local stakeholders of the tourism sector attended the meeting.

The findings through the SWOT analysis would be incorporated in the Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism plan.

to reach Midweek dial 320169

One arrested for murder in North

a MIDWEEK Report

CHUNGTHANG: Police have converted a case of grievous assault against Karma Tshering Lepcha into murder with the victim Topchen Lepcha having succumbed to injuries.

On 3 September, Karma Tshering had assaulted his uncle Topchen Lepcha at Shipgyer under Chungthang sub division in North Sikkim accusing him of having an extramarital relationship

with his wife. The nephew, in a fit of rage, rained blows on the chest, face and stomach injuring him grievously. The victim succumbed to injuries on Sunday and the police have arrested Karma Tshering Lepcha.

Fire razes wooden house

a MIDWEEK Report

PAKYONG: A two storeyed wooden house belonging to one Bal Bahadur Subba was razed to the ground in a freak fire accident at Changey, a revenue block under Pakyong sub division. The fire started from the kitchen which was left unattended and the inferno engulfed the entire house within no time. The incident occurred around 1 PM

on Monday. While no lives were lost, all the household items and other property including jewellery perished in the fire. Speaking to MIDWEEK, officer in-charge of the Pakyong police station Nima Cheddar said that a report prepared by the police along with the panchayat on the incident has been sent to the sub divisional magistrate.

170 'HERITAGE' TREES TO BE SACRIFICED FOR NEW RAJ BHAWAN

KEEPING SIKKIM GREEN?

by KARCHOONG DIYALI

A hundred and seventy odd trees, many of which are Rhododendrons, the prized state tree, and reportedly the oldest in the region, have been 'marked' to be felled for yet another construction in the capital.

The area that has been housing and still is the residence of His Excellency the Governor of Sikkim, categorised as central residency area in the official files, the address we familiarly know as Raj Bhawan is the venue for the mass denudation of our 'heritage trees' in exchange for a new Raj Bhawan.

According to sources, a joint inspection conducted by officials from the Forest Environment and Wildlife Management Department and the Public Works Department [Buildings] counted more than 170 trees that fell within the earmarked construction area, the foundation stone for which was laid recently by Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekawat. The inspection report, which was still to be tabled and submitted to officials at the FE&WM Department at the time of going to print, is reported to have a list of species of flora that includes bamboo and a host of other old trees. The

most important trees however, are the numerous Rhododendrons that abound the hilltop and are considered some of the oldest flowering Rhododendrons in the region.

Considering it takes about sixty years for a single Rhododendron tree to reach maturity and start flowering, the sheer number of these species that will perish under the saws of the *arrawallahs* blatantly contradicts what the much publicised State Green Mission propagates. The felling of these trees is by no stretch of imagination giving 'a new direction and dimension in the State's efforts and endeavor to sustain, maintain and enrich Sikkim's environment and ecology.'

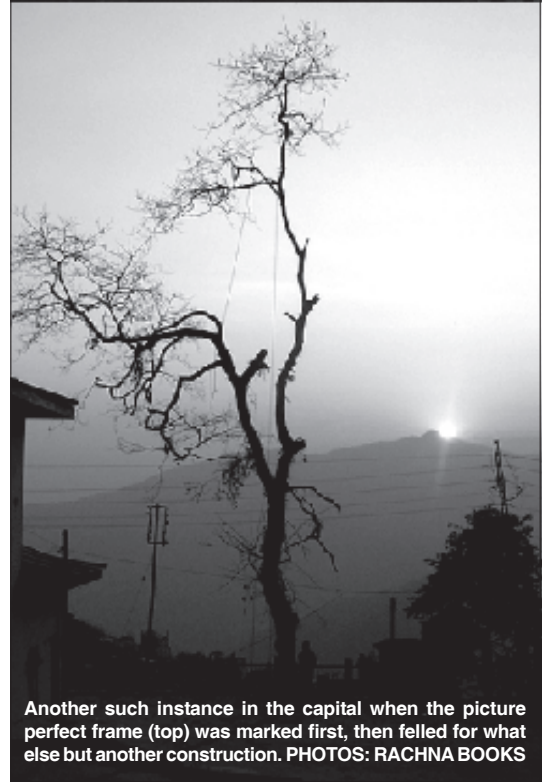
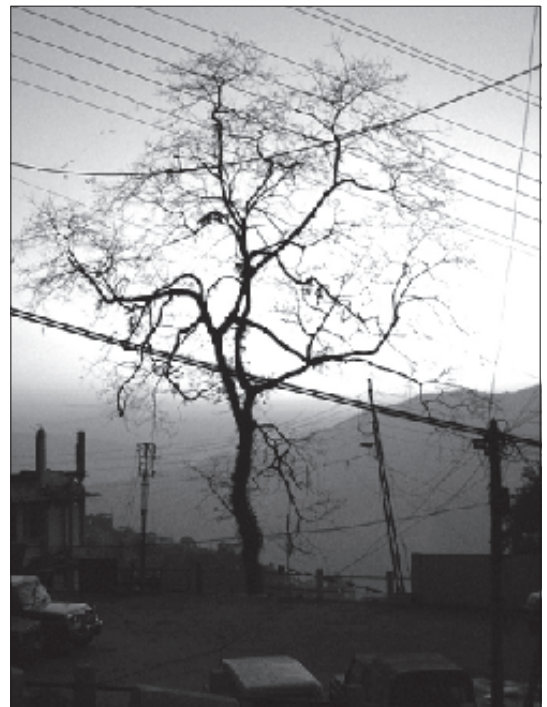
Although the Buildings Department has reportedly promised to review the plan proposal after officials at the FE&WM Department pointed out that the state could not afford to lose these valuable ecological assets, waiting for the concerned authorities to act on the matter is a luxury we do not have as concerned citizens of the state.

In recent years, as an act of conservation of forest and

wildlife in west Sikkim, we saw grazing abolished and cattleherders directed towards other means of livelihood. On the other hand the capital has witnessed a spate of felling and denudation in the name of modernization and development. At this rate we can aptly term the phrase 'ultimate eco-tourism destination' as just another *endangered adjective*. And where are the various NGOs that pride themselves on being committed to environmental issues in the state? Or is the consciousness only limited to plantation drives in the already overcrowded Smriti Vans in the state?

Hence, with reference to another target set by the State Green Mission which states that it is 'broadcasting greening activities through peoples participation, support and guidance', Midweek urges the people to come forward and show their participation by emailing us at sikkim.midweek@gmail.com and supporting 'THE FAMILY TREE: Midweek Campaign To Save Our Green Heritage'.

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Another such instance in the capital when the picture perfect frame (top) was marked first, then felled for what else but another construction. PHOTOS: RACHNA BOOKS

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Delimitation drama plays out

from page 1

Expressing surprise that the notification was announced despite being sub judice, Pradhan said, "Based on our petition, the delimitation commission has also filed a counter affidavit. I don't know how the final order has been issued by the commission despite the fact that the matter is still pending before the Supreme Court," adding that the matter is likely to come up for hearing soon and counsels were working to list the case by next week.



"There is no confusion at all. It is very clear that article 371 F empowers the parliament to make special provisions for Sikkim" - Goroong

Accusing the government of not pushing enough for seat reservation for the LT's the state BJP chief said, "Had they sent a proposal, an ordinance could have been passed to list the matter before the parliament within a month and then all of us could have led a delegation to the centre. Not sending the proposal has been the main hitch. Even the delimitation commission had written to the state government earlier asking why they never bothered to send a proposal." He also claimed to be in possession of this letter sent by the commission, which, according to him has not yet been disclosed by the government.

That the government is aware of the potential trouble the issue may cause is apparent from the fact they have now turned to Article 371 F to sort out what they see as a technicality. Refuting all charges, B. B. Goroong, advisor to chief minister Pawan Chamling has said that the entire process of delimitation of assembly constituencies could be carried out in Sikkim again if the reservation for the Limbu and Tamang communities was granted. He said that this was possible because of the

special provision enshrined for Sikkim under article 371 F of the constitution.

Dismissing the opposition claim that the next delimitation would take place only in 2026 and the Limbu and Tamang communities would not be able to avail any reservation of seats till then, Goroong said that the two communities could seek relief under Article 371 F. "It is clear that article 371 F is a provision in the constitution which governs the state of Sikkim and by virtue of the non-obstante clause 'notwithstanding anything in the constitution' appearing in the opening words of the said article, it has an overriding effect even if any of the clauses under article 371 F appears repugnant to the other provisions of the constitution. This is a settled position of law as laid down by the Supreme

court in the cases of Surendra Prasad Sharma Vs. the State of Sikkim & others [1994] and R. C. Poudyal vs. Union of India & others [1994]."

"There is no confusion at all. What is the need for confusing them further when it is very clear that article 371 F empowers the parliament to make special provisions for Sikkim," he added.

Not wanting to let go of another

"It is communal, anti-people and carried out according to the whims and fancies of the associate member committee and the State government" - Bhandari

opportunity to embarrass the government, the opposition leaders huddled within their camps deciding on the next course of action for another issue which they claimed was thrown to their platter and to their 'advantage'. Expectedly State Congress Chief, Nar Bahadur Bhandari launched a vitriolic attack on the ruling party, branding the notification as 'communal' and 'anti-people' which according to him was carried out on the 'whims and fancies' of the associate member committee and the state government.

It is but natural for the Congress chief to be annoyed since he is the most affected by the new realignment facing a technical knock out in both constituencies he last contested from. The Central Pendum seat, now incorporated as West Pendum has been converted into a SC seat while Gangtok, the other seat he fought from is now a BL seat. According to Bhandari, the new set up is communal since it goes against the spirit of the very purpose for which the delimitation was to be carried out. He said that the territorial constituencies reserved for the BLs should have had more population of these two constituencies, which in this case has not happened. According to him the two communities were now in further danger of being marginalized. How he has come to this conclusion when all 12 BL seats are in safe custody was not very clear.

Bhandari also batted for the Limboo-Tamang's saying that with the notification being made official, the two communities had to wait till 2026, purely because of the fault of the state government. He called the statement made by BB



Goroong that Sikkim could take relief under special provisions for article 371 F 'bogus'.

Meanwhile, chief minister Pawan Chamling has been stressing on the fact that Delimitation was a central subject, conducted by the Commission, which was an independent body leaving the state government with very little role to play.

It can be added that the Delimitation Committee is not empowered to tackle the issue of seat reservation. It is constituted only to delimit constituencies.

"All doors closed for us"
- SLTJAC

GANGTOK: The Sikkim Limboo Tamang Joint Action Committee has expressed dissatisfaction over the recent announcement of the delimitation of Assembly Constituencies in the State.

Dorjee Tamang, Convenor, SLTJAC said in a press release that no where has the Limboo-Tamang community been incorporated in the new alignment. "Till 2026, all doors have been closed for us," he said. "Now, in Sikkim, without reservation, we have become just political toys. The Chief Minister Pawan Chamling kept assuring us, but never promised us. If he had given his word, he may have fulfilled it but he just kept assuring us. Recently at Tharpu he told the public that he had approached and requested the Central government not to go ahead with the delimitation process in the State before seats were reserved for the Limboo-Tamangs but this did not happen. From this, we can only assume that either Delhi does not listen to Pawan Chamling or he has been lying to the people of Sikkim. Even the Central Government had said that the Limboo-Tamangs would get reservation or should get reservation; Chief Minister Pawan Chamling sacrificed the political rights of the Limboo-Tamangs in order to save his chair. If my arguments are wrong, Mr. Chamling can go to the court and if he is wrong, he has to resign," Mr. Tamang stated in the press release.

14th National Children's Science Congress to be held in Sikkim



GANGTOK: Sikkim will be hosting the 14th National Children's Science Congress 2006 from December 27-31 at Sikkim Manipal Institute of Technology, Majitar, Sikkim. This is a national event of great importance in the fraternity of science education. The President of India has consented to be the Chief Guest during the inaugural function on December 27, on invitation of the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

A sensitization programme for all members of the Organizing Committee and various Sub Committees was held on August 30 at Janta Bhawan, DPH Road, Gangtok.

National Children's Science Congress is organized every year in all the states and the union territories among the children of age group 10 to 17 years of all the districts to inculcate scientific temper and creative ability among children. The NCSC had a very modest beginning in the early nineties and soon became a national event in 1993 with the support of Department of Science and Technology, Government of India. The main objective Of NCSC is to enhance the natural curiosity in a child and provide the medium to quench the thirst for creativity.

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PITA to get more teeth in Sikkim

by SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: The persistent efforts of a group of young lawyers have resulted in a major breakthrough in the implementation of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, in Sikkim.

The Act (PITA in short), although already enforced in the State, was virtually ineffective and handicapped by a major lacuna in its proper implementation. An important sub-section of the Act stipulates that each State Government has to appoint a Special Police Officer for dealing with offences under this Act. According to the Act, the Special Police Officer shall not be below the rank of an Inspector of Police. Strangely, the State Government, in an obvious oversight on its part, had failed to appoint SPOs as

required by this Act.

As a result, any one booked under PITA would be technically knocked out because of this lapse in the implementation of the Act, which made it rudderless. Since the legal provisions under this Act were not fully in place, it weakened the case under the PITA for both the Police as well as the prosecutors.

It is clearly stipulated in Sub-section (I) of Section 13 of the Act that the SPO of an area shall be assisted by such number of subordinate police officers (including women police officers wherever practicable) as the State Government may think fit; and the State Government may associate with the special police officer a non-official advisory body consisting of not more than five leading social

welfare workers of that area (including women social welfare workers wherever practicable) to advise him on questions of general importance regarding the working of this Act.

This major loophole in the judicial mechanism in the State was noticed by a law firm based here in Gangtok. This law firm used the provisions under the Right to Information Act to petition before the State Government to bring this lacuna to light. In August earlier this year, the Human Rights Law Network wrote to the State Home Department on the basis of the RTI Act to know whether the PITA had been fully implemented in the State, and if so, why no SPOs was appointed till date. The Home Department had a month to reply on this issue.

The petition obviously was

a wake up call for the Home Department because recently, it finally got its act together and issued a notification appointing SPOs in compliance with the PITA. The Home department notification, No. 64/home/2006, dated 02.09.2006 says that "in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-section (I) of Section 13 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (104 of 1956), the State Government hereby appoints each of the Sub-divisional Police Officer for dealing with the offences under this Act in their respective jurisdiction."

This latest development is a major shot in the arm for both the Police as well as the judiciary in the State. "Our hands have now been strengthened by this. Since the Act had not been fully implemented until now, it

made prosecution of the accused under PITA difficult and strengthened the defence's case," says DIG Range Akshay Srivastava, while talking to MIDWEEK.

Although the problem of trafficking of women for prostitution may not be a major one for the State at the moment, the full implementation of PITA would certainly strengthened the judicial mechanism in the State. Till now, the Act largely failed on technical grounds in the absence of a SPO handling the case, a point the defence team used to their advantage.

Judiciary in the State is still in its infancy, and even if the State is relatively crime free, it still needs to be fully aware of the proper implementation of all laws in order to maintain the faith of the people in the judicial system.

More arrests in lottery rigging episode

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The lottery rigging incident has taken a fresh turn with one more name being added to the group of masked men who carried out an aborted attempt to rig the lottery results last month.

Kanchan Rai, another insider who was working as an assistant in the Directorate of State Lotteries, was arrested by the East District Police on 8 September night. The Police believe that he was a key player in the conspiracy and was the one who had supplied the result sheet to the eight masked men who attempted to rig the online lottery on the night of 11 August. Apparently, Kanchan was given Rs. 3,000 for providing the lottery sheet by the alleged mastermind Phu Chung Chung and also promised a sum of Rs. 2 lakhs later.

After sustained interrogation, the Police believe that Kanchan was

present during the entire incident when the gang tried to force the lottery judges to sign on the forged result sheet of that night's draw, which was recorded on the CCTV.

Last week, the brother of Rajesh Lakhwani, one of the main accused and believed to be the key mastermind was picked up by the Police. Rajesh had all along maintained that his brother Babloo Lakhwani was the main brains behind the plans with Phu Chung Chung as a co-conspirator.

According to the Police sources, Babloo had bought tickets of the forged numbers in Mumbai and had devised the plan to become crorepati instantly. It is now clear that entire modus operandi was well planned out much ahead. Babloo purchased the tickets in Mumbai so that no suspicion could arise, police believe.

LPG DISTRIBUTOR NABBED FOR SHORT-CHANGING

a MIDWEEK Report

GYALSHING: The next time you buy a LPG refill cylinder, make sure you check its weight before you take it home. You may have been cheated all along by your distributor by paying for a half-filled cylinder.

The Gyalshing Police on 10 September arrested a LPG cylinder distributor for short-changing his customers in the West and South Districts. Suren Koirala, a LPG distributor for Sikkim Trade Development Corporation (STDC), Jorethang Branch,

South Sikkim, was picked up by the Police after registering a *suo moto* against him earlier.

The Gyalshing Police had been receiving a number of complaints from customers that the LPG refill cylinders weighed less than the actual weight. Based on the complaints, the Gyalshing Police registered a *suo moto* case against Koirala, booking him under 420 (cheating) of the IPC and 7 Essential Commodities Act. On 10 September, the Gyalshing Police apprehended a truck (SK-03-2291) laden with gas cylinders headed for

Gyalshing from Jorethang near the Sakyong village in West Sikkim. During the on-the-spot inspection that followed, the Police weighed the cylinders and found that 10 cylinders weighed about ½ to 2 kgs less than the standard 14.2 kgs. The 10 cylinders were immediately seized and the driver and the agent's statement recorded. The challan and permit issued to the distributor was also seized during the raid.

Based on this information, the Police arrested the distributor Koirala who has been remanded to Police custody till 13 September.

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Workshop on export promotion begins



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a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: A four-day-long workshop cum training programme on export promotion from Sikkim began here from September 12.

Jointly organised by the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi and the Department of Commerce and Industries, Government of

Sikkim, the workshop will deliberate on various issues relating to export promotion plan and begin the process of preparing an export development plan for Sikkim.

Addressing the gathering during the inaugural session, Dr. Rakesh M. Joshi, Prof. IIFT and Project Leader, said that the Central Government's consistent focus over the years

have been on the North Eastern region and efforts have been made to push region towards greater economic growth. However, the export potential of the NE region still remains unexplored and therefore, there is a great need for both the Central and the State Governments work together for the development of export promotion plans, he said.

While the NE States have realised the significance of export promotion, the efforts are insufficient and there is little coordination amongst the States in their promotional efforts, Dr. Joshi said. Moreover, the government officials from the States hardly possess requisite skills, information and experience in promoting exports efficiently and effectively, he said.

The basic objective of this programme, he said, was to develop a basic understanding amongst the various officials of the State Governments and other non-government trade organisations of export trade and inculcate necessary skills for export promotion, which would in turn facilitate participants in developing State-specific export development plans.

Dr. Joshi said that this training programme was being held in five phases and six States have been covered so far. He said that with the opening of the Nathula Pass for trade,

this programme held more relevance for Sikkim. He said that export promotion should be a priority for Sikkim not just for revenue generation but also as a key development strategy.

In his address, additional Chief Secretary, TT Dorji, who was also the chief guest at the inaugural function, said that the Sikkim Government's pro-active role in development of human resources, maintaining peace and harmony and infrastructure had propelled the State towards economic growth. He said that the State Government's development programme has focussed on its natural resources. Sikkim had a lot of potential in terms of further development and industrialisation and therefore, there was a need to prepare an export promotion plan for the State.

Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by CL Denzongpa, secretary, Commerce & Industries Department.

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nearly a month. In fact, trade was stalled for 21 days over the IEC issue.

With the IEC waiver in place, the traders were in for another shock. It soon became clear that the trade limit of just Rs. 25,000 per trader per day was too little. The Union Ministry of Finance had initially imposed a restriction of trading of just \$ 500 US per trader per day. This proved to be another major constraint. Trading over Nathula proved to be by no means cheap. Also, the Central Government directives stipulate that the State Bank of India issue US dollars to the traders to the tune of just \$ 500 per day, that too, only for business travel purposes. No dollars are available for actual trading purposes.

Just the cost of daily transportation is costly. For small traders like Chimi R. Bhutia, a first-time trader, going up to Nathula on a daily basis, the economics of budgeting is a daunting task. In the absence of any daily service transport service to Nathula, the traders like him are shelling out nearly Rs. 2000 per day just on hiring vehicles from Gangtok to Nathula and then from Nathula to Renqinggang, the Chinese mart. "Traders are allowed to take their vehicles in Renqinggang but the road leading to the Chinese mart is still under construction and negotiated only on a four-wheel drive. The logical option is to hire one of the vehicles pressed into service by the Chinese government to ferry Indian traders, which costs Rs. 500 one way," says Mr. Bhutia. The only solution to this problem would be starting of a bus service to Nathula by the State Government.

Tiding over the huge transportation costs, once the traders are inside Renqinggang in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), they are faced with yet another hurdle. There is hardly anything to buy or sell. This is because the present list of items for import-export is virtually redundant and based on trading that took place 44 years ago. "Yak skin and tail, sheep and horses were items traded more than four decades ago. It may have nostalgia value but it does not make business sense today. There is no demand for most of the items listed for import," says a trader. Only recently, it was reported that the Chinese traders could hardly do any business last month as there were no demand for their items. "There is an urgent need to review and amend the present import-export list keeping in mind the needs of the present age and trade advantages," Mr. Sarda says. This low volume of trade percolated by the unrealistic items for trade has now prompted Beijing to ask the Indian Government to review the list of items for import through the Nathula. One report suggested that the trade through Nathula is currently worth about \$ 12,500 a week but the Chinese traders in the last two months did business worth about \$1,600. "Most of Chinese traders are also first-timers and they are also in the learning process. Although they are crazy about Indian goods for its high standards and a good market in China, the limited items for trade has proved a dampener for them as well as us. The Chinese traders do bring various items for display at Renqinggang, we are unable to buy anything because of the restrictions. On an average, we hardly did any substantial trading," Mr. Bhutia says.

Another major hurdle for the traders is the limitation on the period of stay at the Chinese mart. Traders are allowed to enter the TAR from Nathula at 7:30 in the morning and are expected to return back after finishing all businesses by 3:30 pm the same day. This is unrealistic. "It is impractical and certainly unrealistic to expect the traders to warp up business in just few hours of time and return. Just to get to Renqinggang from Gangtok takes more than 3 hours. Also, the road conditions during the peak Monsoon season increases travel time considerably. We have hardly two hours to interact with the traders and strike a deal," says Mr. Bhutia. The Renqinggang trade mart



has excellent facilities for Indian traders including boarding facilities. But Indian traders have not been able to use this facility so far. It is imperative that this restriction be lifted and the traders be allowed to stay at the Chinese mart for at least two days. "Considerable amount of time is needed to interact with the Chinese traders and understand the demands of the market there. Also, time is needed for familiarising oneself with their trading dictums and building a good business rapport with them," says Mr. Sarda.

Similarly, Indians holding valid visa are not allowed to directly enter Tibet as of now. For visiting Tibet, one has to fly to Beijing in main-land China from where a special permit has to be obtained to enter Tibet. For trading with China, even through Nathula, it becomes imperative to meet and interact with traders from main-land China as well, since most of the export demands are from traders and whole-sellers based there. The traders at Renqinggang are small traders from the near-by villages who take orders for big traders and whole-sellers outside of TAR. An Indian trader would have a better understanding of ground realities on prices, demands and quality if he could directly interact with retailers and whole-sellers in TAR and main-land China. And it would bring down travel costs and time if the Indian traders are allowed to enter TAR directly from Nathula itself.

The bottlenecks do not end here. International trading in animals and animal products require certification from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The nearest office for this region is located at Bangalore. Any animal product imported into India would require CITES clearance, which can take up to a month. Till then, the animals or animal products languish at the Sherathang Trade mart on the Indian side, leading to huge losses. Also, food grains imported require clearance from the Central Food Laboratory at Kolkata. Samples are sent to the CFL for certification which takes more than three weeks to come through. "Chinese wool and silk, which are major items for trade, all need CITES certification. The length of time needed to get these clearance add to the escalating costs of trading and loss of valuable time," says Mr. Sarda.

Interestingly, on the Chinese side, the Mart is equipped with high-tech scanners which make testing of food grains and animal products almost instant on arrival.

Given all these constraints, it is no surprise that the Chinese traders were reportedly not too happy with the slow pace of business. Also, about two Indian traders crossed over to the Chinese side daily on an average. "Despite the large number of locals issued travel permits, hardly two make it to Renqinggang on a single day from Monday to Thursday. This has resulted in a low morale for the Chinese traders," says a trader.

But there is also some good news. Indian traders did brisk business to the tune of about Rs. 2 lakhs last month trading items such as non Basmati Rice, cigarettes, blankets, copper products, dry fruits, canned and processed food products, spices and pickles. "The first 15 blankets taken by a trader got sold out the moment he reached Renqinggang," says Mr. Sarda. Also, local Sikkim-grown rice, cleaned and packed in one kg packets are getting good business. The various Central Government ministries have responded positively to the demands of the local traders in streamlining the trading operations. "After the IEC code waiver, only last week, the Reserve Bank of India increased the limit of \$ 500 to \$ 10,000 issued for traders. We are hopeful that the trading limit would be increased to Rs. one lakh per day per trader," he adds.

Traders from outside of Sikkim are also showing keen interest in the Nathula trade. Trade delegations from other States have been coming here and holding meetings with the Sikkim Chamber of Commerce members on the possibility for setting up manufacturing units here especially for raw materials like wool and silk. Mr. Bhutia echoes this sentiment. "I am keen to import wool and silk but I can make a good profit only if there are manufacturing units for these raw materials here in Sikkim itself. Also, if the products are manufactured here, it will add good brand value to Sikkim," he says.

Mr. Bhutia's aspirations may soon be realised as one trader from outside of Sikkim has shown interest to set up a silk processing unit to manufacture Varanasi Silk sarees here.

"The various restrictions have proved to be detrimental to small traders so far. For big traders to enter the field, these bottlenecks have to be removed. Then only we will see the real trading in large volumes taking place. The issue of right pricing is also there. Traders on both sides are yet to finalise a standard price formula for goods for trade. Once all these are on place, we can expect real business through Nathula," Mr. Sarda opines.

"This has been a great learning period for us, and despite the various bottlenecks we faced, we are optimistic about the prospects of Nathula trade," sums up Mr. Bhutia.

THE SIKKIM WILDLIFE



Photo: KARCHOONG DIYALI

BIRD OF PREY

Often noticed in pairs patrolling the valleys uttering their characteristic *kek-ke-ke-keee-keee* calls during late mornings, this Crested Serpent Eagle was spotted along the Sang - Martam road. Known as 'Spilornis cheela' to ornithologists (now one knows where the word *cheel* comes from), they are common but not plentiful in Sikkim and are one of the most important friends our farmers and forests have.

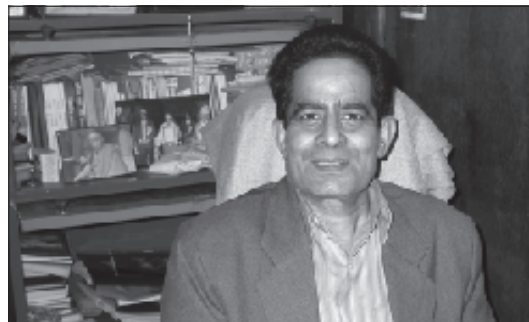
Wichar completes 25 years of publication

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: WICHAR Nepali Weekly, a premier publication from Sikkim has completed 25 years of regular and uninterrupted publication.

Edited and published by eminent litterateur and senior journalist, Subhash Deepak from Gangtok, WICHAR was established in May 1981. Over the years, it has grown in its endeavour to uphold the ethics of journalism and the promotion and propagation of Nepali language and literature.

According to Mr. Deepak, the main focus of this publication has been on the social, economic, cultural and literary issues pertaining to Sikkim, North Bengal and those of the Indian Nepalese. WICHAR reaches to readers not only in Sikkim and North Bengal, but also to Indian Nepalese in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and various regions of North India.



The contribution of WICHAR in the development of Nepali language and literature is immense and a subject of research. It is perhaps the only newspaper that has been devoted not only to social and development issues pertaining to Sikkim but also to fostering and encouraging young and budding writers in Nepali language by providing them a platform for publication of their works. Almost all activities related to Nepali language movement and

literary development in the region has been covered by WICHAR in the past. More than 1500 poems, more than four dozen short stories and numerous amounts of essays, literary criticisms and interviews have been published in WICHAR in then last 25 years. The newspaper has also been a staunch supporter of the national movement of Nepali language in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution.

WICHAR is bringing out a special silver jubilee issue to mark this occasion.

Sikkim to host All India Police Tourney



a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Sikkim Police will be hosting the 55th BN Mullick Memorial All India Police Football Championship, 2006, in the state from 28 October to 6 November. Participating in the championship will be 35 police teams and paramilitary organisations from various states.

The prestigious tourney is being hosted here after 11 years; the last time it was held here was in September 1995. Till date, Sikkim Police has reached only till the quarterfinals in this

tournament. Last year, they were beaten at the quarterfinals by the eventual winner BSF at Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

The league matches of the tournament will be played group-wise at different locations, whereas the opening and closing ceremonies, quarterfinals, semifinals and finals will be organised here at the Paljor Stadium. As per information received from the Office of the Deputy Inspector General of Police [Range], the league matches will be held at Sikkim Armed Police Ground at Pangthang [East], Bhaichung Stadium [South],

Jorethang Public Ground [South], and Kyongsa Public Ground [West].

It should be mentioned here that the SAP ground at Pangthang is being converted into a national level football ground and should be ready before the tourney starts.

The tournament will be conducted in accordance with the rules prescribed by the All India Police Sports Control Board and All India Football Federation. It is being planned and organised under the leadership of state Director General of Police CM Ravindran, who has further distributed the work of organising the tourney to various committees headed by senior officers of the department.

DIG [Range] Akshay Sachdeva, cultural and media secretary for the tourney, informed the media on Monday that this tournament will also offer the state an opportunity to promote Sikkim as a great tourist destination. Keeping this in mind, the state's mascot for the tourney will be a Red Panda. To further reflect the culture and ethos of Sikkim, cultural programmes and literary events will be also held during the teams' stay in Sikkim, Sachdeva added.

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NATHULA:



by JIGME N. KAZI

The decision to construct a two-lane highway between Gangtok and Nathu La [distance 53 km and two hours drive] at an estimated cost of Rs 200 crores by the Border Roads Organisation [BRO] and the construction of 608 km road network along the Line of Actual Control [LAC] from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, passing through Sikkim, are all positive indications of the building up of a closer and more friendly ties between India and China. Besides facilitating better road network in the entire Himalayan frontier road construction on LAC has been prompted by strategic considerations. India wants to strategically counter the Chinese build-up of road and rail links along the border in Tibet and be prepared to meet any eventuality. What happened after *Hindi-Chini-bhai-bhai* euphoria in the fifties cannot be forgotten so easily even if both India and Chinese aspire to let bygones be bygones. While a note of optimism has indeed been struck on Sino-Indian relations New Delhi needs to tread cautiously in dealing with contentious issues in the coming days.

More than anything else both the



Photo courtesy: NOW!

Local Aspirations and Strategic Location

countries need to give top priority to local concerns raised by people of Tibet and Sikkim. The Sikkim unit of the Indian National Congress [INC] objected to resumption of Indo-Tibet border trade through Sikkim before fulfilling the

long-pending demand on restoration of the political rights of bonafide Sikkimese. The Sikkim Bhutia-Lepcha Apex Committee [SIBLAC] has also harped on the same issue. Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee President

would be of greater advantage than an unhappy Sikkim in India on one of her future international boundaries of great importance, which would be of disadvantage, indeed a danger to India." This applies to Tibet, too.

POWER DEPT. INCURS LOSS OF

The COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT for the year ended 31 March 2005 was presented to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly on 10 June 2006. MIDWEEK will serialize some of the findings of the CAG Report each week for a clearer picture on how our departments function. We begin with the Power Department, which according to the report has incurred a loss of Rs. 4.06 crores due to 'wasteful expenditure'.

4.06 CRORES

THE CAG FILES

Power Department incurred wasteful expenditure of Rs. 4.06 crore in providing power lines to a factory at government cost as the factory closed down their operations after a short while without paying the energy charges of Rs. 87 lakh.

The government decided on July 1997 to provide dedicated High Tension [HT] power lines at Government cost to M/s Sikkim Alloys and Carbide Ltd., Setipool, East Sikkim, in order to promote heavy industries in Sikkim. Government took

this decision on the plea that the Government could realize Rs. 3 crore per annum as energy charges. An agreement was signed on February 1998 providing for tariff comprising contract demand @ Rs. 80 per KVA of the plant capacity per month and energy charges @ Rs.1 per KWH effective for five years from the date of providing supply. When the proposals for financial sanction for the work were moved in November 1997 the Finance department opined that it might not be economical to import power, sustain transmission and distribution loss and distribute power at an unremunerative rate. The Finance Department also warned that similar

infrastructure created in the past for meeting the demand of local industries did not yield desired results; the most noticeable case being Sikkim Vanaspathi Ltd, which was operational for a short period of time and the Power Department ended up in chasing irrecoverable dues from this defunct unit.

Notwithstanding the genuine reservations expressed by the Finance department, the Power Department decided to construct in April 1998 one extension bay at Lower Lagyap Hydel Project [LLHP] 66 KV switchyard for installation of one 7.5 MVA sub-station i.e one DC 11 KV transmission line upto Sikkim Alloys and Carbide Unit, Setipool, at a total cost of Rs. 4.06 crore. Before commencement of the

above work, the Department constructed low tension [LT] heavy duty line with specific transformers at the factory premises at a total cost of Rs. 48.95 lakh.

The construction of HT line works which commenced in April 1998 could not be completed before the agreed date of July 1998 due to financial constraints and want of clearance from Forest Department. The work was completed and supply of power commenced in September 2000 to M/s Sikkim Alloys and Carbide Ltd.

Audit scrutiny carried out in December 2004 revealed that M/s Sikkim Alloys and Carbide Ltd. did not draw power after the commencement of the HT supply in September 2000 and thereafter, closed down their

operations. During the period of operation with LT heavy duty supply, the firm did not pay the energy charges amounting to Rs. 87 lakhs as on 31 March 2001. Thus, the infrastructure provided to the factory at Government cost amounting to Rs. 4.06 crore proved wasteful without generating any revenue to the Government as envisaged.

The department replied in April 2005 that the whereabouts of the owners of the firm were not traceable. In their further reply on August 2005, the Department stated that the infrastructure created for their unit has been utilized for providing supply to the public in the nearby areas. This could not be vouchsafed in audit in the absence of supporting details for the same.

MIDWEEK

Vol. 1 No. 2

Hear Them Out

The public hearing for the 300 MW Panan Hydro Electric Project located at Dzongu in North Sikkim is to be held on 18 September. The project proposes to tap the waters of the Tholung Chu, one of the great tributaries of the Teesta in the Dzongu area. The dam for this project will come up on the confluence of Rangyong Chu and the Tholung Chu at Lingza village while the power plant will come up near the Panan village.

Over the last few days protests against the proposed power project has been intensifying. Last week a team consisting of officials from the Forest department and developers of the project was stopped by protestors from entering the area for a joint inspection. The Sikkim Armed Police had to be deployed to allow them entry to Dzongu. This week another Joint Inspection Team was not allowed to carry out the survey work by the locals at Passingdang, Dzongu.

The recently published report on the 'Capacity Study of Teesta Basin in Sikkim' has listed the many ways in which the proposed dams will affect the environment of the area. Apart from the large threats that these hydro electric power projects pose to the eco-system of north Sikkim, other major concerns raised by the Panan power project is its location - the Dzongu Lepcha reserve and its proximity to the Tholung Gumpa, one of the most sacred and important monasteries of the state. It is feared that any major project in the vicinity of this area will definitely be a cause for concern as it would involve large influx of migrant workers from outside the state.

What started as low profile protests is now threatening to get more strident. While the government has so far succeeded in ignoring the initial murmur of protests, it may now not be so easy to contain the protesting voices with the movement against the dam gathering momentum. The Sikkim government's ambitious programme to harness the hydro-electric power potential of the State may prove to be good economics but the damage done to the ecology and to the indigenous cultural heritage of the area must also be accounted for. The fears of the locals on the social impact of the project in the Lepcha reserve cannot be ignored just because it is the minority view.

INBOX

sikkim.midweek@gmail.com

CONGRATULATIONS

Midweek has brought freshness with fragrance here and there.

All the best.
R.S.Shrestha

LAYOUT TOO PLAIN

I just bought a copy of Midweek and found it very refreshing for a change. We the Gangtokians were missing a good weekly newspaper and Midweek has filled that gap. We hope to see more interesting coverage in the future. However, I was bit disappointed with the layout as it was very plain and dull. Please add more photos and more sections for the youth.

Sonam Lepcha & friends, Gangtok

PRICE NOT RIGHT

You have priced your newspaper too high for Gangtok's pockets. A

newspaper priced at Rs. 10 is bit too much for a small town like Gangtok.

Arun Pradhan
Received over email

GO SUPERNOVA

Firstly I would like to congratulate you and the Midweek team on coming up with the first issue. Quite impressive even though i just managed to just scan through the pages. Even though I am not much of a TV person and never really caught any Supernova episode, ever since I read your article on the same I have started watching that show. Anyways, Midweek is good, looks neat and the content is varied too. Nice work people. Keeping it up is the difficult part though, let's see you guys pull it off.

Pavitra Tuladhar
Received over email

Politics makes strange bedfellows



MADDY'S DILLI

Well I'm back again from good old Dilli with a vengeance. Of course I have to assume that I'm a runaway hit in Gangtok for want of enough reassurance on that score. So without much ado let me plunge headlong into more saucy stuff from the capital city. Our good old ex Foreign Minister (now hounded), was just breathing a sigh of relief when the Pathak committee exonerated him from the great Iraqi food for oil scam and now the poor chap along with family and friends is yelling bloody murder. I can't blame him though as the manner in which he is being badgered is questionable and brings to mind the witch hunts in the days of the Emergency. Clearly he is now persona non grata in the inner court where he once enjoyed an exalted status. Though I don't personally agree with Mr. Natwar's, 'grapes are sour', approach, I must say that he is being selectively victimized by the powers that be. After all the world famous Mr. Q of Bofors fame was mysteriously let off the hook and his dubious assets unfrozen to boot so he could scoot with the loot, literally speaking! Could that be because of Mr. Q's close proximity to Ms. Sonia Gandhi...well the game is afoot Watson and the plot thickens.

Bolstered by the clean chit doled out by Justice Pathak, they were planning to fight back on the floor of the house and I was mortified at the prospect considering their belligerence level and the dramas that unfold these days in both houses of Parliament. But like rats deserting a sinking ship, his former accomplices have now turned saints and spilled the beans so to say. Former Ambassador Aneil

Mathrani has miraculously recovered from acute amnesia and for one who was initially unclear of Mr. Singh's visit to Baghdad with a Congress delegation is now singing like a canary. His sworn testimony leaves no doubt that Mr. Natwar's goose is finally cooked. The erstwhile suave and polished Natwarji is now busy making Jatland his heartland! As the saying goes.... 'politics makes strange bedfellows'. And just like the yoyos our dear politicians have become I have an ominous premonition he is going to bounce back with a vengeance. Watch this space for more details.

Right, let's move on to the latest entrant to the Rajya Sabha, Ms. Sule who also happens to be Union Minister Sharad Pawar's daughter. If nothing else, she sure is loaded and her declared assets would make many in her flock blush. After all, Gandhi caps and starched white kurtas are still the order of the day, perhaps the last mockery of the austerity and simplicity the Gandhian era represented. I don't grudge anybody their moolah, but flats in Peddar road and Singapore, a whopping amount of jewellery, loads of the green stuff, et al doesn't quite fit in with the 'khadi' mould does it? It seems like the budding politician and perhaps CM, Maharashtra in waiting is preparing more for a beauty pageant rather than parliament. And it is interesting to note that the old warhorse Mr. Pawar's declared assets are a miniscule fraction of his daughters. Well that's what seasoned means in politics today I guess.

While on the subject, Mr. Sharad Pawar has been fingered by the scamster par excellence Telgi. While the gossip and rumour mill was

working overtime since his narcoanalysis test in 2003 and a few heads rolled as a result, it took 3 years and Times Now to actually telecast an obviously intoxicated Telgi mumbling out name after name....Mr. Sharad Pawar, Mr. Chhagan Bhubal....and it went on and on. The moot question is; is anyone surprised? The guy was able to procure a printing press and print almost genuine stamp papers and distribute them with gay abandon for god's sake! How could he have ever managed without a whole lot of help from you know who? And of course, lowly people like him and Abu Salem can be put through these tests and the results can be stoutly denied by the very powerful combine of those who aided and abetted in the crime! After all, this evidence is inadmissible in court. Well what id like to know is, how come none of our great politicians with such impeccable integrity and fat bank balances which most shouldn't be having in the first place undergoes narcoanalysis? We have, 'the right to information', after all don't we? So even if the interest is purely academic we sure would like to know who's got what stashed away here, right?

So before I go on a lighter note... a small prayer doing the rounds at the BJP HQ in Delhi ... [in anticipation of a, 'Shining India', that is yet to come]

WE SHALL OUST SON
[set to, 'We shall overcome']

We shall oust Son, we shall
oust Son some day,
Deep in our hearts we do
believe, that we shall oust Son
some day,
Manu dear is just a boy,
Manu dear is a boy today,
She has got the say every
which and every way, we see
that everyday

We shall find the chosen one,
the chosen one we'll
find one day
But when we'll ever do that,
not a single one of us can say
No matter what goof ups we
do, this surely we can say
That we shall oust
Son some day!

So that's it for this time folks. See ya next time with more of the same from good ol Dilli.

It is interesting how the absence of reserved seats for the Limboo and Tamang communities in the final delimitation of Sikkim's Assembly constituencies seems to have caught many 'observers,' including leaders, by surprise. When even the obvious, when it is eventually stated, comes as a shock, it speaks volumes of the level of political maturity and understanding that engages in public debate.

The Central Delimitation Commission was instituted under Delimitation Act of 2002. As its name makes clear, its job is to delimit constituencies – both Assembly and Parliamentary. Its charter of responsibilities makes it explicit that the Commission is to look into only the geographical boundaries of constituencies and realign them in a way that each constituency is more contiguous, more homogenous.

The reservation of seats for the Scheduled Tribes, as Limboo and Tamang communities became in 2002, in turn requires an amendment of Section 7[1A] of the Representation of Peoples Act, 1950. This section, one may add here, determines the seat reservation formula for Sikkim which provides the 12 seats for the Bhutia and Lepcha communities, two seats for Scheduled Tribes and one seat for the Sangha. Given how sensitive the whole issue is, it needs to be stated that the 'amendment' will be to appoint the number of seats to be reserved for the new Scheduled Tribes and will not entail a reduction in seats already reserved for other communities since their continuance has already been endorsed by the Supreme Court. What will also be required is an amendment of Clause 3 of Article 332 of the Constitution covers reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes. One must remember here that this would be first time that Assembly seats in Sikkim will be reserved specifically for Scheduled Tribes. The same Article 332 provides the Constitutional guarantee of reserved seats for the Limboo and Tamang communities; the reservation has to come and even though the Centre might rank Sikkim lower in the priority list of Parliamentary business [like passing the required amendments], it is bound by the Constitution to eventually deliver. Yes, the process looks complicated. It is not. The moment the two

Delimitation and Reservation and the resultant confusion

FRINGE BENEFIT

by PEMA WANGCHUK

communities were added in the Scheduled Tribes list, the 'files' should have started moving in Central Ministries to complete the formalities. Those who continue to dither do so at the risk of subverting the very constitution that every elected representative and government official is duty-bound to uphold.

Once the above Acts are amended, directions are passed to the Delimitation Commission to also earmark which constituencies should be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in Sikkim. The Commission cannot decide whether reservations should be accorded or not or even how many; their job is to mark constituencies afresh and decide which constituencies to reserve. Everyone knew that neither Article 332, nor Section 7[1A] of the Representation of Peoples Act, 1950, had been amended; no one should have expected to find seats reserved for the Limboo and Tamang communities in the final list. But this ill-informed expectation should have been expected. When the Delimitation Commission was convening public sittings on its proposals in Sikkim, much time was consumed by those demanding reservation for Scheduled Tribes in Sikkim even after the Commission members had explained that theirs was not the forum to raise such demands. The delimitation process has to be seen in isolation of the reservation process. The Commission can only

decide 'which,' not 'whether' or 'how many.'

The Commission has been charged with the responsibility of making constituencies as similar in voter strength as possible. This makes sense. Since we are a democracy in which people elect their representatives to govern, it should only follow that each representative in the State Assembly represents a similar number of people - that would make them equally representative, and thus, equally powerful. It is obvious that Sikkim has many anomalies on this front, but three decades of living with this arrangement have made the people comfortable with the way things are. But then, comfort-levels are not the same as political propriety.

No one was expected to welcome the delimitation process - not in Sikkim, nor anywhere else in India. Elected representatives cultivate vote-banks, groom constituencies and unfortunately their return to the corridors of power is decided more by how many voters they made happy, rather than how many policy decisions they turned in favour of the people. Any changes in the areas they represent would require new strategies and perhaps even entail the splitting of core supporters between different constituencies. Some might even lose their traditional strongholds to a reserved category. So yes, there is reason for confusion and heartburn, but not over reservation of seats - that is a different process altogether.

The night Manul village turned to 'ground zero'

by PEMA L. SHANGDERPA

Disaster might have different faces but thousands of miles away from Manhattan, September 11 remains an equally important day for a tiny hamlet along the North Sikkim highway. Here the 'ground zero' is not where the twin towers stood but Manul, a village in north Sikkim where on this day in 1983, a massive landslide buried alive 65 people, including personnel of General Reserve Engineering Force and their families, at the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp.

The night of 10 and 11 September 1983 experienced a heavy downpour of around 450 mm after a cloud burst, coupled with intermittent tremors with thunder showers. One of the nallahs upstream on the Manul camp got blocked due to heavy debris which choked it. The stream changed its course and in its fury, caused by the raging torrential rain washed away the BRO and labour camps. Never before had such a tragedy struck the BRO camp, in spite of continuous work in hazardous and inhospitable terrain and climatic conditions.

"A camp bustling with life a night

before was swept away and covered by debris with no signs of humans the next morning," recounted a BRO official. Following the slide, the highway had remained closed for several weeks. Some 84 slides occurred at different places on that fateful night. Five major permanent bridges were damaged, the highway had sunk at 37 points. However BRO rose to the occasion and restored road communication in record time.

The then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in her message to BRO had appreciated the restoration and the citation reads. "After such major landslides, the restoration of the road to Mangan and Chungthang, well in advance of schedule, is a tribute to the efficiency and organisational excellency of the Border Roads Organisation. This is specially laudable because of the adverse conditions in which they have had to work". Two BRO personnel were then awarded with two Kirti chakras while another three received the Shaurya Chakra.

Manul Day is observed by all officers and ranks of 758 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) and 86 RCC on 11 September every year as a day of solemnity and commemoration to mark

their respects to the victims of Manul disaster in particular as well as the others who had lost their lives during the course of road construction work in 758 BRTF in general.

A prayer and wreath laying ceremony was performed at the Manul memorial near Manul village in North Sikkim. All ranks under 758 BRTF observed two minutes silence in their respective locations at 10 AM as a mark of respect to the departed souls. The rededication service was also observed at the headquarters of Project Dantak in Thimphu, Bhutan where chief engineer Brigadier M. S. Pillai and all ranks will vow to strive harder and to achieve the goals left over by their departed comrades. In Sikkim, Commander 758 BRTF, A. K. Dikshit and Commanding officer, 86 RCC, Lt. Colonel Rajesh Karel along with their team pledged to fulfill the dreams of the martyr's.

Even this week the BRO has been kept busy by keeping the north Sikkim highway open despite the rain causing major slides along this north Sikkim highway as well as the Singtam-Dikchu road where the roads have caved in at several places. The BRO has completed permanent restoration works.

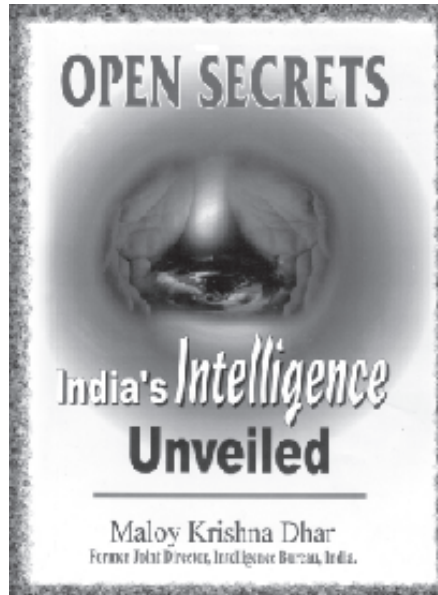
A flash of you...

Sometimes
I can see
A flash of you
In my uncle's eyes
An expression,
A sidelong look
In an aunt
When I seek
More searchingly
It's not there
Captured only
But a moment
My heart leaps
As involuntarily
I jerk forward
With a need
So primitive
A heartstopping
Hungering inside
People die
But genes remain
I wonder sometimes
Can others see
A flash of you
In my cheekbones
Or perhaps
Even my soul?

- Tenzin C. Tashi

Sikkim Unveiled

MALOY KRISHNA DHAR, an Intelligence Operator was sent to Sikkim by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) after the 'merger' of Sikkim with India in May 1975 to look after the internal and counter intelligence functions. In his book *Open Secrets: India's Intelligence Unveiled*, Dhar offers an insider's view on prominent people and events of the time. Revelations made in the book by Dhar has already caused shudders in the country's political, bureaucratic and security institutions. The fact that no other government official of Dhar's seniority has made hold to disclose so much about the functioning of the Indian intelligence establishment has imparted a kind of historic significance to the book. MIDWEEK excerpts from his chapter on Sikkim



BACK TO SHANGRI-LA

One of the loyal officers of the former Chogyal had very aptly described the tryst of history in which Sikkim was drawn into the mysterious webs of ambition, aspiration and frustration of three women – Indra Gandhi, Hope Cooke and Kazini Eliza Maria Khangsarpa. Some day someone should be able to peel off the webs of mystery that surrounded the Kazini. I would try to narrate a few snippets of my encounter with that legendary *rolling stone of history* that came to rest in the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim.

It was not an easy task for me to address the infrastructural problems. My regional boss at Calcutta did not appreciate the logistical problems. To him Sikkim was another territory gifted to him after the merger of the Himalayan kingdom. I gave up on him and pleaded directly with the top bosses in Delhi to help me with manpower, communication equipment and funds for hiring accommodation. I received immediate support. Within three months I could establish a few intelligence posts at Rhenock, Jorethang, Rongpo, Malli, Geyzing, Namchi, Mangan interior pockets. My efforts were complimented by adequate support from the technical branch of the IB. They provided the basic wireless sets and trained operators. I was allowed to use 20 helicopter sorties in a year to visit the outposts on China border and any number of sorties for evacuation of sick and wounded personnel.

The tiny 22nd state of India presented myriads of challenges.

The Intelligence Bureau was an unknown commodity in Sikkim. The Sikkimese were exposed to the operatives of the PMO, External Affairs and the R&AW. The OSD stamp at my back did not befool the uncanny political gangs and the persona closer to the former Chogyal and even some of the Indian bureaucrats on deputation to the government of Sikkim.

In 1975 Sikkim presented a crystal clear black and white collage, though the intervening colours were not imperceptible. But extreme analytical skill was required to decipher those colours.

The people were broadly branded as pro-India and pro-Chogyal. Being pro-India was the fashion of the day. The pro-Chogyal elements were treated as pariahs and were natural suspects, having possible linkages

with China, America, and the all-pervasive evil machine of the day, the CIA. The general rung of the government and political establishments were required to demonstrate their loyalty to the new country and new masters in demeanour and deeds. They did everything possible to please the 'deputationist officers' and the enigmatic Indian bureaucracy that were being gradually imported into the new state.

The Governor had replaced the Chogyal. The chief minister physically resided in his Mintokgang house located in between two hills, one occupied by the Governor and the other housing the Tashiding palace, abode of the former king, Palden Thondup Namgyal.

Kazi had reluctantly committed himself to the merger of Sikkim with India. Once caught into the web of Delhi's design the Kazi had no other option but to drift along, though he did not want outright abolition of the identity of Sikkim. After the merger his cabinet colleagues and the elected legislators, most of who knew which side of the bread was buttered, vied with each other in proclaiming loyalty to the new political dispensation.

The Kazini too was vociferous in proclaiming loyalty

Kazi had no other option but to drift along, though he did not want outright abolition of the identity of Sikkim

to Indra Gandhi and the new political masters in Delhi. She had achieved the final fruit of her lifelong pursuit – power, glory, adulation and a final destination. But, as I penetrated closer to the hearts and thoughts of the Kazis I was left with no doubt that Kazi Lhendup and Kazini Eliza Maria had not really bargained for the merger of Sikkim with India. They wanted the Chogyal out and continuation of Sikkim as a protectorate of India with a democratically elected government and at worst a constitutional monarchy.

On several occasions Kazi opened up his heart and conversed with me in Nepali to convey that at heart he was a Sikkimese and had struggled for a democratic dispensation. A Lepcha noble, he was a devoted Buddhist but he did not trust the wily Bhutias and the Tibetans. He considered the Nepalis as demographic ants, who were bound to gobble up the identity of the aboriginals. Kazi had a vision. But he was not a politician of the mettle the Indian politicians are made of. He was a trusting type of person and easily yielded under pressure. His biggest disadvantage was that he believed in the Indian bureaucrats and politicians who guided him along the course of merger of Sikkim, as per the strategic design of Delhi. The Kazini often vociferously voiced the personal and secret views of Kazi. Discretion was not her forte. Behind the back of Kazi some of his Nepali colleagues had arrived at secret understanding with Delhi as they hoped to gain a better deal from an Indian Sikkim, where the rule of majority was the basic ingredient of democracy. I do not want to name these Nepali colleagues at this stage of Kazi's life, when he is sufficiently disillusioned with the political leaders and bureaucrats in Delhi.

The events had overtaken the Kazi and Kazini. Back in Delhi Indra Gandhi was in no mood to allow the ripe fruit to fall on wrong laps. She was seemingly on a winning streak and Sikkim offered an opportunity to reaffirm her greatness. She had helped demolishing a part of the history written by the British Empire and the hungry politicians of 1947 by dismembering Pakistan. She had earned for India the membership of the nuclear club. Sikkim was another stepping stone to put her on the pedestal of greatness. Both Kazi and Kazini had failed to fathom her problems and

Sikkim was drawn into the mysterious webs of ambition, aspiration and frustration of three women – Indra Gandhi, Hope Cooke and Kazini Eliza Maria Khangsarpa

proclivities. They finally ended up as the reluctant tools that helped the people of Sikkim to achieve democracy and lose their identity that they had enjoyed for over 300 years.

Most of the cabinet ministers were ignorant kids and were not able to comprehend the complicated political process that involved in making a democracy function smoothly. The elected legislators had very little to do but to endorse the actions of the Governor which were normally routed through the chief minister with approving seal of the state assembly. But all of them were happy on one count. The merger brought in huge plan and non-plan budgetary support from Delhi and they did not take time to learn the tricks of funnelling the riches to their pockets. Some of the Indian bureaucrats were quick to come to their rescue by teaching them the Indian rope tricks that made budgetary provisions vanish into thin air. Having wide experiences of such magic tricks in mainland India they themselves practised the trick and taught their new political masters in appreciable to collaborative spirit. The merger had inextricably molested the political and moral virginity of the once innocent people. I had seen the same rat race towards the cesspool of corruption amongst the politicians and bureaucrats in the North East. Bhartvarsha like the Imperial India believed in the political philosophy of stuffing the gullet of the concerned people with currency bills to keep them silent and contented. I suffered from serious pains to witness the simple people of the North East and Sikkim imitating the people of mainland India, immersing them in corruption and degrading their intrinsic values. That's the decisive march of democracy!

[Excerpted with permission]

Fifty-five. That's the number of suicide cases reported in the state by May this year, and these are only the recorded figures. The real picture could be even more disturbing with experts suggesting that this could be just the tip of the iceberg.

In the past three and a half years, i.e. since 2003, Sikkim has witnessed an alarmingly steady increase in the number of suicides. While the average number of suicides per year stood at 100 till mid 2005, by the month of October the same year, the figure had already touched the 126 mark. This year's statistics have painted an even darker picture with 55 cases already reported within the first five months.

Tired of waiting for someone to take the initiative to save lives, a handful of like-minded young volunteers have recently come together to go beyond just talking and do something in this regard. Formed as CARE in June this year, the organization aims to create awareness amongst the society, especially the youth, about mental ailments, find out if they have any problems and provide them counseling.

"Suicides cannot be anticipated but they can certainly be prevented up to some extent if efforts are made to create awareness in this direction. We felt it was high time for like-minded people to do something together," says Ongdup Lepcha on the formation of CARE. Lepcha is the general secretary of CARE and holds a post-graduate degree in anthropology.

Within a few months of its formation, CARE has successfully held awareness workshops on suicidal tendencies and probable preventions in Paljor Namgyal Girls' Senior Secondary School and Burtuk Junior High School. During these workshops, besides talks by various experts, students were also treated to an interesting one act radio play where negative emotions like fear, anger, doubt, frustration and depression were personified on stage by members of Christian Students' Fellowship of Sikkim. The play, written by renowned Nepali writer Prabin Zumeli, has been well received by students who, in the survey,



have stressed on the need for such educational, yet at the same time entertaining, radio plays for the success of such awareness campaigns.

A little probe behind what triggers off this growing fatalistic trend in our tiny state brings to fore mental illnesses, most significantly depression – an ailment, which, more often than not is left untreated due to our faulty social perception. Reports suggest that an alarming 95 per cent of these suicides were a result of untreated mental illness, of which a whopping 80 per cent were cases of depression. Again, of the ones suffering from depression, 80 per cent of the cases were seen among women. It has further been observed that the suicide rate is high among the productive age

group of 15 to 45 years, with 75 per cent of the cases recorded in this age group.

Besides awareness camps, CARE has also been organising free counseling/coaching classes for both dropouts and regular students from classes eight to twelve, in collaboration with Gurukul Academy. Along with acknowledgement of the good work done by them coming in from all quarters for their efforts, invitations to hold similar awareness workshops have also been pouring in for CARE from all parts of the state. The team will be visiting Jorethang this month, followed by Pelling.

While the good feedback from participants has come as a major encouragement for CARE members to continue their good work, playing the spoil sport are fund constraints presently faced by the organisation. Thus far, the organisation is sustained by its members and some sponsors, informs PJ Pradhan, counselor and one of the founding members of CARE. This explains the team's inability to hold awareness camps as frequently as they would have liked to, or even open a helpline for that matter.

To fully meet its objective to prevent suicides, save lives and bring down the increasing suicide rate in Sikkim, CARE requires cooperation from the entire society. So much needs to be done and a handful of Good Samaritans have shown their care. Do you?

THEY CARE

CARE Members: Ongdup Lepcha, Dr. Biswas Pradhan, Kamal Chamling, PJ Pradhan, Sashi Kumar Rai, Nirmala Pradhan, Norzang Sandyang, TN Sharma, MN Dahal, Jesse Targain, Ongyal Lepcha, Pushpa Lata Subba, Rekha Mani Subba, Renzino Lepcha

CARE Sponsors: MS Mittal, Kalimpong Store, Azar Tailors, Gokul & Sons, Padma Traders

:FOR COUNSELING OR DONATIONS:
Contact 99326 46646, 98320 41053, 98320 90058, 98323 04261



a MIDWEEK report

GANGTOK: Mainaam Garden, Namchi, South Sikkim won the second -best Best Display by Individual Growers prize at the 2nd International Flora Expo 2006 held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi from 08 September to 10 September. The award was presented to proprietor of Mainaam Gardens, Tika Maya Chamling by Minister of State for Commerce Jiram Ramesh. Organized by Media Today Pvt Ltd, the expo was inaugurated by the President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. The event was a big hit and was participated by

various State Horticulture Departments, private gardens and foreign flora firms.

Mainaam had put on a display of eye-catching flowers including Jennifer Gali, Cooksbridge, Starburst, Forest King, Top Spot, and Ice Cascade.

Named after Mainam peak, which is itself a repository of rich varieties of flora and fauna, the Garden is spread over an area of 20 acres consisting of different locations of varying altitudes for nurturing different species of flowers. With excellent infrastructural facilities and backed by an experienced team of gardeners and horticulturists, Mainaam

Garden is engaged in the production and supply of a complete range of cut flowers throughout the year. The Garden's range of supplies includes exotic, tropical, sub-tropical and rare varieties of orchids. Cut flowers of liliun are being transported using state-of-the art-technology for the longevity of their freshness and beauty. A wide range of flower bulbs and flowering plants are also available. The combination of experience and expertise of the team of gardeners and horticulturists, and use of state-of-the-art technology with excellent infrastructure assures production and delivery of quality flowers.

from the
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FOR AD ENQUIRIES

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sikkimnewhorizons@yahoo.com

Taktse International School started operations in March this year, promising to change the 'concept of education' in the state. How far have they succeeded?

RHEA SHARMA spoke to WENDY PULGAR, Principal, TIS and alumni of Stanford University, California, USA with a master's degree in International Education for an update on progress and problems.



"Quality education comes at a price"

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE PROGRESS YOU HAVE MADE SO FAR?

Yes, we are happy with the progress made so far. Considering that the first phase of the school was constructed and operationalized within a year is in itself quite an achievement. Enrollment numbers have increased, from a modest figure of 17 when we first started to 43 currently. We were under no illusion of getting a high enrollment nor did we go out actively seeking it. Our first group of parents has been our best ambassadors as through their word of mouth the numbers have increased. This would not have happened had they not been satisfied with the kind of education their wards were receiving. The parents of the 43 children now have the status of Founding Parents at our school.

PEOPLE HAVE BEGUN TO SEE TIS AS AN ELITIST SCHOOL. IS THAT YOUR INTENTION?

We do not see TIS as being an elitist school – far from it. The many parents who send their children to TIS are ordinary working class parents who value quality education and are willing to make the necessary sacrifices for their children. TIS honor this and are conscious of keeping the fees affordable within the constraints and realities of running a truly good school. I do not think our parents would want it any other way.

TIS is a not for profit institution and will aim to fulfill its other social obligations by providing scholarships to needy and meritorious students.

WHY IS THE SCHOOL MORE EXPENSIVE THAN ANY IN THE REGION?

We believe that for learning to be effective and meaningful class sizes need to be manageable. Unlike many schools where class sizes are in excess of 30 and as you know in some cases even 40 to 50 at TIS we will have class sizes not exceeding 20. This will enable our teachers to track the performance of individual children so that child specific learning needs can be met. A rigorous curriculum and instructional approach benchmarked to international standards complements the small class size. To deliver quality education on a consistent basis TIS is investing in its people through on going professional development. The hard reality is that delivering and sustaining quality education comes at a price. What TIS is offering is significant value in comparison to other schools including international schools in greater India where the fees are exorbitant.

HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE THERE

AND HOW HAVE THEY ADJUSTED TO THIS NEW METHOD OF TEACHING?

We currently have an enrollment of around 43 students. This is a huge jump considering that we started the school with barely 17 students. The students have adapted very well to an interactive and enquiry based learning approach and the outcomes have been very encouraging. We have seen children who were inhibited and shy open up; children who dreaded going to schools now coming to TIS with great enthusiasm and children who were not confident now standing in front of an audience and performing.

WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU FACED?

The major challenge we face will be getting quality human resource. This says a lot for our educational system including our higher institutions of learning where we are unable to produce high caliber human resources. TIS will continue to recruit the best teachers from all around as well as investing in professional development. We are also drawing on international resources for training programs.

WHAT ABOUT AFFILIATION?

TIS has started the process of affiliation with Cambridge for the primary and middle grades. In our assessment Cambridge offers the best alternative in terms of educational approach, access to quality educational resources, training support, and a certification recognized internationally. We are not aware if other Boards are providing this level of support. It is at the primary level that thorough grounding must

take place, where the foundation must be built and therefore our choice of going with Cambridge.

WILL YOU STICK TO THE NO UNIFORM POLICY?

It is not true that our school has a "no uniform policy". Our students wear uniform twice a week and on special occasions. Other days they come in smart casuals within a defined dress code. This is practical as students are more comfortable and can dress appropriately depending on whether conditions.

IS IT TRUE THAT STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED TO BRING IN EXPENSIVE GADGETS AND GAMES TO SCHOOL?

This is not true. The school does not permit extraneous gadgets or games to be brought to school. Essential learning aids such as audiovisual, computers, sports equipment are provided by the school.

WHAT ARE YOUR IMMEDIATE FUTURE PLANS?

In the immediate future we are looking at a junior playing field and an adventure playground. The school master plan is being developed on the basis of which we will progressively build the senior sections and other supporting infrastructure. The school is currently to Grade VI. Next year it will be upgraded to Grade VII and thereafter progressively to Grade XII. Intake of new students will be limited. TIS will follow a gradual growth path that will enable it to create and manage the right school culture that will promote a dynamic learning environment.



Namchi gets new indoor stadium

NAMCHI: The Namchi Indoor Stadium, constructed at the cost of Rs. 2.6 crores over a sprawling area of 19600 sq. ft., was inaugurated here on 8 September by chief minister Pawan Chamling.

The indoor stadium, the first in the state to have a multipurpose fitness centre, has facilities for playing volleyball, basketball, badminton, tennis, etc. It has

been learnt that the photographs of Sikkimese sportspersons, who had excelled at the national level, would adorn the walls of the new indoor stadium.

The fund for construction had been sanctioned by the Buildings & Housing Department, and the building's foundation stone had been laid earlier by the CM on 27 January, 2004.

EASTERN ZONAL LEG OF NATIONAL TOURNEY TO BEGIN FRIDAY

GANGTOK: Sikkim Football Federation [SFA] will play host to the Eastern Zonal Round of 29th Sub-Junior National Football Championship for Mir Iqbal Hussain Trophy 2006 to be held here at Paljor Stadium from 15 to 24 September. The inaugural match will be held between Sikkim and Orissa. Other teams participating in the championship are Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand.

This is the first time that SFA has been given the responsibility of hosting the zonal leg of this national tourney by the All India Football Federation.

SATA team leaves for Chennai

GANGTOK: A 15-member team of Sikkim Amateur Taekwondo Association will represent Sikkim in the 25th National Senior Taekwondo Championship to be held at Periamedu, Chennai, from 15 to 17 September. The championship is being organised by the Tamil Nadu Taekwondo Association under the aegis of Taekwondo Federation of India.

The Sikkim team left for Chennai on 11 September, headed by chief coach Trilok Subba and manager Sanchaman Subba, and will participate in fin, fly, bantam, feather, light, welter, middle and heavy categories.



A RECORD BROKEN, MONETARY ASSISTANCE ASSURED

Swimming Meet concludes

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The 3rd Sikkim State Swimming Meet 2006 concluded on Sunday, 10 September at the TNA swimming pool with a new record being set by Khenrab Wangchuk Dorjee (above left) of 32.68 seconds in 50m Freestyle men breaking his own earlier meet record of 35.11 seconds in the same category. Sikkim Amateur

Swimming Association has been assured monetary assistance of Rs. 50,000 for the promotion of the sport in the state by SB Subedi, Minister for Forests, Wildlife and Environment Department and chief guest at the closing ceremony. SASA will be participating in the National Aquatic Championship 2006 to be held in Bangalore from 21 to 25 September later in the month.

OPEN Thursday to Sunday

RATE : Thursday / Friday / Sunday
- Rs. 200 couple/stag Rs. 100 Coupon
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Photo: Karchoong Diyali

DIVINE REPAIRS

EVEN LORD VISHWAKARMA, the presiding deity of all craftsmen and architects, is not spared from the wrath of the transport journey from Siliguri to Gangtok as the photograph portrays. According to Kalu Mandal and Kutu Pal, two sculptors from Siliguri who had 20 of their statues brought over to Gangtok for the Vishwakarma Puja on 17 September, the effigies suffer a lot of damage and extensive repair work is needed here in Gangtok before the statues are sold for about one thousand four hundred rupees each.

Baichung to endorse tribal products

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: India football captain Baichung Bhutia will associate himself with the cause of promoting tribal products. Baichung Bhutia will be the first sportsperson to be a part of the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd's (TRIFED) initiative of associating eminent people from tribal communities to promote tribal products. TRIFED has a chain of 28 retail outlets under the name of Tribe India in 22 cities across the country.

Products endorsed by the India captain Baichung Bhutia will be available for sale in all Tribe India outlets. According to official figures, the sale of tribal products in these outlets have gone up from Rs.5 million in 2004-05 to a whopping Rs 16.8 million in 2005-06.

Some new products were

added to the list last year - Pashmina shawls, dehydrated apricots and yak wool shawls from Leh and Himachal Pradesh; textile items from the northeast; organic food items from Uttaranchal, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh and herbal formulations from Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

Meanwhile, the Ravangla-based High Altitude Spices, a food preservative firm owned by Baichung and his brother-in-law Sameer Tamhane has announced the setting up of a new plant at Reshi in West Sikkim. The state-of-the-art unit will have sections dealing with fruit, vegetable and spice processing and will be built at an estimated cost of Rs. 6 crores. The group has decided to seek strategic partners to provide financial support in this new venture and has plans to start building the unit by October this year and the first trial run is expected in a year's time.

Two weeks, three investors

SIKKIM'S INVESTMENT FRIENDLY POLICIES BEAR FRUIT

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The consistent efforts of the State Government to promote Sikkim as an investment-friendly State have started to show results.

With the opening of Nathula and the prospects of immense economic boom it brings and the wide and positive vibe Sikkim has gathered over the years through its persistent publicity campaigns, the State has seen a steady interest from investors over the years.

The last two weeks, Sikkim has attracted the attention of three major companies interested in setting up their production units here.

Business giant Godrej Pvt Ltd and Pharmaceutical leaders Cadilla and Sun Pharmaceuticals are all ready to set up shop here, following Sikkim's positive investment scenario. Godrej Pvt Ltd has already acquired land at Mamring near Rangpo in East Sikkim to set up their hair dyes manufacturing unit. According to official sources in the State Commerce and Industrial department, the company has

spent a little over Rs. 5 crore just for land acquisition. Cadilla Pharmaceuticals has acquired land at Bardang, between Rangpo and Singtam at a cost of Rs. 3 crores for a pharma and medicine manufacturing unit. The Rangpo-Ranipool stretch along the National Highway 31A has been declared an industrial belt by the State Government.

In another major development, Sun Pharmaceuticals has declared that it will set up a new plant in the State and invest Rs 100 crore during the current fiscal, taking advantage of the tax benefits available here.

Sun Pharma Chairman and Managing Director Dilip Shanghvi told a press conference at Kolkata on September 9 that the company is setting up a new plant in Sikkim that would cost Rs 50 crore. The total investment proposal by the company is Rs 100 crore for the current financial year.

The first phase of the Sikkim unit is expected to be completed by March 2007 and the second phase of

commercial production in 2009. The company has a total of nine units in India and one in North America.

The Sikkim project will produce tablets and capsules for the domestic market. The unit will have a capacity to produce 300 crore tablets and capsules per annum, which will be 20% increase over existing capacity, Mr. Shanghvi said. The company has acquired five acres and the plant area would be one lakh square feet. The reason behind building it in Sikkim was the tax benefits.

It would interesting to note here that a number of multinational companies have already set up their units here. Sheela Foams Pvt Ltd, makers of Sleepwell brand of mattresses already have their unit at Bardang. The Swiss multinational, SICPA, a global leader in manufacturing security inks for bank notes started their unit at Mamring last week, along with Chaudhary Group of Nepal, who set up their famous WA IWAI noodle manufacturing unit also at Mamring.

HIGH ALTITUDE SPICES

Ravangla, South Sikkim - 737 139

HIGH ALTITUDE SPICES, RAVANGLA ANNOUNCES

THE SETTING UP OF 6.00 CRORE STATE OF THE ART : MULTI FRUIT, VEGETABLE AND SPICE PROCESSING UNIT IN SIKKIM.

FOR THAT IT NEEDS Strategic Partners with sound financial background. Shortly Tie up with Consortium for Exports
Sanction and Approval Stage : Sept.-Oct, 2006
Infrastructure building from : October, 2006-09-05
Trial Runs : October 2007 . Commercial Production : November 2007

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Chief Promoters of Project:
BHAICHUNG BHUTIA & SAMEER TAMHANE

OUR BRANDS:

Spice of Life

Actual

We know that there a lot of issues that only women need to address and sometimes grapple with as they go about their lives. Like pregnancy and bringing up baby, unless of course you can boast of a husband who's really involved in the parenting as well. Then there are those guilt pangs peculiar only to women who are part of the workforce and feel that they are cutting corners at home and missing out on being available to their children.

We also know that contrary to the commonly held belief, mostly male, of course, that woman on the whole can't get along with others of their sex, they can and do bond with each other. It may not be obvious as the raucous bonding men do over a game of football or a chilled glass of beer but then again women are wired differently. Our relationships are more private, more complex, more layered. We've also heard enough sexist comments about women being the 'weaker sex' or the 'fairer sex'. Sorry, we don't buy that anymore. We know many women who can handle a pair of pliers or hammer better than their maybe stronger but definitely more inept husbands.

Women everywhere are shattering the glass ceiling and striding tall beside men in the corporate world. While gender neutral fields like IT have thrown up big successes, more traditional companies-

Pepsico and ICICI are a few top notch companies- have recognized that women not only make good bosses, they actually are more dedicated and their EQ- emotional quotient- is much higher. They make more compassionate yet more ethical bosses in simple words! The women in Sikkim have always had it much better than their counterparts in other parts of India. Though ours is a patriarchal society, the women have always had their share of respect and freedom. What we truly respect about our women is that they are

so large hearted and so giving. It is these women who turn up their sleeves, take over and efficiently run the kitchens in homes struck by a tragic demise leaving the family to cope with the stream of condolence givers.

We at MIDWEEK are dedicating this page to our women. Women who constantly multi-task and juggle a lot of diverse

roles, always giving of themselves. Whether they are wives/ singletons, mothers, working women or stay at home housewives, every woman is constantly nurturing and nursing others, constantly trying to blur the line between who she is -a normal woman- and who she wants to be- superwoman.

We encourage our readers to write in about what they would like to see on this page. We hope that our more experienced readers will share good practical advice with our younger ones, and lest we get labeled sexist, men you can write in too about how difficult it is to understand and please women, or so you normally claim!

This is our space, ladies- make the most of this platform to bond big time! Yes, crib big time too about your remote wielding partner if it catches

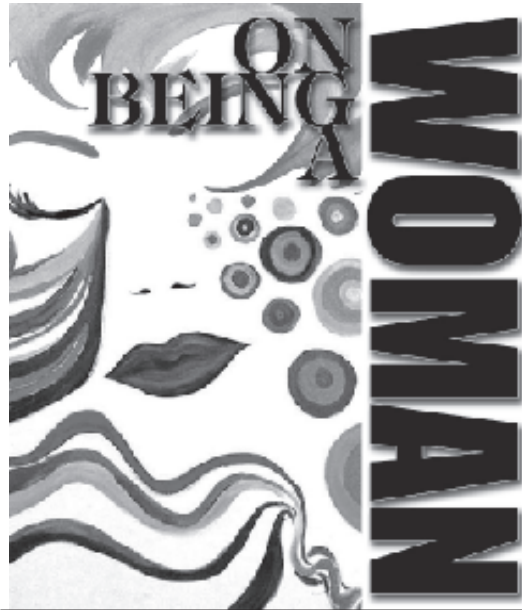
your fancy. And since Madam Editor insists that some one has to helm this page, it looks like it's my call though frankly I'm not a very girly woman- here are my dubious credentials:

No of make up items in my handbag: Nil

No of hair colours tried: Zilch

No of conquests: One, I married him!

My one redeeming factor is probably the fact that when I'm told 'Or else', I'm a prolific writer! But then of course I'm a more obvious choice from a pool that includes Pema and Karchoong, he,he,he!



by TINA

MOMS-TO-BE CLUB

Ohmigosh, I'm pregnant!

YOUR DOC has just pronounced those three words, 'Congratulations, you're pregnant'.

If the first thought that flashes into your head is not a blissfully happy one, relax, you're normal. We asked a cross section of women to verbalise the first thought that raced into their minds as soon as they heard they were in the family way. Here are some of the uncensored responses:

- Scared · Excited
- SHIT! · Terrified
- Numb · Zapped
- Unsure · Weepy
- Depressed · FINALLY!

Psychologists say it's normal to feel any or a combination of the above feelings, like scared but happy. So if you've been feeling secretly guilty about your perfectly normal reactions, relax!



Anything as monumental as pregnancy is sure to impact your mind as well as your body. While most women tend to go out of their way to deal with obvious changes

such as the growing bump, they neglect the critical but often unseen changes in their mindset. The trick is to realize that motherhood does not

happen when the baby is born, a woman goes through a roller coaster of emotions as she gears up to become a mother during the three terms of her pregnancy. Every time a baby is born, so's a new mother. Enjoy your pregnancy, you'll be a more relaxed and confident mother when baby comes.

trivia

Sarus cranes mate for life. A male sarus crane literally mourned its dead mate and did not allow zoo keepers to remove the carcass for a long time.

Fruits are best eaten on an empty stomach and not as an after meal snack as we commonly tend to do here.

INDIAN WOMEN ON TOP

The Indian woman is storming the global power lists!

Excerpts from Forbes.com: Chief Executive-designate of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi, Congress President Sonia Gandhi, and ICICI Bank's Lalita Gupte and Kalpana Morparia are among the 100 most powerful women in the world.

India-born Nooyi finds herself as the fourth most powerful woman on earth, while Sonia Gandhi occupies the 13th position on the list.

Joint managing directors of ICICI Bank Gupte and Morparia are on the 93rd position, while Vidya Chhabria, chairperson of Jumbo Group, Dubai, is at the 95th spot.

MIDWEEK SAYS: Expectedly, Indians were quick to post comments on the site ridiculing that Nooyi could be more powerful than Madam G. Sonia who could influence the lives of billions of people compared to the former who is interestingly listed as an American citizen. Seems Sonia is truly India's bahu!

CHYK

HOUSE PROUD

Grandma Knows All

MOST PEOPLE MAKE THE MISTAKE OF NOT CLEANING THEIR FRIDGES REGULARLY AND THEN THEY OVER COMPENSATE BY GIVING IT A GOOD SCOURING WITH HARSH CLEANING AGENTS.

Grandma's Take: Forget those multi purpose sprays and all that tommyrot. The best way to wipe your fridge clean is to use two humble products from your kitchen shelves. Vinegar works fine, so does a solution of baking soda mixed with a little warm water. It's cheap and effective.

Extra hint: Put off the fridge before cleaning it. Put a cut lemon half in the freshly cleaned fridge to remove nasty odours.

the PROFILER



a MIDWEEK photo

HOME DEPOT

WE'VE BEEN HEARING so many people rave about this new **great new departmental store** in **Development Area** that we had to check it out. We strolled into **Home Depot** in the **Hotel Madhuban building** and instantly joined the rave brigade. To be honest, we got so caught up checking the terrific product inventory we almost forgot to take notes for this column!

The shop bills itself as a 'one stop shop' and yes, we must say that it does live up to its tagline stocking cosmetics, stationery, groceries, provisions, gift items, dairy products and household items all under one well organized and spanking clean roof. There are these neatly lettered little labels prominently displayed above a product category that allow you to quickly zero in on what you want without much ado.

There are a lot of product categories - cosmetics/ baking/ home cleansing products/ baby care/candies & sweets/ FMCG

items/rice and many more and a lot of competing brands jostling for attention in each product category and the end result is you're thoroughly spoilt for choice.

There truly is something for everyone. Normally neglected consumer segments like the large number of diabetics in Sikkim have cause to celebrate - they have a whole section of sugar free goodies to choose from- jell-o, mint, caramels, jams to name a few.

Another segment that is rapidly growing but largely underestimated by other shops finds prominent shelf space here. We're talking of men's cosmetics and personal grooming products. But then, of course, young proprietor Naresh Raj Shrestha would know males best!

You'll find locals snapping up popular items like 'gurpak', 'kinema' 'sukuti' or dried and spiced meat and home made pickles and a lot of interesting frozen stuff from the Al Kabeer brand like mutton rib chops and chicken burger meat. Yes, you can pick up tiger prawns and shrimp as well!

It's obvious that a lot of meticulous planning went into

making the whole shopping experience at the Home Depot a complete one. No wonder ladies come from comparatively far flung areas like Kazi Road and Arithang to shop here.

Check it out, highly recommended.

QUICK PICKS:

- Sausages and other cold cuts from the Adhunik brand
- Beetles, fish and other interesting shaped little chocs
- MIDWEEK!
- A fine selection of cheeses and non alcoholic wines
- Khadas - and something else equally handy, find out for yourself what it is - ready wrapped in newspapers.
- Packaged dals and spices

WHAT WE LIKE: There's plenty of parking space available 24/7 in the vicinity, the breadth of products on display is pretty impressive and it's easy to navigate the shop. Best of all, the shop's **prices are lower** compared to other shops in town. We really like the quirky gastro section which has Eno, Pudin Hara and Disprin as well!

WHAT'S the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of Pears soap? The gentle soap, right? All soft mother and baby skin, right? Wrong! The Pears brand from the HLL stable in recent months has launched several new variants [brand extensions actually] in a concerted effort to break out of the by now boring 'gentle' tag it has so long been identified with.

The oil control version was



launched some time back in a vibrant green colour as far removed from the transparent brown of the good old Pears as possible.

Now the **Pears Junior** soap entices you with a bright pink strawberry colour and what's more, it smells tantalizingly like a candy. Young mothers will find it a big help in getting recalcitrant little children to bathe willingly.

SCORCHING THE SHELVES:

the lowdown on new products

The company says it's all about putting the fun back in bathtub. But it's quite serious about being good for your kiddo's skin so it boasts the goodness of olive oil to moisturize and nourish baby's tender skin.

The inside of the soap packs a neat surprise too, puzzles to keep your preschooler busy. Good idea this!

A 75g bar of Pears Junior sets you back by Rs.20 but it's still cheaper than market leader J&J's baby soap. Available in most retail shops in town.

Beauty experts all agree on one basic principle - always remove all the war paint oops, make up from your face before hitting the sack. Most women, striving hard to juggle the multiple demands of home and career and young kids tend to cut corners when it comes to removing their make up properly at night.

We suppose the whole

rigmarole of putting make up remover/ cleansing milk, etc., on cotton balls is a bit tedious for the average woman to be religious about. Anticipating this, the Delhi based company **Ginni Filaments Ltd.** has come up with a capital product in more ways than one - **Clea cleansing and make up remover wipes.**

Made of soft spun lace non-woven fabric, which scores over paper in that it does not tear easily, Clea not only cleanses the skin, it moisturizes and tones it as well since it contains the goodness of Chamomile and Aloe Vera, both well

known ingredients in the beauty industry. It removes waterproof mascara and eye liner with minimal fuss as well.

Available in six variants - Aloe, Orange, Cucumber, Lemon, Mint and Anti-Acne, a resealable pack of 30 Clea wet wipes retails for Rs.50. It's a pretty handy thing to have in your bag, especially on the move.

The Aloe pack can do double duty to clean up your youngster's minor cuts and scrapes when they happen away from home, it's also great for removing the dirt and stickiness from grubby fingers.

We picked up the products for testing from the Home Depot.

- TINA



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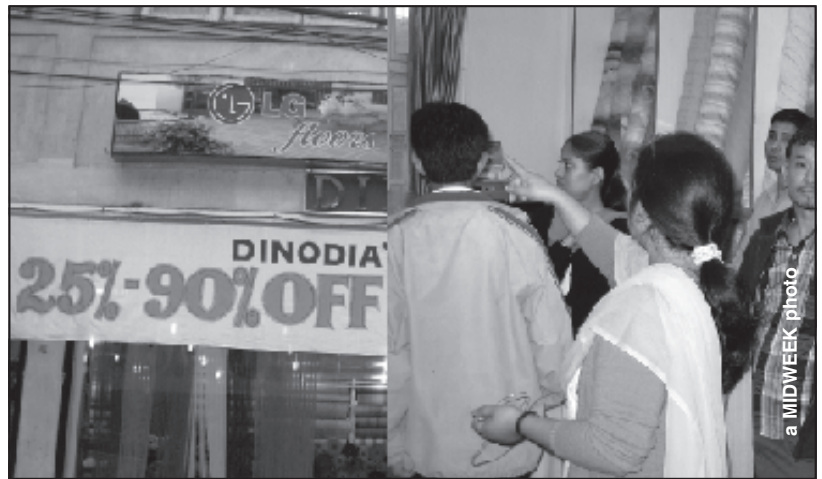
Heal yourself at ATREYA AYURVEDA

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: For those favouring alternate healing over allopathic treatment, there's good news. Dr. KS Roy, who has opened Atreya Ayurvedic Centre here at PNG Road, says his centre combines the best of both worlds – diagnosis of ailments through modern science and its treatment through ayurveda – and provides the desired results to its patients.

Opened by Dr. KS Roy four months ago, the centre boasts of being equipped with all the modern facilities for treatment of a host of ailments, which it provides at a reasonable cost. Treatments are provided here for arthritis, joint pains, low back pain and osteoporosis as well as for infertility in males and females, and problems relating to menstrual disorders.

The herbs used in the centre are procured from the mountains of Bankura, Purulia, and Birbhum, and then treated in a factory at Arambagh. Dr. Roy now has plans to start his own herbal garden here too, besides opening more centres in Sikkim.



Shopaholics Anonymous

Sick of the way your rooms look, but don't want to spend a bomb to introduce a new look? One of the easiest ways to instantly give a lift to any room is to change the upholstery and curtains. And you're in luck, there are pre Dasai sales in three popular home furnishing outlets in town right now- strictly in order of distance from the MIDWEEK office in Nam Nang: Dinodia Traders in Nam Nang, Curtina in M.G.Marg & Mittal

Furnishings in Tibet Road. Dinodia is offering you a pot luck discount, you can get a discount equal to the percentage you pull out. Mittal is not such a big or established player but you can pick up some interesting bargains.

It must be the overdose of the 2550th Buddha Jayanti celebrations but we find people following the middle path... to Curtina! The shop's got some incredible discounts which has people coming in hordes. Here the discount is assured, maybe

that matters to most people who are skeptical about their chances of getting a big discount at Dinodia?

Some of the big picks at Curtina are: Introductory offer on suitcases from a mattress company at real cheap prices, would you believe you get a big suitcase for around Rs.650? Only prob is they seem to come only in red. Floor mats and carpets are a steal at almost 50% off. Nice curtain materials at affordable rates starting from Rs.29/- a metre.



SGC works towards popularising Science



a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Sikkim Government College, Tadong, is currently hosting various activities to popularize science, particularly physics, among its students as a part of the programme celebrating the International Year of Physics 2005. Wednesday, 13 September, will see the finalists of various competitions being held under the programme titled 'Appreciating Physics in Everyday Life' battle it out to bag the grand prizes.

Essay writing on '100 Years of Modern Physics' and painting competition on the theme of 'Nature' were the main attraction of the programme on 12 September. The day's programme had started earlier with a talk on 'Rise of Modern Physics' by B. Kunwar.

Earlier on the opening day, 11 September, the main attractions of the day were the screening of a mini film show on science and a lecture on evolution of stars

by Professor Ajit Khembavi from IUCAA, Pune. On Wednesday, the concluding day, the final rounds of quiz contest and debate will be held and results of all the competitions held so far declared.

The programme is organised by the Department of Physics, Sikkim Government College, and sponsored by Rashtriya Vigyan Evam Pradhhyogiki Sanchar Parishad, DST, Government of India, and the Sikkim State Council of Science and Technology.

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DIPS & PIPS

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO TYPES OF GANGTOKIANS

by TENZING GYATSO



In Gangtok's social potpourri of communities, classes and castes, there are two types of Gangtokians who somehow stand apart in the sharpest contrast due to their peculiarly distinctive outlook and lifestyles.

For the purpose of presenting a portrait of comparison of the two groups, I shall categorize them as: [a] Disproportionate Income Persons or DIPs, and [b] Proportionate Income Persons or PIPs.

The DIP is an impeccably suited gentleman with rather sedentary habits. He is in his element when officiously ensconced at his football field of a desk. Out of doors, you will be lucky if you catch a fleeting glimpse of the grave august presence bowling sedately along in his shining spotless Scorpio. The preoccupied expression on that noble countenance indicative of a great mind internally wrestling with the complexities of the affairs of the state.

The PIP, on the other hand, is a total nondescript nonentity. Yes, you have correctly spotted him in there. He is tightly wedged between two rather overweight office *babunis* in a share taxi heading to the secretariat at 10.30 AM. The trademark of the PIP species is his shy, diffident smile, stooping posture and badly dyed hair.

I shall now present brief sketches of conversations of DIPs and PIPs on their favourite topic 'Price Hike' to illustrate their similar yet divergent anxieties on the issue.

Let us start with a brief exchange between two DIPs during the course of one their interminable official meetings.

"The price of cement and rods has shot up again. How am I ever going to complete the remaining three stories of my sixth son's building?"

"Yes, it's the same with the cost of cars... and just as the price of the latest model has taken a stiff hike, my *kanchhi boori* has got it into her thick head that she simply must own a Maruti Swift..."

Now let's listen in on two PIPs in their favourite habitat - the office canteen.

"Ever since the price of *atta*, *maida* and *aloo* shot up, my damned family members have developed a sudden huge appetite for *parathas*, *rotis* and *aloo dum*. These days I am compelled to limit my *khattu* quota

to a measly three *twoks* at *Amala's adda*."

"And the price of onions and tomatoes has simply become ridiculous. I have issued strict instructions to my wife to use only a quarter of an onion and half a tomato in the *tarkari*..."

The DIP could be termed a compulsive overachiever. His is a hectic life on the fast lane of speculations, accumulations and premature ejaculations. His steadily growing number of cars, *kanchhis* and *kothis* is the envy of every PIP far and near. Lately the number of DIPs has inexplicably dwindled. It has been surmised that even a fractional increase in their numbers could cause the state exchequer to go stone broke.

Evasive is the term that best describes the PIP. This is because the PIP spends most of his waking hours evading his wife, his *ghar ki malik*, assorted creditors, his office work and, last but not the least, his DIP boss. He is perennially occupied in figuring out unique ways to make ends meet. In order to live within the confining parameters of his 'muster roll' salary, he has to literally squeeze the last drop out of every rupee, paisa and *khattu ko twok*.

In our teetering high rise cement jungle of a town, if the DIP is the endangered yet predatory tiger, the PIP would qualify as the much preyed upon rabbit timidly foraging in a forest of telecom towers and hoardings urging him to 'Buy Bigger! Buy Better! Buy the Best!'

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THE BOOKSHELF

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- Kurt Meyer & Pamela Devel Meyer; Rs. 2500

THE RAVEN CROWN: The Origins of Buddhist Monarchy in Bhutan

- Michael Aris; Rs. 1500

TEA, LEGEND LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD OF INDIA

- GP Barooah; Rs. 2000

TREASURES OF THE THUNDER DRAGON: A Portrait of Bhutan

- Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk, Queen of Bhutan; Rs. 495

THE TIBETAN WAY OF LIFE, DEATH AND REBIRTH

- John Peacock; Rs. 895

HIMALAYAN VILLAGE [An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim]

- Geoffrey Gorer; Rs. 360

FROM PEKIN TO SIKKIM

- Count De Lestain; Rs. 695

THE RAVEN CROWN: THE ORIGINS OF BUDDHIST MONARCHY IN BHUTAN

by Michael Aris

The hereditary monarchy of the Wangchuk dynasty was established in 1907 in the independent Himalayan state of Bhutan, thus introducing one of the world's most recent experiments in kingship. The new order quickly replaced a theocracy founded in the seventeenth century by the first of the "Dharma Rajas", a lineage of reincarnating lamas known by the title of Shabdrung. The first king of the new dynasty, Ugyen Wangchuk [1862-1926], was a charismatic figure who came to power against a turbulent background of incessant and complex feuding. He adopted as the unique symbol of his authority a crown surmounted by the head of a raven. The bird represents a form of Mahakala, Bhutan's guardian deity. The prototype of the founding monarch's Raven Crown had first been devised as a battle helmet for his father, Jigme Namgyel [1825-81]. Known as the Black Regent, he had worn it in bloody struggles against

his many rivals within the country and against the British who tried, unsuccessfully, to subdue him. The story of the Wangchuk dynasty's rise and triumph moves from a picture of turmoil and chaos to one of relative peace and stability. In contrast with earlier published accounts based solely on the colonial records of British India, here the narrative is founded on the Bhutanese chronicles which offer a new perspective and bring many new details to light. The ethnic and historical context is outlined before recounting the turbulent career of the Black Regent, followed by the lives and achievements of the first two kings. The book is copiously illustrated with rare historical photographs that have come to light in private and public collections in the United Kingdom. Most of these vivid images have never previously been published. They provide a lively depth and focus to the unfolding narrative.

THE TIBETAN WAY OF LIFE, DEATH AND REBIRTH

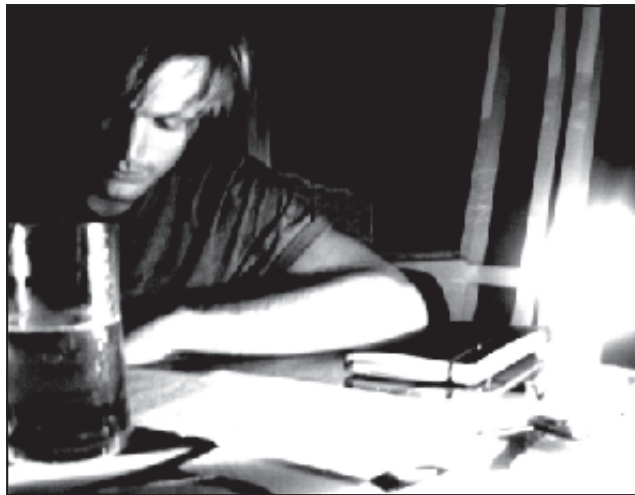
by John Peacock

What's the difference between a lama and a tulku? Who is Tara? What are the four classes of tantra? In this lavishly illustrated book on Tibetan spiritual wisdom, Peacock, a British professor of Indian religions, answers these questions as he analyzes Tibetan approaches to life, death and rebirth. One unusual feature is the book's extended discussion of how Tibetan Buddhism has been informed by Bon, the pre-Buddhist folk religion that is still practiced by many in Tibet. From Bon, Tibetan Buddhism has appropriated "preoccupation with shamanic healing, demonic forces, and the fight between good and evil", contributing to Tibet's complex and esoteric form of Buddhism. Peacock also describes how tied Tibetan religion is to the landscape of Tibet, "the land of snows" - a particularly important issue in the past 50 years, when Tibetan Buddhism has flourished in exile. Every page is garnished with full-color illustrations, and there are numerous informational sidebars.

Pang Lhabsol, a festival unique to Sikkim, is more than just a festival dedicated to a mountain deity. It is an event that aims at strengthening the bond between two ethnic communities of the state. Of late, the festival has moved beyond its religious and cultural confines and has more or less turned into a commercial affair aimed at tourism promotion. It is amidst this state of affairs that Alexis Torp, a French documentary filmmaker from Paris, has taken up a lone mission to bring the focus back to what is most important about Pang Lhabsol.

Currently on his second visit to Sikkim, Alexis has captured the different aspects of Pang Lhabsol on celluloid, assisted by his French assistant, a second cameraman from New York and a sound engineer from India. The entire exercise took him two weeks, from traveling to historical places in Sikkim like Yuksom, Kabi and Gangtok as well as some villages where pujas were held to shoot the dances.

His fascination with this festival had started during his earlier visit to Sikkim. "After visiting the Himalayas, I felt I had to give my regards to the mountains here by means of this film," he says. However, disappointed by, what he calls, 'Gangtok's lack of religious feelings towards the festival', he went to Rabong on the advice of Tourism Department only to be disappointed again by the commercialism attached to the entire event. It was only at Pemayangtse that the filmmaker found what he had been looking for.



A FRENCH TAKE ON PANG LHABSOL

by BIRENDRA RAI

"At Pemayangtse, I found dancers rehearsing in a committed way. This got me thinking on the meaning of the dance, and the variety of aspects the mountain had taken throughout the history of Sikkim. This also kick started my own struggle to understand it better. And that is what brought me back here three years later with the purpose of conveying a filmic trip

through Sikkimese history on the basis of its main festival."

Alexis is not new to making movies on geographical issues. He has a number of documentary films on the opening of high mountain areas to tourism or the different practices of forestry under his belt.

On his current project on Pang Lhabsol, Alexis says he is trying to fit

the geographical frame of the dance into the geography of Sikkim: from the narrow point of view of the monastery's sacred ground to conveying mostly spiritual outlook on the mountain, widening all the way to the broad interests into Sikkimese location between India and China.

"The perspective would be taken from the oldest to the newest generations, from the most traditionally oriented to the ones looking towards the future. The action of the dance and the process of its rehearsal would blend into history until it makes enough sense to be shown without comments. Then the character of the mountain can take its full role, watching the performance and taking account of their effort to please it – because the mountain isn't only there to be watched; it remains the silent watcher of every event happening in this country," he says.

The documentary, he says, aims at documenting the ongoing struggle to keep the spiritual relation with the country's landscape alive even at a time when the ongoing development has been conveying different perspectives to the people of Sikkim. It is a film on the unity and identity of a country.

Once the film editing is over, Alexis hopes to first come back to Sikkim and screen it for the people involved in the project here. Thereafter, he says, he would like the film to serve pedagogical purposes in Tibetan related institutions or colleges, and be screened by cultural channels in Europe. "I hope its aesthetic qualities could get it through festivals too," he adds.



Hitting the Right Note

a MIDWEEK Report

Friends who have heard Wangmu Ladakhi sing at informal gatherings have often wondered why she did not do so professionally. It seems the lady has finally paid heed to that advice and is now all geared up to launch her debut album. Titled *The Valley of Rice*, the album is a compilation of new and old compositions, a mix in fact of English and Nepali numbers. While the first four songs are in English and are original compositions, the next four are cover versions of popular Nepali numbers. Wangmu has written the English songs herself while collaborating on

the composition with Noel, Enoch and Subhash, her guitar teacher.

So what made her finally take the plunge, you ask. 'I got a guitar two years back for my birthday, started learning how to play and also experimented with writing songs. Friends encouraged me to do a CD and here it is,' she says, of the project which started almost a year back. Wangmu's inspiration for songs like *Is this Heaven, You painted a Picture* and *Mr. Charming* came mostly from her own personal experiences. 'It was a sort of coming to terms with myself, an expression of what I had been through'.

Recording at Psalms Studio

at Tadong, she says she was a bit nervous at first but soon got the hang of it, helped by the comfort level she felt with her musical collaborators.

The album is a pleasant hear with some foot tapping numbers too like *Furiya Lyaidchhan*, originally sung by Heera Devi Waiva back in the 50's. The song has been remixed with Boney Lepcha singing the rap interludes. *Valley of Rice*, a song on Sikkim written by Wangmu, and *Jahan Bagchha Teesta Rangeet*, ever popular, still manages to woo the listener with her special rendition. The album is slated for a pre Dasain release.

RAMAYANA SLATED FOR A 20 SEPT LAUNCH



VIRGIN COMICS has released preview pages from "Ramayan 3392 A.D." #1, which hits stores 20 September. According to the publisher, the series is a reinvention of India's greatest epic - the Odyssey of the East. "Ramayan is India's greatest legend," said Virgin Comics CEO Sharad Devarajan in a release. "This new story from Deepak Chopra and Shekhar Kapur reinvents this legend for a worldwide audience. Adding Alex Ross' incredible painted cover makes it a visual triumph." [The original solicitation text and preview images follow.]



naked LUNCH

Every day you hear and read stories about people overdosing (O D) on PAIN-KILLERS and it makes my blood boil. When i hear about such people dying, my first thought is that we should all go find the man who sold the drugs and castrate him with a shovel. A rusty shovel.

But then i remember that I'm a Brand New Pacifist. It's remarkably difficult to generalize about drugs and drug use. Some of my friends take drugs occasionally and they continue to lead normal and productive lives and they're neither addicts nor waste-cases.

But i've also known lots of people who have disappeared into the hell-holes of addiction AND who have had their lives ruined by drug abuse.

Some people can take drugs once and be destroyed by the experience, and other people can take drugs many times and remain happy, healthy and strong.

So how to make generalizations about drugs?

At some point we're going to have to recognize that people, citizens, TEACHERS, etc, seem to enjoy taking drugs, and these same people are willing to take drugs even though they know it's illegal.

Ok, i've said enough. to avoid any backlash i have to remind everyone that i think that drugs are dangerous and should be avoided.

I'm really not in any way advocating drug use at all. Imagine a possible Gangtok wherein death and O.D-ing are so commonplace that people approach their own mortality with complete nonchalance.

And imagine our nonchalant youth driving around in the night, hoping to stay alive, but not really caring. And that's the truth. Really, i swear.



"Criss Angel kicks magic in it's tired old ass! A dynamic cross between Brandon Lee and Houdini that would make David Copperfield cry for his Mommy!"
- Rob Zombie

"Extraordinary - a spectacular mix of visionary magic and post-apocalyptic chic. This is the future and it can't come quickly enough."

- Clive Barker, author and film director

The two observations pretty much sums up master illusionist Criss Angel and his hugely popular TV show *Mindfreak* aired every Tuesday on Star World at 09.30 pm. Tuesday nights have never been so eerily exciting!

Born Christopher Sarantakos on December 19, 1968, in Long Island, New York, Criss Angel is an illusionist extraordinaire, musician, escapologist, stunt performer, and the creator and director of the *Criss Angel Mindfreak* television series on A&E Network, which is currently in its second season. One of the most provocative artists of our day, Criss began dabbling in the art of magic when he was six. During his teenage years, he studied the art of mysticism, music, martial arts and dance. By the age of 18, he had acquired the state federal pyrotechnic license and the federal pyrotechnic license by 21, the youngest ages allowed to carry such permits.

Famous for conceiving and performing impossible, death-defying stunts, Criss is definitely the most intriguing

artist of the 21st century. Some of the mind-blowing demonstrations aired by Star World include Buried Alive [where Angel is handcuffed, put in a coffin box and buried six feet under], Bullet Catch [where Angel catches a bullet in a cup held by his mouth], Body Suspension [Angel is suspended from a helicopter by four fish hooks through his skin while being flown over the Nevada desert].

Other chilling demonstrations include being towed 80 feet into the air while handcuffed inside a barrel filled with water and making his escape and tying himself to a safety rope before the barrel is released; laying on top of a bed of nails and having a Hummer drive on top of him; and levitating himself and strangers off the street. On his first episode of *Mindfreak*, Criss burned himself alive for around 45 seconds for his mother's 70th birthday. He said he wanted to be a 'human candle'.

Criss was named both 2001 and most recently 2004 Magician of the Year by The Academy of Magical Arts, making him the first two-time recipient ever to receive this most coveted award. He won the Merlin Award in 2001, 2004, and 2005; he is the only three-time winner of that

award. He is also the only magician ever to appear on both covers of *Magic Magazine* [October 2003] and *Genii Magazine* [December 2003] almost simultaneously. Criss' *Mindfreak* is the first weekly magician show in over 40 years. Criss was also unanimously selected as the recipient of the 22nd Louie Award for outstanding achievement in the art of magic. Interestingly, *Criss Angel Mindfreak* is also the first weekly magic series in 40 years.

Criss' television success has not impeded upon his music career. He was in an industrial band called Angel dust, which he started with Klay Scott [now known as Klayton of Celldweller]. Angel dust released an album called *Musical Conjurers from the World of Illusion* in 1998. Criss wrote, produced and performed the music currently available on four CDs from APITRAG Records entitled *Criss Angel: System 1, 2, 3 In The Trilogy* and the *Mindfreak* soundtrack. In a more recent tone, Criss Angel created the video MF2 featuring Sully Erna, the lead singer of Godsmack. The video debuted on Yahoo! videos. And according to his official website, his second *Mindfreak* soundtrack was released on 05 September, 2006.



This week, MIDWEEK presents cheat codes for...



Need for Speed™ Most Wanted challenges you to become the most notorious and elusive street racer. Combining illicit street racing and tuner customization with the intensity of strategic police pursuit that surpasses any Hollywood-style chase scene, *Need for Speed Most Wanted* should be on your "must-have" list. Out-race rivals, evade cops, and exploit hundreds of miles of open road as you make your way up the Blacklist.

All Junkman

Performance Parts

At the Start menu enter Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right. Go into the Challenge Series and go

down into the last icon, then complete that race and that will get you All Junkman performance parts for your cars. Rating: 3.53 with 17 votes.

One Stop Shop Marker

Press Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Up, Down at the "Press Start" screen. A special marker for the Junkman Engine part will appear in the back room of the One Stop Shop in career mode. Note: This code can only be enabled once per career. Rating: 3.13 with 8 votes.

Castrol Syntec Ford GT

Press Left, Right, Left, Right, Up, Down, Up, Down at the "Press Start" screen. Rating: 2.92 with 13 votes.

Tupac Shakur - 10th Anniversary Tribute



It's hard to believe that 13 September, 2006, marks the 10th anniversary of hip-hop's all-time top-selling star Tupac's death. To mark the anniversary, *10th Anniversary Tribute* – a limited edition double CD and double DVD pack and the biggest Tupac tribute released to date – will be released on 13 September. Dubbed as the final tribute, a must for all Tupac Shakur fans worldwide! This pack is jammed packed with two CDs featuring unheard, un-released tracks, interviews and mixes that deserve awards and two DVDs featuring un-seen footage, interviews and fans' opinions on the disappearance of Tupac Shakur. Since this pack won't probably be released in India, it'd make better sense for you to call or email your cousin in the USA right away!

A ROCK STAR: SUPERNOVA WEEK 10 RECAP



by SERAH BASNET

the drama continues...

It's just a week to go until Supernova picks their vocalist and Jason Newstead finds this a convenient time to finally get in touch with his feminine side – with a little help from Storm Large. But he's certainly disappointed with what he's found, disappointed enough to cry in full view of the audience. Jeez! Can't we have a drama-free week sometimes?

Week 10 starts with a song writing clinic where the contestants get to write lyrics for a new supernova track. Gilby Clark likes Storm's work, is disappointed with Magni's lyrics, thinks Lukas' song is lyrically great and melodically excellent but is irritated he didn't complete it, says Toby had the complete song, and is disappointed with Dilana's clichéd lyrics.

On Week 10, we see each contestant performing a set – a cover and an original. First to hop around the stage is Dilana with The Who's *Behind Blue Eyes* and her torn calf muscle. They tell us she tore that muscle during the practice, making us wonder what was she practicing with the house band! She sings The Who tune without her gritty growl on for one whole verse! But just as I start thinking the girl can actually bring out that soft sexy voice, it's already time for the return of the growl. But her original *Supersoul* – a song with a me-against-the-world theme – breaks all records of cheesiness. It's a '*beep* you' song to the internet voters, she says. The voters return the favour by not

voting. She's in the bottom three next day singing a punked out version of Cheap Trick's *I Want You To Want Me*. Decent job but all that hopping around the stage is seriously grating on my nerves now.

Next on is the Icelandic madman Magni with The Beatles' *Back in the USSR* and his original *When the Time Comes*, which he says he translated from Icelandic. I think he did a better job on the original than the cover. His song's solid, with a consistent rock beat and tone. The next day on the results show, the Iceman is picked by Supernova to perform their new song, which is about love! And this is the part where I go get myself something to munch. I can still hear the song from the kitchen but again am not a whole lot impressed with Supernova.

Storm's rendition of David Bowie's *Suffragette City*, though not vocally dynamic, is entertaining. She is joined on stage by Dave Navarro and they work some good chemistry. The only problem is Storm looks manlier than Dave in her black outfit and fedora. She then introduces her original as *What The What Is Ladylike* as against her original *What The *beep* Is Ladylike* title. Nice arrangement, catchy chorus, strong vocals and good stage presence but it's still not good enough for the voters. She's also in the bottom three, singing Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*. She says it's for her mom, sheds a tear, starts off the song a

little too softly but pushes it up a couple of notches soon and does a pretty neat job overall. Meanwhile, Jason too sheds some tears, showing the world what a wimp he is. Or is it just something in his eye?

Trust Lukas to completely rearrange classics. This time it's Bon Jovi's *Livin' On A Prayer* where Lukas is on guitar and the keyboard player in the background. Though many would disagree, personally I find this stripped down version the best performance of the night artistically. If only he would stop gargling his words. Next on is *Headspin*, a song about his love-hate relationship with his mother written during his days as the frontman for Rise Electric, which again is not the best among his originals. Besides, aren't we all tired of rockers dedicating songs to their mothers? So the next day, he's in the bottom three for the first time, stubbornly singing *Headspin* again.

Toby's the last contestant to hit the stage with The Killers' *Mr. Brightside*. The performance is not a whole lot impressive but the Aussie revs things up next with his original tune *Throw It Away* and steals the show. Though the anti-drug lyrics are not right up Tommy Lee alley, it's the catchy chorus that does the trick. Toby's literally all over the place, running amok, working the crowd, and getting a certain Mr. T Lee to get up and grope him in the process. The next day, he

-continued on page 26

SOMEBODY'S GOING to be crowned Miss World this September and somebody's going to land a major gig with a rock band in a reality TV show. And trust me, it's not going to be the prettiest or the most talented contestants. Ask me how I know that and I'll tell you. It's called the SMS age, my darlings. This is the new technology-driven Dark Age where any dimwit with a cellular phone and a television set can play judge and decide the fate of a lot of smart, pretty or talented people.

Come to think of it, it's a sad sad situation. Earlier, it was just a bunch of cocky people who sat at the judges' table and decided who should win. The good thing in this scenario was at least they knew what they were doing, or at least they thought they knew what they were doing. Now, its total chaos with people with myopia selecting the 'face of the year' and people with 90 per cent hearing impairment choosing our singing idols. All hail the power of SMS votes.

Let's take a sample of the thought patterns of an average SMS voter: Enki minki ponki... okay, maybe I should vote for Ms. I-quit-my-regular-gig-to-take-part-in-this-competition. If she loses, what will the poor thing do? No, wait! There's someone here more miserable. He's lived all his life in a trailer truck. Maybe he *needs* to win this more than anybody else here!

The deciding factor here is not who is the most worthy contestant that really *deserves* to win; the parameter is set on who *needs* to win the gig more than anybody else. So, most often than not, what happens is that a contestant in a rock band audition may get the most number of SMS votes based solely on his/her sex appeal while a contestant in a model search show may get booted from the competition because a majority of the voters decided that they didn't really like her Puerto Rican accent.

The TV channels, so-called hep magazines and newspapers can go on calling us Generation X or whatever cliché they intend on repeating till kingdom come. The fact remains that this is

WHEN THE FATE OF THE WORLD RESTS ON SMS JUDGES...

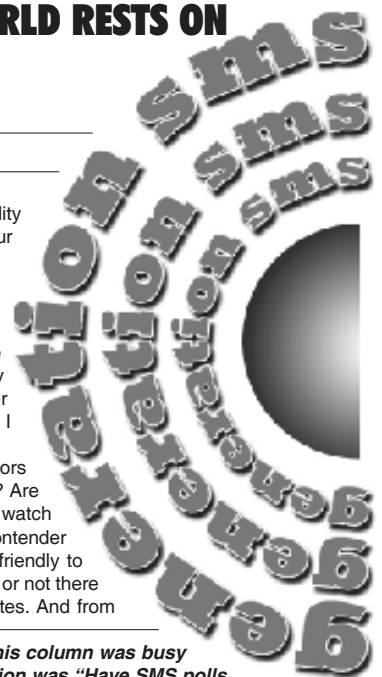
by SERAH BASNET

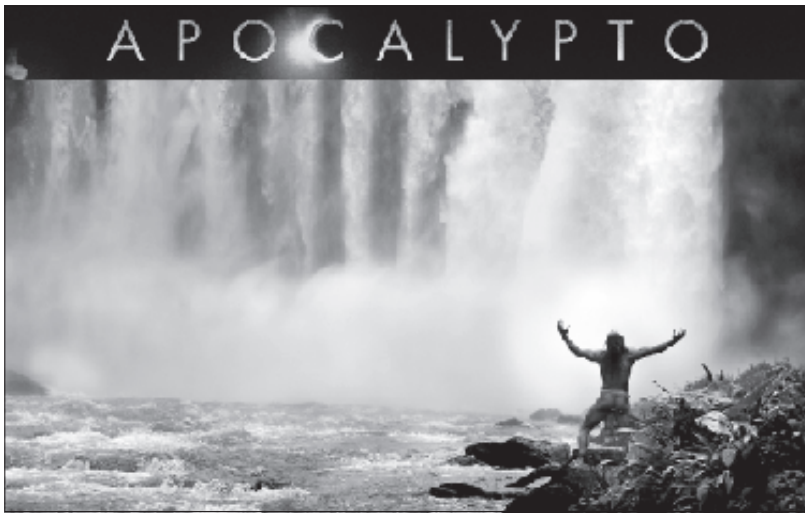
Generation SMS, raised on unhealthy doses of reality TV shows and SMS opinion polls where we choose our 'idols' with the might of our phone balance.

What's even shallower than *that* is that we have continuously voted out the best candidates for the job - be it to hold the title of the most beautiful woman in the universe or to be our rock 'idol' - and settled for the second best or even the mediocre. Why? Simply because our 'emotions' came in the way of better judgement, or because we didn't know any better. I guess that's what popular opinion means.

Last I heard, they were letting the viewers select actors to play some characters in a soap opera. What next? Are we going to line up our politicians in a reality show and watch them gang up and connive against the strongest contender and then send our SMS votes for the most camera-friendly to lead our nation? And are we going to vote on whether or not there should be a war in Iraq? God save us from SMS votes. And from ourselves!

At the time of going to print, the author of this column was busy participating in an SMS opinion poll. The question was "Have SMS polls taken over our lives? Type 'Y' for Yes or 'N' for No." As expected, she typed 'N'. At the last count, she had hit the Send button 33 times!





THE BIG PREVIEW

Mel Gibson follows The Passion Of The Christ with an epic drama about the fall of the Mayan civilisation. Performed in the ancient Mayan language, Gibson claims it's designed to elevate audiences to a higher plane

"Grizzly Adams here," chortles Mel Gibson from a cinema screen, referring to his alarmingly bushy, white-streaked beard. Recorded

especially for Cinema Days, the Film Distribution Association's tri-annual event for UK film journalists, Gibson's statement precedes the first screening of a new trailer for his latest directorial work, **Apocalypto**.

Due for release in December, the film is set during the final days of the ancient Mayan civilisation in Mexico before the European conquests of the 16th century. *Apocalypto* is another eccentric project from Gibson, the man who earned over \$600 million for a film Hollywood insisted nobody would want to see: *The Passion Of The Christ*. As he proved with his Biblical epic, Gibson is a man unafraid to cut his own path. In his filmed statement, he says that

Apocalypto is in "the ancient Mayan language and, yes," he smirks, "there will be subtitles."

But, he goes on to explain, the film will be light on dialogue and heavy on imagery and action. If the new footage shown in the trailer is anything to go by, those images look set to be striking. Invading warriors, bodies daubed in war paint, crash through the jungle, while a high priest in a feather head dress stands atop a pyramid to address his people. It looks promising, although it is unlikely it will perform at the box office - the Bible belters who block-booked *The Passion* are unlikely to turn up for what promises to be a violent tale about ancient pagans. Indeed, for Gibson, it appears an odd choice of movie.

BOLLYWOOD snippets

BIG B'S WRITING AMBITIONS

Veteran Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan is trying his hand at scriptwriting for a new movie project. The prolific Indian icon is helping write the script for *Johnny Walker*, a love story set to be directed by Soojit Sircar. The film will be Bachchan's first after recovering from intestine surgery earlier this year. Bachchan says, "I am excited about *Johnny Walker*, hence more involved."



SIMI 'RENDEZVOUS' GREWAL'S BIG SCREEN COMEBACK

Well, we do know who the elegant and ageless Simi Grewal is. But just to get the attention of the present generation, we had added the word 'Rendezvous', as it is an obvious reference to state-of-the-art and very popular talk



show - *Rendezvous With Simi Grewal*. Just to refresh the memory, who can forget the graceful school teacher of Raj Kapoor's *Mera Naam Joker*, the 'calming down' wife of Bachchan in late Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Namak Haraam* and of course the vamp/villain of Subhash Ghai's *Karz!* The good news

is that the graceful Simi has said 'yes' to a role in Revathi's [*Phir Milenge*] next movie and also for a small but important role in one of Anil Kapoor's home production.

AAMIR'S HIGH JUMP MAY ROLL IN SEPTEMBER

Aamir Khan's film, which he is producing jointly with PVR, has a working title *High Jump*. This film is about a little boy, and according to sources Aamir may appear on the screen around interval point. *High Jump* is slated to roll in September and will most likely be shot in a start-to-finish schedule. Aamir has short-listed a few kids for the central role and is likely to take decision soon. The film is to be directed by Amol Gupte. Aamir will thereafter start another film under his banner, to launch his nephew Imran as the hero. Imran is the son of Aamir's cousin [director Mansoor Khan's sister] and grandson of filmmaker Nasir Hussain. It may be mentioned here that Aamir had been launched by Nasir Hussain in *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* which was directed by Mansoor Khan.



PKSE ALL SET FOR 15 SEPT RELEASE

Pritish Nandy Communications has announced the worldwide release of *Pyaar Ke Side Effects* on 15 September. Directed by Saket Chaudhary, the film is a romantic comedy with an ensemble cast comprising Mallika Sherawat, Rahul Bose, Perizaad Zorabian, Kiron Kher and Satish Shah, among others. A confused Rahul, who plays a DJ in the movie, panics when his girlfriend Trisha [Mallika] proposes marriage to him. Thus begins his nightmare as Sid [Rahul] scans through women's magazines, his sister's advice, his mother's constant nagging and his room-mate's red alert against marriage. T-Series has already released the film's music.

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Producer: Bala Patel
Cast: Emraan Hashmi, Ashmit Patel, Mithun Chakraborty, Geeta Basra
Music: Himesh Reshammiya
Lyrics: Sameer
Cinematography: Attar Singh Saini

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PANG LHABSOL

Snapshots from Rabong



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Yab-Di, the blue masked deity 'Mahakala' takes a rest while Dze-Nga who represents Mt. Khangchendzonga in the red mask dances in the background at the Mane Chokerling complex in Rabong. The Pangtoed chaam was part of the festivities at the 3 day festival in this sub divisional town in south Sikkim.

Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, Chief Guest at the Pang Lhabsol celebrations in Rabong was felicitated for Sikkim being ranked No. 1 among the 12 Eastern States in the India Today State of the States rankings. UD&HD minister D. D. Bhutia also the Ralong MLA and C. B. Karki, MLA Wok, presenting a citation on behalf of the people of Ralong and Wok Constituencies. Earlier the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the Buddha statue cum eco garden to be spread across 23 acres of land located between Cho-Zo lake and the Mane Chokerling complex.

The Pangtoed chaam being performed at the Mane Chokerling complex as part of the Pang Lhabsol festival on 7 September.

Pics by PEMA L. SHANGDERPA

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CHECKMATE

The deafening silence that followed the announcement of the delimitation notification seems to have been only the lull before the storm. All parties are now launching the most vitriolic attack possible. No one seems to be happy about the new alignment. Buzz sources say a lot of sitting MLAs are very disgruntled about having their safe constituencies decimated, with the big boss trying hard to convince everyone that it's no big deal really and things are not going to change so much.



Buzz

The business community too has begun to feel marginalized. While Gangtok has now become a BL seat, the other two areas, Jorethang and Rangpo, which have a considerable bazaar community, are now part of SC reserved seats. But the real loser in this exercise seems to be a former chief minister who is apparently really mad at having the last two seats he fought elections from being taken away from him. What can I say; it's all in the hand of the uparwallah [I mean GOD, not who you are thinking, you wicked people]

SAY SORRY OR BE SORRY

The same former CM is also known to keep a file on his most hated enemy, a minister in his erstwhile cabinet who had the audacity to replace him, even if for a few days. Get the drift? Anyway, in this file is kept each and every bit of information that EVER came out in print about his 'enemy'. Spooky, Man. Recently, a local scribe was treated to a sneak preview of some very confidential letters which could cause quite some embarrassment. The rivalry continues. Watch this space for more news on the old fogeys.

DEVIL IN DISGUISE

Doctors are supposed to be life savers but this lady doctor working in one of the district headquarters sees her role quite differently. Not only is she a drug addict herself, her favoured part time job is to create fancy 'drug' cocktails which she sells to the youth there. It seems even the cops are on to her evil ways but for some reason have not taken any action. We at Midweek are seriously thinking a sting operation would be cool. What say?

WHAT ABOUT US

Talking of doctors, many have been heard complaining about the second hand treatment meted out to them. According to a senior doctor, they work the hardest, make the least amount of money [as compared to engineers who start having their pockets lined the moment they report for duty] and are the least appreciated. Their main grouse is that while every other department and functionary is accommodated during the presentation of the state awards, not a single doctor has ever been given one in all these years. Is that true?

THE SHUTTERED CHRONICLES

by KARCHOONG DIYALI



A boy sieves through the river bed to collect gravel in Rani Khola.

continued from page 23



SLIGHTLY OFF-CENTRE

Chicken Dies, Wife Shoots Husband

CHESHIRE, Ore.: A woman shot her husband in the back after he killed her pet chicken last week, the Lane County sheriff's deputies said. Deputies said they were sure that Mary Gray, 58, intended to shoot her husband, Stephen Gray, 43. They weren't certain if the husband meant to fire at the chicken.

"We don't know if it was an accident or if it was on purpose," Sgt. Clint Riley said. "It depends who you ask." Riley said the couple had been drinking for much of Monday while they did yard work at their rented home in the town northwest of Eugene, and they began arguing after Stephen Gray shot the chicken with a .44-caliber handgun. Deputies said he was then hit with a shot from a .22-caliber rifle, and is recovering. Mary Gray was arraigned last Tuesday on an assault charge.

Woman, 79, Charged in Toy Gun Robbery

CHICAGO: A 79-year-old South Side woman bearing a toy gun and a visor that read "Princess" has been charged with trying to rob a downtown bank. Melvena Cooke was charged last Wednesday with attempted bank robbery. She is free on \$4,500 bond and was released into her daughter's custody.

Cooke walked into the Bank of America branch Tuesday morning and told a teller that she'd just come from the dentist and could only speak quietly, according to an FBI affidavit. As the teller leaned in, Cooke

whispered a demand for \$30,000 and brandished a gun that turned out to be a toy, the affidavit says. Instead of handing over any money, however, the teller triggered a silent alarm and walked away. Cooke left empty-handed after several minutes and then ducked into a nearby store, where she was arrested.

Officials said Cooke was dressed for the attempted heist in a black trench coat, sunglasses and a white "Princess" visor. She faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted, according to the U.S. attorney's office.

DUDE, YOUR BUTT IS RINGING

EL SALVADOR: Cell phones, complete with a charger and data chips, were found in the body cavities of four inmates at a maximum-security prison, and they had used the phones to direct criminal activities on the street, officials said last Wednesday.

The discovery was made last Tuesday at the prison in Zacatecoluca, in central El Salvador, after suspicious officials took X-rays of the inmates, federal corrections chief Jaime Villanova said.

The names of the prisoners, all members of the dangerous Mara Salvatrucha gang, were not released in order to avoid jeopardizing an ongoing investigation that began a month ago, he said.

Capt. Juan Ramon Arevalo, director of the Zacatras prison, said the gang members had introduced the cell phones, wrapped in plastic bags, into their bodies through their anuses.

the drama continues...

gets the encore and with an oh-oh-oh-oh wins the keys of a shiny black Honda Element. Maybe that was a payoff to Toby to withdraw his sexual harassment claim against Tommy! But that was one classy move on his part to give his love to fellow Aussie Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, killed recently during a marine accident.

So, like I'd guessed last week, it's Storm who's sent home after a long speech by Dave Navarro and Supernova boys. Dave tells her he could have chosen to rock on stage with anyone but he chose her. Jason addresses Storm and Dilana as "Comrades of Rock". Then everyone gushes about how they'd love to be her backing band. Hey, wait! Didn't these morons just axe her from the show? Aww... this is so retarded. The only saving grace here at this point is Storm who thanks everyone and goes out gracefully. Without crying.

Week 11 will see Supernova pick their new vocalist from among the final four. Who will it be? Methinks it's going to be a Toby Vs. Lukas thing. Will they choose to go with a modern, Goth-rock sound [Lukas] or stick to their fun, old school, hard rock style [Toby]? Though I think Lukas is the most creative among the remaining four, I'm putting my bets on Toby.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

Taurus The new eclipse series emphasizes your need for internal order and self-reflection. You must remain true to your deepest self and maintain faith that time will yield the secular opportunities that you crave. Consider hypnosis or meditation, psychotherapy, dream work or journaling as resources to help you contemplate. Solitude can be healing now.

Virgo Involvement in your community, networking, and developing friendships continues to be occupying an important role during the next 15 months. You have lessons to learn about discerning who is truly a friend. Those with children must concentrate on fostering those relationships. Some may decide against having babies.

Capricorn There will be emphasis on career, life goals, and community reputation. Honors may develop in coming months if you have previously built a solid foundation. Family members plead for more attention in subtle and overt ways. Property may require repair, rejuvenation, or replacement. Family patterns are changing. You may experience a sense of loss, but renewal occurs in its wake.

Scorpio Legal, ethical or educational issues are emphasized by the current eclipse series. Travel is punctuated, whether it be of body, mind, or spirit. Exposure to those of different backgrounds or cultures opens your heart and leads you in new directions. A change in the family/ household or a move is on the horizon.

Libra The eclipse pattern emphasizes issues of sexuality, intimacy, and material accumulation. Your attitudes in these areas need renewal. Reorganization of debt and investments may be in progress. You may be more conscious than usual about existential matters related to life, death, and what is on 'the other side' of normal, waking consciousness.

Pisces The eclipses of this 18 month series focus attention upon your partnerships. What is your pattern in Significant Relationships? What needs to be repaired or improved? How might you contribute to a fuller, richer life for yourself as well as the important persons in your life? It is crucial to search out solutions that favor everyone involved in the relationship.

Libra It is important for the Librans to concentrate on improvement of work related relationships and health maintenance. Diet, exercise and improvement of physical regimen will serve you well. Honing your management systems in personal and work arenas is necessary to improve the efficiency of the daily work routine. You must balance concerns of recent years with better self-care.

Virgo The eclipse pattern emphasizes your progeny, personal creativity, and new romance. Intense experiences may come through one or more of these areas to open your world. Both errors and successes in parenting and / or creative work will be revealed. Allow dissolution of friendships and associations that no longer serve you well. Make room for fresh creativity.

Scorpio Matters concerning your career will be accented. Old problems in relationships, even with the deceased, are brought to consciousness for cleansing and healing. A new family member may enter the scene. Property and real estate matters require concentration. Bringing career into alignment with your true self is an important focus.

Capricorn The accent of the new eclipse series is on travel, education, care of vehicles and relationships to siblings, roommates, neighbors, or others who daily traverse your life. Lifelong habit patterns of thought must be reviewed. Negative thinking must be corrected, habits of speech and communication improved. Now is the time to focus on learning new and practical life skills.

Libra This eclipse series accents your personal and financial resources. Greater awareness is demanded related to your expenditures of time, energy and money. Debts need to be repaid. If there are income tax issues, they may surface during these eclipses. You need to eliminate or recycle whatever is no longer useful in your life.

Pisces Your personal identity is the subject under consideration. Who are you becoming and who do you need to be? How do you wish to define yourself before the world? How can you develop an individual identity that is workable while simultaneously maintaining a personally rewarding relationship?

JEST LIKE THAT

by PANKAJ THAPA



Amzanig huh?

Picking up from last week's stream of consciousness, where I held forth about how the SMS has mutated language, it is also interesting to see how the SMS has become an easier alternative to E-Mail, which has killed the fine art of letter writing, which in turn has killed good handwriting, all of which have together killed the art of stamp collecting. No writing, no letters, no stamps. A vicious circle, that.

The ruthless efficiency of the e-mail notwithstanding, it definitely lacks the personal touch of what has now come to be known as "Snail Mail" owing to the eons taken to deliver a letter. Having said that, the joy of receiving that blue and red edged *Par Avion* envelope, (fragrant?) with your name and address written in elegant cursive longhand, - often written over a couple of times for permanence, seems to have now been relegated to the archives. Who has the time to think, compose and write a letter today? And even if you did have the time and the energy, to try and write down your thoughts concisely with a fountain pen (as opposed to the smoothness of the ballpoint) seems to require a conscious effort. Especially if you're a keyboard addict. The keyboard has single handedly (is there a pun there somewhere?) destroyed the ability to write in longhand. Pick up a pen and try writing a paragraph now. The very letters and words you wrote effortlessly during your academic career seem to now



by PANKAJ THAPA

interfere with your thought process. Longhand requires curves, twists, slashes and dots, while the keyboard has reduced all the letters of the alphabet to single taps. Using a pen calls for dexterity of the fingers and wrist, and co-ordination of hand, eye and brain, faculties that have now been dulled by the keyboard. And because the mind is very fast, the hand often finds it physically difficult to keep up with the stream of commands emanating from the little grey cells. Sometimes, these commands overlap and things start to get interesting. Like you want to write the word "the," and you end up writing "het". Why? One would have to think it's because your brain sends a nanosecond signal to your hand to start by forming the letter "T" after which it sends another nanosecond signal asking the same hand to form the letter "H", followed by the last letter "E". Prolonged

keyboard-usage and loss of adroitness and spontaneity causes the hand to react slowly. And so, while it's still in the painful process of forming "T" the second signal overlaps the first and you find your hand converting the "H" into a "T". Of course, your hand is still moving towards the intended word, and "E" follows "H". By this time the super fast brain has already noted the mistake and sends another lightning signal for "T", hence, - HET. Happens to me all the time. Of course, it might also be an early case of Alzheimer's.

Talking about the written word, here's something worth checking out: "Accodmrig to a rsccheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt thng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can still raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihis is bcuseae the huamn mid deos not raed ervey ltteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh?"

If you read and understood that paragraph, then you've really come a long way. Makes you wonder why you had to work so hard at your English Language when ultimately you can break every grammatical rule and still communicate. Well, - like Confucius says: "To unlearn something, you must learn it first." (Probably the safest guy to quote, that Confucius.)

Keep them leetel grey cells turning till next week. Adios.

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