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SIKKIM MATTERS

GANGTOK **WEDNESDAY, Aug 28-03 Sept, 2002** **Vol 1 No 13** **Rs. 5**

Panorama

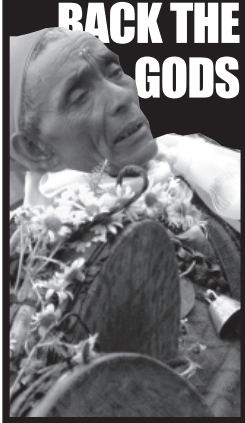
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WELCOMING BACK THE GODS



JHAKRIS DESCEND ON TSOMGO

TURN TO pg 7 FOR DETAILS

SUPER!

Geyzing, Soreong, Jorethang and Pakyong get marked on UD&HD's map for "integrated development." The Department has taken tenders for construction of a "supermarket" each in these towns. Earmarked for a total of Rs. 4 crore budget, the project has a 2-year deadline. The Department might not be satisfied with the bids it has received, but promises that work will start by mid-October...

TURN TO pg 2 FOR DETAILS

PANG LHABSOL AT RAVANGLA



TURN TO pg 5 FOR DETAILS

THE CARNIVAL COMES TO TOWN

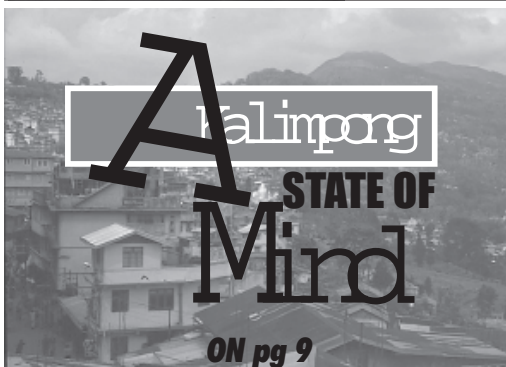
STALEMATE FOR STALE MEAT



GANGTOK COPS TURN ON THE HEAT ON VENDORS SELLING STALE PRODUCTS, AFFECT 3 ARRESTS

TURN TO pg 2 FOR DETAILS

A Kalimpong STATE OF Mind



ON pg 9



TURN TO pg 12 FOR DETAILS

SO WHAT'S BREWING AT LITTLE ITALY?

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LIMBU CULTURAL BODY TURNS 22

THARPU: The 22nd Foundation Day of Sri-Janga-Yakthung Shakhthim Pho-chumbo (Sri Janga Limbu Culture Association) was celebrated in a grand manner at Tharpu, West Sikkim on August 23.

The function, organised by SYSP Committee, was graced by Animal Husbandry Minister, PS Goley as the chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Goley informed that a Limbu Culture Bhavan was being constructed at Tharpu. He also reiterated the government's commitment to get the Limbu and Tamang communities included in the Scheduled Tribes list. He further requested the public and the NGOs to utilise well the funds provided by the government for the development of their culture and language.

Minister, PWD, RB Subba, who was also present for the function, announced that the long-pending demand for inclusion of Limbu and Tamang communities in the ST list had already been cleared by the Cabinet committee and that it was presently in the Parliament for final clearance. He also assured that this inclusion would "in no way" harm the interests of those communities already in the ST list.

IPR

SUPER!

UD&HD TENDERS WORK FOR 4 SUPERMARKETS

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The negotiations might still take some time, but officials at the Urban Development & Housing Department are convinced that work on construction of supermarkets for the four towns of Geyzing, Soreong, Jorethang and Pakyong should begin no later than October 15, after the panchayat elections are over.

Talking to NOW! the Chief Engineer, UD&HD cum Secretary, Housing Board, GD Mimani, revealed that the four supermarkets are being funded under the Integrated Development of Small and Medium Town Scheme sponsored by the Government of India. Each construction is expected to cost about Rs. 1 crores with the GOI chipping in with 90 per cent of the cost and the remaining 10 per cent being funded by the State government.

The project took its first step forward on Monday when the Department tendered the work. The project has already hit a minor snag in the sense that the bids are not as reasonable as the Department would have wanted them to be. Mr.

Mimani admitted that even the lowest offer was "comparatively on the higher side" and that the Department would like to "negotiate" on certain points before awarding the work. The final say on the award of work lies with the Committee which includes the Secretary UD&HD as its Chairperson and representatives from the Finance, Planning and Development departments. The Committee was constituted by the GOI. All sanctions and approvals for the project are whetted by this Committee, Mr. Mimani informed. Once the Committee has cleared the project, it will be sent to the Centre for final approval.

The Department is, however, working on a tight leash as far as time is concerned. The project is slated for a 24-month schedule for completion. There is also a catch in the form of a Rs. 1 crore ceiling on it. Should the project head for a cost escalation because of delayed progress, the bill would have to be footed by the State Government. Mr. Mimani assured that no time would be wasted on starting the project and revealed that the work would be awarded soon after the panchayat polls were over. "Work should start sometime around Oc-

tober 15," he said.

It is also learnt that the supermarkets at Jorethang and Pakyong would be bigger complexes than the one's proposed for Geyzing and Soreong. Each will have a parking lot with provisions for all types of shops within the complex. Everything from vegetable stalls to garments showrooms will find space in the new complex, it is learnt.

While responding to the query whether these areas really needed supermarkets, Mr. Mimani maintained that the project was not just for the immediate future. "The population might be small at present and occupancy might even be low in the beginning, but such infrastructure will become a necessity in the future," he maintained.

Interestingly, here is also a proposal for a similar supermarket for Rongli which has been delayed for want of land. Apparently the four projects got off faster because all structures are coming up on Department land. Till such time that acquisition remains a problem for Rongli, the project will remain stagnant. As for the lucky four, it remains to be seen whether the 2-year deadline can be met.

Sikkim Congmen want AICC faux pas rectified

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Controversy refuses to let go of the State unit of the Congress (I). Their misadventures with a proposed induction of SSP chief, Nar Bahadur Bhandari barely over, they had to deal with the off-on expulsion of its General Secretary, Jigme N. Kazi. A controversy that refuses to play down. It surfaced again this week with the All India Congress Committee (I)'s SC/ST Department inviting Mr. Kazi for a seminar on SC/ST issues. The letter of invitation was seen as a vindication of Mr. Kazi's earlier claim that he continued to be a Congressman.

In an attempt to set things right, the Executive Body of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee (I) met on August 26 and decided to write to the AICC's SC/ST Department Chairman, G. Venkatswamy, to debar Mr. Kazi from attending the Seminar since he had already been expelled from the primary membership of SPCC for his "anti-party activities."

Explaining the faux pas, the SPCC (I) General Secretary, Press & Publicity, Tseten Lepcha, informs that the letter of invitation to Mr. Kazi was "apparently" extended because the "report" of his expulsion could not reach Mr. Swamy in time. Mr. Lepcha further explains that the delay was because of the party's "large" size. "The expulsion of Mr. Kazi was, however, intimated to Mani Shankar Aiyar, in charge of northeast and Sikkim," Mr. Lepcha adds.

In the meantime, the SPCC (I) has welcomed the inclusion of Limbu and Tamang communities in the ST list of the State and has also "resolved to protect the interest of the Bhutia Lepchas in Sikkim." This is interesting in light of Mr. Kazi's statement pointing out that he would raise the pros and cons of this development at the seminar. "The central high command has been intimated that in the event that Mr. Kazi is allowed to attend and address the seminar in spite of our request, the SPCC (I) will not be responsible for any controversy that gets created due to his views," Mr. Lepcha adds.

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STALEMATE FOR STALE MEAT

COPS TURN ON THE HEAT ON VENDORS SELLING STALE PRODUCTS, AFFECT 3 ARRESTS



a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Acting on an increasing number of complaints from locals about vendors selling stale meat and other eatables, the Sadar Thana here swung into action and has thus far arrested three persons on charges of selling stale and rotting foodstuffs.

On August 24, the local police detained Man Bahadur Thapa when they found him selling pork, which was "not fit for human consumption", at the Lall Bazaar meat-stall. On the same day Sanu Roy who runs a tea and sweet stall at Lall Bazaar was also detained when his shop was allegedly found stocked with stale sweets.

The crackdown on such "irresponsible" vendors continued when three days later, on August 27, the police seized a sack of rotten beef from a meat counter near Vajra Cinema Hall, owned by one Chakra Tamang a resident of Arithang. He too has been detained.

This practice, though hazardous for the people had gone unnoticed till date. A local English weekly had recently done an expose on the pro-

liferation of rotting meat on sale in counters all over the capital and even the Consumers' Forum had taken note of the same. The recent arrests, however, make for the first crackdown on the trade.

Officials at the Sadar Thana point out that the people themselves have to be alert and inform the authorities if they find anything amiss. Officials maintain that the police was very alert and frequently conducting raids to nab those selling anything which was not fit for consumption, but they needed the support and cooperation of the people to be really successful.

The Department of Health, as also the Department of Animal Husbandry should have conducted regular checks, recount officials, but in the absence of any such initiative, stale foodstuffs continue to get sold over the counter. It is not possible for the police to keep a continuous check on such vendors and given the limited personnel at its disposal, the Sadar Thana can at best conduct raids once in a while. If those entrusted with keeping the meat and food stall free of stale stuff did their job, Gangtok would keep in much better health.

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DAM BURGLARY

DIAMOND-TIPPED DRILLERS STOLEN FROM PROJECTSTORE-ROOM



As if the slides were not enough (above), the tunnelling at Dikchu now has to deal with thieves with a weakness for rods that drill...

a NOW REPORT

DIKCHU: The dam promised prosperity and on its heels slipped in crime. The damsite at Dikchu is already grappling with several social problems and now even the facilitators of the hydel project have been hit. According to a complaint filed with the Police Out-Post here by Soma Enterprise, one of the companies contracted for the NHPC project at Dikchu, the storeroom of the company was broken into and various materials stolen in the wee hours of August 20.

Reports suggest that at around 3 am on the said date, the lock of the storeroom of the company at

the NHPC dam site here was broken and the storeroom vandalised. Several items such as driller rods and a LPG gas cylinder were stolen. The driller rods, of which about 60 are believed to have been stolen, were tipped with diamond and ranged in length from 5 ft to 15 ft. The driller rods, it might be mentioned here, are placed inside compressors and used for tunneling. Along with the diamond tips they should fetch a good price as scrap material.

ASI PT Denzongpa, of the Dikchu OP, while investigating the case recovered some of the driller rods from a field in Tumin about 15 km from Dikchu towards Singtam. The cops have, however, not been able to work out a list of suspects as yet. Following the initial breakthrough, the case has been handed over to the Sadar Thana at Gangtok. No arrests have been made thus far.

HARDLINE

by PANKAJ THAPA



in
rajdhani

SHYING AWAY FROM A FIGHT

Getting casual with the G'nor



a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: An informal gathering of media persons was organized at Raj Bhavan on August 26 at the behest of the Governor. Not so much a press conference as a parley of friendly pokes and counter pokes all in keeping with the Governor, KN Sahani's policy of maintaining friendly relations with the press.

In the course of the friendly chat, the Governor disclosed the imminent visit of Union Minister, Disinvestment, Arun Shourie to the state, which is scheduled for September 14. He is to preside the second convocation ceremony of Manipal Institute of Technology. He also hinted at the possibility of a visit by the Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj to the state on October 4, which could also see the official inauguration of the Doordarshan transmission centre in the state.

Recalling the recent episode in which his name was associated with a statement made concerning the 'political ambiguity' of SSP chief NB Bhandari, the governor denounced it as a case of "yellow journalism" and said that no harm would have occurred had the facts been placed in the proper manner. He maintained that as long as he was Governor he would have no relation with any political party but would be accessible to all peoples.

The governor also made an appeal to the people of Sikkim to help develop the State Archives by donating any historic document or valuable piece of literature on Sikkim they might have in their possession.

CONGRESSMAN STILL

JIGME N. KAZI TO ATTEND AICC SEMINAR ON TRIBAL ISSUES

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: What the state unit does, the central body is unmindful of. This at least holds true for the Congress (I). The Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee (I) had earlier announced the "expulsion" of its General Secretary, Jigme N. Kazi, to which the former Editor had retorted that the SPCC (I) did not have the powers to expel him. "Despite what they might say, I remain a Congressman," Mr. Kazi had told this reporter in his living room which still displayed a Congress flag.

Mr. Kazi's assertions of continuing to be a Congressman were borne out by a letter from the AICC (I) Chairman, SC/ST Department, G. Venkatswamy, inviting him over for a National Seminar on "issues and problems pertaining to SC/ST

communities of the country". Mr. Kazi, was invited for the August 30 seminar in his capacity as the Chairman, SC/ST Department of the SPCC (I).

Mr. Kazi, while refraining from continuing with allegations and counter allegations on his status in the party, has, through a press release, informed that he would be raising "vital issues" relating to the Sikkimese Bhutia-Lepcha tribals. Restoration of political rights of the BLs will obviously figure in Mr. Kazi's list of issues and a fresh one gets added in the form of the "problems and prospects" arising out of the likely inclusion of Limbus and Tamangs in the ST list of the State. The two communities had thus far been accommodated in the OBC list, but their inclusion in the ST list had been a promise made by all political parties in the recent past.

Mr. Kazi has also assured to "outline" the need for fresh delimitation of assembly constituencies in the state to "ensure fair, just and genuine representation of the SC/ST communities in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

"Besides seeking political and economic empowerment of the backward SC/ST communities in the State, Mr. Kazi is also expected to raise the issue of seat reservation for SC/ST candidates in government jobs and educational institutions during the seminar," the release adds.

The seminar will also be addressed by the Congress President, Sonia Gandhi, and is scheduled to be attended by all Congress Chief Ministers, PCC Presidents, CLP leaders and office bearers of the SC/ST departments and delegates from the States.



HAVING INITIATED THE MECHANISATION FOR AN EN-BLOC MERGER WITH THE BJP, BHANDARI GETS BOISTEROUS

BACK IN BUSINESS

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Former Chief Minister and Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad President, Nar Bahadur Bhandari is offended. He feels that the allegations made by his successor, Pawan Chamling, on the occasion of Pang Lhabol that the extension of Central Direct Taxes to Sikkim was a result of Mr. Bhandari's activities were in "bad taste".

Expressing his apparent displeasure over the remarks made by Mr. Chamling on August 22 during the Pang Lhabol festivities here at MG Marg, Mr. Bhandari decreed that Pang Lhabol was "a purely religious and cultural festival of the people of Sikkim" and not "a day for political comments." "Chamling should not have used the day to settle scores," he said.

It might be mentioned here that Mr. Chamling had asserted in his speech that the Centre had been "forced to slap" excise duty and gift tax in Sikkim to bust a money laun-

dering racket involving politicians, businessmen and some Bollywood film stars during the Bhandari regime.

"The Centre had no option but to enforce excise duty and gift tax in the State when some businessmen in connivance with the then ruling politicians, gifted huge amounts to Bollywood stars to turn their black money into white. The State was initially exempted from paying the taxes. To take advantage of this, Rs. 25,000 crores worth of money was laundered off as gifts, which led to huge losses to the State exchequer," he had said.

While Mr. Chamling's assertions are common knowledge in Sikkim, Mr. Bhandari reserved his for some sharp criticism as he retorted at a Press conference here on August 24 that, "Mr. Chamling should not forget that he was in my government for seven and a half years."

"I am not happy with the Chamling government for using a religious function to tarnish my image, that too in front of the governor, who was the chief guest on

the occasion. This is not tolerable," Mr. Bhandari said.

Mr. Bhandari also expressed his displeasure over the dragging of the governor's name into the ongoing speculation over Mr. Bhandari's attempts to join hands with the BJP in some newspaper reports. The newsreports were apparently triggered by a meeting Mr. Bhandari is alleged to have had with the Governor in Delhi recently. Mr. Bhandari, however, explained: "I had called on the governor and Madam Sahani in New Delhi recently to enquire about their health as both of them were undergoing treatment there. Since I was also in Delhi at that time, it was my duty as a former CM, former MP and presently MLA to pay a courtesy visit. It had nothing to do with my personal political agenda."

On his party's possible merger with the BJP and the reasons behind this move, Mr. Bhandari said, "Now, I fully realize that because of the many obstacles hindering proper governance by a regional

party and more importantly, the follies of the present government and its failure to implement central government programmes properly, it is important for the future of the State that a national party forms a government here."

Mr. Bhandari admitted that he met almost all senior BJP leaders in New Delhi recently to discuss the possibility of merging his SSP with the BJP. "I told them that if they are interested to strengthen the BJP unit in Sikkim, we are ready to merge SSP en masse into the BJP," he informed, adding that he laid down certain conditions for this. "I told them that first they had to understand the problems of the State. If the BJP high command is ready to accept our entry en bloc, we will join for the welfare of the State," he said.

While most see Mr. Bhandari's feelers to BJP as a recent development, informed sources reveal that the groundwork was being laid even as he was discussing possible merger with the Congress (I). The BJP angle gained currency after the

Cong-SSP merger fell through.

Mr. Bhandari claimed that the BJP was "thinking very seriously" about his proposal and that he was expecting a positive response soon in this regard. In fact, he even revealed that he has written to the BJP leaders in Delhi wanting to know whether they were interested in contesting the upcoming panchayat polls. "If they want to, even though SSP will not be fielding any candidates, I will ask my cadre to vote for BJP candidates," he said.

Given to sensationalism, Mr. Bhandari even suggested that the recent explosion in which a Home Guard personnel was injured while handling stolen detonators "could indicate that Maoists are already active in the State." Mr. Bhandari warned that the incident was "serious" and that the government should "wake up and take notice". Expressing his "apprehensions" over the incident, Mr. Bhandari said, "According to my source, Maoist activities have already started in Gangtok."

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pix GURU T. LADAKHI

PANG LHABSOL AT RAVANGLA

The Carnival comes to town

a NOW REPORT

RAVANGLA: Sonam Dorjee and DD Bhutia must be proud of what their initiative of 17 years ago has grown into. The two, who now sit on opposite sides of the State Assembly, had, 17 years back decided to bring Pang Lhabsol celebrations to the then sleepy town of Ravangla. The newly constructed Mani Lakhang there provided them with the reason and Pang Lhabsol came to town. Today, the event is a three-day carnival which not only attracts rural folk from all over South district, but also domestic and foreign tourists wanting to get a look-see at how the Sikkimese indulge in some revelry.

The religious significance apart, the three-day fest, which has now incorporated such elements as a local Boogie Woogie dance competition, provides the locals with some break in the otherwise monotonous drag of monsoons in Sikkim. The organisers have even worked in a unique way for encouraging local talent. The cultural programme on the first day made it mandatory for participating teams to perform sans gadgets. Dances were allowed in the competition only when choreographed to the tune of live music



and chorus.

This year, the rains were even more harsh, but the organisers, the Pang Lhabsol Celebration Committee, Ravangla, deserve credit for having pulled off a major feat in organising the celebration. All the stalls were put up in pouring rain which slowed to a drizzle only on the final day - August 22.

The rains notwithstanding, the celebrations drew a handsome crowd wanting to see how the local boys, trained by Ralong Monastery monks and Topchen Takapa, the Horticulture Officer at Ravangla, stepped to the complexities of the Pang Toed dance on the final day. They were not disappointed. The boys, now into their fifth year of performing the Warrior Dance, made up with exuberance what they might have lacked in skill. Mr. Takapa, while talking to NOW! revealed that what is being staged in Ravangla was only an extension of the age-old practise of performing the Pang Toed dance at Ralong Monastery. The Mani Lakhang here is apparently attached to the Ralong Monastery. "The Pang Toed dance has been traditionally performed at Ralong Monastery ever since the

one at Tsuklakhang in Gangtok by Pemayangtse monks. The two dances differ slightly since they are performed by monks from different sects," he informed.

The gathered janta was also treated to a volleyball final between Drivers Association and Borong VI with both teams fielding skilled volleyball players from Nepal and Kolkata.

While some locals had expected a lower turnout this year because of the rains and also because the I-Day, another event that draws people to the sub-divisional town fell only a week earlier, the numbers that eventually braved the monsoons gave everyone at Ravangla a reason to smile. More smiles were stretched when the rural sports events were staged with locals participating in such games as shot-put, bamboo climbing and pillow-fights. The event was open for all and many impromptu matches thrilled the gathering.

The celebrations were presided over by the Social Welfare Minister, OT Lepcha as the Chief Guest with the area MLA and Minister Health, DD Bhutia in attendance.

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Sikkim Grahamite Association Congratulates

Shri K. N. Bhutia

Sikkim Grahamite Association would like to congratulate Shri K. N. Bhutia, Special Secretary, Income & Commercial Tax Division, Finance Department, Govt. of Sikkim for being conferred with the "Certificate of Meritorious Service" on the occasion of Independence Day 2002 in recognition of the outstanding services rendered by him to the State.

Shri Bhutia has always excelled in every department that he has served whether it be Mines & Geology, Sikkim Khadi, Rural Development Department, Sikkim Tourism Department or the Finance Department looking after Income & Commercial Tax division.

He has been the General Secretary of the Association from since its inception and has always been the backbone of the Association.

The Association is really proud of him and wishes him many more years of dedicated service to the State and the country.

Dr. K. Bhandari
Vice-President, Sikkim Grahamite Association
Gangtok

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NOW!

SIKKIM MATTERS

OBJECTS IN THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

History, they say is always written by the victor who decides which aspects of the vanquished history suits his greater plans and which bits are best left untold. The same has held true for the history taught in schools in India. The curriculum is embarrassingly North-India-centric so much so that even though students learn by rote the names of all those who made it emperor in the Slave Dynasty, ask them about what the northeast was up to in the meantime and they draw a blank. It is accepted that prior to the advent of the East India Company, there was no concept called India. The region was a collection of empires, kingdoms and princely states. Each with its own intrigues and their own histories. So the history we learn in school is actually the composite histories of the areas which came together to form the Union of India in 1947 and later. Well, not really. The focus is too limited to the areas which either the British researched well or were studied in detail by later day historians. Only the histories of areas which were on the ascendant in the 19th century and beyond are taught. Take a close look at the number of MPs each state has and the number of pages devoted to those areas in books teaching Indian History will be directly proportional to that number. But that's not history. The blind-spotting of areas that got cut off with partition is even worse. The Muslim League for example was a part of the Indian Freedom Struggle and the demand for creation of Pakistan came much after the movement had progressed. We, however, read very little of the role played by this group. Icons like Subhas Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh too are glossed upon. But that's another debate.

Before progressing further it is important to make clear why we study history at all. The main reason is to get a better understanding of where we belong - where we fit into the larger scheme of things. There has been much talk about making Sikkim join the mainstream which is why it is not enough to just study Sikkimese history in schools in Sikkim. Sikkim needs to figure in the history books studied elsewhere in the country. In junior school, students learn of what Confucius meant to China even before they are taught when and how Sikkim joined India. Ask a child, even in Sikkim, which dynasty ruled Sikkim and chances are that you will get the wrong answer. One is not suggesting going parochial here, but Sikkim does have a history that's worth learning. Few dynasties have ruled for the three hundred years that the Namgyal dynasty has to its credit. The British rule which hogs the history books lasted less than a hundred years and stretched 200 years if we include the East India Company's presence on Indian shores. Surely the British intrigues with Tibet should make for interesting reading as should the Nepali adventures in Sikkim under Prithvi Narayan Shah. If kids can learn of the distant Great Wall of China, why can't the story of the Lepcha tower of pots be told to them. There are some who might argue that most of what is passed off as Sikkimese history is actually myth. Well, it will remain so till some serious study is conducted on it. It might not be out of place to even suggest here that Sikkim should prepare two chapters on Sikkimese history to fit into text books for schools all over the country and take it to the Centre for whetting by the text book boards for inclusion in the syllabi. Everyone is talking about rewriting the History textbooks anyway and this might be one of the few constructive changes in it.

SIKKIM MATTERS FOR NOW!

I am very glad to see that NOW! is truly living up to its "Sikkim Matters" image. The Special Feature on Pang Lhabso carried in your last issue was the need of the hour as a lot of misinformation and distortion has been making the rounds. Pang Lhabso is an integral part of our cultural heritage.

All the best wishes for your continued success.

Sem T. Ongmu, Gangtok

BLOWN AWAY

Your story Blown Away really blew my mind. To think that nearly 30,000 detonators are kept in such a careless manner. The unfortunate incident involving Suraj Chettri could have been averted if the authorities had been more diligent. Thanks to NOW! we know the sorry state of affairs. All these years the explosives have been lying around unguarded for anyone to walk in and take some home. We are lucky a bigger incident did not take place.

Rajen Chettri, Siyari

Readers are invited to share their views, opinions and reactions to news-items carried in NOW! The letters may be edited for language and content and the name of the writer withheld on request. Personal attacks will not be carried, but letters raising pertinent issues will be shared with readers. Please mail all feedback to NOW, Gairi Gaon, Tadong, Gangtok East Sikkim. email: sikkimnow@rediffmail.com

Who's in Charge?

DEEP FOCUS

by RANJIT SINGH

Indian Politics never ceases to bewilder. We may rant and rave at the decadent lot of leaders we're besotted with but Shakespeare would have been hard-pressed to come up with the kind of tragic-comedian, topsy-turvy file of renegade characters that make possible the Great Indian Drama.

The latest chapter in this ongoing series is perhaps the most incredible in its incredulity. That there should be a debate at all as to who is king when he is well enthroned and entitled seems utterly nonsensical and uncalled for. But that is what most newspapers are talking about. And what makes the matter more intriguing is that there is good cause for the breaking of heads over this seemingly headless issue.

So if Atal Bihari Vajpayee - our constitutional king - is not ruling, who is? Ever since the cabinet reshuffle, which saw the re-designation of Advani as Deputy Prime Minister, this debate has been on in the editorial columns of the national dailies. But the point missed out here is not who is actually holding the reigns of governance but how the constitutional sovereign is being overruled.

The resignation of the Union Power Minister Suresh Prabhu last week casts another dark and gloomy shadow over the prime minister's power domain. It not only reflects poorly on the prime minister but also on constitutional propriety and cabinet etiquette.

The Prime Minister is the head of the union cabinet. The selection and rejection of cabinet ministers is the prerogative of the prime minister and each individual cabinet minister is responsible to him. But Suresh Prabhu's resignation runs contrary to the basic norm of the cabinet system and reveals that selection or rejection is no longer in the prime minister's hand.

Suresh Prabhu did not resign because his prime minister asked him to or due to embroilment in any controversy. He resigned because his party boss, Bal Thackeray, wished him to do so. Prabhu belongs to the Shiv Sena, which is an

ally of the BJP, and Bal Thackeray is the Shiv Sena supremo. In the strange world of the NDA government it is not the prime minister who has in his hands the strings of control but the leaders of the various coalition ministers who choose or dismiss his ministers for him.

Nor is it the prime minister's satisfaction, which the coalition ministers strive to achieve. Their one point agenda is to seek patronage of their respective party supremos. This becomes evident from the fact that Thackeray recalled Prabhu, as he was "unsatisfied" with Prabhu's work. In an interview to Shiv Sena mouth-piece 'Saamna', Thackeray lamented that his minister had failed to create a "Maharashtra lobby" in New Delhi. So Prabhu was axed as he failed to be energetic enough to meet his party's requirements for funds.

If individual cabinet ministers

do not care to show any allegiance to the prime minister, are propelled by the instincts of their party bosses rather than their "constitutional boss", and if the prime minister, under compulsion of heading a ragtime coalition, is on perpetual tender-hooks as regards his equations with his cabinet colleagues, then a serious question arises as to who is in charge here. The principle of collective responsibility, too, is thrown out the window. The cabinet, which is collectively responsible to Parliament, is now individually responsible to other individuals. In the word of a national daily "terminological inexactitude" is what George Fernandes is guilty of when he says that the opposition has no right to boycott him in Parliament because it is the prime minister's prerogative to choose him - as it was to accept his resignation after the Tehelka scam.

With the distinction between party, government, cabinet and coalition blurring over time so is the power and indisputable authority of the prime minister. Perhaps these are the fallouts of a coalition government. But somehow one gets the feeling that the nation is being held to ransom - unnecessarily.

A New Kind Of Science

PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO Jr on Stephen Wolfram's book that may change science as we know it...

Move over Stephen Hawking. Stephen Wolfram is here. The British-born theoretical physicist-turned -software millionaire is the genius in the classical mould. After going through Eton, Oxford and Caltech, he earned his doctorate at the age 20 in 1979, and ever afterwards grappled with the abstruse and tangled issues of particle physics. But in 1982 he dropped out from academia, started a software company, earned millions, and devoted himself to writing a book that would change science as we know it. Twenty years later he has emerged with the promised tablet of new science, which is simply titled as "A New Kind of Science."

He published the book, which runs into 1200 plus pages, himself because there are hundreds of computer graphics which form the backbone of his theory of science, and he would not trust the other publishers with the accurate reproduction. Wolfram, like any genius, is not modest. He is cock-sure that what he had written will cause a tectonic shift in science, and that post-A New Kind of Science, it will not be possible to go back to the old ways of doing science. Another radical assumption of Wolfram's magnum opus is that it should be accessible to the non-science reader as well. Whether the non-science reader will plough through the 843 pages of text, interspersed profusely with computer-generated graphics, even if he were to ignore the 300 pages of notes, has to be left an open question. Wolfram provides a teaser of sorts on his Internet site, where he has put up sample pages of "A New Kind of Science", which gives a glimpse of his simple language and the computer graphics. In the Preface, he notes: "my hope is to share what I have done with as wide a range of scientists and non-scientists as possible. In modern times it has been almost unheard of for genuinely new science to be presented for the first time in a book that can be read by non-scientists."

And he almost succeeds.

What will intimidate the non-science readers is not the abstruse ideas and the opaque language, but the 800 pages of reasoning. It cannot be said at the moment whether Wolfram has really heralded a revolution in science, but he has indeed unfurled the standard of rebellion. He has questioned the accuracy and ability of mathematics to explain the universe. He declares without much ado: "Three centuries ago science was transformed by the dramatic new idea that rules based on mathematical equations could be used to describe the natural world. My purpose in this book is to initiate another such transformation, and to introduce a new kind of science that is based on the much more general types of rules that can be embodied in simple computer programs...the crucial realisation that led me to develop the new kind of science in this book is there is in fact no reason to think that systems like those we see in nature should follow only such traditional mathematical rules."

The idea that mathematics is not really all that good in explaining the universe has been around for the last few decades. Both Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose, the two famous British theoretical physicists, had been

turn to pg 8

LETTERS

MORE SPORTS

I have been reading your paper for quite sometime now, and I think that you people are doing a good job. I especially enjoy Dear Dee, and the Rajdhani helps me know what is happening in the town, keeps me well informed. The standard of the paper is really good and I hope that you will maintain it. But I wish there was more sports news in your paper.

Laden Tamang, Tadong

A MORE LOCAL RAJDHANI

I have been a regular reader since your first issue and I think your paper is just too good. I like the writing style and the whole look of the paper. Just one suggestion, is it possible to include more local items about the town in the Rajdhani section?

T. Dorjee, Development Area
CAREFUL ON THE BUZZ

This is regarding your Bazaar Buzz column. Although I en-

joy reading it when I have nothing else to do, I really wonder if what you write is the truth or just your fertile imagination working overtime. Please don't pass as news things which you make up. A recent incident about which you wrote was not about me but everyone else thinks it is. I am sure others are facing the same problem. I think its high time your paper got more serious.

Name withheld

INFORMATIVE NOW

I'm a visitor from Delhi and I happened to get hold of a copy of NOW. I really liked the well-written newspaper, with excellent features and with a very good layout. I got to know a lot about the culture and the happenings in Sikkim, which no travel guide would have ever told me. The editorials are at par with any mainstream national newspapers and I wish "NOW" all the success. Keep up the good work.

Parikshit Singh

WELCOMING BACK THE GODS

NOW! pix



It was a typical monsoon afternoon. The light drizzle was routine, only made biting by the higher altitude of Tsomgo. It was also off-season and relatively low key, yet, some 100 vehicles plied their way to the lake at 1320 ft for a date with the gods on August 22. The fact that the day coincided this year with Pang Lhabso might have kept some away from Tsomgo, but there were enough to welcome the assortment of Jhakris who had in turn descended to welcome the Gods back from their slumber through the Nepali month of Sawan. It was Guru Purne (Full-moon of the Gurus) which coincides with the festival of Raksha-bandhan. "We have been praying through the night welcoming the gods back," revealed Dhan Bahadur, a Jhakri from 15 Mile, as he took a break from his dervish swirling on the banks of Tsomgo.

No one knows when and why the Jhakris started arriving at Tsomgo to observe Guru Purne. Locals inform that earlier Jhakris from all over Sikkim would walk all night to reach Tsomgo by daybreak and then proceed to offer prayers at the shore of the lake before launching into a glorious display of their supernatural skills. Nowadays, most Jhakris prefer the more comfortable carriage of the jeeps, but they come nevertheless. The numbers are definitely down, but the spirit remains.

When asked the significance of Tsomgo, even the Jhakris recount a muddled story of three sisters who came to live there and the miracles that followed. It is common knowledge that the Jhakris worship Mahadev (Shiva) and Kali (the female force). Tsomgo has a Shiva temple where all Jhakris make their first stop and their legend attaches a female force to the spot (by way of the legend of the three sisters) and the two combine to make Tsomgo as good a spot as any for the annual convocation of sorts. Nepal, where the festival is much more recognised and grander, sees Jhakris from all over the country gather at Kalingchowk, a hamlet in Dolkha in north-eastern Nepal, but that's another story. The day is quite big in Darjeeling, too and perhaps subdued in Sikkim because it is observed in the out of the way, off-season Tsomgo.

But it is a spectacle nevertheless. The slight drizzle and the occasional swathe of the sun added to the exotic experience of watching a sway of white frocks, topped with red bandanas, strips of bells and the rhythmic beating of the Jhakris' drums. Jhakris kept trickling in through the day, their swirling steps reaching a crescendo as they approached the temple and parted a way for themselves through the throng of believers who, too, had arrived to pay their obeisance to the Gods.

The Jhakris moved through the motions of offering prayers as if in a trance, dancing to the rhythm of their drums, they jumped and swirled around as their bodies shook in uncontrollable bouts. These, a person accompanying Dhan Bahadur, informs us are the



Dhan Bahadur (third from left) does his Jhakri jig at Tsomgo [top]; Lay people make offering at the lake [left] and the Jhakris offer their prayers from a special spot behind the Shiva Temple [bottom]

signs that a spirit has entered them. We have seen them go through these motions many times in the past, but there is something fascinating about watching so many of them go through a collective primordial exercise of faith. These after all, are our faith healers.

We were also told that on the day at Tsomgo, we get to see a battle of powers between the Jhakris. Preparing for a showdown of supernatural powers, we were disappointed for having taken it literally. The Jhakris flaunt their power by of the number of interns they bring along for their first initiation. Guru Purne is the day when Jhakris officially begin the training of their students. The more the number of students, the more powerful is the Jhakri considered. We had picked on the most powerful one at Tsomgo in Dhan Bahadur. He had four disciples. All others came in solo with only a helper carrying their Bumpa, the copper vase filled with flowers.

Dhan Bahadur informs us that the pilgrimage is also undertaken to "renew" their powers. When he goes into a trance, Dhan Bahadur informs, he enters into a brief contact with invisible forces, a contact externalized by a controlled up-and-down shaking of his shoulders. From this contact he draws strength for his work of healing in the coming year, we are told. Given the absolute faith obvious in the eyes of the collected gentry, we too, believe him and make an offering of a bottle of XXX rum topped with wild flowers plucked en-route to Tsomgo. Dhan Bahadur is launching into another communion with the spirits and we beat a hasty retreat allowing the lady behind us to get answers about the problems hounding her family.

Apart from the Jhakris there were many at Tsomgo who were there not just for the spectacle. Many lay people, too, made offering at the lake. When asked what they prayed for, the reasons ranged from prayers to blessed with a child to getting that long-awaited promotion. Most also offered the hard stuff to the Jhakris for a peep into the future.

While one can understand legends attached to Tsomgo, it was confusing (and also interesting) to find a solitary Jhakri twirl at the Baba Harbhajan Singh Mandir further up. Most believers who kept their date with Tsomgo also made the trip to Baba Harbhajan's Mandir which saw a traffic jam, both on the road and the temple as the sway of humanity and diesel spewing jeeps struggled for space in the complex and on the road.

The trip, even for an atheist, is advised, if not for the colourful display of an alternative faith fast going extinct, then for the riot of colours that line the road all through. Flowers which don't get to bloom in spring because of the snow cover are at their resplendent best at present.

"Saio, saio, saio le bumba saio"

Commission demands bank account of Ex-minister Joshi

KATHMANDU: The Judicial Commission Monday requested the Rastriya Banijyaya Bank to furnish details of the bank accounts opened in the names of former Minister Govinda Raj Joshi and his wife and children after assessing that the property details submitted by Joshi were incomplete.

The Commission formed to probe the property of individuals holding public posts after 1990, has asked the bank to furnish the details of Joshi's accounts within seven days. Joshi is second in the line to be questioned by the Commission. The Commission headed by Supreme Court Judge Bhairab Lamsal had asked the bank to forward the details of the financial status of Minister for Physical Planning and Works Chiranjibi Wagle a few days back. The bank had revealed that Wagle had some six hundred thousand rupees in his bank account.

TROUBLED MAOISTS RUN OUT OF HIDEOUTS

KATHMANDU: Maoists in hideouts in India are having a tough time after Indian security was beefed up in New Delhi, Uttaranchal, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim. And they have been alienated from their supporters in India.

Among the senior Maoist commanders Rit Bahadur Khadka, Ajab Lal Yadav, Yan Prasad Gautam and Krishna Sen Ichhuk have been killed, while Krishna Dhoj Khadka, woman leader Rekha Sharma, and youth leaders Shiva Dangi, Tara Bhandari and Shashi Shrestha, etc have been arrested. The Maoist information network has also been assaulted.

On the other hand, the Maoist central command is vertically split. Our sources say that powerful central committee and politburo members Mohan Baidhya (Kiran) Ram Bahadur Thapa Magar, Nanda Kishor Pun (Pasang), Barsha Ram Pun, Poshta Bahadur Bogati, Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Dev Gurung, Matrika Yadav, Santosh Buda



(Rolpa), Bam Dev Chhetri and Buddhi Yonjan are firmly against any talks with the government. A vertical split between those for and against talks with the government is visible within the party.

Prachanda supporters like CP Gajurel, Haribol Gajurel, Pampha Bhushal, Hisila Yami, Prakash Dahal, Agni Sapkota, Dr Baburam Bhattarai, Suresh Ale Magar, Shakti Lamsal want to use peace talks as a tool to distract the government from its operation against the Maoists.

A third faction, led by Gopal Khambu and other leaders Jhakku Prasad Subedi, Dipak Dahal, Chatur Man Rajbanshi, is trying to distance itself from both the Prachanda Path and the Badal Path.

There are still other Maoist leaders who want to use the upcoming elections, Jana Morcha-style: Dinesh Sharma, Dina Nath Gautam, Basanta Shrestha, Bimala Subedi, Devendra Paudel, Dev Nath Yadav, Ishwor Chandra Gyawaqli, Jai Krishan Goit, Kumar Dhakal, Kumar Shah, Ramesh Chaulagai, Surya Yadav, Surya Thapa, Thaman Pariyar and Hemanta Prakash Oli.

We have not been able to learn the names of seven other leaders who support talks with the government, but our sources tell us that Shakti Bahadur Basnet, Tilak Pariya, Uma Kanta Khanal and Jaya Puri Gharti could be among their numbers.

Ghatna Ra Bichar, 21 August

THE PLIGHT OF NON-MAOIST NEPALEIS IN INDIA

KATHMANDU: Ever since the state of emergency was declared in Nepal, the number of Maoists in India has increased rapidly, especially in the bordering states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. According to Nepali resident in India, the Nepal Ekata Samaj - banned by the Indian government - continues to function. Residents complain that they are harassed by both Maoist activists and Indian security forces. More prone to harassment are Nepali migrant workers. Bhakta Lal Hirachan who runs a lodge in Gorakhpur district, India, says, "Previously, thousands of Nepali migrant workers would come seeking jobs. Today, the numbers have dwindled."

Immediately after the visit to India of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Hirachan's lodge, patronised by a large number of people from Nepal, was raided twice in the middle of the night. Many Nepali residents like Hirachan told *Samacharpatra* that the Maoists had created an environment in which normal people trying to make a living were constantly under the suspicion of Indian security forces. While Nepalis living in India for a long period have experienced relatively fewer problems, Nepalis entering India recently in order to escape the murder and violence in Nepal, are getting caught between the security forces and the Maoists. Many have been leaving the bordering Indian states and going inland. As the Maoists wreak havoc in Nepal and then seek refuge in India, the Indian public is beginning to suspect any Nepali of being a Maoist. Children of resident Nepalis being enrolled in schools in India are often looked on with suspicion by the school administration.

According to resident Nepalis, earlier, members of the Nepali Ekata Samaj, an organisation closely affiliated with the Maoists and currently banned, would trouble people for donations. Recently, their activities have decreased. Tilak Kaku, a high-ranking Indian security official from Uttar Pradesh, told *Samacharpatra* that Indian security officials were prepared to help Nepali residents who suffered any injustice. But like other Indian security officials, he said, "Where are the Maoists in India? The Maoists are in Nepal. If they come here, we can only send them back." Despite this assurance, Nepali residents stress that the Maoists, including leaders and cadres, are seeking refuge in bordering Indian states.

Nepal Samacharpatra, 17 August

A New Kind Of Science

Contd from pg 6

struggling with different kinds of mathematics to understand the universe.

Wolfram cuts the Gordian knot. He is for abandoning mathematics. He wants to replace the mathematical model of the universe with that of a computer program. And he has a very disarming argument as to why the transition should be made to a post-mathematics world. He writes: "In the history of science it is fairly common that new technologies are ultimately what make new areas of basic science develop. And thus, for example, telescope technology was what led to modern astronomy, and microscopic technology to modern biology. And now, much in the same way, it is computer technology that has led to the new science that I describe in this book."

The matter-of-fact immodesty of Wolfram shines thorough when he recalls that his present quest really goes back to 1972, when he was a 12-year-old, and he was looking at the physics textbook, and the topic of randomness. The picture that showed the pattern of randomness on the cover of the book did not convince him. And he tried to simulate it on his computer. He writes: "The computer to which I had access at that time was by modern standards a very primitive one. And as a result, I had no choice but to study a very simplified version of the process in the book" And he feels that but for the technological problems, he would have discovered many of the insights in his new book way back in 1974! The wunderkind does not confine himself to explaining the methodological necessity to replace mathematics with that of a computer program as a better and more accurate way of explaining the universe. He pursues the question that has baffled philosophers and theologians for millennia: that of free will. He states the problem: "Ever since antiquity it has been a great mystery how the universe can follow definite laws while we as humans still often manage to make decisions about how to act in ways that seem quite free of obvious laws." And Wolfram rams home his point once again that he has found an answer to the eternal riddle: "But from the discoveries in this book it finally now seems possible to give an explanation for this. And the key, I believe, is the phenomenon of computational irreducibility...For what this phenomenon implies is that even though a system may follow definite underlying laws its overall behaviour can still have aspects that fundamentally cannot be described by reasonable laws...For even though all the components of our brains presumably follow definite laws, I strongly suspect that their overall behaviour corresponds to an irreducible computation whose outcome can never in effect be found by reasonable laws."

Scientists are hedging their bets. They do not want to dismiss "A New Kind of Science" as a madman's ranting. They cannot dismiss it out of hand because Wolfram is not an outsider, and he is a challenger of the system from the inside. It is sure to excite the non-science reader, but it will remain an exciting curiosity. It is hard to ignore the fact that Wolfram is overstating his case. The sequencing which forms the minimal alphabet of a computer program, and which is capable of attaining Himalayan heights of unprecedented complexity, is but one of the many probable keys in making sense of the universe. The model of the computer program has the advantage of utmost simplicity, and which is capable of generating a system whose behaviour is a tangle of complexity. But the computer program remains a device which is the local product of a human brain, and we cannot fall into the old trap of credulity that the universe answers to our conceptual model, whether it is a mathematical equation or it is a computer program. But Wolfram has shaken humanity out of its mathematical slumber, which has begun with Plato. He has demolished the iconic status of mathematics. And he deserves all praise from all those who could not master mathematics, and who hated the subject and themselves for it. Wolfram has set humanity free from the tyranny of equations.

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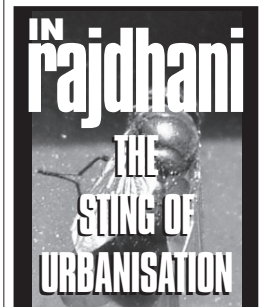
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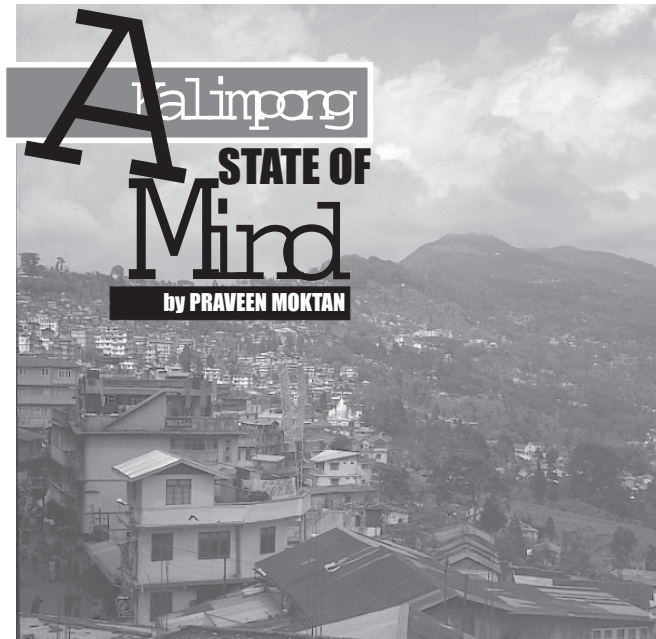


Most people in Kalimpong tend to believe that the only other place where they celebrate 15th of August with greater fanfare than their own town is New Delhi. But that, I believe, is just a deference they show to the Capital. I was there at college for a few years and I did not realise until afternoon that it was the 15th of August. In Kalimpong, it's not like that. You are aware of the 15th of August in January or whenever it is that you get your new calendar. It is, I guess, one of those few occasions that touch the lives of 100 per cent of the people here. A government thing, yet all look forward to it. Earlier, the Independence Day celebration was observed without any political symbolism, attached to it. Now, of course, wrapped up in the fanfare is also the message about who is the Boss in Kalimpong. But more on that later.

My own memories of I-Day as a child is the sight of flickering lights faraway in the hills beyond Relli. They were the torches that at pre-dawn showed the villagers the way to Kalimpong town. On I-Day, all roads lead to Mela Ground. Yes, they come from everywhere. It seems that the entire subdivisional population is there and join the party as vendors from Siliguri and elsewhere arrive in full force with their assorted arsenal of gimmicks and contraptions. For the busy-folk, this is the one occasion where they can savour the sights and sounds of Siliguri in the security of their own backyard. So, they go around sipping sugarcane juice crushed by those fantastic machines, buying flutes and balloons and damru-gaadi and generally having the time of their lives.

Ringside seats around Mela Ground are at a premium with the Tibetans usually camped out on the eve of the grand day in their distinctive tents generally well-equipped with thermoses filled with tea and other healthy drinks. People used all their contacts to get a berth on terraces that overlook the

I-Day - The Kpg Experience



town. Meanwhile, back in the villages and the town, kids take up odd-jobs, run seemingly impossible errands to make some quick money to indulge themselves on I-Day. It seems everyone prepares for it. The schools,

whose participation add much colour to proceedings of the Day muster all their creative energies to come up with something grand. This intention normally translates into new drills, march-past set-up and at times entirely

new uniforms which the kids sport on that Day only and let it rot in their cupboards for the rest of the year. This time, one was treated to the spectacle of a certain school making a grand entry to the ground on motorcycles, not unlike what they do in circuses. Speaking of schools, there was one case in a nearby village that celebrated its I-Day on August 14 just to give time to their students to enjoy the Real Thing in Kalimpong. Of course, little did the authorities realise that unfortunate day happened to be the I-Day of our neighbourly adversary and they were made to feel the full bureaucratic brunt for their oversight.

It's a free for all and certainly the creative juices in Kalimpong never dry up.

For a town that had at one time boasted of business transactions worth Rs. 400 million everyday, the 15th of August is a flashback to those grand days long gone. Days when Kalimpong was on the world trade map, a busy caravan sarai where intrepid Marwaris from Rajasthan, Newsars from Kathmandu and Tibetan traders, all joined in a party that was never to last. Post '62 and everything fell silent. Kalimpong once again was the town that everyone forgot. It was a garden town where nursery men grew exotic orchids in the antiseptic silence of their tissue culture laboratories. It was a post-retirement haven where a Roerich bought Croker T or the Raja of Burma sought to spend his days in the quiet of Panorama.

But on 15th of August, the commerce, the colour and the commotion come back. For one day in a year, Kalimpong shakes the insipid hangover of a permanent recession and comes out in full force to party, to spend, to revel and bask in the hedonism of a carnival. Of course, lost somewhere in all the show is the patriotism, but there have always been other forums to express the same. 15th of August is when we became free and is that day of the year when Kalimpong frees itself and lets off some steam.

A fortnight later, theft and murder turns to theft and double-murder

from our CORRESPONDENT

KALIMPONG: Even for a town used to violence, the events of the past month at 16th Mile here have been disturbing. What started off as a suspected murder for theft, has now become a double murder. It is not just the murders that have rankled the locals, but also the manner in which the victims were killed and disposed.

Villagers in 16th Mile found the decaying and decapitated body of 14-year-old girl Munna Chettri on August 23. The severed head and the body were buried at different locations and have added a fresh twist to a nearly month-old unsolved case of homicide and theft.

The latest victim was working as a domestic help in the house of KB Thapa, a teacher of Pagang Gumpa High School here. His wife had been brutally murdered earlier this month.

Preliminary investigation by the cops had led to them to believe that Mr. Thapa's two domestic helps, the second a Rajbanshi boy, had committed the murder to make away with the loot - a loan Mr. Thapa had withdrawn at the time. Both had been absconding since then.

With the discovery of the body, the needle of suspicion now swings to a solitary suspect who remains untraced.

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TIBET ROAD GANGTOK

Rs. 3173 crores released for NE; PM's agenda makes headway

NEW DELHI: In a major initiative aimed at speedy and all-round development of North-East, the Union Government has released a sum of Rs 3,173.06 crores till August this year under the Prime Minister's Agenda for socio-economic development of North-Eastern region.

The initiative envisages a total investment of Rs. 9,094 crore. It comprises 27 projects ranging from rural infrastructure development projects, irrigation and educational infrastructure development to strengthening of internal security, besides horticulture and IT development etc.

The Rural Infrastructure Development Fund has got the highest share. Of this Rs. 117.28 crores have been provided for construction of 12 new National Highways encompassing 1962 kms to ensure better connectivity between the North-Eastern region and the rest of the country. In order to provide a boost to information technology in the region, Rs 220 crores have been sanctioned for creation of computer information centers in 487

blocks. Rs 100.15 crores have already been disbursed under the project.

In order to tap the immense potential of hydro-power projects, a total sum of Rs. 109.23 crores have been provided for Teesta Hydel project and Loktak Downstream project. In addition, Rs. 12.53 crores have been disbursed for electrification of 500 tribal villages and Rs. 52.00 crores have been provided for laying electricity transmission and sub-transmission lines in the region.

As insurgency is a major problem in the region, Rs. 273.80 were disbursed for expansion of security-related expenditure. In addition, while Rs. 18.09 crores were provided for fencing of Indo-Bangladesh border Phase-II, Rs. 118.32 crores were disbursed for police modernization. Other major initiatives include provision of Rs. 4.39 crores for export development fund; peace bonus to Mizoram to the tune of Rs. 182.84 crores and disbursement of Rs. 4.10 crores for border town development etc (PIB).

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In the Court of Additional District Magistrate, East at Gangtok AFFIDAVIT

Whereas, I, Ben Sharma, S/O Late Srikanta Sharma, aged about 29 years, by faith Hindu, by occupation unemployed, permanent resident of Rhenock, East Sikkim, at present residing at Upper Syari, Gangtok, Sikkim, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under.

1. That my correct and full name is BEN SHARMA as recorded in the Certificate of Identification whereas it has been wrongly recorded as "BEN PRASAD SHARMA" in my A.I.S.S.C.E. certificates and also in other documents.

2. That, both the above name i.e. Ben Sharma and Ben Prasad Sharma are of the same person i.e. myself.

The Affirmation made above in para 1 and 2 are correct and true to the best of my knowledge and belief and nothing has been concealed/suppressed therein.

I have signed this Affidavit on this, the 16th day of August, 2002 at Gangtok, East Sikkim.

sdl/- Ben Sharma, Deponent

For Professional beauty therapy and hair cutting classes, contact Susang at Aries Beauty Parlour, Nam Nang

Aries BEAUTY PARLOUR

IN THE COURT OF ADDITIONAL DISTRICT MAGISTRATE, EAST AT GANGTOK AFFIDAVIT

Whereas, I, Aiti Subba, daughter of Shri Ran Bahadur Subba, aged about 34 years, by faith Hindu, by occupation Government Servant, resident of Namphok Busty, South Sikkim, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:

1) That my correct name is "Aiti Subba" as recorded in my Certificate of Identification bearing memo No. 698, dated 14th November 1986 issued by the District Collector (South), including my Service Record.

2) That by mistake my name has wrongly been recorded as "Aitaya Maya Subba" in my Academic Certificates and "Aita Maya Subba" in my Employment Card bearing No. 1569/87 dated 1-7-87.

3) That "Aiti Subba", "Aitaya Maya Subba" & "Aita Maya Subba" as disclosed above are the names of same and one person i.e. myself.

4) That I am swearing this Affidavit to affirm that my correct name for all practical purpose, purport and record shall be "Aiti Subba".

The statements made herein above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and nothing has been concealed therein.

And I have verified and signed this Affidavit on this the 21st day of August 2002 at Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Deponent (Aiti Subba)

CHARGED ABOUT WORK

MR and Work-Charge employees disagree with "seniors," demand regularisation

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: A meeting of the All Sikkim Government Workcharged and Muster Roll Employees Association (ASGWMREA) was held at the waiting Room of Krishi Bhawan here on August 22.

The meeting was chaired by Gopal Gurung, President, ASGWMREA, and attended by the members of the central executive committee and the Advisor of the All Sikkim Government Drivers' Association, Indra Bahadur Chettri.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Chettri asked the members of the Association to stay united and apprised them of their rights and responsibilities.

According to a press release issued by the Association, the main agenda for the meeting was to discuss the alleged "injustice" meted

out by the "senior" ranking officials of the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments on Class IV temporary workers employed in the departments.

Many workers placed their grievances before the meeting and after much deliberation, the Association passed a six-point resolution. The meeting also decided to place the demands before the State government.

The Association has demanded that the number of seats for Muster Roll and Work Charge employees in the said Department be increased to its original number. It has alleged that the total number of seats till June 1, 2002 were 275, which have now been reduced to 130 by the senior officials, "for reasons best known to them." The Association has said that by reducing the number of seats, many would be deprived of employment opportuni-

ties in the Department.

The Association has also demanded that Muster Roll employees working in the Department for many years be regularized according to their seniority. It has demanded that the decision taken by the two departments to permanently abolish such Class IV posts as fieldman, maali, chowkidar, etc to be reconsidered. All the vacant posts of LDCs and peons in the departments should be filled up with Muster Roll workers already in the service of the departments according to their ability and seniority, it has demanded.

The Association has further demanded that the order given by the Chief Minister in 2001 to fill the vacant posts in the various department with Muster Roll employees employed in the same departments should be immediately implemented.

Lucknow MP in Sikkim to promote Hindi

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: BJP Rajya Sabha MP from Lucknow and the vice-president of the Kendriya Hindi Shikshan Mandal, Rajnath Singh 'Surya', under the Ministry of Human Resources was here this week on a two-day visit.

He was here to attend the valedictory function of the Hindi Bhasha Sanchetna Shivir, organised by the Kendriya Hindi Shikshan Mandal, in collaboration with the State Education Department.

The 21-day workshop was held to train Hindi teachers from schools across the state. The valedictory function was held on August 23 here. The eighty-one teachers who attended the workshop were awarded certificates by Mr. Singh. The ten toppers have been selected to undergo further training at the Kendriya Hindi Shikshan Mandal headquarters in Agra.

Every year this institute trains

about seventy odd Hindi teachers of the State, in order to promote the teaching of Hindi language and literature in the schools and colleges, and to make Hindi the link language in the country.

This institute was formed in the mid-50s basically to train teachers to teach Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states of the country. The Kendriya Hindi Shikshan Mandal has been active in Sikkim for about ten years now.

Rajya Sabha MP from Sikkim, PT Gyamtso, the Director, Education Department, Norden Tshering and a large number of teachers and officials were present in the valedictory function.

Later, speaking to media persons, Mr. Singh disclosed that there are four other sub centers of the Shikshan Mandal apart from the one in Agra. They are located in Shillong, Guwahati, Mysore, and Delhi. He said that one such sub center would soon be opened in Dimapur in Nagaland, at the request

of the government of Nagaland.

The center in Agra trains about 200 teachers from non-Hindi speaking states of the country and has an annual budget of about Rs. 11 crores, Mr. Singh said. "We also train foreigners, basically foreign citizens of Indian origins at our center in Agra. We get about 80 such students every year," he said.

Mr. Singh said, "We ensure that a certain standard of the Hindi language is maintained. Therefore, it is important that the teachers to teach this language are properly trained in all aspects of this language." He said that the standard of Hindi language taught in the schools and colleges in the non-Hindi speaking States has "improved a great deal."

Mr. Singh also disclosed that the Kendriya Hindi Shikshan Mandal facilitates Hindi language experts from non-Hindi speaking States every year at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi. A total of 15 awards are given out every year, he said.

One lakh vows of brotherhood

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Nearly one lakh people were bound in brotherhood with "Raksha-Sutras" on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan by the Swayam Sevaks of the Rastriya Swayam Seva Sangh. The Raksha-Sutra is supposed to be the symbol of national integrity, patriotism and brotherhood. The exercise was part of the Sangh Parivars Raksha Bandhan (Sawan Purnima) celebration throughout Sikkim observed from August 21 to August 25.

Many organizations, departments, schools, temples and mon-

asteries participated in the initiative with even Christians and Muslims being included in the tying of the Raksha-Sutras, for *Sarva Dharma Samman*.

Cultural programmes, bhajans and other programmes were showcased at Rhenock, Pakhim, Machong, Gangtok, Geyzing, Namchi, Sombaria, Legship, Jorethang and sixty other places, informs a release issued by the RSS.

On August 21, a programme was organized at the Shanti Bhawan in Gangtok. It was presided over by Tara Mani Nepal, and the Chief Guest of the occasion was,

Garjman Rai, President of the NHPC Contractor Sangh.

The Speaker Ashok Singhi said that the Sangh was a social and cultural organization and that some "politically motivated" people have tried to tarnish the reputation of the Sangh from the very beginning. He also alleged that some newspapers and magazines "influenced by foreigners and others" have tried to distort the image of the RSS, but the people who know the Sangh have been helping the Sangh in continuing with their good work. He also said that the Sangh has never splintered since its inception in 1925.

NEW ANNEXE FOR THARPU SS

GEYZING: A 2-storeyed, 8-roomed annexe building of Tharpu Secondary School, constructed at a cost of Rs. 17 lakhs under the Non-lapsable pool of resources was inaugurated by the Minister, Education & Law, RB Subba on August 23, 2002.

Mr. Subba, who is also the area MLA, in his address informed that under the 10th Five Year Plan, 4,000 teachers would be imparted a 6-month training for effective teaching and learning. Expressing his concern over the increase in anti-social activities like drug abuse in rural areas, he requested the guardians and teachers to be alert and guide the children in the right direction. While commenting on the poor performance of government schools, he said that deliberations are being held to sort out the shortcomings of the education policies and to work out ways and means to rectify the same. However, students should also put in labour to achieve good results as should the teachers go about their jobs sincerely, he added. With almost every facility being provided to the schools, he requested the public, teachers and students to care for the school as their own property.

The Joint Director, Education, in his welcome address outlined the work done by the government in the field of education, which he said could be seen by all.

-IPR

STOP-PRESS: Sikkim Police, in connection to the assault of Mohan Gurung (for details see *Rajdhani-Shying away from a fight*), have arrested Dhiraj Rana and Bijay Rai of Pani House area. The police are hoping to make more arrests soon.



SIKKIM'S BANGLA DREAMS

Joint release of the first-ever Bangla tourist guidebook on Sikkim published in Sikkim, *Swapnil Sikkim* by Minster, Sikkim Tourism, KT Gyaltsen, Minister for Tourism, West Bengal, DC Dakua, and the Tourism Minister, Meghalaya, Momin. The book was released at TTF 2002, in Kolkata on August 2, 2002. PK Dong (ED, STDC) can be seen in the pictures helping the ministers. The book has been published Gangtok-based Metroprints, which has already published such popular titles as Gangtok in a Nutshell and a series of quality post-cards on Sikkim.

FOR UNITY, PEACE AND HARMONY

GANGTOK: The Pang-Lhabso festival was observed with much fanfare here on August 22. Despite inclement weather, the celebration here drew a handsome crowd ever since it kicked off with the offering of khadas to the Statue of Unity and lighting of the ceremonial lamp. Governor, Kidar Nath Sahani, presided over the festivities as the Chief Guest with the President of the Pang-Lhabso Samaroh Samiti, Thukchuk Lachungpa handing over the *Abhinandan Patra* to the Governor and the Chief Minister.

In his address the President of the Samiti requested the CM to help the Samiti in providing proper roofing for the area where the Statue of Unity stands.

The Governor, while addressing the people, said that the people of Sikkim should maintain peace and harmony among themselves. He also said that Sikkim was an integral part of India and the people of Sikkim should join the fight against cross-border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan.

The Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, while addressing the gathering said that Pang-Lhabso is a historical festival of peace, unity and social harmony. He assured that his Government would always work for the good of the people of Sikkim. He said that the Rathongchu Hydel Project was scrapped by the Government keeping in view the social harmony and religious toleration, even though scrapping the project meant a loss of several crores in terms of invested money, power generation and employment opportunities.

He said that the reservation of seats for the Limbus and Tamangs would not affect the other people entitled to these reservations. He also assured the gathering that the 12 seats of the Bhutia-Lepcha community would not be diluted.

Sikkim ready for Exports

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Agricultural Export Zones "AEZ" recently introduced by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, aims at promoting export of specified products grown in a contiguous area with the objective of providing remunerative returns to farmers on sustained basis by improved access to exports.

To take benefit of the AEZ Scheme of Government of India, Department of Horticulture, Government of Sikkim, with the approval of government project proposal for the development of AEZ for ginger, floriculture and cherry pepper have been prepared through the consultancy services of IDFC New Delhi & Natural Synergies LTD., Chennai. The estimated cost of the AEZ project are given as under:

1. AEZ for Ginger: Rs 2461.50 lakhs
2. AEZ for Floriculture & Cherry

Pepper: Rs 3311.00 lakhs.

The sources of fund for the project consists of existing scheme of Government of Sikkim, Spices Board, Ministry of Agriculture (TM on Horticulture) Ministry of Food Processing Industries, National Horticulture Board, NABARD and major share is to come from private investors.

The financial assistance is sought for activities that include productivity management, micro irrigation, improvement in product quality through R&D, pre and post harvest training and extension services, maintaining cool chain, development of international level packaging material, market development, freight assistance for selected products and transport assistance for selected regions. Credit from banks is also sought for farmers at concessional rates for purchase of inputs, at par with packing credit to exporters.

The declaration of Sikkim as an agricultural export zone is expected to give the economy of the state a

gigantic boost. With the generation of employment opportunities is expected a general improvement in economic standards. Not only will there be an acceleration in the export potential of the state but also an improvement in production standards and quality which in turn will lead to a reduction in the cost of the product. The export of agricultural goods also means extra foreign exchange earnings, which in turn could be used for development of infrastructure.

The AEZ proposal has already been approved by the Steering Committee, Ministry of Commerce of APEDA, Ministry of Commerce, and Government of India.

The Government of Sikkim has designated the Department of Horticulture as a nodal agency for development of AEZ in Sikkim. To provide finance to develop AEZ for ginger, floriculture & cherry pepper a MoU was signed between the APEDA and Government of Sikkim on August 26 at Conference Hall Tashiling, Gangtok.

REPLANT TO REJUVENATE - THE MANTRA IS CLEAR FOR SIKKIM CARDAMOM

Average productivity of large cardamom, perhaps Sikkim's main cash crop, has been falling each year. It is time now for replantation drives, advise experts...

by SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: Large cardamom is the most important cash crop of Sikkim, with an area of 23,500 hectares under its cultivation. The State produces about 85 percent of India's total share in the cardamom production, an estimated 4,000-4,500 metric tonnes.

The production of large cardamom employs about 16,949 framers, of which about 1,500 are small and marginal farmers. For many of them, cardamom is the only source of income.

Sikkim's present average productivity of this important cash crop has however, seen a sharp decline over the years, with a production average of only about 155 kg per hectare

per year, primarily because of two reasons - the lack of high yielding plant varieties and absence of replantation in the older growing areas of the State. These factors have had an enormous impact on the livelihoods of the farmers.

The usual economic bearing of cardamom orchard is for about 12 years. After 12-15 years, the orchards need replantation. The peak age of large cardamom is between four to eight years.

The average yield of a good orchard is about 480 kg per hectare and the maximum yield can go up to 1000 kg per hectare depending on variety and orchard management. However, due to the earlier cited factors, cardamom yield has gone down over the years from 250 kg per hectare in 1975-76 to 153 kg per hectare in 1996-97.

It is estimated that over 80 percent of the bushes in Sikkim require immediate replantation if the State is to stay on top in cardamom production.

"Cardamom can be the life capsule of Sikkim," says Dr. Utpal Gupta, Senior Scientist, (transfer of technology) of the Indian Cardamom Research Institute, Regional Research Station, Spices Board, Tadong.

"To be able to tap the full potential of this cash crop and earn substantial returns, it

is essential to replace the local uneconomic large cardamom with elite planting materials," he adds.

Dr. Gupta has been actively involved in crop improvement work on large cardamom at RRS, Tadong and has been successful in evolving high plant varieties suitable for different elevations and agroclimatic zones in Sikkim. According to him, to augment the decreasing production, the RRS has evolved a number of methods, which include extensive replantation scheme and development of a superior variety to give a better yield.

The RRS has set up a gene bank in Pangthang and on the basis of multi-locality yield evaluation, two types of high yielding selections of large cardamom have been found and both are recommended for large scale planting.

The two selections are SBLC-5 (Kanchanjonga) and SBLC-50 (Himali). According to Dr. Gupta, both the varieties belong to the local cultivar *Savney* and are suitable for cultivation in medium to high altitudes. The RRS team, with Dr. Gupta has been working to develop these high-yielding varieties since 1986. Dr. Gupta said that with these varieties, the production could go up to 100 kg per hectare. The RRS, 1997 onwards, introduced the varieties to cardamom culti-

vators. Beneficiaries were selected from throughout the State as well as from the Darjeeling hills and provided with the two high-yielding varieties. About 40 hectares in Sikkim and 15 hectares in the Darjeeling Hills were planted with the new varieties and now are in the yielding stage. "With these two new varieties, production can go up to six times more," said Dr. Gupta. He added that in order to improve the yield, farmers should adopt Rhizome Multiplication Technology, which is "more effective and more economical." However, this technology carries the risk of transferring plant viral diseases such as Foorkey and Chirkey from the mother plant.

"Only a few farmers have started to use these two new varieties. If more farmers came forward and started using them, the production of cardamom would yield the much desired results," Dr. Gupta said.

The two new selections are to be planted in the months of June and July, when there is enough moisture in the soil. "Proper irrigation is also extremely important as it enhances the productivity. It is also advisable to use organic fertilizers made from cow dung," Dr. Gupta said.

There is a need to evolve a comprehensive strategy to revive and sustain cardamom yields, Dr. Gupta felt.

1ST GIRLS JUN. NATIONAL BOXING TOURNEY TO BE HELD IN SIKKIM

THE SQUARED CIRCLE AND THE FAIRER SEX



Sikkim's Sangdi Lepcha celebrates her silver medal winning performance at Women's East Zone championship in Arunachal Pradesh, 2002.

by SUMANLATA PRADHAN

GANGTOK: The Sikkim Amateur Boxing Association has come a long way since its inception in the year 1995. Now the Association is all geared up to host the 35th Boys and 1st Girls Junior National Boxing Championship. History is being created, as this is the first time that a national level boxing event is being held in Sikkim; add to it the fact that this is the first time that a National level championship is being held for Girls.

At a press conference organized by the Association, the SABA President and DIG (Range) SD Negi, informed that some 300 to 400 Boxers and 100 officials from

all over the country would be participating in the event. It is expected that around 150 women will participate in the game. He said that this would be a great opportunity for the game to be popularized in Sikkim and to introduce the culture of boxing to Sikkim.

There will be twelve weight categories in the Boys Championship right from the Light Fly (48 Kgs) to Super Heavy (Above 91 Kgs). In the Girls Championship there will be PIN Weight (45 Kgs) to Heavy Weight (91 Kgs). The Association has been organizing the State Open Boxing Championship and the Kanchendzonga All India Invitational Boxing Championship every year, but it is for the first time that a national champi-

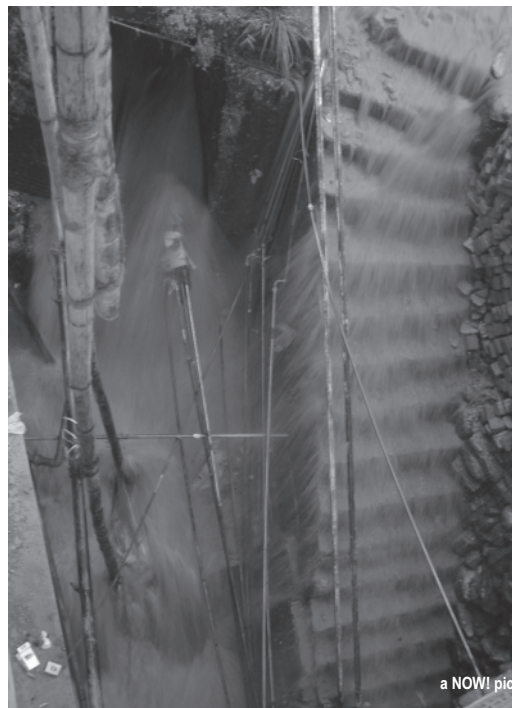
onship is being held here and the Association sees it as a great challenge and honor.

The Association has already issued the prospectus and joining instructions to the Indian Amateur Boxing Federation who will in turn intimate the same to all the affiliated boxing units around the country. To meet the international norms of amateur boxing, computerized-scoring system will be used during the championships, Mr. Negi informed.

He further informed that the local boxers were doing very well and that three of them, Ashok Subba, Bikash Tiwari and Sondhya Gurung have also trained in national coaching camps apart from participating in Zonal and National level tournaments.

While on the performance of local pugilists, Mr. Negi disclosed that in the North Eastern Sports festival the boxers of Sikkim managed to win 2 Golds, 2 Silvers, and 2 Bronze medals. Chimi Wongmu bagged a Bronze medal at the National level thus becoming the first local lass to bag a medal in a boxing event. The Association hopes that local participants would perform well in the Championship and get the exposure they require. The State Open Championship will be held from September 5 to September 7 this year and this is expected to help the Sikkim boxers prepare for even bigger events. Coaching camps for the State contingent are already underway with many boxers preparing to graduate from simple sparring to the blood and sweat of the squared circle.

When it rains...

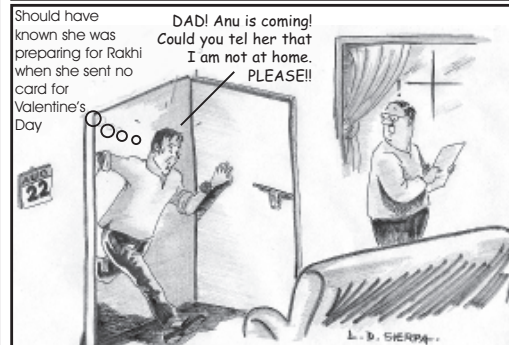


a NOW! pic

Would you risk these steps next to a jhora somewhere in Gangtok even if the downpour was soaking you? None dared on Monday evening when the sultry afternoon was interrupted by a downpour backed by boisterous thunder and lightning. And yes, the phones went promptly dead too.

SHORTCUTS

by LAKPA DORJEE



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GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM