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GANGTOK **WEDNESDAY, Oct 02-08, 2002** **Vol 1 No 17** **Rs. 5**

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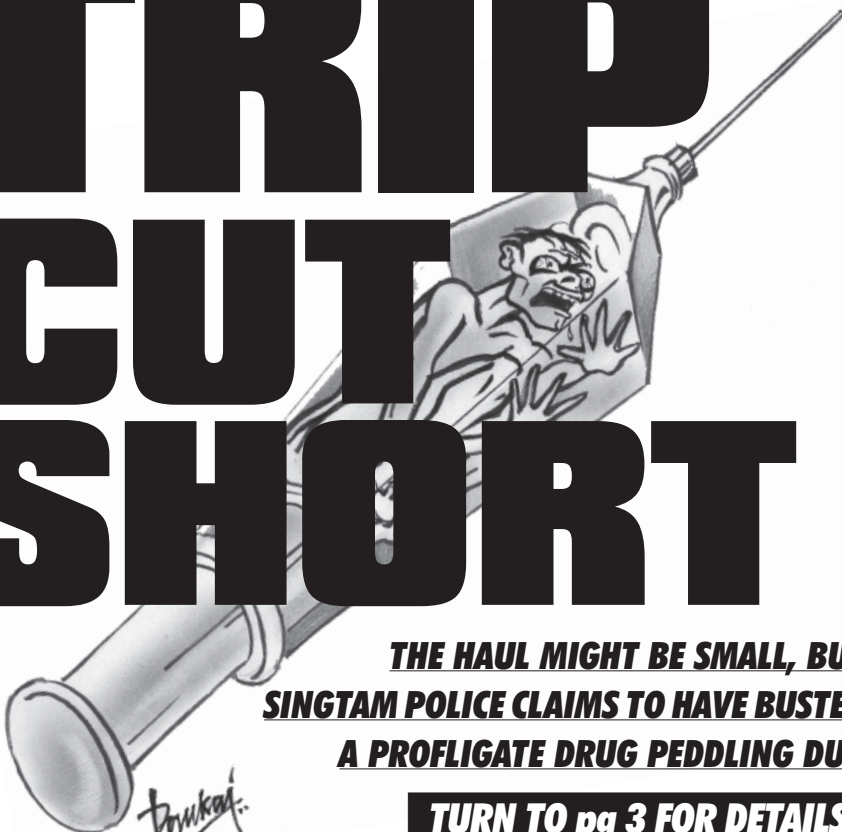
GANGTOK: Here is some good news for the students of Joybells School, Tadong and the parents.

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, New Delhi, has allowed the students of the present Class IX to sit for the ICSE 2004 examinations.

In a letter to the management of the School, the ICSE Council, on October 1, apprised the School of this decision.

The Headmistress of the School, Ms. Rajsree Prathapan, also informed that the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling has granted a special permission for the construction of a school building and ground. Once the School has its own premises, it can get permanent affiliation with the ICSE Council, she told NOW! She added that the management is looking forward to further cooperation from the parents and students of the School in the future as well.

TRIP CUT SHORT



THE HAUL MIGHT BE SMALL, BUT SINGTAM POLICE CLAIMS TO HAVE BUSTED A PROFLIGATE DRUG PEDDLING DUO

TURN TO pg 3 FOR DETAILS



SINORA - ZEE'S SIKKIMESE FACE

GANGTOK: 21-year old Sinora Lepcha is the new face of Sikkim Playwin Super Lotto's Khelo India Khelo weekly draw on Zee TV.

With a Diploma in Civil Engineering and a Degree in Interior Designing from Chennai, Sinora came back to Gangtok this January. Now, she is a faculty member at the Central Engineering Technical Institute at Nam Nang.

Sinora says that she read about Zee TV looking for new faces in NOW! and thought she'd give it a shot, "just for the experience."

So, how does she feel being on national TV?

"I feel confident and I hope I can meet the expectations," she says.

Zee TV has short-listed four more local girls who are undergoing training at their studio here.

Catch Sinora, wearing a Gada this Thursday night on the Playwin draw on Zee TV.

IN rajdhani



JAMAI TO JAM

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LOTTERY LAMA GIVES COPS A HARD TIME

by SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: A monks walks up to a lottery vendor at the Lall Market Road on September 26 and produces 50 tickets of the Dear Royal Sikkim State Lottery, of the September 18, 2002 draw. The tickets, sold in a bundle of 50 and priced at Rs. 50, bears the serial numbers AA 12631 to EL 12631. The numbers being the winning numbers of the draw, the vendor hands over the prize money of Rs. 3,500 to the lama and keeps the tickets with him. The lama pockets the cash and scurries away.

Mewalall Gupta, the lottery vendor then takes the tickets to his agent and receives a shock. The winning tickets claimed by the monk are tampered. Upon closer examination, the serial number 12631 are found to be have been meticulously over-written - the last digit '1' has been forged. The draw date printed on the tickets is also tampered with.

The next day, Gupta, along with the agent approaches the Sadar Thana with the complaint. The monk is traced to the Chorten Gumpa living with his nephew at the Sheda there. A case under 468/420 of IPC for "cheating" and "forgery for the purpose of cheating"

is registered against the lama on September 28. He is arrested and brought to the Thana.

Interrogation reveals that the monk, Sherab Dukpa, is a Bhutanese who arrived in Sikkim a couple of years ago. Dukpa, in his late 40s, tells the Police that he is an "ex-army" from Bhutan and had been staying at the Chorten Gumpa here with his nephew, who is also a monk. The prize money is recovered from him and Dukpa admits to having planned and executed the forgery on his own.

What Dukpa had apparently done was purchase a bundle of 50 tickets, the draw date of which was September 8. When the draw was held and results declared, Dukpa did not win any prize money. However, when the next draw of the same lottery was held on September 18, and the winning numbers closely matched the numbers on the tickets bought by him earlier. Dukpa then set out on a ploy to hoodwink the lottery vendor and pocket the money by hook or by crook.

For the next one week, Dukpa toiled day and night to carefully change the last digit of the 50 tickets from 4 to 1. Dukpa's original tickets bore the number 12634. He even managed to change the draw of date printed on the tickets from 8-09-2002 to 18-09-2002.

What the monk overlooked was the fact that the impression of the original serial number was clearly visible on the back of the tickets, which could not be changed despite his best efforts but still managed to trick the vendor with the forged ticket.

While still in the lock-up, the robust lama managed to cause a quite a commotion at the Sadar Thana when he attempted to escape while his statement was being recorded. According to the SP, East, Akshay Sachdeva, the monk made an aborted attempt at the Sadar Thana the day he was arrested.

"Dukpa, while his statement was being recorded in an officer's room at the Thana asked whether he could use the toilet. The officers present, in good faith and considering the fact that he was a monk, allowed him to use the officers' toilet. Incidentally, the officers' toilet is not very secure and the window just holds two rods. Once inside, Dukpa latched the door from inside and somehow managed to force apart the rods wide enough for him to jump and sprint towards the boundary wall of the Thana," he said.

Dukpa managed to do all this right under the noses of the cops, that too within the premises of the Thana. The cops were clearly

caught off guard but caught the fleeing lama soon enough. When the escape bid was noticed, the entire force at the Thana chased after Dukpa who sprinted through the meandering maze of buildings around the Enchey compound in his overflowing robes followed by irate cops hot on his heels!

Finally, Dukpa's luck ran out when he fractured his leg while trying to scale a high wall near the Rendezvous Hotel. Nabbed again, he was brought back to the Thana and quickly secured. The whole drama lasted for just five minutes. A doctor attended on Dukpa and diagnosed his condition as mild fracture and dislocation.

Dukpa was then produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, East/North and sent to 15-day judicial remand and is now cooling his heels at the Rongnek Jail.

Meanwhile, the management of the Chorten Gumpa, Deorali, has taken a strong stand against this incident and has supported the action taken by the Police. In a letter to the SP, East, a member of the management committee has said that if any monk of the Chorten Gumpa is arrested by the Police for cognisable offences, the management would have no objections.

RANGIT OFFERS MORE

a NOW REPORT

RANGIT NAGAR: NHPC's high-profile Teesta Hydrel Power Project Stage-V may have hogged the headlines for all the wrong reasons, but a relatively smaller hydel project of the Corporation on the South-West end has already been commissioned and in production.

The NHPC had recently organized a tour of the project area for media-persons based here for a quick overview of the project and its functioning.

The 60 MW Rangit Hydrel Power Project, a project executed by the NHPC was commissioned in February 2000 after spin trial in Dec 1999. The Rangit Project is situated in the West and South Districts near Legship.

At the time of execution, the Rangit Hydrel Power Project was the biggest project of its kind in the State. The project, a run-of-the-river scheme located 362 metres downstream of the confluence of the Rangit and Rathang Chu, was to contribute greatly to the economic development of the State, until it was overshadowed by the 510 MW Teesta Project at Dikchu-Sherwani.

The Project, in operation for the third year now, is currently generating about 10 percent more than the installed capacity of 60 MW. The powerhouse was synchronized to the Eastern Grid in February this year.

The Chief Engineer, Rangit Project, SP Sinha, disclosed that while the project was completed at a cost of Rs. 492 crores, it was now generating about Rs. 82 crores worth of power annually. This will



rise to Rs. 100 crores in the coming years, Mr. Sinha assured. The Sikkim Government is receiving 12 per cent free power. A 66KV line is supplying the State's share but due to some technical flaps, the State is not been able to tap the free supply of power, he informed.

What is of further interest is that the Rangit dam and reservoir has great tourism potential. A local NGO, Manav Sewa Samiti of Legship has been entrusted with the responsibility of developing the area into a tourist spot, Mr. Sinha said. The NGO has already been promoting the area as 'Rangit Water World.'

The NHPC is also maintaining about 4 kms of State PWD roads and has spent about Rs. 14 lakhs on maintenance alone, the CE added.

Assistant Manager, Rangit Power House, located at Saagbari, about 4 km downstream from Legship, AN Thakur said informed that the neighbouring areas in South and West Sikkim

were using the power generated by Rangit Project. Although the Power House has been supplying 66 KV of power to the Sikkim government up to the Melli switchyard, the State Power Department has been unable to use the free power due to non-availability of grid network facility from Melli onwards, it is learnt.

Incidentally, NHPC has already spent more than Rs. 18 crores on environmental protection in the project area. Arvind Sharma, Environment Officer, Rangit Project, said that compensatory afforestation scheme and resettlement and rehabilitation plan has already been completed, along with shifting of religious monuments. About Rs. 11 crores has been spent on catchment area treatment plan, covering an area of 797 sq. kms, he added.

Security arrangement in and around the Project area has been entrusted with the Sikkim Armed Police personnel.

Saregama turns 5

a NOW REPORT

MARTAM: Sa-re-ga-ma Parivartan Pariwar, Lower Martam celebrated its 5th Foundation Day here on September 24, 2002, at GREF camp, Lower Martam with great festivity.

A Nepali Dance Competition 'Boogie Woogie' was organized to mark the occasion for the second

successive year. Pooja Sharma of URHP colony won the first prize.

A special prize was awarded to Dharam Thapa and group from Rongpo Bazaar and Riya Chettri for they were the youngest participants at the competition.

Forest Minister, DT Lepcha, who also happens to be the MLA, presided over the function as the chief guest.



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TRIP CUT SHORT

THE HAUL MIGHT BE SMALL, BUT SINGTAM POLICE CLAIMS TO HAVE BUSTED A PROFLIGATE DRUG PEDDLING DUO

by SARIKAH ATREYA

SINGTAM: In a major breakthrough, the Singtam Police arrested a notorious drug peddler and his accomplice, thanks to the support received from the residents of Singtam.

Had it not been the efforts of the diligent public of Singtam Bazar and their support rendered to the Police in flushing out antisocial elements, the two drug pushers would have never been put behind the bars.

Acting on a tip-off, a Singtam Police team led by PI Rapden Bhutia, zeroed in on one Santosh Kumar Gupta, 24, a driver of a Commander Jeep, who had been peddling drugs out of Singtam for quite a while now.

The Police, it is learnt, had been receiving complaints against Gupta, a resident of Singtam, who used to ply his Commander between Singtam and Siliguri on a daily taxi service. He had, however, been collecting much more than his daily fares by smuggling subscription

drugs into Sikkim. The Police had been keeping a close watch over his activities for a while now.

At around 8 pm, on the night of September 28, Gupta, was apprehended by the Singtam Police while returning from Siliguri. His vehicle, SK-04/2388 was also seized.

When the Police searched the Jeep, they found a carton of Phensedyl, a cough syrup widely abused for its psychotropic properties, hidden in the toolbox under the driver's seat. The carton was open and contained 11 bottles. Later, the accused admitted to having consumed a bottle himself. When he was frisked, about 12 N-10 tablets were also found in possession of Gupta.

Following Gupta's interrogation, the Police also arrested Sheikh Ashiq, a friend of Gupta's, who used to sometimes accompany him to trips to Siliguri and who himself is a peddler and an abuser like Gupta.

Informed sources reveal that the two would buy Phensedyl and other psychotropic drugs from Siliguri

and sell them at various places along the National Highway 31A, right up to Singtam. Soon, their clandestine activities became public knowledge. But without any concrete proof, the hands of the Police were tied.

"We had been receiving information about the duo, but without any concrete evidence, there was very little we could do. So, we stepped up our vigil and the movements of the two were constantly monitored," PI Bhutia told NOW!

On September 28, the Police were tipped off that the two were returning from Siliguri with a consignment. The Police were ready when the Jeep pulled up at Singtam Bazar late in the evening.

"Although the consignment seized is small, it is significant as two hard-core peddlers are now behind bars," the Singtam Police said.

The Singtam Police have received more complaints about other such peddlers and the Police are monitoring their activities, PI Bhutia disclosed.

HARDLINE

by PANKAJ THAPA



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SDF diktat leads to 21 expulsions

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The ruling Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) party has expelled nine party members for their "involvement in anti-party activities and violation of party discipline."

SDF General Secretary (administration), SK Pradhan, said that these nine persons have been expelled from primary and active membership on the directions of the party President and Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling.

The expulsions have come in the wake of allegations that some of the SDF members were supporting and campaigning for their relatives who are contesting as independent candidates in the ensuing Panchayat polls, scheduled to be held in the

State on October 9 this year.

While SDF has fielded candidates in most of the 903 Gram Panchayat Units and 100 Territorial Constituencies and has already won a total of 687 seats uncontested, a small number of independent candidates are also in the fray. It has been alleged that the expelled SDF members had supported their relatives candidature for the party ticket and were campaigning for them now that they were contesting as independents.

Earlier, the SDF party expelled twelve members for five years, who were contesting as independent candidates against the SDF nominees in various Gram Panchayat Units and Territorial constituencies in the State. According to sources, these twelve SDF members were "dissatisfied" because the party had not

given them tickets and had gone ahead and filed their nomination papers as independent candidates.

Meanwhile, the State Election Commission is all set to conduct a "fair and peaceful Panchayat polls," the State Election Commissioner, DK Gazmer said. "The Commission has made all necessary arrangement to ensure that the rural polls are held in a fair and peaceful manner," he said.

Sikkim RSS condemns temple attack

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of Sikkim, in a Press release issued here recently, has condemned the militant attack on the Swami Narayan temple in Ahmedabad on September 24.

Sikkim's RSS workers have further appealed to the central as well as the state governments to take strong measures against terrorist activities and help maintain commu-

nal harmony in the country.

It has also condemned those "directly or indirectly" responsible for promoting such terrorist activities in the country.

The Sevaks have also appealed to all the citizens of the country to understand the need of the hour and face the challenges posed by such threats unitedly.

"In this crucial hour of uncertainty being faced by the whole nation, RSS feels that the nation must maintain peace and harmony," the release states.

THE PAKYONG CONCILIATION?

a NOW REPORT

PAKYONG: The warm greeting that awaited SDF supreme, Pawan Chamling, when he arrived here on September 29, hinted that the constituency was trying to make up for the let down in the last Assembly polls when it sent an Opposition MLA to the Assembly. The reception over, the CM addressed a string of well attended public meetings here at Aho, Pacheykhani, Dikling and Namchebong Upper-Raigaon. Some 2,000 supporters are reported to have shown up for the Dikling meet.

In all his speeches, Mr. Chamling, informs a party release, "completely endorsed" the selection of the party candidates and reiterated that party discipline must be maintained at all costs. He, however, also added that he was not upset with instances where party members had stood as independents against SDF's official candidates. This, he said, was the hallmark of democracy working. However, he warned that such rebel candidates should not go around claiming to belong to the party any more.

The people who get elected have a very great responsibility ahead of them, he said since more power and decentralization of funds

and responsibility would take place. Mr. Chamling also emphasised the need for Panchayat members to reinvent themselves and their work.

"This institution and institutionalization process begun by our party will be remembered in the days to come as more significant than any other achievement," he claimed, while adding, "It is definitely a middle path approach and we can say without a shadow of doubt that in the last eight years of our rule every citizen of our state has gained - not lost."

Senior party functionaries accompanied the Party President. Many local leaders also spoke about local concerns and needs.

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The Road To Tourism

The highways are the modern world's great rivers. Just as most ancient civilisations came up on the banks of major rivers and their tributaries, so too in the present times does every developmental initiative demand the presence of good roads. Digressing a bit from what the headline promises, one would add here that the Government need not allot sites and sponsor settlements where it wants satellite townships developed. It needs to just extend good road cover to the proposed areas. Take the present District Administrative Centre at Upper Sichey for example. No sooner had the office shifted there and the road carpeted properly, did the area grow into a bustling township, complete with its PCO booths and restaurants. A boom followed the road development initiative. Now, about tourism and roads. No matter how many man-hours are spent trying to come up with the most enticing slogans to attract tourists to Sikkim, the efforts will not last beyond one season. Tourism, after all, depends heavily on positive word-of-mouth publicity and no traveller, who is already taking a risk visiting places based on just publicity brochures and glossy centre-spreads, will decide on a destination once he is told of the poor road conditions. Taking Sikkim's case, one needs to first understand that the State plans to place itself on the Buddhism circuit. Needless to add, all those who decide on Sikkim for its Buddhist qualities expect a tranquil stay here. A bone-rattling experience on the road to the monasteries is not something they would have factored in.

It must also be borne in mind that when we say good roads, we do not, by any stretch of imagination, imply wide, three-lane blacktops. All that is required is a road that is smooth and safe. Bad roads (in fact all roads) turn into nightmare experiences during monsoons in Sikkim. Despite whatever we offer, no tourist wants his "adventure tourism" escape to begin even before he has checked into a hotel. One might argue that the roads to Gangtok (read NH-31A) is perhaps one of the best hill roads. Agreed, but the real tourist is not interested in the concrete of Gangtok. At best it is a stopover to make the Tsomgo-Nathula trip or proceed to North Sikkim (Gangtok can be given the slip if it is West Sikkim you are headed for). Roads to both the districts which are already on the tourist must-do lists offer very little promise for a revisit. Drivers are known to refuse fares to Khecheopalri from Pelling if so much as a cloud is sighted in the horizon. The ride, even on drier days is uncomfortable enough.

So, the road to promoting tourism in Sikkim lies literally in its roads. Improve them, promote well and Sikkim has enough potential to just survive on the repeat tourists. This also is a matter that lies beyond the Tourism Department's control, but the other arm, that of Roads & Bridges for the State roads, also belongs to the same Government. Some coordination, planning and prioritisation should get the roads in better health, monsoons notwithstanding. There is nothing new in what is being suggested and there must have been several attempts to improve the blacktops in the past, but maybe we should try harder.

TRANSFER INDEED

Your article on school transfer certificates found in a hotel in Siliguri is shocking. I have heard of these things happening in other parts, but not in Sikkim. How did these certificates get out of the Department? This may seem like a minor incident but it needs a thorough investigation. However, the writer should have contacted the Education department and the school authorities to get their opinion. Only then would the report have been completed.
S Rai, Development Area.

WOW! NOW!

Presenting correct news with perfect views seems to be a vow taken by NOW!

The paper is informative with excellent write up and should continue for many years. In the days to come let it not turn ugly by including insipid columns. The readers expect the paper to focus on vital issues like influx and maintaining communal harmony in the peaceful state.

LETTERS

NOW! is interesting and exciting.

Sonam Thakarpa, Gangtok

FINALS, NOT SEMIS

This is to bring to your notice that there has been a slight mistake with regards to the news item, "Shining Through Lean Seasons" carried in NOW! dated 25/09/02, where it is mentioned that Neekita Pradhan of TNA had made it to the semifinals of Inter Public Schools tournament in Delhi. The fact is that she had actually made it to the Finals and stood first runner up, hoping that this error be rectified.

Nikita Pradhan, TNA
the error is regretted - ed

WEAKER, INDEED

Women seem to be taking everything, from being in the majority in the new batch of civil servants to being the forerunners in the Panchayat elections. I believe even in local newspaper offices they



...AND WE STILL REFUSE TO LEARN FROM GUJARAT

According to a report in a national daily a classified working paper for the conference of DGPs and I-Gs (held between September 29 - October 1) has merely a two-line mention of Gujarat. This reference is made in relation to the tension prevailing between the two - Hindu and Muslim - communities. Law and Order, the two most important chapters in the document completely ignore the possibility of the State becoming a happy hunting ground for Islamic terrorist outfits.

To any citizen of the country it would seem more than obvious that the most convenient spot to stir up a conflagration or communal violence is Gujarat. After the many months of communal violence and targeting of Muslims by Hindu extremist groups in Gujarat, the ISI would find there many young Muslims willing to take up arms against the majority community. And the easiest way to set Gujarat aflame again is to organize a terrorist attack on innocent devotees in a temple.

A reflection of the following points would expose the gross miscalculation of the security agencies, which resulted in the overlooking of the inclusion of Gujarat:

Firstly, the community is highly

DEEP FOCUS

by RANJIT SINGH

polarized providing a catalyst for communal conflagration.

Secondly, Gujarat's coastline and borders with the inimical neighbour provide entry points for terrorists.

Thirdly, the state was used as a transit point for the RDX consignment used in the Mumbai blasts.

The Pakistanis would like the world to believe that the diabolical transgression on the Swaminarayan Temple in Gandhinagar by two young AK-47 toting extremists is the work of local youth eager to revenge the atrocities perpetrated during the dark days of communal violence in the state. This is a loaded stance adopted by them which has the double effect of vindicating them of any charge of having a hand in the temple massacre and on the other hand it exposes the fallout of the recent victimization of Muslims which according to them has resulted in their alienation and left them ample reason for revenge.

are greater in number than men. This is a growing trend worldwide and just shows what women can achieve given the opportunity. Here's to a gentler, more caring world.
Sonam Choden, Syari.

SUICIDAL WARNING BELLS

In your editorial you have addressed the growing trend in suicides in Sikkim. Sometimes reports come in even from peaceful rural areas of youth taking their life. It is time to wake up and take notice. We cannot allow it to go out of hand. As it is so many young people are taking to drugs. We have to start examining the underlying factors and a concerted effort is needed to stem the tide. Your editorial was timely and please highlight these issues in other articles and features also.
K Pradhan, Tadong.

LET'S LAUGH NOW

I really enjoy reading your paper. It is very informative and interesting. But please can we have more

humour. In these dull times, a good laugh can brighten your day. Please write more humorous articles and give more jokes and cartoons.
Amit, Arithang

SUN, NOT ANIMALS

I enjoy reading my horoscope every week but I prefer sun signs to the animal signs that you give. We are all more familiar with sun signs. Please leave these animal signs for menu cards in Chinese restaurants and go back to Aries, Taurus, Gemini etc etc.

I also wish you would start good food and recipe column. I am a big foodie who loves to cook and eat. And more than loves to read about food, so please do not disappoint me.
Sarita Thapa, Tibet Road.

THANKS FROM MY BABY

Your column *Baby Talk* by Dr HK Chettri will be very much appreciated by all mothers. There are so many queries a new mother has and it is not always possible to consult books or go to doctors. Dr Chettri is the best paediatrician in Sikkim and his vast experience will come handy while answering the questions. Why don't you occasionally ask other doctors to address

This is not too farfetched an assumption.

But there is evidence to suggest Pakistan's complicity. The first pointer is the kind of armaments carried by the terrorists. Secondly, this is the work of a suicide squad and apart from the LTTE and Palestinian extremists only Pakistan sponsored terrorists groups use such squads. Unable to scuttle the election process Kashmir, Gujarat is their next best destination.

In such a volatile atmosphere the need of the hour is peace and goodwill gestures, especially from the political parties. The bandh call by the VHP was totally insensitive to national imperatives and could have further aggravated the situation but for the non-cooperation of the BJP. Add to that the passion and fervour that has risen in the state in the wake of Modi's rath yatra and the image of Kalidas chopping the branch of a tree on which he was seated comes to mind.

There is every need at a time like this to demonstrate a unity of purpose cutting across all barriers in order to frustrate the terrorists' design of sowing seeds of communal discord. At the same time India has to get used to living on a prolonged 'red alert'.

various problems regarding health. The best thing I as a wife and a mother like about your paper is that you have given one whole page to health. Health is becoming a major issue in these modern times.

Looking forward to regular articles on this subject. As far as Baby Talk goes it will be one I'll read first because children all have similar problems and it will be a big help.
Mrs. S Pradhan, Nam Nam.

WHAT'S THE SCENE WITH OUR BANANAS?

I have been reading in papers about bananas being banned in Darjeeling because of the use of carbide to ripen them. I would like to state that this is happening in our state too. I have been giving my children bananas every day but I recently found out that fruit shops in Tibet Road and Lal Bazaar are also using this agent to artificially ripen the bananas. What is worse is that these people are not even aware that carbide is extremely dangerous and can cause long time damage. Please investigate this problem and let people know the truth.
Pema Dadul, Gangtok

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

It is 1:30 PM on a Sunday afternoon. As you walk up the stairs of the Chamla Tsering Building at Tibet Road, sounds of deep chanting can be heard. In the flat, you see a motley crowd of nearly 50 men and women sit on separate sides of the room. Some of them are wearing a white sash with Japanese inscriptions calligraphed on it. Soon, the collective reciting of prayer is over and one by one, the members get up to speak from a dais about their experience, thoughts and feelings. Now, if you're wondering what's going on here, you obviously are not one of the 10,000 or more Reiyukai followers in the State.

The Reiyukai centre was started here in 1997 by Chunnimal Ghimirey, a familiar face on SCTV. A friend who had trained in Japan made him a member. Soon, he himself went for Reiyukai sessions to Nepal and Japan. Today, he is the sessions leader and head of the Reiyukai sect here, a Sibuchi, as he is called.

"I am a writer. I have written seven books, won awards and done many other things, but I had no satisfaction. I had a certain arrogance, but once I got into this, I felt I was just a student. There was so much more to learn," he says.

The founder of Reiyukai is Kakutarō Kubo. In the 1920's amid the rubble of the Great Tokyo Earthquake and the chaos of a society in transition, he saw a way for people to live better lives. His vision did not involve a political party or the preaching of monks, instead he looked to the philosophy of Buddha and devised a simple, personal set of teachings that could be applied by anyone, anywhere. Today, Reiyukai has evolved into a multifaceted organisation with centres throughout the world.

"Reiyukai is based on the teachings of Buddha, but it is not a religion, it is more like a philosophy and does not distinguish between race, religion or economic status," says Ghimirey. This is apparent when you see the wide variety of people who are the Sikkim Reiyukais - Men, women, students, professionals and simple village folk.

For Ambika Sharma, 25, who works at the centre and Man Kumari, 34, who's been a member for a year, Reiyukai has added that extra dimension to their lives. They claim to feel better physically and more at peace with the world.

REIYUKAI

FOR A BETTER WORLD



a NOW!
feature on
Reiyukai
and its
beliefs...

The focus of the Reiyukai centre, Sikkim, seems to be ancestor worship. This is done by a daily ritual offering of fruits and water. Every session of prayer is also preceded by first making offerings to the ancestor.

Says T. Pradhan, a member, "We worship our ancestors. When I pray I feel they get peace, so I feel peaceful myself." Affirms Ghimirey, "We have forgotten our ancestors, our main objective is to worship them, to cleanse ourselves of bad karma."

Reiyukai promotes the personal development of all people through awareness and

actions as individuals, so that a better world can be developed. To achieve these goals, Reiyukai organises a variety of activities at all levels. It offers opportunities and occasions for people to get together, communicate and support each other so as to find wisdom and ideas which will be useful in daily life. Towards this end, the Sikkimese Reiyukais organise all kinds of cultural and literary programmes.

Social work is undertaken in the form of giving free tuitions and coaching classes to those from poor families and tailoring and

soft-toy making classes for housewives. And ambulance service at nominal charge is also available. An old-age home for the neglected elderly is also on the anvil.

For Ghimirey, whose day begins with pujas, meditation and reading of the sutras, the Reiyukai mantra of, "Namū Myū Ho Renga Kyū." (I bow to the lotus). "I feel very happy, not so attached to worldly goods," he claims, "even if I can help one person, I feel happy." That, in effect, sums up what Reiyukai is all about.

SABARMATI ASHRAM - A COMMAND POST OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Sabarmati Ashram built in the outskirts of Ahmedabad, became the nerve centre of the Indian freedom struggle. From here, Gandhi, the apostle of peace and also the founder of the Ashram, guided India to freedom. The Ashram was a spectator to his strategies and plans, which he chalked out to make the freedom struggle a mass movement. Hence it assumed the significance of being the most important place in the country's freedom struggle that reminds everyone of the most inspiring leader of the world in the 20th century, his life, his message and his service to the nation.

Its importance can be gauged from the fact that Sabarmati was the first place visited by the present President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam after taking office. In fact, he told the children at the ashram that Gandhiji had been his role model right since childhood.

Sabarmati Ashram is also known as Satyagraha Ashram, Harijan Ashram and Gandhi Ashram. It is the third of the four ashrams set up by the Mahatma in his lifetime. The other three ashrams were - Phoenix settlement near Durban, Tolstoy Farm in the Transvaal, both in South Africa besides, Sevagram at Wardha in Maharashtra during the freedom struggle. Out of the four ashrams, Sabarmati Ashram continues to be the best preserved with most of the Mahatma's remembrances in different forms as it happens to be the place of his longest stay in the country during his life time.

Soon after his return from South Africa in January 1915, Gandhiji expressed his desire to found an ashram to settle down with the inmates of his Phoenix Ashram, who had returned with him. Although his admirers and friends suggested several places like Haridwar, Vidyantadham near Kolkata and Rajkot Gandhiji, however, chose to set up his ashram in Ahmedabad. Behind his decision was his strong desire to serve the country through his mother tongue, Gujarati besides, reviving hand spinning as Ahmedabad had been an ancient handloom centre. There were also possibilities of getting monetary help from wealthy citizens of the city. He founded the Satyagraha Ashram on May 25, 1915 in a bungalow in Kocharab then a small village near Ahmedabad with

DIGANT K. DAVE on the history and significance of Sabarmati Ashram...

25 ashramites. It was offered by Barrister Jivanlal Desai. As plague broke out in Kocharab, Gandhiji had to shift to another place, about 4 kms to the north of Kocharab on the banks of Sabarmati river.

Gandhiji liked the Sabarmati location because of its vastness (36 acres of land) and proximity to sage Dadheechi's temple, who, as per a legend, sacrificed his life to help Lord Indra craft a Vajra from his ribs to defeat the demons. This ashram was started in July 1917 with 40 ashramites in several canvas tents on the land infested with venomous snakes. The main object of the ashram was to qualify for and make a constant endeavour towards national service. Prayer formed an important part of the ashram life and other conditions for the inmates included self help, celibacy, belief in humanity, respect for all religions, non-possession and eradication of untouchability. All along his stay at the ashram for 13 years from July, 1917 to March 1930, he inspired, shaped, led and guided a number of movements, programmes, struggles and satyagrahas all aimed at the freedom of India. Most of the constructive activities of Mahatma Gandhi, supplementary to the freedom struggle, like eradication of untouchability, basic education, khadi activities, swadeshi andolan, cleanliness campaign and prohibition were also started from the same hallowed land. It was again during his stay at the Sabarmati Ashram that the first trial for sedition by the British empire was conducted against him. From here only he went to jail for the first time besides going on fast for the first time in India, while at the ashram.

In 1918 Gandhiji led the workers of the textile mills of Ahmedabad to go on a strike against unjust cut in their bonus. At one point he went on fast and within three days a

settlement was reached and 21 day's strike soon ended. In 1930, it was from here he embarked upon the historic Dandi March with 79 Satyagrahis to break the salt laws of the British empire. As the Mahatma with a 54 inches long stick in his hand led the March, to 241 miles away Dandi village on a seashore near Surat, lakhs of people greeted him on the way. Gandhiji had publicly declared before he left the ashram that under no circumstances he would return to the ashram till the freedom was won. Dandi March brought tremendous awakening amongst the people all over India. Mahatma Gandhi symbolically broke the salt laws by illegally picking up a fistful of salt on the Dandi seacoast on April 06, 1930. This signalled the launching of a massive non-co-operative struggle during which lakhs of people were arrested for defying the salt laws and boycotting foreign cloth and liquor. To curb the struggle Gandhiji was arrested at Karadi Camp on the 4th May. Needless to say that Gandhiji thereafter never returned to ashram and disbanded the ashram in August, 1933.

Since 1951, the ashram is being looked after by the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust. Sabarmati ashram has, after the martyrdom of the Mahatma, become the first and foremost historical place associated with his pioneering activities in the country during the freedom struggle. For 13 long years from 1917 to 1930, it had been the Command post of freedom struggle. It attracts five to six lakh people every year not only from all over India but also the world over including a large number of VVIPs and VIPs. In the center of the ashram stands Hridaykunj, the 3 room residential quarters of Gandhiji and Kasturba from 1918 to 1930, a witness to innumerable historic decisions and events during freedom struggle. It is a hallowed place treasuring Gandhiji's charkha, writing desk, Chappals and some other articles of personal use. In the front of this sacred place is Upasana Bhomi - prayer ground. On the right there are two small Kutirs which were once occupied by the great satyagrahi and sarvodaya worker Vinoba Bhave and Miraben - origi-

DARJ BANANAS AND MILK ARE HEALTHIER, SCARCER

from AMITAVA BANERJEE

Darjeeling:

This year pujas will be the same at Darjeeling, except that the Mother Goddess will be offered plant ripened bananas and unadulterated milk, thanks to the Darjeeling Municipality and the Local Health Authorities.

A notice issued by the office of the Local Health Authority (Sadar), Darjeeling, circulated to all the fruit vendors of Darjeeling, states that the use of Acetylene gas commonly known as Carbide gas for ripening of food is prohibited under Rule 44-AA of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954 and Rules 1955 and strict action would be taken in case of violation of the rule.

This has resulted in bananas practically disappearing from the Darjeeling market as most of the bananas sold in the Darjeeling market was artificially ripened. Two weeks after serving notices to the 20-odd fruit shops of Darjeeling and the 3 godowns which were being used to ripen bananas with carbide, the Sub Divisional Food Inspector decided to enforce it. He destroyed 5,000 pieces of bananas and confiscated huge amounts of Carbide.

"I have nothing against fruit-sellers or bananas for that matter, but they were literally selling poison. I have not even imposed a ban on bananas, they can sell bananas which are naturally ripened," said Vijay Kumai, Sub Divisional Food Inspector. He also said that carbide usually caused food poisoning, acute gastric problems and continuous exposure resulted in visual disorders and asthma. He also said that the people living in the vicinity of the godowns had complained that there life had become miserable due to the stench from the carbide being used in the godowns.

The Inspector suggested that they could switch to the traditional



DARJEELING FRUIT STALLS WITH EMPTY BANANA HANGERS.

pic: Amitava Banerjee

methods like straw and gunny sacks to quicken the process of ripening rather than using carbide which was actually meant for welding torches. Incidentally nearly 4 tonnes of bananas were regularly being brought in mainly from Kishangunj in the Purnea District of Bihar, and ripened in the godowns of Darjeeling by using carbide.

Ram Sevak Prasad, a fruit vendor complained, "If the Indian Army can march on the same Jahaji Kela ripened by carbide why can't we consume the same."

Kumai also informed that hill vendors were not just ripening bananas using carbide, but also mangoes and even the tomatoes brought in from the plains. Similar enforcement have also taken place in Sukhia, Bijanbari and Takdah blocks.

Not to be left behind in the cru-

sade, the Darjeeling Municipality along with Himul (Milk Cooperative under the State Government) also got into the act and conducted surprise raids on milk vendors and what they found was astonishing.

"Milk in the Hills is just a whitener with no food value," said Madan Gurung, Secretary, Darjeeling Municipality. Most of the milk tested had fat content as low as 0.09% against a scheduled standard of 3.5% fat.

"Some of the milkmen even ran away leaving their milk cans," stated B. Bomzan, Councillor-in-Charge of Health. He also admitted that the present initiative was the first raid after many years of ignoring the adulteration. At most, the culprits were being warned that their licenses would be cancelled if the milk they were selling was found below the standards.

Of the 18 milkmen checked, only one was vending standard milk with 3.5% content. Nearly 500 litres of milk was seized. An official stated that usually starch and cheap milk powder was being used to increase the volume of milk.

Passang Tshering Bhutia, Chairman, Darjeeling Municipality stated that the Darjeeling Municipality had its own food testing lab till 1975, since when it has been defunct. Prior to that, food from all over the district and even the plains was tested here.

"We will emphasise on such drives and raids in future also. There should be awareness and people should get the right value for their money," said the Chairman.

Incidentally, the milk to Darjeeling is supplied from Rampuria, Mongpu, Pubong, Takdah, Sonada, Burbutey and Dabaipani areas.

NEPAL KARNALI DISTRICTS UNITE

The Karnali zone in western Nepal is as remote as any region can possibly get. Kathmandu ignores it and the Maoists plunder it and now the region has grouped together to form its own development solidarity...

Fled up with a faraway capital that doesn't care about the welfare of people living in the remote and roadless parts of western Nepal, five districts of the Karnali Zone have decided to set up their own development solidarity.

Called the Common Karnali Development Group, it will have members from local government combines, non-government organisations and civil society. "If Kathmandu keeps neglecting us, we want to show that we Karnali people can take care of ourselves," says Jivan Shahi, former DDC chairman of Humla.

Karnali's main problems are its remoteness, the lack of investment in development from the central government, chronic food shortage, lack of salt and poor public health services. Yet, Karnali is endowed with great biodiversity, natural beauty and human resources which if properly utilised could lift the region out of poverty, the group believes. "We will show them that we can be self-sufficient," Shahi said. "In five years, we will not be living hand-to-mouth anymore."

The group has prioritised improvements in transport, agriculture and tourism. Another member of the group, Deep Bahadur Shahi of the Kalikot DDC says, "We went through the Panchayat, 12 years of democracy, and the Karnali is remained where it was. Karnali is the only zone without a graduate college or a road. They start roads, and they never complete them on some pretext or the other. Sometimes the excuse is Maoists, sometimes it is lack of budget. They have Maoists in other zones, too, don't they?"

As an example, Shahi points to Salleri (Phaplu) airport in Solu Khumbu, which was put out of action by Maoists. It has since resumed operation. Maoists attacked Dolpo airport, but planes have still not started flying there. The same thing has happened to the Surkhet-Jumla road, where construction has stopped because of the security situation.

The main reason for lack of development is the lack of connections in high places in Kathmandu. Mohan Baniya is from the Mugu DDC and says Karnali should be declared a "Special Zone" so its gets priority treatment for development. "Mugu's average lifespan is 36, this is less than sub-Saharan Africa," says Baniya.

The group argues that Karnali has been neglected by Singha Darbar because it is remote. Mugu, Humla and Kalikot don't even have airports. Dolpa has been out of action because of Maoists. Karnali has been pushed further back because of the Maoist insurgency, the destruction of bridges, food supply and pulling out of development projects.

SHARAD KC in his report for the BBC Nepali Service

GLAD TO BE A PIRANHA

Of the Clubs and their activities...

In Kalimpong, as the joke goes, if you are a Newar you join the Rotary Club and if your genetic affinity goes further east and you are a Marwari, you join the Lion's Club.

But what if your snob value is not up there, but you still want to do 'something'? Well you join the local club.

Of course, before you get carried away by that newfound altruism the one thing that you don't do is give your 'local club' the naming rights to your children. With names like 'piranhas' and 'dansberg' these clubs do not leave much to your imagination. But what they lack in being etymologically challenged they make up by their sheer zeal for community service.

I fortunately belong to that category of people who live in an area where the social conscience of the entire neighborhood is reflected in the code of a local club. In our case, it is the Piranhas Athletic Club. I am no social scientist, but I have seen that in those areas where the middle class take the initiative of doing something meaningful, of mobilizing the youth towards attaining a certain goal, the lesser is the delinquency of this sensitive class. The Piranhas for example, organize a cricket tournament but it is more than a sporting contest. This event in the winters gives every youth in the area something to look forward to. It gives them the opportunity to be useful. It puts them in the same league as, lets say, the employed adult who has the luxury of being able to 'plan out' things. To a young boy the privilege of being able to sit and talk things over with adults, to contribute with their own inputs,

to be treated as equals in a joint endeavor is a high that they will not get even from the best quality glue.

It is therefore no surprise that in 11th Mile, where I live, you will not find water pipes being dug and sold in broad daylight, or see tasteless obscene graffiti with no sense of the female anatomy rudely charcoaled over walls. Some of my friends who live in more up market colonies with insular rich folks cannot make the same claim.

The activities of this aforementioned club, however, are not confined just to sports. Sports, I guess, is the smart thing to do if you want to get the young ones involved but once the ball is set rolling their energy can be directed towards more pressing concerns. In recent days, for example, the Kalimpong electricity department has embarked on a witch-hunt trying to unearth illegal lines. At the face of it, it sounds good as this meant that the legal lines would at least get the voltage that was their due. However, the matter seemed not as straightforward as we would have liked it to be. At a Press conference called by the club to reveal their findings, certain startling facts came to light. Whether the allegations made against the department are true or not is another matter. But that a club could have at their disposal an investigating team that took up the cudgels on the behalf of harassed consumers and conducted some 'investigation' and had the confidence to call a full-fledged press conference speaks volumes about the activism of this very interesting Kalimpong phenomenon.

The Piranhas is just one of the many location and activity specific clubs that are unique to this town. Others towns too may boast of such clubs but their visibility here is something that rivals the government. In

turn to pg 10

A Kalimpong STATE OF Mind
by PRAVEEN MOKTAN

Everyone's got complaints and the best things about a democracy is that these complaints can be voiced. "Action Mail" is the platform where the public mails us their grievances and we get them the replies from the concerned authorities. If you have a problem that needs redressal, just mail your complaint to us at "NOW! Gairi Gaon, Tadong, Gangtok, East Sikkim". We will reach the complaint to the concerned authority and carry their reply in the same issue. Names can be with-held on request and letters may be edited for language and length. Should the concerned agency not reply within a week's time, the letters shall be carried without the corresponding defence.

SOURENEY RESIDENTS

BREEZY TOILETS

The Education Department sanctioned money for a toilet to be built at the Government Primary School at Soureny village, Assam Lingzey, East Sikkim.

We believe a contractor from Ranipool got the contract. Accordingly, its construction began in the month of February this year. The foundation was laid, the pillars were erected and a concrete slab was laid. Underground tanks were also constructed, with a concrete slab as a cover, with two circular manholes on it.

Then, to our surprise, the construction work was stopped suddenly for no apparent reason.

We even approached the con-

tractor with an appeal to finish the work, but he refused to pay attention our problems.

Because of this callous attitude of the contractor, the students of the school are now suffering. It is specially the lady teachers and children who are now in difficulty because of the non-completion of the toilet.

The manholes are without any covers and this poses a danger to the safety of the students, especially the younger ones in the pre-primary section.

Therefore, we appeal to the concerned officials see to the completion of the toilet as early as possible.

Concerned citizens, Soureny village, Assam Lingzey, East Sikkim

EDUCATION DEPT.

NOT INDIFFERENCE, JUST THE RAINS

RK Pariyar, District Engineer, Education Department, when contacted by NOW! had a different view of the entire episode.

According to him, this particular work of construction is a departmental work and reveals that the so-called contractor is in fact not a contractor, but just a supplier of raw materials of the work.

Mr. Pariyar goes on to reveal that the school is built on private land and not "registered" with the Department. The initial delay in completing the work, he claims, was because negotiations with the owner were taking too long. Then, the rains set in and damaged the road leading to the school because of which raw materials could not be transported to the work site. He, however, assures that work on the toilets will begin as soon as the monsoons abate.

EX-STUDENTS, NORTH DISTRICT

RENOVATE MANGAN SS SCHOOL

We, the executive body of the Educated Unemployed Youth Association (EUYA) and Ex-Students of North Division, would like to ask the Department of Education to consider the renovation of the Mangan Senior Secondary School Lower Building and the old double-storey building, which are in serious need of the same.

The Lower Building was supposed to be used as a conference hall but it is now in a bad condition, making seating arrangements for even 100 people during function a difficult task. Only the supporting posts and the roof is intact, which now hangs like a skeleton.

This is shameful for the education department as this is the only senior secondary school in the entire North District.

We would be grateful if the government would take some initiative to improve the condition of the school as soon as possible.

D. Kumar, Joint Secretary, EUYA and Ex-Students, North District

EDUCATION DEPT.

RENOVATION DONE

RK Pariyar, Divisional Engineer (DE), Education Department, while responding to the complaints raised by the EUYA claimed that the Department had completed the work of renovating two buildings - one with 18 rooms and the other with eight rooms - just a few weeks back.

Refuting the complainant's plea that the complex does not have sufficient rooms to accommodate the students, Mr. Pariyar pointed out that the two buildings were spacious and the students face no problems as such.

He also mentioned that one RCC building situated just above Mangan

SS School was not being used because it was in a deplorable condition. The Department, he said, had it dismantled and has taken necessary measurements and drawn estimates for a new building there. However, this file is being processed and this proposal totally depends on how much budget that the Government is going to award it, he added. The DE further informed that plans have been made to build a science laboratory and a sort of multi-purpose room in place of this dismantled structure.

He also informed that estimates have been drawn for renovation of the present science building and the staff quarters. "This school is to celebrate its Silver Jubilee function very soon and we hope to complete our work prior to this function," the DE disclosed.

"CHRISTIANS CANNOT BE EQUATED TO MAOISTS"



The Christians of Sikkim have taken umbrage to the report carried in a national weekly which equated the demographic threat posed by Christians with the law and order exigency which the Nepal Maoists could create for Sikkim. The United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim now demands "proof" to back the report...

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim (UCWSS), the apex body of Christian organizations in the State, has taken strong exception to an article carried by the English weekly, THE WEEK, which it calls "inflammatory" and one that incites communal discord among the people of Sikkim.

The said article, which was published in the August 4 issue of the magazine under the heading "Shangri-La Threatened," which claimed: "Sikkim is now being threatened within and outside and it is important to tackle the triple threat of Maosim (sic), Islamisation and Christianisation."

The report claims that while there were only a few Muslims and Christians in Sikkim when it merged with India in 1975, now they number 60,000 in a population of 5.4 lakhs. Comments are also made on the "lure of money" which "tricked" many underprivileged Sikkimese into converting to Christianity. It further says that there have been demographic imbalances in the State caused by conversion and influx.

"The Christian community in Sikkim has been deeply hurt by the

baseless allegations levelled by the said article, which has sowed seeds of discord in the minds of the people of the State by casting aspersion on the whole Christian community," UCWSS president, Simon G. Lama said. "The facts within Sikkim do not corroborate the allegations made in the article. The author seems to have written it on hearsay or wrong statement given by people intending on dividing the Sikkimese society," he said.

"The author says that there are at present, 98 Churches in the South District, 75 in the East, 16 in the West and 9 in the North District, but according to the Bureau of Economics & Statistics as on 31 March 2002, there are 30 Churches, 88 Buddhist Monasteries, 191 Hindu Temples, 159 Mane Lhakangs, 6 Mosques, 2 Gurudwaras and 1 Sai Mandir in Sikkim. From where did the author get those exaggerated figures from?" Mr. Lama questions.

"The figure of 53,000 Christians in a population of 5,40,493 in Sikkim is also a cooked up figure. According to the 2001 census, there are only 13,500 Christians in the State," he adds.

Out of place references in the article on how mosques and churches are "taking full advantage" of assistance forwarded by the

Ecclesiastical Department (a feature unique to Sikkim) come close to slander since the Department, although dealing with religion, by virtue of its name is a secular outfit expected to treat all religious institutions similarly.

"The assistance given to the Christian community is miniscule," Mr. Lama said.

The report had even quoted the DGP, RK Handa as admitting that a senior government official had been warned against proselytising with the lure of money. Mr. Lama, however, contends that the DGP, in a meeting with UCWSS executive members denied having passed on any such information.

"What reason or facts does the author have so as to equate Christians in Sikkim to the Maoist rebels of Nepal? Christians in Sikkim have always lived peacefully with other communities of the State and have contributed to the development of Sikkim in all spheres. We have never resorted to violence," Mr. Lama stresses in his letter.

The UCWSS has written to the WEEK stating that the author will have to "prove with facts as to how the Christian community of Sikkim is a threat to the State or face defamation charges in Sikkim Courts for maligning the community."

SADAR THANA

NO SIDES BEING TAKEN IN PANIHOUSE ASSAULT CASE

Shying away from a fight, a report carried in Rajdhani (a NOW! supplement) generated a lot of feedback. One, however, hinted that the Sadar Thana officials were playing favourites by not booking some accused because they were contables with the force. When contacted, this is what the Thana had to say:

That on 22.8.2002 a complaint was received from Mr Mohan Gurung of Arithang to the effect that the same evening while he was returning home along with his son Sishir Gurung from Panihouse after attending a party they were restrained, assaulted and gold chain of Mohan Gurung was snatched away by the unknown 6/7 miscreants.

Soon after receipt of the information at Sadar police station, Gangtok, a criminal case for rioting, simple hurt and for robbery was registered against unknown persons and the investigation was taken up. During initial course of the investigation, Dhiraj Rana, Bijoy Rai, Pempa Tamang and Dawa Tamang of Panihouse area were arrested and detailed examination was done. The witnesses who were acquainted with the facts and circumstances were also examined.

During investigation Pempa Tamang and Dawa Tamang were not found involved in the case and after detailed examination they were let off from the Police Station as no concrete evidence was found against them. However, Dhiraj Rana and Bijoy Rai were remanded in police custody for 10 days and released on Court bail after an order from the Chief Judicial Magistrate.

The police in its investigation so far has learnt that on the evening of 22.8.02 at about 8 pm the complainant Mohan Gurung and his son Sishir Gurung while returning home after attending a cocktail party at Panihouse happened to pass by Bijoy Rai of Panihouse who was, then urinating standing on the stair leading to lower Panihouse. A discussion arose between them and soon Dhiraj Rana, who was at the nearby Paan shop, joined Bijoy Rai. The two groups had minor fighting in which no body sustained bodily injuries.

The complaint lodged by Mohan Gurung, who is a dismissed police sub inspector, involved and convicted in a physical assault case of Biraj Adhikari, was found false and so far there is no evidence of rioting and snatching of his gold chain. The police are of the opinion that the said Mohan Gurung being an ex-police officer misguided the police station and the investigation team by lodging a false complaint.

The residents of Panihouse area have informed the police officers that the said complainant Mohan Gurung is trying to extort the money from those persons who were brought to the Police Station for examination on the pretext that if he was paid well, he would withdraw the complaint and compromise the matter.

Sadar Police Thana is thoroughly investigating the case after putting sincere efforts for the fair and proper justice to the citizens.

Sadar Thana

Gangtok Times to host seminar on Environmental Justice

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: *Gangtok Times*, a local English weekly, is collaborating with Panos South Asia, to host an "Environmental Justice Seminar" on October 7, 2002 at Hotel Chumbi Residency. This seminar is proposed to be an informal gathering of media and NGOs from Sikkim and the Drajeeling Gorkha Hill Council.

The seminar will address the issue of environmental activism and the need to take it beyond the conservation and protection for, which the world has been, adequately sensitized, to accountability and justice. At this seminar the concept of

environmental justice and the need to define it for South Asia will be introduced because unlike in the West where the concept was mooted, a majority of the people in South Asia are directly dependent on their immediate environment.

At the seminar, a Panos South Asia report on promoting environmental justice will be released. The document reportedly provides an introduction to environmental justice and also covers some of the elements of justice issues relevant to South Asia and factors that have a bearing on them, and throws up issues for further consideration.

The objective of the workshop is to deliberate on questions of equity,

responsibility and accountability as they relate to the environment and environmental resources with Justice for All as a background document.

Panos South Asia will, over the course of the next few years, promote this South Asian concept of environmental justice by encouraging the coverage of related issues in the region. Panos South Asia will encourage journalists to pick up critical themes relevant to different countries and regions, particularly where the people have little to say in decision making, and help them to report on these issues so that the affected public is better informed and can use this information to try and bring about a change.

NLCPR to the rescue

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Sikkim schools are to receive funds from the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR), Government of India.

This fund was earmarked by the Education Department for the construction of 159 four-roomed and 39 six-roomed school buildings, at a total cost of Rs 23.42 crores, and for development of 4 affiliated colleges at the cost of Rs 5 crores.

The construction of these school buildings commenced in the month of December last year and barring

a few almost all buildings will be ready for occupation by the end of November this year.

T. Gurung, Chief Engineer, Education Department, informed NOW! that till date, construction of 160 schools have been completed.

These school buildings have been constructed as double storied RCC structures with provision for vertical extension and each room has an area of 320 sq.ft, which can ideally accommodate 40 students.

The initial sanction cost of Rs 23.42 crores has been revised to Rs 28.33 crores and now has provision for classroom furniture also, it is

learnt

Regarding the development of colleges, Gangtok Degree College has an added physical infrastructure in the form of an Auditorium and 12 units of staff quarters. Kamrang Degree College at Namchi and Law College at Burtuk are to be completed within the current financial year and next financial year respectively.

The Chief Engineer also told NOW!, that the NLCPR funds are a 'boon' to Sikkim, as they came at a time when these school buildings were in dire need of renovation and reconstruction.

AUCTION AUCTION AUCTION

PROPERTY FOR SALE AT MAJITAR

The State Bank of Sikkim invites sealed bids for purchase of its property situated at Majitar, East Sikkim, on the following terms and conditions:

- The sealed bids should be accompanied by a Temporary Deposit Receipt in favour of the General Manager-I, State Bank of Sikkim, for Rs. 20,000.
- The sealed bids should mention the offer price at which the bidder is ready to purchase the property and the bid along with the T.D.R should be received before 4 pm on 21 October 2002.
- The State Bank of Sikkim reserves the right to reject the bids below its 'Reserve Price.' It will accept highest bid above its 'Reserve Price,' which has been set equal to Rs 8.00 Lakhs.
- If a bid is accepted, the concerned bidder will have to immediately pay to the State Bank of Sikkim a sum equal to 25% of the accepted bid amount within a week of the acceptance of the bid by the State Bank of Sikkim. Failure to do so would result in forfeiture of earnest money and the Bank will proceed to make its offer to second highest bidder above the Reserve Price.
- The State Bank of Sikkim undertakes to execute a Sale Deed Documents in favour of the successful bidder on receipt of the advance mentioned vide Clause (d) above and present it to the Registrar of Deed for registration. The successful bidder will, however, be responsible for payment of necessary Stamp Duty and Registration Duty. The bidder will be responsible for making final payment at the time the Deed is finally accepted for Registration by the Registrar as the sale is subject to the Registration Rules.
- The bidder should be eligible to own landed property in rural areas of Sikkim as per the prevailing laws of Sikkim and the bidder should attach requisite proof of such eligibility along with his bids offer

SCHEDULE

A portion of land under plot no. 2268/4049 measuring 40X30 with already constructed two storied R.C.C. building in the name of the seller and situated at Majitar, Rangpo, East Sikkim. The said plot is butted and bounded on East-land of Shri. Bir Bahadur Subba, On West-31 A, National Highway-50, from the road, on South-Land of Shri Hari Prasad Deokota. The bidders can inspect the land records in the office of the D.G.M (L/R) on any working day between 10 am to 2 pm.

BY ORDER,
MANAGING DIRECTOR, STATE BANK OF SIKKIM

SABARMATI ASHRAM

Contd from pg 7

nally a British lady Ms. Madeleine Slade. To the left of Hridaykunj is Nandini – the guest house of the ashram during the freedom struggle. Khadi Vidhyalaya – training centre for Khadi workers and Magan Nivas, residence of the first ashram manager – Maganlal Gandhi are also situated on the same complex.

Sabarmati Ashram has now turned into the biggest pilgrimage centre to pay homage to the Mahatma. Nearby Gandhi Smarak, Sangrahalaya treasures memory of the great leader in the form of his original letters, photos, relics and Gandhian literature. Eternal importance of Sabarmati Ashram seems never to fade away.

(PIB)

Glad to be a Piranha


Contd from pg 8

more commercial times this happy arrangement of affairs could give away to those more ubiquitous non-governmental agencies but for the moment one can only thank the lord and for small mercies.

The mother of all clubs in our town is the GNLF. It is off course as everyone knows a political party. But when it is in no hurry to either contest or boycott the next election they are your friendly neighborhood club. Which means they will undertake any task - from putting your marital life back in order to getting your child admission in college

The color of Kalimpong is that

which is given to it by its many societies and clubs. So it is not unusual to have a weekend of kickboxing followed by one with a ghazal evening and a play and an opera and a rock-concert and football and ... the list is endless. And for someone who at the moment does not belong to any such club, what selfish joy it is to live in a town where it never stops 'happening'. So here's three cheers to the small and the big clubs that never let our collective conscience get desensitized by all that goes on in this big bad world of ours. In a "dog eat dog" world aren't you glad that you are a piranha?



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THE MALAY EYE IS ON SIKKIM

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Can Sikkim woo Malaysian tourists? We'll know soon enough. Promoting the State as the premier Buddhist destination would be an idea worth exploring, Minister for Tourism, KT Gyaltsen said.

Mr. Gyaltsen was speaking at a special function here on September 26, organised by the Tourism Department to welcome a delegation of Malaysian Indian Tour & Travel Association (MITA).

"The USP of Sikkim can be its Buddhist heritage. We have the largest number of monasteries in the country and the State according to Buddhist scriptures was visited by Guru Padmasambhava on his way to Tibet. The State could be ideal religious destination for Malaysian tourists, especially those of Buddhist background," Mr. Gyaltsen said.

The 14-member team of MITA, led by its President, A. Sevaguru, was here to explore the possibility of tying up with Sikkimese tour operators to promote Sikkim in Malaysia. Earlier the team visited Pelling, one of the most popular tourist destinations in West Sikkim and other places, and interacted with the local tour operators there.

In Gangtok, the Malaysian delegation met and closely interacted with the members of the Travel Agents Association of Sikkim and Sikkim Hotel & Restaurant Association.



Malaysian Indians strike a pose with Sikkim Tourism officials

"When we decided to take up a new destination to promote, Sikkim was the obvious choice because it is still not on the Malaysian tourism map," Mr. Sevaguru explained, while adding, "Sikkim has a lot of things we are looking for in a new tourist destination. The Buddhist heritage can definitely be a selling point for Malaysians as 30 percent of the Malay population consists of Chinese Buddhists. If we can capture the market, it would be an added bonus."

Mr. Sevaguru said that an annual travel fair is organised in Kuala Lumpur by the Malaysian Travel Agent Association, which is visited by over 60,000 people. "Sikkim should participate in this fair as it

would greatly promote the State in the South Asian region," he said, adding that the MITA would provide all out assistance to the Sikkim delegations at the fair.

However, the bureaucratic bottlenecks and the restricted area permit hassles for foreign tourists have to be removed if Sikkim wants to attract more foreign tourists, he suggested.

The delegation also felt that accessibility to the State should be made easier and the existing infrastructure in the hotels should be improved if the in-bound foreign tourist traffic is to be increased. The delegates also said that the Indian Tourism office in Malaysia should be reopened to promote Indian tourism there.

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AFFIDAVIT

I, Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen, son of Mr TS Gyaltsen, aged about 49 years, by faith Buddhist, by occupation Government Service, resident of Tateng Villa, P.O & P.S. Gangtok, East Sikkim (India), do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as under:

1. That Mr KARMA JIGME GYALTSO TATENG is my natural son.
2. That in the academic certificates ie, in I.C.S.E and I.S.C.E Certificates my said son's name has been recorded as KARMA JIGME GYALTSO TATENG.
3. That in the Passport issued by the Regional Passport Officer, Calcutta (India) bearing Passport No. N-607460 dated 01/01/1995 my said son's name has been recorded as KARMA JIGME GYALTSO GYALSTEN.
4. That the person by names KARMA JIGME GYALTSO TATENG and KARMA JIGME GYALTSO GYALTSEN are the names of the one and the same person ie, my said son.
5. That by virtue of this affidavit the name ie KARMA JIGME GYALTSO TATENG as appeared in the aforesaid academic certificates of my said son be recorded henceforth for all intents and purposes, whatsoever, including in his further academic certificates and other Official records.

I have signed this affidavit on this the 27th day of September, 2002, at Gangtok, East Sikkim (India).

Deponent - Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen
Identified by - SS Hamal, Advocate

VERIFICATION

I, Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen, the deponent herein, do hereby verify and state that the contents of paragraphs 1 to 4 herein above are true to the best of my knowledge and the content of paragraphs 5 is my respectful submission. I have signed this verification on this the 27th day of September, 2002, at Gangtok, East Sikkim (India).

Deponent - Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen

Solemnly affirmed before me this the 27th day of September, 2002 by Shri Jigme Tenzin Gyaltsen of Gangtok, East Sikkim identified by Shri SS Hamal, Advocate of Gangtok, East Sikkim.

Suraj Chettri, Oath Commissioner/
Gangtok/ Sikkim

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Ku-Tshe Shegu

We, the family members of the late Barmiak Choom Chering Choden Densapa, are extremely grateful to all friends and well wishers for your very kind assistance and condolences.

The KU-TSHE SHEGU or the 49th day prayers will be offered on Saturday, the 19th October, 2002 at the family residence in Gangtok. May we request you to kindly join us on this occasion. We deeply regret not being able to inform each and everyone of you personally despite our best efforts.

*Barmiak Densapa Family
Cherry Bank, Gangtok*

Antheyesthi Kriya

The Anthesti Kriya of late Mrs. Tara Shrestha, who left for her heavenly abode on September 22, 2002, falls on October 4, 2002. While expressing our sincere gratitude and thanks to all our relatives, friends and well-wishers for their support and co-operation at the time of bereavement, we request them to kindly attend her Anthesti Kriya on the above date at our residence at Dara Gaon, Tadong to offer prayers for the peace of the departed soul.

MC Pradban (Husband); Pranoy and Pawan (Sons); Prerna (Daughter), Dara Gaon, Tadong

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Managing Director; Nayuma Cable

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25 Sep 02 11 am to 5 pm; Trident Infotech Pvt. Ltd. Tibet Road, Gangtok. ph: 23606

26-28 Sep 02 10 am to 6 pm; Aptech Computer Education, Metro Point, NH 31A. ph: 23172 APTECH. ph: 26065

Antheyesthi Kriya



Antheyesthi Kriya of late (Smt.) P. M. Silal, who left for heavenly abode on 23rd September, 2002, falls on 5th October 2002 (Saturday).

All friends, relatives and well-wishers are requested to join the members of the bereaved family in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Syari Govt. Quarters on the above date.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to all those who extended their help and cooperation at the time of our bereavement and at teh saem time we regret our inability to thank them individually.

Binod Silal (Son); Upen Silal (Son); Dr. Maya Silal (Daughter); Sabita Rasaily (Daughter-in-law)

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THE CABLE GUY'S WOES

Govt wants cable operators to part with Rs. 60 in taxes when they make only Rs. 7 in profits

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Cable operators in Sikkim, under the double whammy of UD&HD deciding to get strict with the 25 per cent Entertainment Tax levied on them and the Central Excise slapping an additional 5% Service Tax, is looking at bleeding 33 per cent of their turnover in the form of taxes (don't forget the 3% Income Tax on turnover in Sikkim).

While a 33% taxation is ludicrous enough, it becomes even more absurd when one learns that of the average Rs. 180 per month that the cable operators raise from subscribers, Rs. 173 goes as payment to pay-channels. How the operators manage their operations with the Rs. 7 they make from each subscriber is another matter, but if the present conditions prevail, the Sikkim Government is in effect expecting the cable TV providers to pay Rs. 52 per subscriber as tax from their own pockets - from money which they have not even earned.

"We understand that the Service Tax is a Central matter and that the State Government cannot do much about it, but they can at least bring

down the Entertainment Tax from its present 25 per cent," said a delegation of Sikkim Cable Operators Association, while talking to NOW!

But how come the business has survived thus far if the money they are left with is not barely 12 per cent of the turnover (25% ET remember), one might ask.

It appears that the UD&HD had been accommodating thus far and set an unofficial "fixed amount" for each cable provider as ET. "We were comfortable with this arrangement, but now the Department wants details and actually raise 25% of our collection," point out the SCOA members.

The Service Tax notice, which every cable operator has ignored,

came as the proverbial final straw. "Why have Entertainment Tax on cable TV. It is no longer just for entertainment like movies. It's also about getting information," argues one irate cable operator.

While this is an argument that cannot be settled in the State, the Association also has a solution to offer - reduce the Entertainment Tax component to more realistic levels. "The ET raised in Sikkim is a clone of Mumbai, whereas we are closer in economic development to maybe West Bengal which levies just 5 per cent. We want Sikkim's ET component to be brought down to this level," they offer.

Thus far, however, the Association has not found ear willing to

give them a considerate hearing. With notices from the Central Excise office and UD&HD now giving strong warnings, they are at a loss on what to do. One option is to hike the cable fee. If the tax structure does not change, the hike will be of at least sixty rupees or more making the cable services beyond the reach of many. The other option to close down shop is not so readily available. A rider in the UD&HD licence to cable operators states clearly that they cannot stop their services without prior "written" permission of the Department.

The coming weeks promise an entertaining round of manoeuvres as the cable-guys try and get an audience for the woes...

Some muscle flexing up at White Hall

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Tempo Kaleon flexed as the "Champion of Champions" at the recently concluded 1st Sir Claude Whyte Body Building competition, 2002. The organiser, Ashim Chettri, who is also the instructor-cum-in-charge of the gym at White Hall, must be proud man since the competition drew healthy participation and threw up some promising body-builders from Sikkim.

Naveen Pradhan, who was the overall runners-up was also adjudged as having the Best Proportionate Physique. Similarly, Sushil Singh earned the trophy for best poser, while Yogesh Chettri came third in the overall ranking.

Champa, from Kalimpong was on stage as the guest poser. Champa apart from being Mr. Kalimpong and Mr. DGHC, has bagged the Mr. Dehradun and Mr. Uttaranchal ti-



ties twice and is the best in North India. He is now competing to stake his claim on the Mr. India title.

The competition was presided over by the DC (East), VB Pathak

as the chief guest. The Whyte Hall Gym is incidentally also the cheapest gym in town with a registration fee of Rs. 300 and monthly membership fee of Rs. 100.

NOW, LET'S TRAVEL MATE

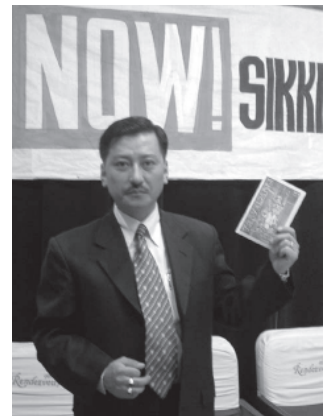
a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Minister for Tourism and Land Revenue, KT Gyaltsen, maintained that misconceptions about and misinformation on Sikkim have to be removed before any effort at promoting tourism can bear fruit. The Minister was speaking at the launch of NOW! Travelmate, a travel guide on Sikkim published by NOW! at a function held here on September 30.

"Sikkim's tourism industry needs the right kind of information on it disseminated to the outside world. A travel guide such as the Travelmate would greatly contribute towards this goal," he said.

While congratulating the team of NOW! on compiling this exhaustive travel guide, Mr. Gyaltsen said that it is a matter of pride that "locals" have come up with such ideas to help promote tourism in the State.

"The tourism industry in Sikkim is developing fast and its success rests not only the shoulders of the tourism department but the contribution of all the sectors involved in the industry - right from the travel



Minister Tourism with a copy of NOW! Travelmate

agencies to the hotels, the business community to even the Fourth Estate," he said.

The simple function was attended among others by the Principal Secretary-cum-Commissioner, Sikkim Tourism, Karma Gyatso, Director, Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation, PK Dong, Joint Secretary, Ms. Jemima Pradhan, officials from the department, representatives from the travel, trade and hotel association in the State and members of the Press.

The Travelmate which offers to guide the readers through the Sikkim Experience is priced at Rs. 10.

Volunteer health workers descend on Gangtok

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Voluntary Health Association of Sikkim (VHAS) inaugurated its 28 Annual General Body Meeting at Chumbi Residency here on 30 September.

VHAS is a national level NGO which bands together a federation of 27 Voluntary Health Associations, linking more than 4,000 health care institutions and grass root level community health programmes spread across the country.

Dr. H. Lepcha, President VHAS told NOW! that VHAs from all over the country had gathered in the capital to deliberate on the theme "Strategy for Social Development of

Unreached Communities", and added that this was the first time that such a meeting was being hosted in Sikkim.

The AGBM provides a forum for voluntary health associations from across the country to exchange ideas, experiences and knowledge. "We are all NGOs working with the common goal of providing better health facilities to the people of India; to promote grass root development by working with people. We work towards peoples participation and community development," said the Doctor.

Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive of VHAI commended the 'young and budding' team of VHAS for working diligently towards

achieving its goals.

He then gave a brief introduction of the working of VHAI.

"We work where there is no help," he began. He then informed the gathering that teams of VHAI workers had worked in such remote places like those the border areas of Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet.

"NGOs should be sustainable, and though we are still struggling, we will definitely be there one day," added the Chief Executive.

SW Tenzing, Chief Secretary and the chief guest at this function said that health and development were synonymous hence the work of the VHAI was laudable.

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