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NOW!

SIKKIM MATTERS

GANGTOK **WEDNESDAY, 13-19 Nov, 2002** **Vol 1 No 22** **Rs. 5**

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FACE OFF



Lall Bazaar traders "gherao" the UD&HD Secretary's office on November 11 [left] before storming in even as the hapless and lone Homeguard gets swept aside by the angry wave [above]

GHERAO!

SERVED THE EVICTION NOTICES LALL BAZAAR TRADERS STORM UD&HD SECY'S OFFICE WITH DEMANDS AND LAWYER IN TOW

TURN TO pg 3 FOR DETAILS

CHECK OUT LITTLE ITALY'S ORIENTAL CONNECTION ON pg 12

CULTURE CENTRE + TRAINING CENTRE FOR TOURISM TO COME UP IN SIKKIM

HUDCO's Rs. 68 crore projects in Sikkim

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: HUDCO is setting up a Cultural Centre and a Training Centre for Adventure and Eco-tourism in Sikkim.

The two projects, undertaken by HUDCO are being funded by the Union Ministry for Tourism and Culture.

The Cultural Centre is to come up here in Gangtok at an estimated cost of Rs. 8 crores, while the Training Centre for Adventure and Eco-tourism will come up at Chemchey, South Sikkim and will cost Rs. 60 crores.

The Chairman-cum-Managing Director, HUDCO, Pankaj Jain, met the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling, during the latter's recent Delhi visit and briefed him on the two projects.

Mr. Jain also offered HUDCO's technical assistance and consultancy services for the landscape development of the sites in South Sikkim where mammoth statues of Lord Shiva and Guru Padmasambhava are to come up. He also offered assistance in preparing plans for a park in every District, a car park at Baluwakhani in Gangtok and development of Kamrang, South Sikkim as a tourist spot. A team of architects from HUDCO is expected to arrive here next week to visit the proposed sites.

HUDCO is also involved in the construction of a Buddha Park at Sarnath and a meditation park at Bodhgaya, both initiated by the Sikkim government.

After bandhs, it's sulking sullies

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Perennial bandhs called across the border trickling down to clot our arterial passage NH 31A inconveniencing our "mild and meek" State. Old hat. But, as if this was not enough, now we have to even deal with cross-border sulking sullies bent upon harassing Sikkim bound vehicles and their inmates.

Of course, we didn't need this. The degree to which Sikkim feels harassed due to disturbances originating in the neighbouring hills of West Bengal can be gauged from the

fact that the Chief Minister, while in New Delhi recently, sought an express meeting with the deputy Prime Minister and requested him for a permanent solution to the problems plaguing NH 31A.

The problem has now acquired a new dimension. Last week a few young men of Pedong town in West Bengal had an altercation with the locals of Rongli in Sikkim. The two towns fall off the NH31A on the old trade route from Kalimpong to Jelepla.

Sources reveal that the youth from Pedong drove into Rongli in high spirits. It was after all Diwali and Sikkim is the place all border

towns from WB seek out when searching for some "subsidised" liquor. The consequent exchange of unpleasanties and thrashing they received at the hands of the Rongli locals landed them in the Rongli lockup. They were later released on bail and returned to Pedong.

But the matter didn't end there, or rather, was not allowed to. Sulking from the treatment they had received, the young men now began throwing stones at every vehicle bound for Sikkim and even began harassing the drivers and passengers. This, despite the fact that the locals of Rongli paid these men Rs. 2000

as compensation for the beating they had subjected them to.

So, when Vikas Tamang, a taxi driver from Pedong was found dead in his cab a few kilometres from Pakyong, there were heads looking the direction of Pedong. But as it transpires the Pedong boys had nothing to do with his death. But the problem remains and is cause of worry. DIG (Range) SD Negi feels those boys from Pedong need some sense drilled into their heads. He however rules out intervention by Sikkim Police as it could cause interstate police problems. Till then, we continue suffering from interstate people's problems.

The Bihari Worship at Teesta



pic courtesy: GURU T. LADAKHI

For the Biharis, Chhat Puja, observed over four days with November 10 and 11 as the main days, is the most holy festival of them all. While their brethren flock to the banks of the Ganga in Bihar, the Biharis who have made Sikkim their home and hence celebrate all their festivals here, it is to Teesta that they flock to pay obeisance to the Sun God. The river's banks at Singtam [above] draw perhaps the largest gathering of them all.

Boulder cuts off Upper Dzongu

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: A massive boulder rolled on to the state highway in Upper Dzongu area in North North Sikkim on Saturday evening cutting it off from the rest of the State. Reports indicate that the road has been blocked about eight kilometres from the North Sikkim Highway en route to Passangding in Upper Dzongu. Although work has started on removing the boulder, its sheer size has delayed the process.

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WB TRUCKS PILFER SIKKIM CEMENT; GET COUNTER SIGNATURES WITHDRAWN

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Pilferage by vehicles transporting material is not unheard of. Follow-up action is, however, rare which is why a recent development deserves the headlines.

It all started on October 7, when the storekeeper of an RDD godown at Jorethang discovered that the seals on the two trucks (WGY-8833 and WGY-2858 plying under SNT and shipping STCS cement) were tampered with. Further investigation by this observant storekeeper revealed that each sack of cement in the truck was lighter by 10 kgs. He refused to

accept the consignment and the two truck drivers allegedly fled.

The chain of communication saw the incident get reported to the STCS' Siliguri handling contractor Badri Narayan Shah, on to the Transport Department which had commissioned the two trucks.

Joint Secretary, SNT, Raj Vikram Gurung, told NOW! that the moment he received these reports he submitted a letter to the Motor Vehicles Department suggesting the cancellation of the counter signature permits of the two vehicles. He also added that the Department has withheld the Rs. 50,000 payment due to the owners of the two trucks and

added that STCS would be compensated for its losses.

Karma Tempo Bhutia, Managing Director, STCS, while commenting on the incident, insisted that this was the first time that STCS supplies have been found to be tampered with. "We cannot take any action against the accused as the vehicles were plying under SNT and it is SNT's "headache" not ours," he said.

"Throughout Sikkim it is only STCS that carries sealed cement and we have been functioning well enough. This is the first such incident and we shall see to it that it does not happen again," he assured.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Given the number changes incorporated in the last issue of NOW!, this letter should have come earlier. We, however, dithered on the announcement since we were still experimenting with a new size and new press. Although the logistics were in place, there were still factors beyond our control which could have caused glitches. So we waited till the hard-copy had rolled off and we knew what we were getting into. Now, we are convinced and hence this letter.

In case you haven't already noticed, we have resized NOW! - A decision forced both by economics as well as technology. The new printing we have opted for can support only this size and this new printing had to be adopted because the economics of running a paper demanded that we started getting more practical with our budgets. Also, the ever increasing print-run made it near impossible for us to continue with the existing setup.

Now that the printline has changed, we would also like to thank the management and staff at Baba Offset for all the nights they stayed awake just so that NOW! could hit the stands on time. They accomplished impossible tasks with their machine and labour and for that we shall always remain grateful. Here, we would also like to thank our readers for supporting the paper since its inception and forcing this change almost six months in advance. We hadn't anticipated our circulation to jump so high so fast. We hope you continue to patronise us....

NOW! pix

**HAVE DEMANDS, WILL
GET THEM HEARD**

GHERAO!

UD&HD AT THE RECEIVING END OF SOME LALL BAZAAR SPITE

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: All the dithering finally spilled over to the corridors of the Urban Development & Housing Department's corridors on November 11 when a 500-strong mob of Lall Bazaar traders gheraoed the Secretary's office and stormed in with a lawyer in tow to get their demands heard. The "gherao", explain members of the "Lal Bazar Traders Association", was forced because eviction notices had been served even though many of their "concerns" had not yet been addressed.

Apparently, a UD&HD eviction notice (dated November 2) served to Lall Bazaar traders ordered them to vacate the premises and shift into the stalls provided at Old Children's Park Taxi Stand by November 16. The traders are insistent that they will not move until some of their demands are met. A Press communique signed by the Association's Secretary alleges that UD&HD was not "taking up" the matter of settling the "disputes and differences" over the relocation, thus leaving them with no alternative but to agitate.

And agitate they did. At around 1:30 PM on Monday, the traders gheraoed the Department's office here at Hospital Dara before storming into the Secretary, LB Rai's office to force a negotiation. The agitated traders were in a foul mood with even their legal counsel, KL Lohia, defending the forceful entry. "I can't understand why the Department is refusing to accept their representation? They are a registered body and it is their legal right to submit a representation outlining their demands," he told NOW!

The first contentious issue is the date for vacating the premises. The traders feel that November 16 is too soon. They have reportedly demanded that the date be shifted to January 15 next year. This, obviously is not acceptable to the Department. Officials point out that the Lall Bazaar Beautification Project has already been delayed enough. The project, which should have started in June this year is yet to take off. The Secretary, after consultation with National Building Construction Corporation, which will be executing the project, has offered to shift the eviction date by a week. Sources at the Department reveal that NBCC has been convinced to start work on November 25 and add that it would be difficult to postpone the project any further. The representation forced on the Secretary sees the November 16 deadline as "arbitrary" and "illegal". How a week's extension will convince them otherwise remains to be seen.

While the demand for a written agreement outlining the vacation, temporary shifting and subsequent relocation in the



The Lall Bazaar mob outside the UD&HD Secy's office [top] while their legal counsel argues his case [middle] to a pensive Secretary [above]

new complex is agreeable to the Department, it is the insistence on fixing the new rents in advance which could stonewall the negotiations. While the traders want the rents for shops in the multi-storeyed complex fixed in advance, the Department insists that this is not possible owing to the huge scale of the project and the vagaries of time and inflation. The Department has, however, offered to decide the rent structure only after consultation with the Association.

A UD&HD official while responding to the example of fixation of rents in advance for shopkeepers at Fancy Market cited by the traders said: "It is not fair to compare the two. First of all the stalls at Fancy Market were not even proper shops. They were just small floor-spaces and then the project was much smaller. The plans for Lall Bazaar are much larger,

it is not possible to settle the rent in advance."

The legal counsel for the hawkers, however, insisted that the rent could be worked out if the Department really desired it. This one point could become the spanner which jeopardises the entire Rs. 16 crore project.

Other demands like settling the floor-space and providing proper infrastructure at the temporary complex are less contentious, but what falls in the grey area is the settlement with the hawkers. The traders have demanded that even the hawkers be accommodated in the temporary site as well as in the new complex. Whether there will be space for them in either of the two complexes is not yet clear.

As for the temporary accommodation at Old Children's Park Taxi Stand which could be where the Lall Bazaar traders will find themselves for the next 3-4 years, an irate set of ladies at the gherao told NOW! that the shop-space there was not good enough. "The shops do not even have shutters or storage space and we are expected to shift there so soon," they complain.

As things stand, the Department has agreed to shift the date for eviction by a week. During this period, UD&HD will forward the representation made by the traders to the "Government," which in turn will decide on the matter in consultation with the Department. At the time of going to print, no fresh developments had taken place in this regard.

While the negotiations over the eviction continue, most officials at UD&HD are not too happy with the manner in which the traders chose to be heard. "Their behaviour was not at all welcome. We have been discussing the matter with them, but they keep coming up with a new demand every time. First, they all wanted to move together, then they wanted assurances that they will get shops in the new complex and now this insistence on fixing the rent in advance," complained a senior UD&HD official. When it comes to behaviour, even the traders are not too happy with the way they have been treated. On their Friday meeting with the Secretary prior to the "drastic" measures they adopted on Monday, a Lall Bazaar lady said: "We were spoken to rudely and literally booted out of the office even though the Minister had made many assurances to us."

While the representation made by the traders claims that they do not wish to "hamper" the "developmental works" of UD&HD or the Government, it also passes on a not so veiled threat of continuing with their agitation "for an indefinite period" if the Department continues to avoid addressing the issues at stake. Things, as they say, are only just hotting up. Better stock up on the supplies because the traders have already hinted at a Lall Bazaar bandh in protest against the

EVICTON DEADLINE SHIFTED BY A WEEK TO NOV 23, FOR NOW

DELHI CHALO

CM's Delhi visit gets Sikkim a 10-seater chopper and assurances on alternate highway

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling has once again urged the Central government to work out a "permanent" solution to the problems plaguing the National Highway 31A.

Mr. Chamling, who was in New Delhi recently, met the Deputy Prime Minister, LK Advani and apprised him of the difficulties faced by Sikkim in the event of the frequent bandhs called in the neighbouring region during which the National Highway 31A is forced to remain closed to traffic. The CM was accompanied by his Political Advisor, BB Gooroong, and Lok Sabha MP, Bhim Dahal.

Mr. Chamling reportedly told Mr. Advani that Sikkim was enduring "untold and unnecessary hardships" due to the frequent bandhs in the Darjeeling hills which invariably smothered traffic on Sikkim's "only" road-link to the rest of the country.

So acute has this problem been for Sikkim, that the Government at one stage was even considering the possibility of digging a tunnel

from under the Kalimpong subdivision to avoid the bandhs.

Mr. Advani has "promised" to look into the matter soon.

During the meeting, informs an official release, the Chief Minister also forwarded Sikkim's request for a 10-seater helicopter for the heli-service in place of the existing five-seater helicopter. This demand was reportedly placed in view of the growing tourism as also the frequent bandhs and landslides along the NH31A. Here, Mr. Advani offered much more than just a patient hearing. He is reported to have assured that the requisite directions would be issued immediately to Pawan Hans so that Sikkim was allocated a 10-seater helicopter at the earliest.

During the meeting, Mr., Chamling also submitted a detailed memorandum containing various demands of the State to the Deputy PM.

Mr. Chamling also met the Union Defence Minister, George Fernandez during his Delhi visit. The two leaders reportedly discussed the construction of helipads at Tsomgo and Lachung on Army land. They also deliberated on the option of acquiring private land for the

helipads. Mr. Fernandez has, however, assured to take requisite action in this matter and assured to give clearance for the construction of the helipads.

What is perhaps of more import for the Sikkimese is the CM's request that the Union Defence Minister explore the possibility of starting an exclusive Himalayan Regiment in the Army comprising of people from all the Himalayan States.

During his visit, the Chief Minister also called on the Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat and apprised him about the general socio-economic scenario and the various developmental activities of the State.

Mr. Chamling assured the Vice-President that his government was "working sincerely towards the development and progress of the State, and focusing on exploring the tourism, hydropower, horticulture and handicrafts potentials of the State, while laying emphasis on the development of service sectors."

An official Press release informs that the Deputy Prime Minister accepted Mr. Chamling's invitation to visit the State sometime in April 2003.

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ANOTHER OFFER FOR FRUIT PRESERVATION FACTORY

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Col. Vinod Marwaha, President, Indian Institute of e-Tourism Management, Pune, reportedly approached the Chief

Minister, Pawan Chamling, during the later's Delhi visit with the request for a long term lease of the Fruit Preservation Factory at Singtam. This, the Col. believed could result in improvement of the

quality of fruit-based products. Col. Marwaha has also offered assistance in encouraging local entrepreneurs set up ancillary units for manufacturing chocolates, biscuits, confectionary items and herbal cosmetics.

Formal inclusion still awaited, NE CMs to confer in Sikkim

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Conference of the Chief Ministers of the North Eastern States is likely to be held here in Gangtok in April 2003.

Union Minister for Disinvestment and Development of North Eastern Region (DONER), Arun Shouries, told this to the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling in New Delhi recently.

During the meeting, Mr. Chamling sought the assistance of the

Minister for an early "formal" inclusion of Sikkim in the North Eastern Council, and setting up a separate University for the State and the restoration of all medical seats quota in the Central pool for the State.

Mr. Chamling said that the State government was fully committed to disinvestment of public sector units and the need to highlight the role of the government as a facilitator.

The CM also made a request for an early consideration of the schemes under the Rural Water Sup-

ply and Road sector for the State.

Mr. Shourie said that some of the schemes proposed under Non-Lapsable Central Pool Resources would be taken up for consideration in the next meeting of the screening committee, which will be held on November 24, 2002. The issues of a separate University for the State and the restoration of all medical seats quota in the Central pool for the State would be then taken up by the Human Resources Development and Health Ministries, respectively, he said.

SIKKIM, MOST DEVELOPED OF NE STATES: KALAM

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling called on the President, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on November 6.

During the meeting, Dr. Kalam evinced keen interest in Sikkim's developmental activities, its cultural heritage, bio-diversity reserves and the hydro-power potential of the State. The President congratulated the Chief Minister for maintaining peace in the State and keeping the State clean and

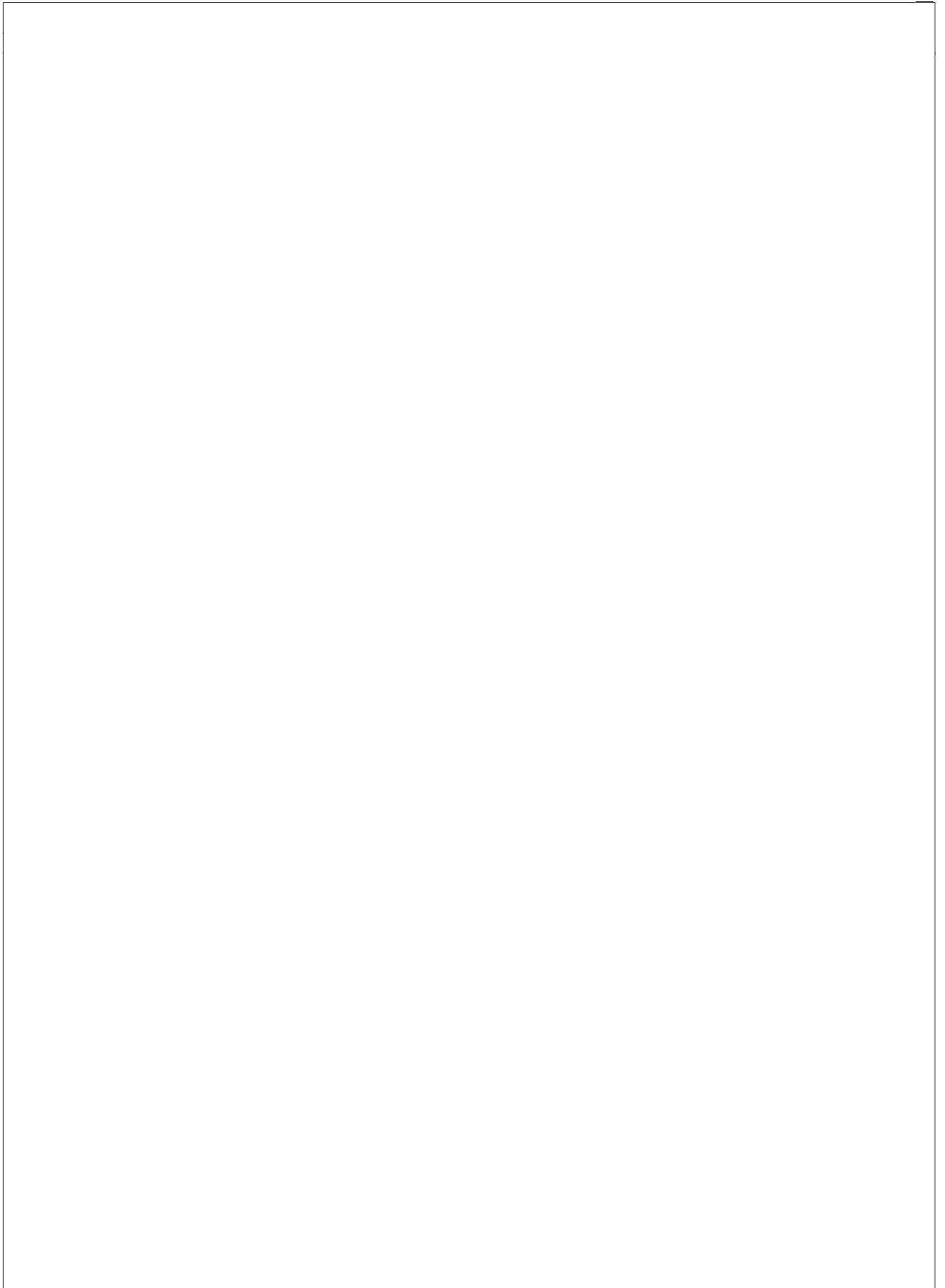
pollution-free. Dr. Kalam said that Sikkim was the most developed State in the North Eastern region.

Thanking the President for his "positive and encouraging words," Mr. Chamling apprised him about the various welfare-oriented and pro-poor policies of the State government. He said that his government was laying emphasis on income generating activities, the service sector and optimum utilisation of tourism and hydro-power potential.

Mr. Chamling told the President that while "moving surely but cautiously" on the path of planned

development, the people of Sikkim were emotionally integrated with the rest of the country and were committed to the principles of peace and tranquillity.

While accepting the invitation of the Chief Minister to visit the Sikkim sometime between December 2002-April 2003, the President has expressed a desire to visit the villages of the State and to interact with the farmers and the School children. He also evinced interest in seeing the areas under ginger and cardamom cultivation and medicinal plants in their natural habitat.



NOW!

SIKKIM MATTERS

Flogging Corruption, Again

Corruption is the use of public office for private gain. The prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 defines bribery as: a public servant taking gratification other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act; a public servant obtaining a valuable thing, without consideration from the person concerned in proceeding or the business transacted by such a public servant; and criminal misconduct.

As in India, in Sikkim too corruption has become the most effective short cut in the journey from rags to riches. A State where industrialization is negligible, where trade and commerce does not generate enough employment or income, corruption has turned out to be the least risky route to social influence and affluence. Lack of private enterprise has led those on a treasure hunt to the plunder of the State treasury. It's actually a catch 22 situation. If the State was to pull away from its established role as the largest consumer of services (by way of contracts and supplies), then there would be no commerce and if it is to continue, then so does the plunder. What we should bear in mind is that it is not just the bureaucrat-politician combine which is corrupt. Also in the nexus are private people. From the truck driver who siphoned away 10 kilos of cement from each bag he was ferrying to the supplier who inflates his invoice and short-supplies on the order, are all guilty of plundering the State treasury. Agreed, there is a much bigger game afoot in bigger projects which we do not even hear of, but the fact remains that the plunder goes on at every level. Every Sikkimese who uses his contacts to win the award of some GI sheets for his/her greenhouse by getting enumerated in the Below Poverty Line list is guilty of contributing to the corpus of corruption. In doing so he/she also loses the right to protest against corruption unless willing to also share the punishment. It goes without saying that corruption cannot survive without political patronage, but blaming the politicians will not suffice. As the electorate which made them powerful enough to sidestep the rules, it is our responsibility to keep them honest. No politician will continue being corrupt if his voters send out a clear signal that they will not tolerate it. Okay, maybe they won't turn honest overnight, but will at least tone down the flamboyance with which ill-gotten gains are flaunted at present. Even that would be beginning. But it is not really the politicians who need to be reined in, it is the bureaucrats. Just look around, you will find many not-so-well-to-do former politicians, but not a single former bureaucrat who is not still living lavishly. We cannot control the bureaucracy directly, but can voice ourselves through our elected leaders. It is time the voice was heard.



ED-SPACE

SKY'S THE LIMIT

What is the one common factor between Jaguars and MiG-21s?

Ans: They both crash over Indian skies - with the air corridor overlooking Ambala slowly becoming uncannily synonymous with such recurrences.

Last week, yet another fighter airplane of the Indian Air Force crashed killing the pilot as well six locals in the town of Ambala in Punjab. A total of 14 IAF aircraft have crashed so far this year, but it has not rung alarm bells because the figure is less than the average of 20-22 recorded every year over the last half-decade. Though it is the MiG-21s, which have an edge over its flying colleague as far as crash rates are concerned inquiries reveal that so far, 32 jaguars have crashed since their induction. Over 90 air force aircraft have crashed in the last six years killing 35 pilots and causing a loss of over Rs. 900 crore to the government.

Reports suggest that the number of crashes though progressively decreasing - during the 80's the annual average was 40 - point to an ageing fleet. The IAF inventory basically comprises aircrafts which were built on technology of the 50's and 60's. A more serious issue - if true - is the allegations of expired spares finding their way into the body of the aircraft. There were reports earlier this year suggesting that HAL -

DEEP FOCUS

RANJIT SINGH

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited - acquires expired spares from CIS countries, which come at a cheap rate. This is exactly what was stated by the top boss of the largest Russian defence export outfit. When asked by Indian correspondents in Moscow as to why the MiGs are crashing every other day in India, he blamed India for buying "expired, forged, old, substandard and low quality" spare parts from CIS countries at low prices, fully aware of the dangers inherent in this dubious transaction.

A senior Indian diplomat was snubbed by the chief of Russia's arms exporting monopoly company, Rosoboronexport, when he tried to question the legitimacy of Russian claims that sub-standard spares from third countries could have caused the series of MiG-21 crashes. In his words "...I cannot understand the logic behind your system of tenders. If you know that there is only one plant in Russia manufacturing a particular spare, how can you invite tenders from others? Naturally others can only supply re-conditioned old

spares at a cheaper price than the manufacturer."

The former Soviet republics have huge surplus stocks of Mig-21 spares in their territory though the Soviet Air Force had decommissioned these fighters about three decades ago.

So is it the "black and grey zone" of dubious arms trade which is making our warrior pigeons fall from the sky, especially the MiG-21s? Since this revelation is coming straight from the horse's mouth, there must be some truth in it. The silence of the defence establishment on this issue gives one the uncanny feeling that the twilight zone of arms trade in the post Soviet CIS countries is too dark to fly in. Clearly, if there is some hanky-panky going on, the defence ministry and the air force have a lot of explaining to do.

In the last decade India has lost as many as 80 pilots and 185 aircrafts. Our young pilots are dying while the air force keeps floating clichéd explanations - bird hits, bad training, design deficiency, engine flame-out etc. In the latest case low high tension wires and dangerously high rooftops near the landing approach way have been suggested as the possible cause of the crash. If this is so, dubious arms deals or not, clumsy flight management and planning on the part of the IAF experts is as heinous a crime.

The dependency on drugs is most likely the result of experimenting, a kind of rites of passage, a coming of age ritual, but without our openness and participation, drug addiction could get more severe and violent - that would be damnation...

Let it be clear from the onset that it is not those who abuse drugs who are damned, it is those others who refuse the addict corrective help that need worry about damnation.

Let it also be clear that this article does not condone drug abuse. What it attempts to do is create an openness in which this malady can be discussed and perhaps also dealt with.

This is not an over wrought brain spelling out alarms, this is what just has to be done. We have been in the habit of ignoring, neglecting, dismissing and suppressing any conversation on, or about the abuse of drugs for long. We might have talked about it at seminars and at debates or even at social gatherings, where we have been so eloquently against the abuse of drugs that others have admired us, but that is not enough. We hardly ever speak of "it" to

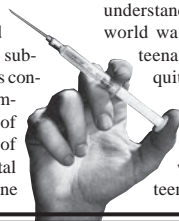
OF DRUGS & DAMNATION

those who need to listen.

Recently this weekly reported on a number of cases relating to substance abuse. These are very serious considerations: one death due to thrombosis brought on by improper use of intravenous syringes; three cases of amputations at the Gangtok hospital in the last six months due to gangrene gone bad. It has been said that there are likely to be more cases of similar amputations which are not recorded; innumerable cases relating to overdose, which often get recorded and treated as cases of poisoning. There have been unreported deaths due to an overdose as well.

Serious considerations indeed. But to be considerate, one cannot stop at a strong feeling of sympathy for the victims, nor vehement contempt.

Moreover the victims comprise the most vulnerable age group of the society; our teenagers. We've been teenagers ourselves and know how impressionable and prone to mis-



understanding this age group can be. But our world was a wee bit simpler than that the teenager confronts nowadays. They are, quite literally, in the full blast of the times, having to cope with all complexities that advanced technologies have brought about along with the usual complexes of the teenager. And so they require all the more concern.

The responsibility is hugely ours. The youngsters are dealing with pressures we

know about, therefore we must help them cope. Covering up for them, like the mother who insisted that her child had not consumed alcohol even though her son was reeking of it in school, is no help. As parents we cannot indulge the child's every whim and then blame the school authorities when the child shows deviant behaviour. Neither does it pay to belt the child. It will also never help to keep worrying as to where you went wrong with the child's upbringing. When the child is in the habit of abusing drugs the child needs

to be treated. The child needs professional help, that is all.

But parents rarely wish to admit this simple fact. It reminds one of the days of yore when insanity was similarly treated. Families went through all kinds of charades to keep the secret; insanity was a curse, a visitation of the devil, an unspeakable fear, and because of this innumerable individuals languished tied to their beds at home. Addiction to drugs is a malady, an illness, a little more severe than the flu. Yes, but for that you have to first accept that your child needs help. Many parents stop there. They are afraid of what others might say; a rehabilitation centre is a stigma; the neighbour will sneer!

What every neighbour needs to understand is the very real threat that the next (god forbid) will be their child. You see, we are no longer speaking of drugs which are very expensive or difficult to procure. Most addicts have grown dependent on prescription drugs, which are neither too expensive nor difficult to come by.

The dependency on drugs is most likely the result of experimenting, a kind of rites of passage, a coming of age ritual, but without our openness and participation, drug addiction could get more severe and violent—that would be damnation. □

VISITORS GALLERY

PARVEEN NEGI

“The emphasis will be on better training”

SIKKIM'S FIRST “LOCAL” DGP ON HIS PRIORITIES

TW Tenzing, IPS, became the first Sikkimese to hold the rank of Director General of Police in the State when he took over from Dr. RK Handa, IPS on November 1, 2002.

Born in 1945, Mr. Tenzing is a 1972 batch of IPS and first held the post of Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime, from 1972 to 1978. He was appointed the ADGP of Sikkim in 1999. SARIKAH ATREYA spoke to him about his service thus far and his plans for Sikkim Police. Excerpts:

How does it feel to become the first Sikkimese DGP?

It feels great. I am very grateful to the State government and in particular to the Chief Minister, Mr. Pawan Chamling for showing such a lot of faith and confidence in me.

What initiatives for the force can we expect during your tenure as the DGP?

Iwant to go in for modernisation of the force and focus on the training of our personnel. I am specially interested in specialised training of the officers-in-charge of the Police Stations for they are

the most important people. Also, it is imperative that peace and law and order of the State, for which it is widely known and talked about, be maintained at all costs. I would like to keep Sikkim a crime-free State.

Sir, don't you think that because of this peaceful nature and crime-free status of the State, it is in fact making our force laid-back in their approach towards policing?

That's exactly what I was referring to earlier when I said that the force should be trained to meet any eventuality. None of us should take the peaceful status for granted. One should take into consideration what is happening around the world and prepare ourselves accordingly. We are fully aware of the terrorist activities in our country and around the world. We must not overlook the growing terrorist activities in the region and in our neighbourhood, in North Bengal and in Nepal. Sikkim's peace and tranquillity could become an easy prey for the rebels active in our neighbourhood seeking a safe ha-

ven. We are not immune. That is why I am laying such a lot of emphasis on training of my force, particularly of the Inspectors, who are the officers-in-charge of the Police Stations and are in direct contact with the people at the lowest level. I feel that they should be exposed to such specialised training. I want them to go for training outside Sikkim. The SIs and the constables should be sensitized in all aspects of policing so that if tomorrow, God forbid, a situation arises in the State, they should be mentally and physically prepared to handle it effectively. We should be prepared to take up the challenge head-on.

How do you rate the Sikkim Police personnel as far as training and expertise go?

We are good and trained fairly well, but I would still like to lay more emphasis on specialized training, like I said earlier. The Officers should go beyond Sikkim and attend seminars, workshops and training camps. We would want to invite experts in related fields to come to Sikkim and deliver lectures to our personnel as well in the future.

What image of the Police do you think the people of Sikkim have? Do you think that Sikkim Police comes across as people-friendly?

Ithink the people of Sikkim have a very good image of the Police. As far as friendliness goes, I think the way people, especially those who come from outside, regard our Police as extremely helpful and cooperative says it all. The moment they enter the State at Rangpo, they are immediately able to feel the presence, the friendliness of the Sikkim Police and see for themselves the contrast between those on the other side of the border. The tourists have an excellent opinion of the Police here.

Do you think this helps in promoting tourism?



Of course it does. I have told my officers that since tourism has been accorded top priority by the State government, the Police Department also has a major role to play. We are closely working with the Departments of Tourism and Home in making sure that the tourists coming to Sikkim are well looked after and go back with an excellent opinion of the State.

We have this perpetual problem with the National Highway 31A during the bandhs in the Darjeeling Hills. How would you like to tackle this problem?

This is a very important question and major cause for concern to us. Like in the past, my predecessor, Mr. Handa had met his counterparts in DGHC and sought some kind of reprieve for Sikkim during the bandhs called there. Through the efforts of Mr. Handa, we were able to get some cooperation from them and during the last strike called, they allowed

-turn to pg 11

COMMUNALISM IS A SAFFRON DISEASE

The VHP has started crying wolf in Sikkim too. Should we pay heed?

So there we have it. "...a substantial growth of Christian and Muslim population in Sikkim... could be a great danger for the existence of 'tolerant Hindu-Buddhist' populace in the state... conversion dangerous for Sikkim..."

Wonder why he didn't distribute leaflets with directions for his flock of trident-bearing scorpions on devious methods to isolate the two concerned religious communities a la Gujarat. Or infiltrate the state with lathi bearing "knickerwallahs" to neutralize the self-inflicted communal paranoia.

Just when we thought that our "off-the-map" State was also off the communal map, we see our contours being redrawn to suit the diabolical machinations of "concerned" well, let's call them trishul donors. The biggest donor of them all lately posed a veiled proposal masquerading as an acute concern for the demographic balance of the State. Yes, we are all in the dark about "trishul donors" and ditto

regarding the biggest donor among them. Yet, they are hell bent on butting their saffron butts in a place too tiny for peace to get a breather. The saffron brigade could just as well be akin to a fire brigade using orange juice to douse a flame gone wild and as visible as the colour saffron in the rainbow to the average Sikkimese. And for those who have heard of the lunatic fringe - we in the fringes of the mainstream couldn't be touched by those saffron smeared thoughts.

The recent reported remarks of Acharya Giriraj Kishore, Vice-President, Vishva Hindu Parishad while he was in Gangtok last week regarding the threat to native Sikkimese posed by the growing Christian and Muslim population sort of reflects on himself and his flock. They feed on paranoia, spreading delusions of a foreign invasion and the desire to paint the entire gloriously variegated country of India in one monotonous shade. According to

him, Sikkim needs an anti-conversion law because "...Christian and Muslim population in Sikkim have gone up by 91.2 and 18.76 per cent respectively in the last decade. According to 1981-91 census, Hindu population in Sikkim was 78.37, Buddhist 27.15, Christians 3.3 and Muslims 0.9 per cent." And now according to him "...the growth rate of Hindus stands at 30.7, that of Buddhists 21.41, Christians 91.2 and Muslims 18.76 per cent." This "substantial growth," he said, expressing due surprise and adequate worry, is worrisome.

Well, so what. One man's worry is another's curry. One can't think of a better response to the deranged utterances coming from a person trained in the theatre of histrionics. We can't afford to let it force itself into a national pastime and it is important to remember here that it is ultimately we who will decide the issue. But to give the devil his due - worry we should. About *when* and *if* the actual population of the "ominous" Christians and equally "ominous" Muslims will ever equal that of Hindus and Buddhists in the state. It's like this - if in the last decade the

population of Christians numbered 100 and today they number 200, well, that's a 100 per cent increase in their number! So, who's complaining? And if any one is then six *mea culpas* to him. Talking in averages and percentages can be very misleading.

We are a democratic people living and believing in a democratic way of existence. There are no laws regulating population growth and none denying anyone the right to propagate his lineage and we don't need one either. Even if the above-presented statistics were truly alarming, all we can do is envy the wanton concupiscence of the indicted communities and seek to emulate them. What we don't need in Sikkim is infectious hysteria about being engulfed by skullcaps and rosaries. What we don't need is some self-authorized, empowered by proxy, extra-constitutional entity seeking to engender a fascist hue called saffron.

The message is - ignorance of coloured truths could indeed be bliss and so let's preserve our naivety and innocence however undue and unwarranted.

- OTIS

Contradicting reports of breakthrough ripple through fluid political scenario

KALIMPONG: Newsitems published in the past 2-3 days in local and national dailies reporting the arrest of one Nar Bahadur Gurung, alias Narey Gurung, a prime suspect in the murder of CK Pradhan, have created confusion among the locals. Not just the masses, but even the political circles have been confounded by the contradicting reports.

While several dailies have quoted "confirmed official sources" to claim that Narey Gurung was arrested from the Jhapa district of Nepal, local police authorities deny the reports while stating that Narey Gurung has neither been traced nor arrested thus far. They, however, assure of an arrest within a week.

CK loyalists are expecting a vital breakthrough with the arrest of the suspected murderer. The arrest of Narey Gurung should provide more leads on who masterminded the assassination, they believe. Narey Gurung, the suspect, hails from 24 No. Gidabling-Sinji constituency of the DGHC which is presently represented by Tshering Sherpa as Councillor. According to the villagers of Sinji area, Narey, is employed with the Department of Veterinary Services under DGHC on ad-hoc basis and has a track-record of run-ins with the law.

Even as the murder mystery continues to baffle, some of the non-GNLF leaders, CK loyalists, local intellectuals and others are making efforts to band

together and pose a political challenge to GNLF's stranglehold on the local political scene. In this connection, on the initiative of Ajoy Dahal and Pratap Khati, this group reportedly met at Jagannath Dharamshala on November 9 to work out a new alignment. The meeting, however, could not reach a fruitful decision.

Sources suggest that CK loyalists and dissident GNLF elements have decided to launch a political outfit in the name of GNLF(R), which, according to them, was the dream of the slain leader. They are yet to decide on a date to formally announce the new political entity in the Hills, it is learnt.

(Kaakh)

SPORTS AND FAITH COMBINE IN LOWER DZONGU MELA

a NOW REPORT

DIKCHU: A two-week long mela was organized at Gnon-Sangdong Lower Dzongu, North Sikkim by the Games and Sports Committee of Gnon Sangdong village, recently.

This mela is an annual event, during which prayers are offered to the local deities of the village, the two secret hills located near the vil-

lage - the "Tonglok Chu" and the "Namjong Chu."

This year's annual event, which usually starts in September, was postponed due to the Panchayat elections.

During the mela, the Games and Sports Committee organized football and volleyball tournaments with cash prizes for the winners. A total of 17 teams took part in the football tournament, while 10 teams participated in the volleyball tournament,

the finals of which were held on November 1. Hee-Gyathang Secondary School won the football title beating Dikchu Forest team 4-2. The volleyball title was won by the Dikchu Youth Welfare Association, which beat the host team.

The same day, Gnon-Sangdong Junior High School held its annual sports and annual distribution day. The children of the School presented a colourful cultural programme.

Darj Lepchas demand Primitive Tribe status

KALIMPONG: Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Fagga Singh Kulesti, expressed concern over the non-utilization of Rs. 40 crores by the WB government even though the same had been sanctioned by the Centre for the welfare of Lepcha community in West Bengal. He also assured the Lepchas to look into their long-standing demands.

Kulesti was addressing a gathering of some 3,000 Lepchas from remote areas of Kalimpong and Darjeeling, assembled here to attend the Lepcha Adivasi Sammelan organised at Lepcha Museum complex on November 9 by the Lepcha Association.

The Lepchas of Darjeeling submitted four memoranda to the Minister demanding inclusion of the Lepchas of Darjeeling in the list of Primitive Tribals.

Apart from this, the Association under the Presidentship of Ren DT Tamsang demanded that the Lepcha language be introduced in the schools and colleges of Darjeeling district; a grant-in-aid to the tune of Rs. 2.45 lakh be sanctioned annually to organize Lepcha cultural festivals throughout the year and the establishment of a cultural unit for preservation of Lepcha folk songs, drama and dance. The demands also included



white collar job-reservation for Lepchas, prevention of alienation of Lepcha land and reservation of seats in the Panchayats, State Assembly, Parliament and DGHC for Lepchas.

Birsa Tirkey, President of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad, West Bengal Branch and Chief Patron of Lepcha Association said in his speech that the Lepchas must be given reservation in the DGHC seats since the reservation has been guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

Somji Bhai Damor, Ex-MP and Central President of ABAPV announced that there was no need for the Lepchas of Darjeeling to approach the

West Bengal Government with a begging bowl. "You are the indigenous tribe of the Darjeeling Hills, the State is duty-bound to listen to your demands and grant them," he said.

The members of Lepcha association also offered traditional Lepcha caps, knives and bags to the dignitaries and staged a traditional cultural programme for them.

Later in the evening, the Union Minister of State also addressed a press conference at the Circuit House. The Minister also received memoranda from the Gurung, Rai, Tamang and other communities in connection with their respective demands.

LETTERS

THE PROFIT MARGINS IN GANGTOK

Coming straight to the point here goes:

It may seem alright to the person justifying purchasing of mobile phones in Gangtok comparatively to Siliguri (and even though after sales is an important factor) the margin for profit in Gangtok is considerably high. And this is not just in the case of mobile phones but in many other products as well. Transport charges and taxes are the weak reasons often given to the gullible and the ever-ready, which make up most of Gangtok's consumers. But when the profit margin is such that you can actually go to Siliguri, buy your mobile phone, stay overnight at a reasonable hotel and come back within that profit margin on only one

product then it becomes something to think about. The matter is not about you being "able" to pay or not as many people seem to believe. In a wider perspective, you are actually starting a very serious and negative trend where a product is sold at a very unreasonable and ridiculous profit margin where only the consumer is the loser. I would urge the people of Gangtok to please try and keep a check on these matters since not everybody can afford these lavish and unnecessary profit margins. In these times of awareness and multiple choices, a consumer can do so and hence prevent further daylight robberies. I'm sure NOW! will convey this message.

carmasutra, recvd on email

ON A HIGH

Three known amputations in the past few months due to infection of drugs - if what you say is true, the problem is indeed reaching alarming proportions. Using painkillers and various other drugs to get a high is common now, but don't these people realise the grave bodily harm that can come to them. Articles like these will make people aware about the seriousness of the problem. Please continue writing more on social problems.

T. Adhikari

COLLECTIVE WAR ON DRUGS

The problem of drug addiction needs to be seen in a holistic manner instead of treating it them as outcasts of society. If a young person starts taking these addictive substances, it means he is suffering from various psychological problems arising from parents behaviour, school atmosphere and society at large. It cannot be seen in isolation. Drug addiction is not the problem of the individual and his family alone. Every addict is part of a

community and the whole community has to work together to address this problem.

S. Pradhan, Development Area

SIZE WISE

I can't decide whether I like the old size better or this one. I guess it will take a bit getting used to. But the printing quality has certainly improved. Twenty-four pages of news and articles for Rs. 5 is too good. I hope you don't plan to increase your price now. When your paper people start changing things around, the next step is always an increase. As it is you have captured the market. Please keep it up.

Karma T, Deorali

COMEON!?!?

I was shocked to see that you people are giving chicken clear soup a prize for Best Recipe. Are you so starved of contributors or dishes? In that case, I'm sending my special recipe for a dish called Bread Ala carte. Take bread, put leftover vegetables on top. Eat. Can I get my winner's coupon by post?

Sonamit, 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**

DEAR STUDENTS

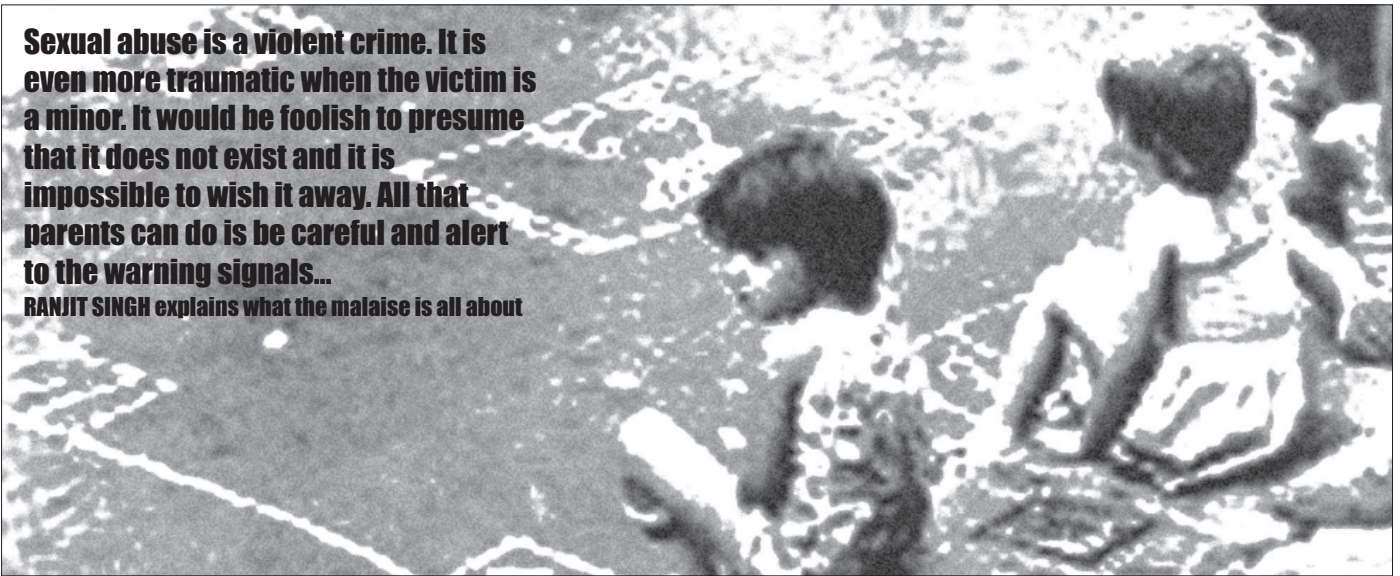
ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE BOARD EXAMS???

CRASH COURSE for STD X & XII
DURATION: THREE MONTHS with
GOOD HOSTEL FACILITIES at
Nimtar Baptist School (No.32),
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For further details contact:
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Sexual abuse is a violent crime. It is even more traumatic when the victim is a minor. It would be foolish to presume that it does not exist and it is impossible to wish it away. All that parents can do is be careful and alert to the warning signals...

RANJIT SINGH explains what the malaise is all about



PREYING ON CHILDREN

Last week a report in NOW! carried the plight of a girl, 12 years of age, who had been sexually assaulted. She worked as a maidservant, is mentally challenged and was forced to engage in sexual intercourse by her employer. A few weeks earlier in a similar incident a minor was allegedly raped by a lottery pedlar in Chandmari while she was alone at home. The offenders in both cases have been apprehended and are in custody.

It is not an issue with NOW! to present these incidents as the first whiffs of a trend. What we attempt to do here is to broach the uncomfortable subject of child abuse and molestation. Though such reported incidents in our State can be counted in one's fingertips, it is imperative we wake up to the reality of child sexual abuse as well as the causes of such abnormal sexual preferences. Implicit in this statement is the fact that there may well be many more such cases which go unreported due to various reasons. Anyone reading the national dailies will realize how grave this issue is – hardly a day passes without a report of a minor being sexually assaulted by an adult.

According to Dr. IL Sharma, the chief Psychiatrist at STNM, the couple of reported cases may just be the tip of the iceberg. Strictly speaking he says, "Sexual abuse of a human being who is under 13 years of age is considered an act of paedophilia." And a person who commits paedophilia is known as a paedophile.

So who exactly is a paedophile? What sort of a person will indulge in abusing harmless, innocent children? What makes him what he is?

Dr. Sharma throws some light on the matter: "The act has its source in personality problems of an individual. He could be an antisocial or possess a borderline personality." Such people, he says, feel little or no remorse or guilt. They in fact derive pleasure in inflicting pain on others. "It is very difficult to distinguish them from normal people as they do behave normally where

everything else is concerned," he says. And that's why potential victims will not be aware of the danger around them.

"In some cases such people become so because they have been subjected to similar abuse when younger which has left a deep scar on their psyche," says the doctor. And the resulting emotion is that of avenging the same.

The perversion is also related to sadism as they derive pleasure in harming others. And that someone has to be some weaker who will not or cannot retaliate. More often than not, such soft targets happen to be children. A mentally retarded minor makes for an even softer target. It is his way of paying back society. "In some cases the perpetrator of the offence may be a psychotic but usually he is a sexual pervert," says Dr. Sharma. This is an important distinction to be made, as the law is usually lenient to a mentally deranged person.

According to Dr. Sharma such deviant sexual behaviour is common in society. In his opinion, the reason why we hear of fewer cases is because people do not come out into the open with it. This is a critical issue, which needs to be addressed immediately. Playing dubious about the incident can decide the future social tendency of the victim. A victim not proffered for treatment can develop the same unnatural instincts as his or her predator. So how do you recognize the symptoms of maltreatment? This is an important question, as many minors may not even realize they have been violated. "The child will become a sort of recluse and keep to itself or will only cling to its parents. Its natural instincts – to play etc – will suddenly vanish and in its place will evolve a tendency to heavy depression. In future this child of trauma will be a major case for psychotic illness and depression," says Dr. Sharma.

People usually keep mum about such incidents due to the fear of shame or they do not know whom to approach or consult. But it is vital that the victims are given psychiatric treatment and counselling. This can only happen when the parents shed their inhibitions and seek help.

RECOGNIZING CHILD SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Different types of sexual offenders:

- A stranger who abducts children for sexual reasons - less than 5% of perpetrators
- An acquaintance, trusted member of society, or family friend - majority of abusers - most are men but 15-20% are females.
- A teenager - 40 % of offenders are adolescents (usually included in above group)
- An older child - usually one who has been sexually abused (reactive behavior)
- A child who is in same age group as victim - usually mutual play but needs to be examined

Two of these types of perpetrators commit the majority of offenses:

- The sex offender who "grooms" the victim - makes friends with child and sometimes with the family (to check out dynamics of relationship between parent and child, to gain trust, establish a pattern of spending time with child)
- The opportunistic offender who takes advantage of a situation in which there is a vulnerable child

PROTECTING CHILDREN AGAINST MANIPULATIVE SEX OFFENDERS

Children are most vulnerable to perpetrators when:

- They don't know about natural, healthy touch
- Are very young
- They don't have any practice understanding how they feel and think
- They don't know how to express themselves
- They don't understand their physical boundaries and their right to limits

Children who have these characteristics are much less vulnerable:

- They have secure relationships with one or more adults
- Live in stable environment
- Needs for comfort and caring are being met
- They know parents will listen to and believe them
- They know their rights in regard to physical and emotional boundaries and respect their own and others
- Their parents are comfortable talking about difficult subjects with the child

Specific Ways for Parents to Inoculate Children Against Sexual Offenders:

- Be aware of new people - adults or adolescents - who want to develop a relationship with the child. Be cautious of a significant age difference.
- If you are a single parent, be especially careful about people in your child's life
- Don't let someone stop in or fix things in your home when the child is alone
- When your child is with anyone new or someone you have concerns about, let them know you will drop in from time to time, and do so. This applies to new friendships, activities, neighbors, school, and daycare.
- Watch and listen to your child's reaction to caretakers when you leave them. Look for excessive enthusiasm, hesitation, fear, or a feeling of secretiveness
- Check in with your child about these types of reactions to the other person. There can be many reasons other than sexual abuse for these behaviors.
- Teach the child to be aware of touches and behaviors that don't fit in a friendly relationship. (i.e. Someone you know can take pictures of you but not of your private parts) Help them learn to question strange behavior and tell you
- Casually ask your child from time to time if something different is going on or if they have a problem and need to talk
- Listen carefully to their outside activities. Keep ears open for hints
- Make sure child knows all the people they can tell if they are away from home
- A child should always know how to contact their parent at home or work, and know what else to do if they need help.

SMARTER DRIVING LICENCES FOR SIKKIM

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Transport Department has initiated an ambitious plan to introduce a Smart Card based Driving Licence and Vehicle Registration book project. When the project gets commissioned, Sikkim will become the first Indian State to issue microprocessor-based Smart Card Operating System for Transport Application (SCOSTA).

The contract for the Smart Card project has been awarded to a Sikkim-based firm, Sikkim Binding Ind, with technical support being provided by Smart Chip Ltd, a company which has implemented Smart Card projects in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The Department informs that the entire system is secure and foolproof mechanism to identify, authenticate and validate. These cards will be issued under high security conditions, using fingerprint authentication, state-of-the-art biometric technology eliminating duplication and possible misuse, the Department assures.

Once in place MVIs will be provided with hand-held terminals using which they can book individual traffic offences on the chip. Sikkim has currently 40,000 driving licences and registration certificates.

NHPC'S SPECIAL AND SIKKIM COULD BE THE SAVIOUR: GOV



a NOW! pic

NHPC officials take the Governor [centre] on a guided tour of the Tail Race Tunnel at Sherwani

a NOW REPORT

SHERWANI (SINGTAM): The National Hydro-electric Power Corporation has a special status in the country and Sikkim's contribution towards hydel generation is much more than any other State, said the Governor V. Rama Rao, at a function held here at the Teesta Stage V Power House on November 7 to celebrate NHPC's 27th foundation day.

The Governor stressed that Sikkim could contribute a great deal to the power sector of the country.

Mr. Rama Rao maintained that given Sikkim's tremendous hydroelectric potential, the State could become the biggest producer of power and help the nation tide over the present dismal power supply scenario.

"Sikkim can become the hope of the country in this sector, and every effort should be made to tap this great potential the State has been

endowed with," he said.

Mr. Rama Rao said that projects such as the ongoing ones at Teesta should act as bridges between the locals and the mainstream and facilitate their integration.

"Projects of this magnitude should benefit all, especially the locals. When the project is completed and commissioned, the local people should feel that they have benefited and not been side-lined. Only then can the project can be termed successful," he said.

The Governor also triggered the final blast of the Tail Race Tunnel which would return the water from the Power House site back to Teesta.

Earlier, the Chief Engineer, Teesta Hydroelectric Power Project Stage V, informed that Sikkim has a hydel potential of 8,000 MW, of which 3,635 MW could be generated from the Teesta River basin alone.

General Manager, NHPC, VK Jain said that the 510 MW Stage V of the Project, which is under construction by the NHPC here, is six months ahead of schedule. "At the present pace, the Project will be commissioned one year ahead of schedule, which will be a record of sorts in itself," he said.

While appreciating the "whole-hearted support" rendered to the Corporation by the State government, Mr. Jain said that once the project was commissioned, the benefits to the State would be enormous. "Besides the 12 per cent free power, Sikkim will also receive 15 percent of the allocated power, which, if the State wants, could be sold to other States to earn revenue," he explained.

Mr. Jain said that the diversion of the Teesta River at the dam site at Dikchu will take place in the third week of November and that work on the construction of the dam would begin simultaneously.

While talking on NHPC's relationship with the locals, Mr. Jain revealed that NHPC was undertaking massive social programmes for the benefit of the locals.

"We are undertaking development programmes of the surrounding villages, creating jobs and conducting capacity-building projects for the locals in the area and the NHPC Ladies Welfare Association is actively involved in this," he said.

Mr. Jain also said that about 1500 locals are presently employed in the Project, and that the Corporation was making all efforts to provide jobs and contracts to the locals.



4TH MODIFIED LEPROSY ELIMINATION CAMPAIGN

GOAL: TO ELIMINATE LEPROSY BY YEAR 2004

- LEPROSY IS A DISEASE CAUSED BY GERMS**
- LEPROSY IS 100 % CURABLE AT ANY STAGE**
- LEPROSY AFFLICTED PERSONS CAN CONTINUE TO LIVE AT HOME AND LEAD NORMAL FAMILY LIFE WHILE ON TREATMENT**
- EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND REGULAR TREATMENT PREVENTS DEFORMITY**
- FREE TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE IN ALL GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CENTRES**

Issued By
STATE LEPROSY SOCIETY
Department Of Health & Family Welfare
Government Of Sikkim

MINISTRY CONSIDERS SETTING UP HIMALAYAN AND TRANS-HIMALAYAN AUTHORITY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

Jagmohan for development of Mountain Tourism

NEW DELHI: Minister for Tourism and Culture, Jagmohan has called for an integrated approach for the development of mountain tourism as it would not only boost culture and tourism of the area but also pave the way for sustainable economic development. He was delivering the inaugural address at a national seminar on "India - Land of Mountains" organised by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation in collaboration with the Ministries of Environment and Forests, Youth Affairs and Sports, Tourism and Culture and the governments of Hill States here on November 8.

Highlighting the recent initiatives by the Department of Tourism

in mountain States, Mr. Jagmohan said setting of Uday Shankar Academy in Almorah, improvement of ambience of many ancient monuments in Uttaranchal, creating a hub of tourism and culture in Himachal and several other tourism projects in Sikkim, Arunachal and other North-East States shows that mountain tourism is on priority in his agenda.

He said there was tremendous scope of adventure, philosophical and spiritual tourism in the mountains. But without involvement of the masses it would not be possible to achieve all this, therefore, efforts have to be made for all round development of these regions and the peo-

ple. He assured all possible support of Ministry of Tourism in that regard.

Reacting to the proposals made by Dr. Karan Singh in the conference, Mr. Jagmohan said that setting up of Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan Authority for development of the region with the involvement of all concerned States and neighbouring countries would be given due consideration. He also agreed that Siachin could be developed into a highest altitude national park and a drive for cleaning up Himalayas with the help of all agencies should be taken up immediately to save the Himalayas.

(PIB)

Depth of Info kept in the dark

GANGTOK: Although it is the Department for Information and Public Relations, it is most of the times ignored by Departments while organising "functions". This, we learn from a circular issued by the Commissioner-cum-Secretary, IPR, D. Dahdul, where he states that most departments do "never" intimate IPR Department about their desire to have the functions covered by "our media team" or the local and national Press for that matter. Ending with the hope that departments would inform IPR of their official functions in the future, Mr. Dahdul maintains that such initiatives "will no doubt help the activities and achievements of the particular department widely publicised". Well, at least someone has recognised the power of the pen.

The emphasis...

Contd from pg 7

vehicles from Sikkim to ply along the NH31A. I intend to keep it that way too. The State government is also extremely concerned and we intend to keep a close liaison with the authorities at Kolkata and also at the DGHC. As far as Sikkim is concerned, it should be kept away from the internal disturbances in the neighbourhood.

What was it like working with our former DGP, Mr. Handa?

Oh, it was excellent. It was very good. He is a very lovable and large-hearted person.

Any message for the people of Sikkim?

I need all the support, understanding and cooperation from my officers, the people and the media in carrying out my responsibilities efficiently. I would request the people to continue to maintain the peace and the communal harmony that we are so proud of.

ACTION MAIL

A HASSLED PASSENGER

To,
The Superintendent of Police, East District
Sir,

This is to bring to your notice the disparity in the taxi fares charged by the local taxi drivers in Gangtok.

On November 10, 2002, I hired a local taxi from Tadong, to Nam Nang on reserve basis. I asked the driver to take me via Deorali-Nam Nang route instead of the main Highway. On reaching Nam Nang, I alighted near the Kyi-de-Khang School and proceeded to pay him Rs. 30. The driver refused to accept the fare and charged me Rs. 50 instead. When I told him that the normal fare from Tadong to Gangtok Bazar was Rs. 35 on the longer route via the main Highway and MG Marg, he became extremely rude with me and started arguing.

The driver told me that if I had taken the longer route, it would have cost me less because he would have been able to "take more people." When I reminded him that I had reserved the taxi and he would not have been able to take in more passengers, he turned even ruder. I told him that I would complain to the authorities, to which he invited me to "go ahead and do it" since he could not care less! I had no choice but to pay him Rs. 50.

This is just one instance of the free run the taxi drivers have as far as the fare is concerned here in Gangtok. Despite the fixed rates issued by the Motor Vehicles Department, the rates vary according to the whims and fancies of the drivers even in share taxis.

I would like the concerned authorities to look into this matter as soon as possible.

Chhaya Dogra, Gangtok

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL SP, EAST DISTRICT

Whenever a passenger faces any difficulty while hiring a local taxi in terms of fares or any other kind of harassment, he or she should immediately file a complaint with the Police. The complainant should, however, make sure that he or she takes down the registration number of the taxi and mention it while making a complaint. This way, if one erring driver is punished, it will set a precedent for others to be careful.

Once the Police receive the complaint, suitable action will be taken against the erring taxi drivers.

With regard to the above-mentioned complaint, we will conduct an inquiry into the complaint and punish the erring driver immediately.

We will also bring the complaint to the notice of the Local Taxi Drivers' Association immediately and ask them to take suitable action in this malpractice.

The Office of the SP, East, along with the Traffic Branch, have been regularly conducting liaison meetings with the members of the Local Taxi Drivers' Association on the various rules and laws that the drivers should abide by, but there are still some who push their luck.

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Jadah Rai

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ATTENTION ALL PNG'ites

All former PNG'ites are invited for a Special Meeting on 16th September, 2002, at 1 PM at Community Hall, Gangtok.

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KUSTE SHEGU

The Kutse Shegu of Sangmo Ney Yap Kunga Lama who expired on 30th September, 2002 falls on 17th November, 2002. All relatives and friends are kindly requested to attend the Shegu ceremony at our residence at Sangmoo village on the date mentioned above. We also take this opportunity to thank all who gave us moral support and other assistance and consoled the bereaved family during our tragic hour.

Sangmoo family

KICKING HIGH IN DARJ

from AMITAVA BANERJEE

DARJEELING: As curtains were drawn on the 2nd DGHC Invitational International Tae-Kwon-Do Festival 2002, it was a time for rejoicing for most of the teams. The Gorkha Hill Taekwondo Association (GHTA) were the organizers of the tournament which was held on the 30th to the 31st October 2002. The teams participating were the national teams from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

India was represented by Sikkim, West Bengal and two teams from Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) area.

Exactly as the organizers hoped the competition was an "eye opener" for DGHC, the State and the Central Government, which has done very little to promote this sport in the Darjeeling hills.

In the Junior Category the DGHC team from Darjeeling bagged 2 golds, 2 silvers and 1 bronze while the



pic: AMITAVA BANERJEE

DGHC team from Kalimpong bagged a silver and 3 bronze. In the senior category the Darjeeling team bagged 1 gold, 1 silver and 2 golds while the Kalimpong team bagged 2 bronze.

It was just a 2 month rigorous practice under the strict guidance of

coach Puran Yonzon of Nepal which saw Darjeeling excel.

"Darjeeling has a lot of untapped talent, and the players who have a lot of endurance and stamina proved themselves in this tournament but the Sports Authority of India (SAI) has turned away from it. We don't even have a SAI coach in Darjeeling for Taekwondo like we have SAI coaches for Football and Archery," said OT Aden, Secretary, GHTA. He was certain that if a SAI coach was provided for the hills along with a modern Gym, the hill fighters would do India proud. Interestingly enough DN Ghising who had joined the Darjeeling team just 2 months back and did not have any exposure in Tae-Kwon-Do and is a white belt stunned

everyone by winning the silver medal competing against a black belt.

"The standards were good during the tournament and the participants have the potential to compete at the Olympic and World Championships," said Deepraj Gurung, Master Instructor of Nepal.

Nepal, the defending champions were adjudged the Champion team, this time too. Bhutan won the best disciplined team trophy. Dema Wangchuk, Coach of the Bhutan team said, "We are working very hard and hope to win a lot of medals in the 9th SAF Games at Islamabad."

Sikkim too had a lot of reasons to rejoice, winning 5 golds and also the junior team champions trophy. The Bangladesh contingent won only a silver and a bronze.

The organizers said that though the tournament went off smoothly, it was not an easy task. The main problem was funds.

"If the concerned individuals of Darjeeling and the surrounding areas had not lent a helping hand fund wise and the business houses not pitched in with sponsorships, we would have had to abandon the idea. We are still waiting for the DGHC to share the major part of our expenses in the form of funds," said a member of the organizing committee. Incidentally Tae-kwon-do was introduced as a demonstration sport in the 1988 Seoul Olympics and included as an event in the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

FREAK FIRE RAZES HOUSE

RHENOCK: In a freak incident a house in Rhenock was completely gutted by fire on the night of November 4. The incident took place at about 9:30 pm. The house, which belonged to one Moti Lal Pradhan, was made out of ekra and plaster with mud. The GCI sheets in the roof along with all household items were completely razed in the fire. No loss of any human lives has been reported. According to investigating authorities, the fire was caused by a burning candle lit by the owner's sister in her room. She is reported to be a psychiatric patient.

BREAK IN

GEYZING: Some unknown miscreants broke into a garage in Geyzing and made away with two car cassette players. The larceny took place on the night of November 4. The thieves broke into the garage, which belongs to one Karma Nedup, by breaking the wooden partition of the garage. They then forced open the owner's Bolero and another Maruti, which were parked inside. Though no arrests have been made so far the police have rounded up some suspects for questioning.

NOW!
can be reached at
270949

Dikchu youth organise blood donation camp to combat superstition

a NOW REPORT

DIKCHU: A blood grouping and enrolment of voluntary blood donors' camp was held here on October 31.

The camp was organized by the Dikchu Youth Welfare Association (DYWA) with the objective to bring awareness amongst the rural masses on the use of safe blood and encourage them to donate blood. The main focus of the programme was to wipe away superstitions regarding blood donation.

The Chief Guest on the occasion was P. Wangden Lepcha, Sub-Divi-

sional Officer (SDO), Mangan. Mr. Lepcha appreciated the work done by DYWA and asked the members to carry out such programmes in the future as well. He also handed over the donor card to Topgay Lepcha of Sagyong Busty, Lower Dzongu, who was the first person to register as a donor.

More than 90 people later registered as donors, of which nearly 20 were women.

The General Secretary, DYWA, Chung Chung Tongden Lepcha thanked the Director and staff of the State Blood Transfusion Council, Medical Officer, Dikchu PHC, Dr. Indu Rawat for their support in organizing the programme.

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