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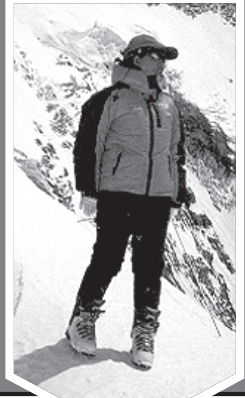
MERGER LIKE AN ITEM SONG?

GANGTOK, WEDNESDAY, 06-12 August, 2003

NOW!

SIKKIM MATTERS

VOL 2 NO 07 □ **Rs. 5**



**SIKKIM'S
PHOOLMAYA
TAMANG
CREATES
HISTORY**

**TURN TO pg 12
FOR DETAILS**

**Sangram's
conversion
to Congress
comes
through**

**TURN TO pg 5
FOR DETAILS**

THE SPYING ENDS HERE



An artist's impression of Dilip K. Roy, the suspected ISI operative arrested by Sikkim Police on 2 August, last Saturday.

GANGTOK: Sikkim and the troops deployed here were lucky that Dilip Kr. Roy was nabbed the day he arrived in Sikkim. A tip-off led to the arrest of this Bangladeshi national who has already made 5 spying missions to India for the Pak secret service, ISI. Seeking to ferret out information on troop deployment and movement, Roy could have proved more dangerous down the line had he managed to set up a network of informers in the region. A retired Bangladeshi soldier, Roy speaks fluent Hindi and his Hindu background helps him remain unnoticed. His luck ran out in Gangtok on 2 August, last Saturday.

TURN TO pg 3 FOR DETAILS



**The first exchange over
Nathula**

TURN TO pg 4 FOR DETAILS

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SIKKIM MATTERS

Merger As An Item Number?

The "merger" that has been in the offing for so long has finally materialised. Sikkim Sangram Parishad and its President, Nar Bahadur Bhandari, are finally acceptable to the Cong [I] high-command. With this development, Cong [I] makes it back to the State Assembly on the wings of an alliance. Mr. Bhandari gets the boost that he required urgently to infuse some vigour into his supporters in a buildup to his fifth bid at power from the outside in the Assembly elections slated for end-2004. Although the decision comes too close to the Cong [I]'s Sikkim in-charge, Salman Khursheed's visit to the State, the state unit has managed to salvage some pride. It had remained insistent that the merger could not be given the nod until they were consulted. Mr. Khursheed was here, he consulted and made the announcement within days of his return. All he extracted from his party-men in Sikkim was an "unofficial" statement that they had no objections to the merger. As for Mr. Bhandari, although he lost face in the run-up to the merger, he has still salvaged some pride in the fact that the merger did eventually happen. Both sides now seem comfortable in each other's company.

Now, to get down to the actual business of what the merger has in store for the Sikkimese people. The electorate had refused SSP the mandate to rule. It did, however, entrust it with the responsibility to play the watchdog - the Opposition. Mr. Bhandari could not keep his flock together and was eventually reduced to becoming the lone MLA not sitting on the treasury bench. The Congress, which did not even win the trust to play the watchdog will now play the role officially till the present Assembly lasts. Be that as it may, the new composition of the Opposition will have to show a much better face than it has done thus far. After all, apart from supporting what were seen as anti-ruling party organisations and their demands, what has the Opposition really done in Sikkim except scripting lengthy memorandums? The time when the merger negotiations were at their peak was also the time when Sikkim was going through its most trying phase. Two self-professed "apolitical and non-communal" organisations - GAC and SIBLAC - had managed to cleave the Sikkimese society and Geyzing had developed as a flash-point. The matter was eventually resolved, but kept the State on tenterhooks for quite some time. Although fringe players had a field day issuing press releases, levelling allegations and counter-allegations, the established institutions of the Opposition remained silent. Neither Cong [I], nor SSP made any comments or observations on the development. The monsoon Assembly session passed off without any questions being posed by the Opposition bench. Either the Opposition in the State was too occupied with the process of their identity switch, or did not consider the developments serious enough. Both reasons are unjustified.

The SSP-Cong merger may have got the blessing of the bosses in Delhi; to win the endorsement of the people, however, they will have to perform much better, be more diligent. Should they fail, the merger will play out like a Hindi movie item-number - something that excites interest, is catchy and entertaining, but has no contribution to the grander narrative. The days when the Sikkimese people could be swayed by plain rhetoric are over. In the last elections they gave the ruling party a clear majority and the Opposition enough strength [seven] to be a formidable voice. Their politicians let them down. The SSP-Cong combine will have to do more than just join forces if they want to be seen as contenders. Just weaning away leaders from the ruling front is no show of support or strength. At the end of the day, they need to convince the Sikkimese people that they can be a good Opposition. Then, and only then, can they even suggest that they should be given a shot at power. Not only do the Sikkimese deserve a good Opposition, but the two players also owe it to the people. It will be interesting to watch how the merger plays out - like a promising twist to a gripping story or an entertaining but inconsequential item-song...

Everyone's got complaints and the best thing about a democracy is that these complaints can be voiced. "Action Mail," is a platform where the public mails us their grievances and we get them the replies from the concerned authorities. If you too have a problem that needs redressal, just mail your complaint to us at NOW! Gairi Gaon, Tadong, Gangtok, East Sikkim or email us at sikkimnow@rediffmail.com.

T.V. OR NOT T.V.

One of the many things that makes the life of a high school teacher an endless litany of complaint is not the bad deal that he gets from the government or his downward slide in the society's pecking order where the respectability quotient of his profession has long since been overshoot by new careers such as those of the councillor and the commissioner, it is the decreasing attention span of his pupils.

The remote wielding generation of reluctant scholars know precisely what they would rather do with their time. And, it is this sure-shot cockiness that is making classrooms an ordeal both to the imparter of knowledge and the alleged learner. In the past, when the present generation of teachers were themselves students, there was no escaping the classroom. After all, there was nowhere else that you could learn and there was little else that you could do with your time. Now the situation is not so bleak. There is an information overload and the deck is stacked heavily against the orthodox teacher, who, as the *Time* magazine says, is about to be extinct anyway.

Learning online is one of the many options at the disposal of a student. This not only has the merit of being eminently flexible as far as the course selection is concerned, but also allows one to do things at his own pace. Add to that the glamour and novelty of doing things digitally and you begin to realise that it is only a matter of time before we begin to witness an exodus from the classroom to the cubicle.

But in the meantime, when all that has not happened, we can afford to meditate on the state of affairs that are so irksome to those pedantically inclined. The foremost is the fact that the pupil today is so very disinclined towards

VIEWPOINT PRAVEEN MOKTAN

reading. Yes, the television has robbed most of our young ones of this simple pleasure and it does so with that cynical satisfaction of not even letting them know about it. The telly today has morphed into baby sitter, best friend and bastardised many a household. In the US, as a recent report suggests, the situation is worse. There are many who think that Homer Simpson head of a dysfunctional family of animated idiots is the most famous American. Roll over Mike Tyson there is just so much that a flesh and blood 'baddest' man on earth can do that Homer Simpson can do even better.

Back to the bickering.

The worst thing that TV does is that it kills creativity. Let's take the example of *Kusum*. Now, if aunty was reading *Kusum* instead of watching it there is a constant effort that she has to put in to imagine things like the colour of her hair or the nature that the intrigue takes on from the previous page. And she can do all this notwithstanding the power cut, the cable wars and CAS. But the telly puts paid to all that and reduces aunty to a one-dimensional entity that can just soak in the soap.

In the classroom the hangover of the remote is reflected in the eagerness of the pupils to switch channels in the mind and virtually shut out the teacher. The other problem with the digital technology of today is that too much stock is put in the presentation of things rather than the content.

It was Oscar Wilde who once said that style is more important than sincerity. This is coming true today, as the PageMaker, the Corel Draw, Avid and Maya have made even the worst content capable of

being cosmetically overhauled by a casual command or a click. The new technology does not create content, that has to come from an intelligence that is not artificial. And that still needs old-fashioned pre-digital attributes such as imagination, clarity and vision. The result of all this is that, today, while the very best make use of both the worlds and create a happy marriage of sorts, the lesser among us are left with the crutches of an assorted collection of software but little or no originality to provide that seed crystal of creativity that these could embellish. After all computers can aid in art but the fire has to be stoked by humans who at least in some of our classrooms are anything but inspired.

So where can we head from here? Is there any hope that our pupils will get back to the book - that agency of enlightenment both intellectual and spiritual?

While there does seem to be some winds of resurgence in reading with the larger storm being created by the Harry Potter series, the fundamentals still seem weak. Harry Potter after all is mere entertainment. Its appeal is that of the fantastic. Of course, later day critics may dissect the tomes for whatever they are worth and extract the last drop of the polemic juice, but our lads read it because (a) there is so much hype about it (b) it's fashionable (c) they do not read it, they just buy it, glance at the cover and go to play pool. Or, they would rather wait till the movie is made.

So, till such time when the necessity of reading is realized beyond the plane of a past-time, we will for a long time reap a harvest of scholars who will bear the burden of books on the back and not in the mind. In a recent movie *The Matrix* the boundary between the real reality [if there is such a

turn to pg 8

"A" FOR AIDS

DEEP FOCUS

RANJIT SINGH

What do HIV and AIDS stand for? *HIV stands for Human Immunization Syndrome. AIDS is Ammonia Deficiency something...*

How do you get it? *When young people have a lot of sex.*

Is there a cure? *There are vaccines, medicines to cure it. Drugs are tax-free.*

How do you prevent HIV/AIDS? *Politicians should be tested for AIDS. Then they can ask people to abstain and we'll be AIDS-free.*

This is what emerged from delegates, mostly MPs, MLAs, and zilla parishad presidents at the Parliamentary Forum on HIV/AIDS. Among other enlightened views to emerge from our honourable leaders - "it's a disease that spreads through people who mingle with ladies;

it's growing because our films show 80 per cent nudity; you can get it by sharing food - but don't worry, vaccines can cure it." According to one MLA, "HIV is not popular, AIDS is popular" among the people of his state.

And these are the people who will be spreading "awareness" about the disease countrywide? It's not even amusing.

Political leaders have always had lots to say about this sobering disease. The more knowledgeable ones alternate between a

mindlessly optimistic denial of the ground realities and an equally mindless concern for sexual morality. Naturally, none of this made the slightest difference to Pavannama, an AIDS-infected single mother of two in rural Andhra Pradesh, who was beaten and then thrown out of her home by her family. She suffered alone, beaten up until her last moments and then taken to be funeral when she was probably still alive. Her isolation from her community, the healthcare system, local administration and the non-governmental organizations serving her area was complete. This in spite of Andhra Pradesh HIV/AIDS programme receiving Rs. 20 crore every year.

Such cases are happening everywhere in urban and rural

turn to pg 8



A timely tip-off led to the arrest of a suspected ISI agent in Gangtok. A Bangladeshi national, Dilip Kumar Roy had already visited India five times in as many months and was collecting defence related secrets for the Pak secret service

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Dilip Kumar Roy, 40, has led an interesting life. A Hindu in Bangladesh, he joined the Bangladesh army in 1974, retired as Havaldar Major in 1991 and instead of leading a simple retired life, got recruited into the Inter Services Intelligence [the Pakistan secret service] in 2002. His journey as a spy, which started in Dhaka last year when Farooq Khan, the military attache at the Pakistan Embassy in Dhaka inducted him, ended in a Sikkim Police lockup on 2 August, Saturday, when his inquisitive nature triggered the suspicion of some people he met, who tipped off the cops leading to his arrest.

The first ISI operative to be arrested in Sikkim, Roy had not progressed very high in the game and was being used by the ISI to confirm troop movement and deployment details which they had already received.

"The diary recovered from Roy had details of Indian army deployment in the region. He admitted during interrogation that one his primary briefs was to confirm the information that ISI had gathered," DIG [Range] SD Negi told a Press briefing here on Saturday.

Apart from confirming troop deployment in the region, Roy was also commissioned by the Pak intelligence agency to get details on movement and training programmes of army units.

When asked how information on troop movement would help the ISI, Mr. Negi explained that

Recruited in Dhaka; Operative in Siliguri; Arrested in Gangtok



such information was used when planning terrorist attacks in the region. The NJP railway station bomb-blast a couple of years back, it is learnt, was timed to "hit" as many soldiers as possible. Even the bomb, sources in the intelligence agencies reveal, was placed at a spot where the "military bogey" would stop and where most soldiers rested.

Among the "incriminating" evidence recovered from Roy were also a number of addresses and phone numbers. Since he was also expected to develop contacts, Roy, it appears, made it a point to take down contact numbers of everyone he met - even casual acquaintances made on a bus journey. The fact that he was seriously working towards developing moles in the Indian army are borne out by his offer to sponsor the marriage of girl he had met in Siliguri if she married an Indian army personnel.

"Roy was in the process of cultivating contacts and sources in Gangtok and other places in the region. Armed with a friendly disposition, Roy could quickly gain people's confidence and befriend them," the DIG [Range] added.

Officials who have interrogated Roy admit that although he was a minor link in the spy chain, another year and he would have developed into a major player. "This man continuously fooled people into believing something

he was not and managed to extract a lot of information from gullible people. Some more time and he would have become very damaging for national security," Mr. Negi told NOW!

It is obvious that even though Roy is a minor player, no is taking the ISI threat lightly in Sikkim. While Sikkim Police's intensified checks at the Rangpo are still subtle, the sandbagged security in army installations here are a more overt reminder of how no one is taking security lightly in Sikkim any more.

Information available thus far suggests that between March to July, Roy had already visited India five times on a Bangladeshi passport. Sources also reveal that he has distant relatives in Kolkata from where he would head for Siliguri and make forays into Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Binaguri and Gangtok. It is learnt that although Roy has visited Gangtok twice [once in June and then again on the day of his arrest], he never stayed over in Sikkim, heading back the same day both times.

Although Roy always entered India legally, he would immediately start posing as an Indian national once he had cleared the immigration check-post at Kolkata. Being a Hindu and fluent in Hindi also helped Roy avoid suspicion. From posing as an ex-Indian army personnel to an NGO worker, Roy is reported to have

used many covers to ferret out information during his stay here.

Roy's arrest and his subsequent interrogation have also revealed more details on how ISI recruits spies for the "human intelligence" network it is building in the Siliguri corridor. Under interrogation, Roy is reported to have squealed the name of a Bangladesh National Party activist who also runs an NGO in Bangladesh, as the person who introduced him to Farooq Khan, the ISI operative in the Pakistan embassy in Dhaka. Farooq is also

suspected to be the main "link-man" between extremist organisation in the northeast and ISI bosses in Pakistan.

Roy, who is being jointly interrogated by several agencies at present, might not make any grand revelations about ISI activities in the region, but could provide crucial leads on its style of operating and areas of interest in the region. He has been booked under Sections 3 and 9 of the Official Secrets Act, 1922, read with Section 120b of the IPC and is currently under police custody.

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CM MAKES SPOT-ASSESSMENT OF NATHULA

HINDI-CHINI BHAIBHAI AGAIN

The first exchange over Nathula

by TINA RAI

NATHULA: "Come here, do not be afraid, we are all brothers," said Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, extending his hand in a friendly gesture to a Chinese soldier across the barbed wire that marks the Indo-China border at Nathula. After a warm handshake, Mr. Chamling proceeded to take off his wristwatch [always a popular gift with Chinese] and gifted it to the People's Liberation Army soldier. The soldier accepted the watch and gifted the CM [a non-smoker] a pack of cigarettes in return. With this, in a way, trade returned to Nathula after a gap of almost forty years.

On his first official visit to Nathula, Mr. Chamling was seen in very high spirits. And, he had reason to be happy. Nathula is very unlike a border outpost. There are no Wagah-like histri-

onics of aggression on display here. In fact, the only hostile motif at the Indo-Chinese border is the barbed wire there. In fact when the press members reached the spot ahead of the CM's entourage, there were no Chinese personnel on duty on the other side.

Later, two rather shy, young Chinese soldiers made their way to the fence and posed for photographs with the hordes of VIPs, officials and journalists who had descended on Nathula on 1 August.

All this took place under the watchful eyes of the Indian army personnel, who were seen conversing with the Chinese soldiers in fluent Chinese. Judging by the friendly atmosphere that exists here, it's almost hard to believe

that the two countries have actually fought a war against each other in the past.

Sherathang and Kupup. Accepting that the existing road network was incapable of handling increased traffic, Mr. Chamling said that an alternative highway from Siliguri to Gangtok was needed to facilitate easy movement of traffic. The Centre, he said, will be approached with a proposal for an alternative highway. The State is also pressing for an alternative road to Nathula which would by-pass the Capital.

While speaking on the benefits of Nathula, Mr. Chamling said that the pass breaks down the geographical barriers which limit the volume of trade between the two countries. "The distance between Lhasa and Kathmandu is some 2,100 kms. Gangtok is barely 500 kms from Lhasa and the port of Kolkata another 600 kms away. Nathula is the best option available for trade between the two countries," he said. Mr. Chamling is convinced that Nathula will help India bridge its trade deficit vis-a-vis China.

Sources reveal that the Chinese are taking the Nathula option seriously and that road widening works have already begun on the Tibet side. Sikkim, too, appears committed to preparing Nathula as early as possible. Shortly after his Nathula visit, the CM also made a trip to Siliguri on 3 August, Sunday, to take stock of Sikkim Government property there and see whether these assets could be worked into commercial holdings involved in the trade.

Benefits for Sikkim, the CM said, would accrue from the services it can offer to facilitate trade through its borders. "My government's focus is now on capacity building and human resource management to empower the Sikkimese to tap opportunities that international trade through Sikkim offers them," he said.

It is in this regard that Sikkim will soon be getting the nation's first WTO centre. Mr. Chamling revealed that the United Nation's Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will soon set up a "World Trade Office Centre of Excellence" to help prepare the state in meeting the challenges of

Nathula, 1 August: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling extends a hand of friendship across the border fence to a Chinese soldier.

globalisation.

"We are gearing up to meet the challenges of trading with China. We need the Centre's full support in this regard and are ready to extend all cooperation from our side," Mr. Chamling said.

On being asked to comment on the environmental concerns that such trade throws up, the CM said that environmental safeguards would be the "top priority" of his government and that all precautions to protect the "fragile biodiversity" of the area will be taken.

Earlier, upon his arrival to Nathula, Mr. Chamling was received by members of the Travel Agents Association of Sikkim and panchayat and party members from 20-Pathing, led by area MLA, Sonam Dorjee. Mr. Chamling also took the opportunity to meet and interact with the local people.

The CM also held a closed-door meeting with the GOC 17 Mountain Div, Maj. Gen. Deepak Anand. The two discussed security concerns and how adequate arrangements could be put into place.

Chamling for "comprehensive and thorough" infrastructure for trade over Nathula

by SARIKAH ATREYA

NATHULA: Chief Minister Pawan Chamling believes that from its place as an irritant in Sino-Indian relations, Sikkim, with the resumption of trade over Nathula, could develop into the medium of improving relations between the two Asian giants. "Trade over Nathula can foster a better understanding between the two countries. Improved economic ties will further strengthen our traditional ties," Mr. Chamling said.

He was talking to media persons at the border check-post here on 1 August, last Friday. Mr. Chamling was here on a spot assessment visit necessitated by the Sino-India joint-declaration agreeing to return trade to Nathula after a 41 year hiatus.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by a power-packed team comprising of the members of the high-level committee [headed by the Chief Secretary, SW Tenzing] constituted to work out the modalities of the trade and its infrastructural requirements, his cabinet colleagues, MLAs, Panchayats, senior party members, government officials and representatives from the Border Roads Organization and the Army.

Mr. Chamling was at Nathula to look into the logistic and infrastructural requirements of the State to handle the demands of international trade and conduct a survey of the area for a master plan on the same. This Master Plan will then be submitted to the Centre for clearance.

While expressing his gratitude to the Centre for agreeing to reo-

pen Nathula for trade, Mr. Chamling said that it was now imperative that the process of setting up the infrastructure was "comprehensive and thorough."

"We will make a suggestion to the Centre to ensure that infrastructure development in Sikkim is comprehensive and takes all sectors into consideration. Both the countries have constituted high-level committees in this regard to study the requirements for trading to resume. We will also look into other areas that might benefit from the opening of Nathula and not just trade. We need a holistic approach here," he said.

A heavy downpour notwithstanding, Mr. Chamling and his entourage stopped over at all crucial junctions on the JN Road from Gangtok to Nathula and discussed such issues as setting up of warehouses along the stretch, need for improved communication links and possible environmental concerns of increased traffic along the route. Later, the CM revealed that it was decided that warehouses be set up at

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The Transport Department workshop at Jalipool loves vehicles. It sometimes keeps them for more than 3 years for repairs...

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: How long would you leave your vehicle with the mechanic when you put it in for a complete overhaul? A month, maybe two at the most. If you are someone who will start missing your drive within a month of two, then make sure that it does not end up at the Jalipool workshop of the Transport Department. The Comptroller Auditor General's Report for Sikkim for year ended 31 March, 2002, reveals that not only has the Department "not considered it necessary to fix any norms of the time required by the workshop to undertake various types of repairs," it is also unlikely to complain even if a vehicle remains at the workshop for more than three years.

"Abnormal" delays in repair works at the Jalipool workshop, the CAG Report claims has resulted in a revenue loss of almost a crore.

Since the Department does not consider it necessary to stipulate deadlines, auditors adopted the standards fixed by the Association of State Road Transport Undertakings [which stipulates a maximum of 22 days for major engine repairs of heavy vehicles] to evaluate the efficiency [!] of the workshop. They checked the books there from April 199 to September 2001.

Their findings are embarrassing. During the check-period, 135

From the CAG Report
The repair specialists

buses and trucks underwent major engine repairs at the workshop. Of these, 126 vehicles [93 per cent] exceeded the 22-day limit set by ASRTU by periods ranging from 4 days to a phenomenal 1230 days. A more detailed break-up reveals that 41 buses and 43 trucks took between 4-200 days more than mandated, 9 buses overstayed their welcome at the workshop by 400-600 days and two buses were being repaired for more than three years!

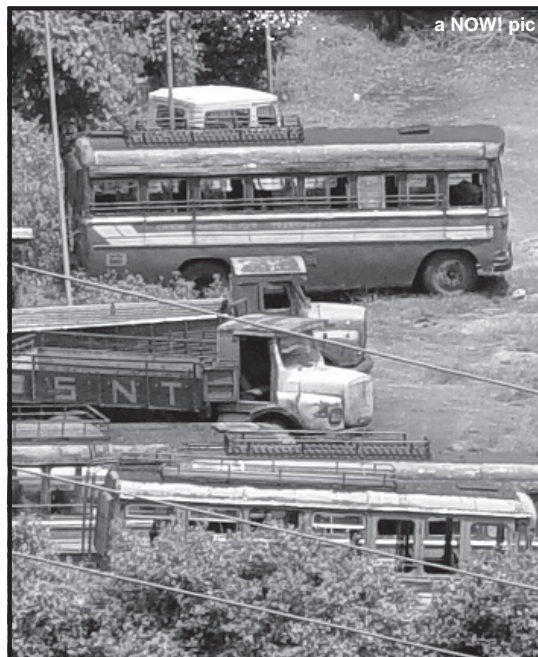
The casual approach of the Department is even more confounding when seen in light of the fact that this is not the first time the issue is being raised. The CAG Report for 1994-95 and an Inspection Report in October 1999 had already pointed out this lack-

adaisical attitude and its fallout.

The CAG Report now observes that such "abnormal hold-up" at the workshop "in excess of industry norms" adversely affected the fleet deployment and resulted in an estimated revenue loss of Rs. 99.63 lakhs to the State exchequer.

In its defence, the Department argued that the delays occurred due to "non-availability" of skilled manpower and "overage" of vehicles. It also pointed out that stipulated 22-day deadline is for engine and gearbox overhauling while the workshop at Jalipool also undertook complete renovation of body and repainting jobs too. "Even after considering departmental reply, the detention of 42 vehicles for more than 200 days was incomprehensible," the Report records.

RECAP SIKKIM



LINED AND FORGOTTEN: Vehicles at the Transport Dept workshop at Jalipool

Court gives Bhandari and co. "benefit of the doubt" acquits them in Employment Exchange case

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Former Chief Minister and Opposition Sikkim Sangram Parishad president, Nar Bahadur Bhandari and fifteen other politicians booked for

breaching Section 144 and rioting in the tumultuous week of 1997 which saw protests against the extension of central employment exchange act to Sikkim have been acquitted by the Chief Judicial Magistrate [West].

Informed sources reveal that

the judgement order gives Mr. Bhandari and co. the "benefit of the doubt" in the charges framed against them in the role they played in leading the sometimes violent protest marches against the Act back in 1997.

Apart from Mr. Bhandari, other Opposition leaders booked in the case were Congress leaders Thukchuk Lachungpa, KN Upreti, PD Namgyal, Sikkim Ekta Manch president and former Power Secretary, LP Tewari and

former Deputy Chief Minister PT Luckson and the two SSP MLAs who now sit in the ruling bench, Sonam Dorjee and JK Bhandari.

The protests, which were threatening to run out of control, ended with a lathi-charge near Paljor Stadium. After the voices of dissent simmered down under the lathi blows of Sikkim Police and RAF, the State Government too withdrew the extension of the Act and booked the opposition leaders.

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POWER PLAY

SIBLAC invokes guardian deities to sustain BL unity

Kabi-Longtsok prayers a curtain-raiser to SIBLAC's Delhi yatra

a NOW! REPORT

KABI-LONGTSOK: "Vested interests have been trying to divide the Bhutias and Lepchas and by invoking the guardian deities and the ancestors through this prayer, we hope to re-establish the bonds of blood-brotherhood that the two communities swore centuries ago," said Tenzin C'wang, spokesperson for SIBLAC which organised a Sol-kha at Kabi-Longtsok on 3 August, Sunday.

The prayers at Kabi, conducted jointly by Bongthings and monks, invoked the guardian deities of Sikkim and the ancestors, in a bid to buttress the BL unity, which SIBLAC fears is fragmenting under the influence of those who view it as a threat.

Mr. C'wang insisted that even though Lepcha organisations had withdrawn support from SIBLAC, the apex committee continued to enjoy the support of a sizeable number of Lepchas in Sikkim who are unhappy with

their organisation's continued silence on issues concerning the ethnic minority group of Sikkim.

Owing to the road conditions, the prayer meet at Kabi drew fewer people than expected, but the invocations went off well in the bright weather that held throughout. Among those present for the prayer were SIBLAC office-bearers including its convenors Tseten Tashi Bhutia and Nima Lepcha, SPCC [I] President, Namkha Gyaltzen and former Ambassador, Karma Topden.

Talking to NOW!, Mr. C'wang added that the prayers were a "curtain-raiser" to the departure of SIBLAC members to Delhi [scheduled for later this month] where they plan to hold a series of sit-ins and dharnas in a bid to spread awareness about and win support for their demands.

The latest list of SIBLAC's 4-point resolution includes a demand for commensurate increase in seats reserved for BLs [up from 12 to 17] should the State Government's



a NOW! pic

demand for increasing the Assembly strength to 40 get accepted. It has also demanded that the reservation formula of the Assembly seats be followed even at the panchayat level and also replicated in reservations for higher studies and employment opportunities. In its fourth demand, SIBLAC calls for such a delimitation that ensures that BL voters are in majority in BL constituencies.

The gathering at Kabi-Longtsok for the SIBLAC-sponsored Sol Kha[above]. [right] A Lepcha Bongthing from Dzongu invokes the guardian deities and spirits of the ancestors to bless the Bhutia-Lepcha tryst of blood brotherhood.

The prayer meet ended with SIBLAC members undertaking an oath to "continue" with their struggle for BL "survival".

BHARAT BASNET QUILTS SDF

GANGTOK: Former Congressman, Bharat Basnet, who had earlier quit Cong [I] to join the ruling party has now also quit from SDF. In a resignation letter dated 1 August, copies of which were circulated among the Press, Mr. Basnet has quoted the State Government's failure to "give justice" to victims of post-poll violence on 1999, its "tacit support" for GAC and what he calls the "5 Cs formula" of the ruling party [Chamling, corruption, casteism, communalism and capitalism] as the reasons prompting his decision.

SANGRAM'S CONVERSION TO CONGRESS COMES THROUGH

High-command compensates Arunachal with Sikkim, Sangramis to now wear Cong colours

a NOW! REPORT

GANGTOK: A fax-message scrolled into the Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee late on Saturday night announcing the Congress high-command's "in-principle" clearance of the SSP-Congress merger which has been pending for some two years now. After months of vacillating over the issue, the Congress high-command finally decided

on it within a week of Salman Khurshed's [Special Invitee CWC and party in-charge for Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim] Sikkim visit.

The announcement took everyone by surprise in light of Mr. Khurshed's comments in Sikkim where he suggested that the merger would not be decided in

"haste". In fact, in conversation with NOW!, Mr. Khurshed even hinted that a lot more thought needed to be applied to the proposal since Mr. Bhandari came with a "lot of excess baggage". "Mrs. Gandhi's popularity is on a high at present, we would not want to do anything that points

fingers at her," he said.

All these considerations now appear a thing of the past. A formal announcement on the merger is expected on 7 August, by which time the SSP President accompanied by his supporters will reach Delhi. The merger, an SSP leader confirmed is "unconditional".

SIKKIM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
[Affiliated to AIFF]

NOTICE TO MEMBERS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the members of Sikkim Football Association has been convened for 4:30 PM on Saturday, the 16th of August 2003 at Hotel Gochala, below Power Office, Gangtok. Hence, all the members are requested to kindly make it convenient to attend the meeting.

[B. K. Roka]
General Secretary

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Ecotourism lessons from Sikkim

Naga tour operators learn the tricks of the ecotourism trade from Sikkim experts

by SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: Tsangchingla Imlong can hardly wait to go home in Mokokchung, Nagaland. The young tour operator is eager to put into practise the training she received here during her two-week stay. She is confident that the training would give the much-needed impetus to the nascent tourism industry in her State.

"I have learnt so much. Nagaland is similar to Sikkim in so many ways. I learnt a great deal. I hope to use my experience here to contribute to the development of my State, through tourism, which I hope will in turn contribute to the development of my own community," she told NOW!

Thirty enthusiasts like her from Nagaland share the same feeling. They were part of the two-week Rural Tourism Guides Training programme conducted by the Ecotourism & Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), which was held from 19 July to 2 August and sponsored by the Government of Nagaland.

This was the second such training programme conducted by ECOSS for trainees



Naga tour operators take tips on ecotourism from Dzongu Ecotourism Development Committee member, Sherab Lepcha, en route to Tingvong.

from Nagaland. The first training programme on adventure tourism was held here in June, earlier this year.

Tsangchingla and her team-mates got first-hand experience of village tourism management through the exhaustive training programme, which included field trips, and dwelt upon subjects like role of rural guides, village home-stays, arrival and departure briefing techniques, customer service interpretation, marketing, medical and first aid, hygiene and sanitation, garbage and trash management etc.

"This training programme was aimed at improving the basic skills of the guides, and train them in responsible rural eco-tourism practices, which they can implement in their State," Renzino Lepcha, executive secretary, ECOSS and the main facilitator of the training programme said.

Mr. Lepcha is of the opinion that such training programmes will immensely contribute to the development of ecotourism of the entire region and will also help in marketing Sikkim as an ecotourism destination, with the focus on village home stays.

The first field trip took the Naga guides to Pasatanga in Assam Lingzey. Lodged in Nepalese households, this was their first experience in village home-stays.

Next, they headed to Dzongu for a one-on-one with the Lepchas of the region. The first stop was at Nampridkang, where the participants visited the traditional Lepcha House.

Tingvong village in Upper Dzongu played host to the visiting Naga delegation, kicking off the Tingvong village home-stay project. The villagers put up a colourful cultural show for the visitors, show-casing their traditional songs and dances. A friendly football match was also held between the Naga visitors and the hosts.

"It has been an eye-opener for me in many ways. There are so many things about village home-stays, which we can replicate in our own villages in Nagaland. It is all about involving the local community in such income-generating schemes which will supplement their traditional sources of income and preserve their culture, tradition and the environment at the same time," felt Tsangchingla.

The rest of their itinerary consisted of visits to the Martam Resort and Kewzing, where the trainees were again exposed to village home stays. In Kewzing, they were treated to traditional Sikkimese Bhutia hospitality and culture. The last leg of their training took them to Legship for river rafting and then to Namchi, where the valedictory function was held on 1 August, last Friday.

"At the end of the day, its all about sustainable development. Sikkim is leading the way in ecotourism and sustainable development efforts of the country. We hope to follow in the same steps," summed up Tsangchingla.

TAAS upbeat about Nathula, concerned over mushrooming of "unauthorised" operators

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Although not yet opened for tourism, the announcement that Nathula will be opened for trade has still got those in the travel industry in a euphoric mood, confident that tourism will receive a boost with the opening of Nathula for trade.

And, when the Chief Minister made his first official visit to Nathula since the announcement, TAAS members were present in full force to welcome him there. The TAAS delegation, led by its president, Paljor Lachungpa, felicitated the CM at Nathula and expressed their "heartfelt gratitude" to the State government for successfully advocating the need to reopen Nathula for trade.

"TAAS has been supporting the issue and now, our long-cherished dream has been realised. The entire sector is overjoyed," Mr. Lachungpa said.

TAAS also took the opportunity to submit a 10-point memorandum to the CM during his Nathula visit.

"While we are happy with the prospects of increased tourism-related activities after trade resumes from Nathula, we also have fears. We have highlighted them in our memorandum. We are hopeful that our fears and concerns will be received positively

by the State government," Mr. Lachungpa said.

Elaborating TAAS' concerns, Mr. Lachungpa said, "We have found that we are gradually being swamped by irresponsible and unauthorised travel agents, tour operators and hoteliers from outside the State. They have no social or environmental concerns for the state. They come here, make quick money, add to the garbage, set wrong examples and leave. We have therefore asked the State government to disallow outside travel agents and tour operators from conducting package tours in Sikkim without a tie-up with a recognised local partner. This will ensure that visitors to the State do not

blame us when things go wrong."

TAAS has also requested the State government to open the Gangtok-Nathula-Gnathang-Phademchen-Rongli-Rhenok route so that people along this route get an additional source of income.

It has also pleaded for a single window-system for issuing permits for high altitude treks and has also suggested that "minor peaks" which do not fall under the sacred category be opened for mountaineering expeditions. The memorandum also advocates the need for opening Tourist Information centres in Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai to tap potential markets there.

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Anthyesthi Kriya

The Anthyesthi Kriya of Late (Shri) Nandalal Rasaily (ex-Councillor) falls on 9 August 2003 at Rautey Rumtek. All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to attend in the prayer for the departed soul.

**Dhan Kumar Rasaily (Thulo Bhai) & Brothers.
Rita & Meena (daughters) & Other Relatives.
Ph: 52319**

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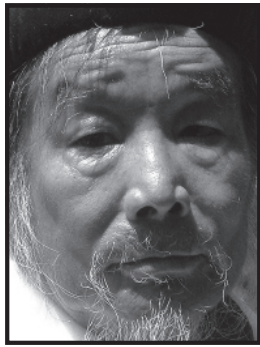
RECAP SIKKIM

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Tendong Lho Rum Faat, one of the oldest festival of the Lepchas falls on 8 August, Friday. The Sikkim Lepcha Youth Association, in collaboration with the department of Cultural Affairs and Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre, Kolkata is planning a celebration at Community Hall, Gangtok, to mark the occasion. The celebratory functions will begin from 6 am with a prayers. Apart from other cultural events, a Lepcha audio cassette and magazine are to be released on the day. Several social and cultural awards will also be given away.

State-wide celebrations will actually start even earlier. On 7 August, Thursday, Bongthings will conduct prayers at Mt. Tendong from 2 am onwards. Tendong has deep religious significance for the Lepchas. Lepcha folklore describes the time when

Tendong-Lho-Rum-Faat- the ancient festival Lepcha youth promise grand celebrations



the Himalayas were in infancy and the rivers Teesta and Rangit, were yet to start their respective journeys downward from their sources, Naho and Nahor lakes.

In the wake of a heavy earthquake which damaged the lakes, the legend goes that Parilbu [King Serpant] and Tuffo guided the two new rivers to their confluence at Pozok [now Peshok].

Unfortunately, the rivers flooded Mayel Lyang [Sikkim]. The Lepchas residing near Mt. Tendong, to save their lives climbed up to its peak and prayed to It-Bu-Rum [the almighty God]. It is believed that a Kohomfo [a Partridge] appeared and offered prayers with Mongcheeb [brewed millet] and another earthquake shook the earth, creating several high mountains around the northern zone of Mayel Lyang which forced the flood waters to

flow southwards, thus saving the Lepchas from the great deluge.

Since that time, the Lepchas have observed the "Tendong Lho Rum Faat" or worship of Mt. Tendong.

Till a few years back the festival was celebrated privately at homes, but now, not only is it a State holiday, but the celebrations continue to grow larger in scale. This year, Lepcha representatives are expected from all the districts of Sikkim, as well as from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Nepal and Bhutan.

To the Lepchas, this festival is a matter of pride because they are among the few ancient people who have records of the great Deluge.

A for AIDS

Contd from pg 2

India, in spite of the President, Prime Minister and sundry political leaders regularly signing all sorts of high-minded and more or less utopian declarations. New HIV infections are increasingly concentrated among the illiterate and the poor, especially among young, poor and illiterate women. Such lives have little value among the Indian political leadership between elections.

India is home to the regions' largest epidemic. About 4 million Indians now have HIV and 3,00,000 more become infected each year. Yet our representatives are still stung with warped concepts about its spread and prevalence. In the absence of widespread access to quality information about HIV transmission and prevention, and with the contribution of social prejudices and silence from political leaders, misinformation flourishes and plays havoc with the lives of those harbouring the disease. That's why the Parliamentary Convention on HIV/AIDS was made to be such an important event – a model for other nations in the region.

This convention was apparently the first of its kind, getting together more than a thousand political leaders from across the country. But social workers and activists will regard it with mixed feelings. The director of the joint United Nations programme of HIV/AIDS considers political leadership a "vital tool" in turning back the epidemic. But if the convention throws up any indicator, it is that our political class needs to be "vitaly schooled" on this subject.

A gender-sensitive and human rights-based approach that includes anti-discrimination laws to protect people living with HIV/AIDS is imperative for India since only such a measure would ensure awareness at the highest levels of decision-making.

T.V. OR NOT T.V.

Contd from pg 2

phrase] and virtual reality is only distinguished by the colour tinge imparted to the images of incidents that take place in the latter sphere.

Sitting sometimes in a class, I sometimes suspect that our pupils too are in some matrix of their own completely shut out from the immediate environment of books and knowledge and the teacher. Only in this case there is no cinematic convenience to distinguish the plane that the particular learner is in. For this, the teacher will still have to ask questions. And perhaps the long hard one that he may hazard is the query that he may put to his self. After all the majority of us too are being swept away by the crosscurrents of that cultural flood that has held us as eager hostages to the mistress of the modern mind - the TV.

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WHO CARES???

I care and you should care too... A major mobile service provider is having a roll in Sikkim by charging more than 50 per cent as service and administrative charges on every recharge.

It surprises me how people here are so indifferent to this daylight robbery, specially since a majority of the people of Sikkim have been to metropolitan cities where the mobile service providers charge approximately 10 per cent of every recharge as their administrative/ service charges. Hutch, Airtel, Spice and many of the service providers in Delhi do not deduct more than 10 per cent as service charge.

I wonder why the mobile service provider we are straddled with charging more than 50% on every recharge voucher where the customers end up paying Rs. 300

for a recharge of just Rs. 143 of talk time.

And, it is not as if the services are anything to write home about. The messaging service from one service provider to another, for example, takes a day and at times maybe more to get through.

Staying connected, which is a necessity, has become a luxury with mobile phones frequently in "network search" mode. It's time the company explained this policy which seems to be reserved exclusively for this region.

-a disgruntled customer

The only official of the private mobile service provider NOW! could get in touch with claimed he was not in a position to comment on the company's policies. The mobile number provided for the other official routinely returned one message: "The number you have dialed is currently not in service..."

Fraud and irregularities at Sikkim Manipal University

Academics is supposed to be the main activity of Sikkim Manipal University. But behind the scenes, there are many dark corners. This University is hiding a host of fraudulent activities designed to fool the Government of Sikkim, the Medical Council of India and the public.

During the MCI inspections, plane-loads of faculty from the Manipal medical colleges in Manipal and Mangalore are transported overnight to Sikkim so that adequate faculty can be shown to the unsuspecting inspectors. This "mobile" faculty has been brought for the last six inspections. The SMU records are falsified, staff attendance records are created.

Even more alarming is the falsification of patient records to show MCI high occupancy in the Central Referral Hospital teaching hospital. The staff nurses are forced to create false figures for each ward for the whole year. Fake patients are made to occupy some of the beds during the MCI inspections. The average daily inpatient is 35-40, but the counterfeit records show them at about 200.

SMU has taken Rs. 30 crores from the Sikkim government and has put up such a shabby building, which is incomplete in parts and requires extensive repair and maintenance. Not only that, SMU has failed to install the superspeciality equipment for cancer and heart patients as promised in the agreement. On the other hand, the Manipal hospitals in Bangalore and Pokhara are state-of-the-art institutions. SMU is reportedly trying to squeeze more money out of the government for the hospital.

Now the latest Manipal trick is to reserve 33 per cent seats for

NRI and foreign students to make even more money.

This, in light of the fact that the central government seats for Sikkimese students have been reduced. These lost seats have not been made up at SMU and even if this is done, the Sikkimese students will have to pay much higher fees than at other government medical colleges in India. It is high-time the government and people of Sikkim wake up to the devious strategies of the Manipal group.

All of the statements in this letter can be verified from SMU and other records. If the MCI finds out about the inspection tomfoolery played by Manipal, the college will be derecognized and the future of the students is in great danger.

A concerned Parent

Middle-Camp Secondary School Students suffer through teacher transfers

a NOW REPORT

MIDDLE-CAMP, Singtam: The class X students of Middle Camp Secondary School are an unhappy lot. They also know the exact date when their woes began - 5 July, 2003 when two science teachers from the school were transferred out. A month down the line, they still await replacements.

Everytime the students had to sit through a Chemistry class without a teacher they were reminded of how inconsiderate those issuing such orders can be. "How can they transfer a teacher in the middle of an academic session," questioned one student while talking to NOW! They might not be aware of the Education Department's expressed policy decision not to transfer teachers mid-session, but are bright enough to see that marching orders after a session has started are unfair on the students.

The Assistant Director, Education Department, KT

Wangchuk, points out that the transfers in question were ordered on the request of the concerned teachers themselves.

Additional Secretary DT Bhutia reiterated that transfers are conducted only during the winter vacations between December to early February. He, however, admitted that at times, mid-session transfers were also forced by administrative reasons or on requests from teachers who request transfers on "health grounds."

While these explanations might hold while clearing files, they are lost on students at Middle-Camp who have lost more than a month of classes. Chemistry classes resumed for them on 3 August, but that is hardly any consolation since the subject is being taught by the Biology teacher [!]

When NOW! visited the school, the students poured out more grievances.

"We had no text books for Maths, Social Science and Science till the first week of June. We

were already lagging behind and now they have taken away the teacher," they complained.

"It is a wrong policy of the department of relieving teachers in the mid session because of this our children are suffering," exclaimed one angry parent.

Their irritation with the Department should not last much longer since the Assistant Director assured that they were in the process of arranging a replacement posting. It is, however, learnt that only one more science teacher will be provided for the Middle-Camp school since a Secondary School gets only two science teachers as per rules. How they got three earlier, even the Department does not seem to know.

The woes for the students are, however, not completely over. Reports suggest that a faculty member at the school is unhappy that while two teachers were transferred out when they requested, his application for a transfer has not been cleared thus far.

Sikkim Manipal University responds No falsification of records at SMU

In a reply to the accusations made on Manipal Medical College and hospital, the Dean, RP Singh said:

"I do not want to comment on any of the allegations made. All the MCI inspections have taken place before my tenure, which started on July 3 2003.

Tampering with the records from the MRD section is not easy and the staff there are highly qualified. No falsification of documents and records is possible.

As far as the question of plane-loads of faculty being brought in during the MCI inspections is con-

cerned, the MCI inspections are not lenient. They know their job and do not leave any loopholes. It is not easy to fool them.

During my tenure, I have invited only one Dr. BA Kumar, an Orthopaedic Surgeon, who is considered the best in the country. He performed surgeries and treated patients. He brought his expertise and did a specialised job. Apart from him, there

has been no faculty transfer. All these are false accusations.

STNM and Manipal are working hand in hand, our objectives are the same. Eleven consultants from STNM are attending sessions at Manipal and the doctors from Manipal hold regular clinics at STNM. We are working for the same purpose."

As to told to NOW!

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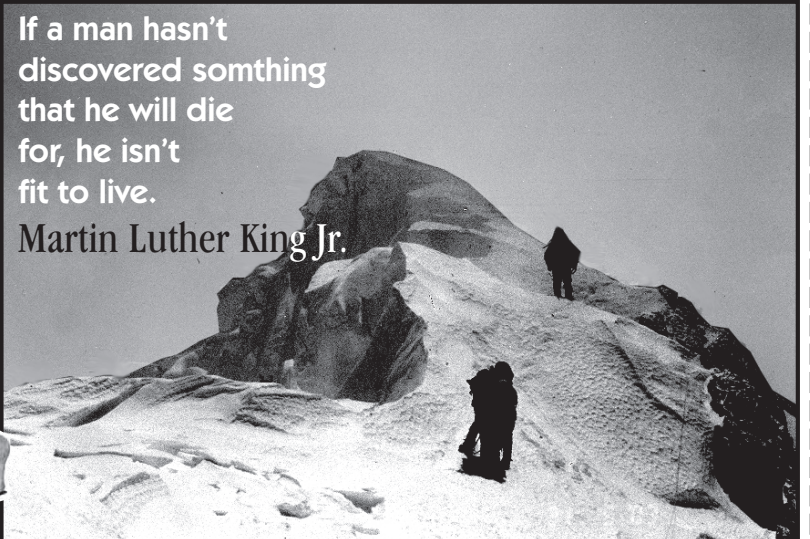
PRESENTS

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LIFE**



If a man hasn't
discovered something
that he will die
for, he isn't
fit to live.

Martin Luther King Jr.



BUSINESS

NEDfi hopes to catalyse economic development in Sikkim

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd., (NEDfi) is all set to start business in the State. It held its first Business Meet, inaugurated by the Chief Secretary SW Tenzing here on 5 August, Tuesday.

The Meet, held to interact with the State's entrepreneurs and "thoroughly" understand Sikkim's requirements in the finance and investment sectors, saw a good attendance by members of the business community, the Travel Agents Association of Sikkim, the Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association, young entrepreneurs and government officials.

Speaking on the occasion, NEDfi GM, Dr. Deka said that the reopening of Nathula for trade has provided the State with the much-needed fillip for industrial development. While outlining NEDfi's various schemes and projects aimed at "catalysing economic development of the North East," Dr. Deka said

that the thrust areas identified by the Corporation for Sikkim included ecotourism, handicrafts and handlooms, aromatic and medicinal plants plantation and processing, food processing and biotechnology, among others.

NEDfi has also commissioned Price-Water Coopers, Kolkata, to prepare a "Pre-Investment Feasibility Study on Industrial Potential for Sikkim" which equips the Corporation with information on development potential of the State. "We come to Sikkim prepared and with an open mind. We hope to contribute to the economic development of the State," Dr. Deka said.

While emphasising on important role NEDfi can play in Sikkim, the Guest of Honour, Chairman SIDICO, PD Rai, said that there was a need to look into all core issues of human resource development of the State.

"NEDfi could supplement some of the projects and schemes initiated by other financial and banking institutions in the State. The financial institutions and agen-

cies here have always been constrained by inadequate financial resources. With the coming of NEDfi, this gap can be bridged," he said.

The Chief Secretary, in his address said that Sikkim was a "happening State" and the need of the hour was entrepreneurship building.

"NEDfi has a critical role to play in Sikkim. We have the land and the labour and NEDfi can provide the capital. The present gaps in the infrastructure will be filled further aiding the economic growth of the State," he said. The CS, however, warned that Sikkim should be "wary" of "fly-by-night operators" who target the immense subsidies the State enjoys after it joined the North Eastern Council.

NEDfi was recently awarded the ISO 9000 certificate, making it the first agency of its kind in the North-East to receive one. It plans to focus on small and medium enterprises in Sikkim. It has appointed Ugen Tashi [a local with banking experience, having worked with IDBI] as the Nodal Officer for Sikkim.

Centre allocates Rs. 17 crores for spices in northeast

a NOW REPORT

Cardamom growers in Sikkim get a shot in the arm with the new Central Government scheme which allocates Rs. 17 crores for export-oriented development of spices in the North-Eastern states.

The programme will consider the potential of improving production and productivity of a number of spices grown in this region. The Spices Board also proposes to take up cultivation of

large cardamom in these states.

The Board, it is learnt, will support the State governments and NGOs for multiplication of planting materials and maintenance during gestation period subject to a maximum of Rs.17,500 per hectare.

Large cardamom which is grown in Sikkim requires special type of curing chambers to dry and Spices Board proposes to construct 15 community curing houses with a capacity of 1,000 kg each at a total outlay of Rs. 75 lakhs.

The Board has also proposed

to bring 3,835 ha under organic pepper cultivation in the region at a cost of Rs. 4 crores. Herbal spices such as rosemary, thyme, parsley, oregano, basil etc. are also proposed to be brought under cultivation in 100 ha during the current plan at an outlay of Rs. 30 lakhs.

The Board proposes to give 25 per cent of the cost for setting up of vermi-compost units subject to a maximum of Rs. 1,250 per unit. About 5,000 units at a cost of Rs. 62 lakhs will be set up during the Plan period, it is learnt.

TASHI NAMGYAL ACADEMY GANGTOK, SIKKIM

ADMISSION NOTICE

- Entrance Test for Admission in Lower Kindergarten for the academic session - 2004 will be conducted on SUNDAY - 2 NOVEMBER 2003 at 9:00 AM
- Prospectus / Application forms would be available in the school office from 15th September 2003 on payment.
- For LKG age should be +4 (plus four) years but below 5 years as on 1st January 2004 and student should not have studied in UKG in 2003 session.
- The last date for submission of application form would be 31 November 2003 by 3 PM along with the following documents.
 - Date of Birth Certificate in original and in duplicate copy obtained from the Office of the Chief Registrar of Births and Deaths Department.
 - Latest passport and stamp size photographs.
 - Registration fee of Rs. 2000/- (Rupees Two Thousand) only (non-refundable) to be deposited in the State Bank of India, Zero Point Branch, Gangtok. Pay in slip can be obtained from the school office after due verification of application form.
 - Attested copy of (parent's) SSC or certificate of identification from DC's office.
- PLEASE NOTE THAT NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH OF THE STUDENT ONCE ENTERED IN THE APPLICATION FORM SHALL NOT BE CHANGED.
- Mere registration is no guarantee of admission. It only entitles a student to take the entrance test. The school does not let parents to check / compare the scripts, however, it would ensure that the test is fairly and efficiently conducted.
- Test will be conducted in basic skills of English and Number Works and Viva-Voce.

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Classifieds advertisements can be booked at the following collection centres: **Porky's**, Super Market; **Oberois**, Naya Bazaar; **Baker's Cafe**, MG Marg; **Cafe Tibet**, NH-31A.



WHEN UNDERDOGS COME UP TOPS

Pachey Primary School does a Lagaan

Gear up cricketers, its trial time

GANGTOK: Sikkim Cricket Association has announced plans to hold trials for selection of players for the 2003-04 season. Interested cricketers who are residing in Sikkim, are invited to attend the above trials for selection in their respective districts. In case of players from outside Sikkim, they are eligible to attend the trials provided they have participated in a domestic tournament of the State. The SCA has called on players to report with their own kits and in proper dress. Players are to bear their own expenses for the trials.

The trials for the Under-15, Under-17 and Under-19 categories will be held in the districts on August 23 and 24.

Contact Persons:

North- Sonam Palden Bhutia, Phone: 234819/ 9434117250.

East- Lakpa Chettri, 224527/ 9832046621

South- Bikash Pradhan/ Pavitra Sharma, 257075/ 276499/ 257089

West- Karma Thendup Bhutia, 250593/ 9434179387

a NOW REPORT

PAKYONG: St. Xavier's School, Pakyong, recently celebrated its Golden Jubilee. But another school from Pakyong had reason to celebrate too, on the same occasion.

In the Golden Jubilee Memorial Football Match held by St. Xavier's to commemorate the celebrations, little heard Pachey Primary School did a "Lagaan" on

more established schools.

In the opening Sub-Junior Football match, Pachey school beat St. Xavier's 5-0 to go on to the next round. In the second round the school beat TNA 1-0 to get to the semi finals. Here it met St. George School, Pedong. A goalless 90 minutes saw the game going into overtime. Boys from Pachey school, led by their captain, Tempo Gyatso Bhutia took the game to a penalty shoot out. Here they beat their rivals 4-2.

The unfancied boys from Pachey School were now in the finals. Here they met St. Xavier's again.

The 30 July finals saw a repeat of the first match. Pachey School won by a resounding 5-0 margin to lift the cup. Coach PW Lepcha could not have been happier. The hard work that he and his boys had put in preparation, showed in the results. The victory was something the Pachey School boys will remember for a long time.

INCENTIVES BACKLOG TO BE CLEARED ON I-DAY

Deptt. of Sports & Youth Affairs gets serious about awarding achievers; new policy offers Rs. 1 crore for Olympic gold

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The 15 August celebrations this year will see many sports-persons from the state get rich cash awards for their performance in the field.

Cash awards for 20 in football, 14 for Tae-Kwon-do, 10 in Boxing, 5 in Table Tennis and one each for Archery and Swimming will be handed out by the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs.

Although cash incentives for good performance have long been the policy, over the years a backlog of payments to deserving candidates had built up. All such cash incentives which are due will be cleared in one sweep this year. Along with it a new structure for cash incentives will be put into

place to further encourage and motivate sports-persons in their pursuit of excellence. And the handouts are generous.

A sum of Rs. 1 crore for an Olympic Gold. And for those who think that is far-fetched, it is still within reach for archer Tarun Deep Rai, our contender for gold in the next Olympics, who has qualified in both the team and individual events for Athens.

A prize in other international games will fetch cash-awards worth Rs. 5-15 lakhs. Medals won in national games organised by the Indian Olympic Association get as much as Rs. 2-5 lakhs for individual events and Rs. 20,000-50,000 for team events while medallists in the North East Sports Festivals will get awards ranging from Rs. 5000 to 10,000. Even

state level competitions have cash incentives worth Rs. 5,000.

The cash awards will be given only to permanent residents of Sikkim, who represent the State in the notified competitions. A certificate to this effect issued by the SDM/DM of the concerned area must be produced while making the claim. Claims for cash awards should be made within 1 year of winning a medal.

Under-19 soccer tourney gets underway

GEYZING: The Sikkim Under-19 Football Tournament 2003 got underway at Kyongsa Ground, here on 4 August, Monday. The tournament which was earlier slated to start on 2 August has been organised by the Sikkim Football Association and Department of Sports and Youth Affairs.

The inaugural match was played between Khecheopalri Lake Club and Sinolchu Club. The first three matches will be played at Kyongsa Ground while the rest of the matches will be shared between Kyongsa and the Bhaichung Stadium in Namchi.

Volleyball tourney for players to smash into limelight

by NIGEL CASHMORE

GANGTOK: The Independence Day Volley Ball Tournament began at Burtuk Junior High School on August 4. Five teams are participating in the girl's category while seven teams are participating in the Junior Boy's section. The tournament has been organized by ST Bhutia, Head Master, Burtuk Junior High School.

The opening match of the tournament was between TNA and PNGSSS. Another two matches were held on the same day between Tathangchen Secondary School and Modern Secondary School while the last match of the day was between junior boys in which Burtuk Junior High School took on Tathangchen Secondary School.

The tournament is being held after a gap of three years. ST Bhutia who held the last tournament at Penlong in 1999, has now decided to hold the tournament on a more regular basis.



Although it is difficult to get sponsors, Mr. Bhutia expressed gratitude towards Hari Stores, MG Marg, for sponsoring the trophies for the tournament. The tournament will also be giving the most promising team trophy, the best player trophy and other individual trophies to the players. The trophies for the junior boys is being sponsored by the school itself. According to Mr. Bhutia, The

tournament offers a platform for both boys and girls to show their talent. It is also an opportunity for sports officials of the state to search for young talent who could then be further groomed.

At the time of going to the press, PNGSS beat TNA, in the second match Tathangchen beat Modern School girls, in another match Burtuk School boys beat Tathangchen School boys.

SIKKIM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION Independence Day Football Tournament for CHOGYAL SIR TASHI NAMGYAL MEMORIAL CUP 2003

FIXTURE

Pre-Quarter

A Dzongri Club v/s (7.8.03, 3PM)
Ghoom Jorebangla Sp. Club

B Munal Club, NEPAL v/s (8.8.03, 3PM)
Northerners

Quarter Final

C Sikkim Police XI v/s (9.8.03, 3PM)
WINNER OF 'A'

D Himalshree (Kalimpong) v/s (10.8.03, 3PM)
UKFC (Kurseong)

E SKM United Sp. Club. v/s (11.8.03, 3PM)
DSPSA, Durgapur

F Thimpu XI v/s (10.8.03, 3PM)
WINNER OF 'B'

Semi Final

G WINNER OF 'C' v/s (12.8.03, 3PM)
WINNER OF 'D'

H WINNER OF 'E' v/s (13.8.03, 3PM)
WINNER OF 'F'

Final

WINNER OF 'G' v/s (15.8.03, 1:45PM)
WINNER OF 'H'

- N.B.:**
1. All the matches will be played at Tashi Namgyal Academy Ground, Gangtok.
 2. Games will be played as per the rules of the AIFF.
 3. SFA Reserves the right to re-schedule the fixture (if needed).

MATCH COMMISSIONERS:

7.8.03 Mr. Karma Wangchuk
8.8.03 Mr. Lalit Rai
9.8.03 Mr. C. C. Bhutia
10.8.03 Mr. P. C. Mundra (1st Match)
Mr. Kunzang N. (2nd Match)

11.8.03 Mr. Arjun Roka
12.8.03 Mr. Dhondup Lepcha
13.8.03 Mr. Rinchen Bhutia
15.8.03 Mr. Karma P. Bhutia

MENLA ETHENPA
Hony. Secretary

SPORTS

The Mountain chooses the Climbers

Sikkim's Phoolmaya Tamang creates history atop peak in Leh

a NOW REPORT

Phoolmaya Tamang from Sikkim created history along with three other women, when she became part of the first all-women group to scale the virgin Argan Kangri Peak in Ladakh. The nine member all-woman team was led by Rita Gombu Marwah.

Four team members, including Phoolmaya, scaled the peak after a three week long expedition, hitting the summit on 20 July at 7.45 am. The climb was the Indian Mountaineering Foundation's (IMF) official commemoration of the golden jubilee of Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay's conquest of Mt. Everest. Though at 6,789 metres Argan Khangri does not count among the highest peaks, it has its share of perils.

On the selection of the eventual summiteers, senior team



A file photo of Phoolmaya Tamang at the Everest base camp

member Yana Banerjee-Bey said, "The mountain chooses the climbers. In this case, we decided that four of us should go to the summit - those four who settled in best with the conditions".

Phoolmaya, is an instructor at Sonam Gyatso Mountaineering Institute, and was one of the representatives of Sikkim at the

golden jubilee celebrations of the ascent of Mt. Everest. The first mountain she climbed was Lake Khangtse in North Sikkim, after which there was no looking back. Up in the mountains she says she becomes a completely different person. "Up there all that matters is the will to reach the top".

Phoolmaya, who recently went up to 7467 metres along the 8849 Mt. Everest, said, "Almost everything went according to plan. It was a bit difficult in stretches because sometimes the ascent was as steep as 75 degrees. But the team did everything in a coordinated way and that's why it worked." After a lull in mountaineering activity in Sikkim, there seems to be a sudden deluge of achievements by Sikkimese climbers. Phoolmaya's colleague at SGMI, Nadre Sherpa submitted Everest for the second time recently and is slated to be part of an Indian expedition to K2 in Pakistan next year.

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