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KALIMPONG REMEMBERS THE ROERICHS
TURN TO pg 5 FOR DETAILS

TAMANGS WANT MORE
TURN TO pg 4 FOR DETAILS

CHEWANG DADUL LASHES OUT AGAINST BHANDARI
TURN TO pg 4 FOR DETAILS

DETAILS ON pg 3
DDRC HANDED OVER TO SOCIAL WELFARE

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Chakung moves to Gangtok, wants Goley back



SDF supporters from Chakung in vehicles flying the party flag on the return leg after a show of strength in support of PS Tamang, whom they want retained for their constituency

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 March: It was almost as if all of Chakung had emptied into Gangtok as some 350 vehicles [jeeps and trucks] carrying ruling party supporters from the south Sikkim constituency rolled into the capital in a bid to petition the SDF high-command to reconsider its decision to take their area MLA, PS Tamang, known more popularly as PS Goley, away to Central Pendam. Reports indicate that the party decision to pit Mr. Tamang against SPCC [I] president Nar Bahadur Bhandari from Central Pendam, evoked a very emotional response at Chakung.

I AM AN SDF SOLDIER, WILL CONTEST FROM WHEREVER THE PARTY WANTS ME TO: GOLEY

Mr. Tamang, while speaking to NOW! from Soreong, said that the public response was "spontaneous" and clarified that he had no role to play in the show of support which spilled over to Gangtok streets.

"In fact, after hearing the party decision yesterday, I was planning to leave for Gangtok immediately. People from Chakung, however, came over and insisted that I did not leave for Gangtok. All they

wanted to do was try and retain me at Chakung and given the high emotions on display, I decided to listen to them and stayed back. It is a democracy and they have the right to express themselves and I did not want the situation to spiral out of control, so I listened to them and let them go to Gangtok. Bear in mind, there are no opposition supporters in Chakung, they are with the SDF," he said.

Mr. Tamang added that the public reaction was also understandable given the fact that a certain bond had

Bhandari's bazaar yatra

SARIKAHATREYA

GANGTOK, 31 March: "Yo pali, Congress lai jitauno parchha hai," a female voice speaks from behind a circle of party faithfuls and curious onlookers even as the former Chief Minister greets a totally bemused and perplexed lady sitting behind a sewing machine inside a tailoring shop at the MG Marg. An assistant hands over a khada to Nar Bahadur Bhandari, who puts it around the lady's neck and with folded hands seeks support for the Congress.

In the next shop, the exercise is repeated. The SPCC [I] president, flanked by a group of party members, with a party Standard leading ahead, seeks every shop along the commercial hub of the capital, thus marking the official start to the Congress' canvassing from here today.

This may not be anything like Sonia Gandhi's road shows. But Mr. Bhandari is sure trying to emulate that here. So its paid yatra for him through an area which sees no vehicles after 5PM. And what better start to his comeback yatra than from the Capital itself?

The former Chief Minister looked confident and visibly happy with the response he was getting. Some even offer him a khada back. All greet him with folded hands. He stops for small chitchats with the shopkeepers. Addresses a few by their names. No bhashans here. Has direct one-to-ones with the Janata. "Our day has come, now we have to work together," he cajoles. His assistants distribute the Congress manifesto to the people. All look pleased. It's not everyday that a

turn to pg 5

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FIRST TIME IN SIKKIM

NOW!

FIRST WITH THE NEWS

The Next Without Prejudices

The world as we know it might be turning into a global village and WTO might be fudging international boundaries as far as trade is concerned, but people in general are becoming more and more parochial. Almost every district wants to express itself as an autonomous region and every autonomous council harbours statehood aspirations. Every locality frowns upon outsiders searching their futures amongst them and every community swears it has a unique identity independent of all others which is in need of safeguarding.

While it would be improper to deny anyone their right to self-expression, it would be criminal to ignore the fact that self-expression in the present-day politically charged times almost always comes at the cost of denying someone else. Our generation has abused with alacrity this fundamental right and mindsets are already fixated on ideas which are prejudiced and illogical. There is little that can be done on this front, but if we accept that things need to change, we should try and do so with the generation still untrained in the biases which we have fomented. It is surprising how the secular environment of the schools still leaves many young minds scarred with prejudices about other communities. True, Sikkim does not have an obvious communal divide, but enter the homes and the opinions, which could later inflame into searing conflagrations, are all there. Passing comments, which never posed serious repercussions earlier, are no longer as innocent as they used to be in times when violent expressions were rare. We need to be more careful and at the cost of sounding trite - more politically correct in the presence of younger adults.

But that's something we can practise at home. If we are to remain free of the communalism which has already swept most of the country and is trying to find its own interpretation in Sikkim, we need to address the issue more scientifically. The best places to start are the schools. It is perhaps time that classes be set aside to educate the younger generation on what makes their culture, their heritage and history and how that has been embellished with influences from elsewhere. No culture blooms in isolation and not all influences are acts of dilution. Similarly, no overt attempts should be made to bring every community under one umbrella and students should be allowed the chance to celebrate each community's individuality. Once they know of other cultures and are also aware of their own, they will not feel threatened. The paranoia which keeps Sikkim from achieving what it is worth will then hopefully be cured.

There is no need to keep the future generation in the dark about differences which exist between different communities here. Perhaps, if they are well informed about the points of attrition, they will also be able to work out a solution. They might even discard the whole concept of notional contradictions. But, they will be able to do so only if trusted with the information. What the coming generation has to learn is that conflict is inevitable, but violence isn't. They have to learn that we, as Sikkimese, do not have to agree upon everything, but it would be nice if we could live comfortably with different points of views. The time for sweeping stereotypical judgements is gone. Sikkim might not be a violent State at present, but it could still borrow a tip from what schools elsewhere in the world are trying out - including nonviolent conflict resolution workshops in their curriculum.

DAMARU LAL BHANDARI

Of course, one could cite so many cogent examples when it comes to illustrate the fact that the incumbent government led by none other than Surya Bahadur Thapa is illegitimate and lacks the desired constitutional authority and mandate to remain in place even a second more.

What's more, he lacks even basic personal dignity expected from someone who is occupying the government secretariat, which had at times been occupied by some deserving people and who could be identified as the representatives of the people. But more about that in the subsequent section.

To begin with, one could say none other than the monarch picked him up, with none of the parties that should be having complete say in the affairs of the state conferred on the issue as to who should succeed his predecessor Lokendra Bahadur Chand fast enough.

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY

However, all this is something which could be expected to happen only in a realm where law takes its own course and thieves, pickpockets, hardened criminals, drug-traffickers, bootleggers, wheeler-dealers and promiscuous elements caught with their pants down are punished by hanging on the nearest electricity poles. Not here for sure.

And given the scenario, I am not expecting anything good happening here until the law takes its own course, until there is right person on the right seat at the right time and crimes mentioned in the preceding section are not treated as serious offenses and con-

victs awarded capital punishment.

The example to establish the fact that

Thapa's government is wholly illegitimate would run

into a book-length story.

That is if it undergoes the

rigor of probing and narrating the entire

trail of events, which prevailed upon the monarch when it came to decide whether he must

stick to Chand or go with Thapa. Oh yes,

future historians have a tough task in hand,

with the past historians going down in history

after coming up with a largely pornographic account of the event.

What I know for sure is Thapa enjoys the

It's Time To Move On, Again

-19-

Now that I had begun to think about this matter, this desire to earn more stuck in my mind and I could think of nothing else but how to earn more and get as much as the others. I begged the cook, who was always very kind to me, to look around from time to time to see whether there might be anywhere some vacant place suitable for me. And one day he did find me a job about fifteen miles from Delhi in a small village called Ghaziabad.

When the cook told me about this job, I was in difficulty. How could

I go away from this place when I had no excuse for leaving? Since I had never made any error, my master would probably not want to let me go. If I could make some mistake for my master to see, he might perhaps dismiss me, or at least not object to my going away to take another place.

At last I thought of something. One day I went out in the morning to the bazaar and then to an Indian picture house, to the morning show at eleven o'clock. This picture I saw with great enjoyment, then I continued to walk around the bazaar till three o'clock in the afternoon. I came home too late for my usual work. My mistress was angry with me and began to abuse me in English with all kinds of nasty words such as 'dirty dog' and 'fool'. But since I did not understand the meaning of the words, I did not mind her abuse.

That same day I told my mistress that I did not want to continue working any longer in this house, that I would like to look for another place if she had no objection. She

said there was no objection whatever if I was not happy to work for her. This settled the matter. How happy

could for a moment only show my happiness by folding my hands and smiling to show my gratitude for the gift.

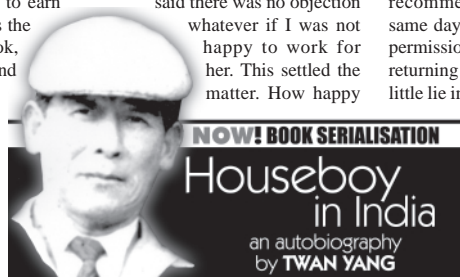
The cook gave me a letter of recommendation, and that very same day I asked my mistress for permission to leave, saying I was returning to my country. I told this little lie in order to part from her in

a kindly way. My mistress raised no objection, as she did not like to keep me if I was dissatisfied. She could afford to pay wages and obtain as many boys as she liked instead of me. In this world there is only one great magician, and that is money.

I had not known much about money up till now. All I knew was to make friends with that bag in the body called stomach. But then I learned that the absence of money was an obstacle to this friendship; for without money my friend, the stomach, could not help me and would have to be buried in the ground.

The cook came with to the Delhi Station to show me the train and then left me, after giving me a ticket for Ghaziabad. I do not know how much he paid for it, but I felt very grateful for his kindness to a poor boy. I came at length to the station at Ghaziabad and got down to the platform from the third-class carriage with my little box and the bedding. I went straight toward the railway office near the platform with my letter and showed it to a railway babu, asking how I could find the place given in the address.

- to be continued



NOW! BOOK SERIALIZATION

Houseboy in India
an autobiography
by TWAN YANG

Artist, filmmaker, keen photographer, columnist with international magazines... It's hard to pin Twan Yang down. Born to a Chinese father and Tibetan mother, he grew up in Kalimpong and worked in Sikkim. NOW! serializes Twan Yang's autobiography, Houseboy in India...

my heart felt! My face beamed and smiled: feet, arms and hands all worked nobly together on account of this happiness. I worked so well because of this feeling that my mistress said, "What has happened to you today that you seem so very happy?" I invented an answer, saying that today was my birthday. Really, I meant the birthday of a new place.

Now the English have a curious custom that on one's birthday one receives gifts to show the happiness of the occasion. So now my mistress very kindly gave me a pair of new shoes and a packet of chocolate as a birthday gift. This gave me the greatest joy and at the same time caused a great deal of trouble in my mind, for now that she showed, for the first time in a long while, kind feelings towards me, I no longer felt so sure I should leave this place and go to Ghaziabad. Thinking this, I

Democracy does not only allow a person the liberty of holding an opinion, but also expressing it publicly. If you feel strongly about something that has been reported in NOW! or have an opinion on some recent development, then share it with a wider audience. While the LETTERS section will carry responses to articles and news carried in NOW!, ACTION MAIL is about complaints and grievances. Wherever possible, NOW! shall also search out a response to the Action Mail. If not, then at least a complaint would have been filed in the public domain. write to: NOW!, Gairi Gaon, Tadong, East Sikkim, or email: sikkimnow@rediffmail.com

dubious distinction of spreading the name of the nation far and wide given his credentials and of course his status as a politician. In fact, this is happening on its own with the rebels running amok in the countryside and killing in gay abandon while the foreign press sees to it that Nepal hits media headlines back at home. Then there is defense establishment, which sees victory in huge setback. What is also being overlooked is the rapes perpetrated on rural womenfolk.

I wonder whether the people of Iceland, for example, had ever heard of Nepal before although they are now reading every lurid detail about this nation and what is going wrong and who is responsible and abetting it, too. They are also learning that there is a monarch calling the shots in the twenty-first century while, of course, the parliament stands dissolved and lawmakers go begging around, with elections a forgotten story altogether.

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Disability Rehab Centre handed over to Social Welfare Deptt.

ANAND OBEROI

GANGTOK, 31 March: The District Disability Rehabilitation Centre [DDRC] was formally handed over to the Social Welfare Department, Government of Sikkim by AYJNIHH, Mumbai, here at Ladakhi Building, STNM Hospital today.

DDRCs have been set up in various states in the country with the aim of providing comprehensive rehabilitation services to the Persons With Disabilities [PWDs] under one roof.

In Sikkim, it was being run at STNM hospital in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, with help from the Home Department. In the past three years, DDRC has reached its services to 4,624 persons with disabilities by providing various kinds of hearing, visual and ortho aid.

The Chief Guest for the function was C. Cintury, Principal Secretary, Social Welfare. The Guest of honour was Dr. DK Subba, Director, Health & Family Welfare. Others present were N Lepcha, Joint Secretary, SWD, Nodal Officer, DDRC, Mr. Matthew, Gangtok, AYJNIHH, Administrator DDRC, Dr SK Dewan, HOD/Ortho, Deepa Rani Thapa, Dy Secretary, SWD,

Cintury assures the good work will continue

staff of DDRC, officers of VHAS and SWD, doctors and officers of the Department of Health.

Nodal Officer, N. Lepcha in his handing-over speech said that ever since it was established, DDRC has provided the best aid and appliances to the disabled people in the state. Although there were some doubts voiced initially about the possibility of sustaining the project, all obstacles had been overcome by the dedication of the staff and the concerned departments, he said.

He also handed over equipment and accessories to the Social Welfare Department.

Saying that 5,000 aid appliances had been given to the disabled in the state which covered about 30 per cent of disabled in Sikkim, he asked the Department to ensure that the figure goes up to 100 per cent.

Dr. SK Dewan, who has been closely associated with the DDRC programme, said that it was one of the best ways to provide help and



Social Welfare Principal Secretary, Ms. C. Cintury (centre), goes through the documents which formalise the handing over of DDRC to her department

assistance to the disabled. He disclosed that Sikkim was the first state in the North-East that provided equipment for the disabled.

Dr. Subba, in his speech hoped that now that the responsibility had shifted from the Health Department to the Social Welfare Department,

the disabled would continue to get their rights. Saying that the picture all over the country for providing facilities and protection of the rights of the disabled people was not very encouraging, he hoped that Sikkim being a small state could create the political will

to extend support towards the rights of the disabled. He also gave his assurance that the Health Department would continue to give their support towards providing aid, accessories and facilities to the disabled in the state.

Thanking the Health Department for providing all technical assistance to DDRC in the past years, the Chief Guest Ms. Cintury said that while earlier DDRC was being handled by an NGO, now it would be the responsibility of the SWD.

She guaranteed that the staff would be retained so that the disabled do not face problems as the 10 dedicated workers were already qualified at the national level. She also made it clear that all the central rules and acts would be given full priority and that the Government of Sikkim was committed to the provisions of the People With Disabilities Act.

Informing that new schools for the disabled were being opened in the State, she asked government offices and movie halls to make adequate infrastructure for the disabled. She further said that the Election Commission had already sensitized the polling officers about the provisions for the disabled to vote.

State Supervisory Board holds meet to warn against prenatal sex-determination

STUDY REVEALS, SIKKIM'S WORKING WOMEN PREFER DAUGHTERS

RANJIT SINGH

GANGTOK, 31 March: Sex determination before birth is to be made a criminal act. This was revealed in a meeting held by the State Supervisory Board under Pre Natal Diagnostic Technique [PNDT] Amendment Act, 2002 at Hotel Sonam Palgey today. The meet was organised by the Deptt. of Health & Family Welfare, and was attended largely by members of the State Supervisory Committee.

The Director, Family Welfare warned of the penalties to be faced by those indulging in sex determination and selection.

"Firstly, the pregnant woman herself will come under the scanner as will her family. Secondly, the doctor involved will have his license cancelled for 2 years for a first-time offence and then permanently if found guilty again. There will also be a fine of Rs. 1 lakh and a jail term of up to 5 years," she informed.

With pre-natal sex-determination tests becoming very popular in India, especially in the mainland, and the misuse of ultrasound sonography techniques, an awareness campaign on maternal and child health has been launched by the Dept. of Health to create aware-

ness on the same among the masses.

The family welfare programme was based on an integrated, bottom-up approach driven by the needs and demands of the society. Its basic premise was the right of a woman to her sex, to have a child in a safe and secure manner and her right to be informed and provided the best and safest health facilities.

The various officials of the State Health Department provided a status report on the existing maternal and child health situation in the state.

The Health Secretary, while addressing the audience, expressed concern on the falling sex ratio in the state but at the same time said that female foeticide though prevalent in the country was not an issue in Sikkim as it was not practiced here. While the national

sex ratio was 927 females per 1000 males, for Sikkim it was 875:1000.

"On the other hand, if the 0-6 age group of children were included in the sex ratio then the number of females per 1000 males shoots up to 986 which is the highest in the country," the Health Secretary revealed.

A survey conducted by the health department for the past couple of years had revealed that while

83% of the urban population preferred a son a very healthy 78% were comfortable with having a daughter. Those belonging to the SC/ST category, along with employed women, all preferred a daughter. The low sex-ratio was therefore confusing.

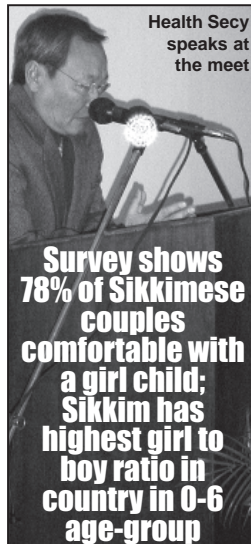
The Health Secretary reasoned that influx of workers from other parts of the country in the

state was one reason for the low sex ratio of Sikkim as was the low literacy rate and poor nutrition among females. He also revealed that the north district had the lowest sex ratio in the state, which according to him was due to the many projects being undertaken there, which involved the importing of labour.

The targets of the Reproductive and Child Health scheme under 10th plan policy of the State Government were highlighted as 100 per cent institution delivery

Also, to be implemented was the PNDT Amendment Act, 2002 as per the order of the Supreme Court. The Act was first formulated in 1994 and came into effect in the year 1996. The Act prohibits sex determination before birth; it seeks to regularise its implementation and prevent the misuse of the technique involved (ultra sound sonography) which is also used to detect genetic disorders and other abnormalities in the foetus.

Under the direction of the Supreme Court, for the proper implementation of the Act, every state was to set up a State Supervisory Board, three Appropriate Authority Committee and Advisory Committees at the district level.



ECI appoints Observers for Sikkim

GANGTOK, 31 March: The Election commission has appointed AK Agnhotri, Malini V. Shankar and Saurabh Chandra as Observers for the coming elections in Sikkim.

Several officers from the State have also been deputed as Observers to other states for the coming elections.

TW Barfungpa has been sent to 3-Churu, Rajasthan, Dorji Dadul to 15- Sabarkantha, Gujarat, Tobzor Dorjee, Reserve, Sangay D Basit to 2- Tura, Meghalaya, Lobzang Bhutia to 6-Budaun, Uttar Pradesh, Alok K Srivastava to 5-Chandni Chowk, Delhi, Suresh Chandra Gupta to 2-Arunachal East, Gyan Prakash Upadhyaya to Mumbai South, Maharashtra, VB Pathak to 52-Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, Girmee Goparma to Latur, Maharashtra, Nari Tshering to Mangaldoi, Assam, Nangzey Dorjee to 4-Bilaspur, Chattisgarh and BP Pradhan, Reserve.

[IPR]

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Chakung moves to Gangtok

Contd from pg 1

developed between him and the people after having worked for them for the past nine and a half years.

People from his constituency did make it to Gangtok after much travails of getting delayed at Rangpo and being allowed through only in batches. Heavy deployment of police personnel in Gangtok directed their movement which was limited to a show of strength procession before being led back. The supporters, however, wanted to meet the party high-command and the Chief Minister himself. That did not happen and the vehicles returned.

When asked to comment on the party decision to send him to Central Pendam which could be considered the toughest fight in the upcoming polls as it pits Mr. Tamang against Mr. Bhandari in a constituency which voted in the latter's favour last time around, Mr. Tamang said: "I a loyal party worker. I am a soldier who will go and fight wherever the party decides to send me. See, individually, I am nothing. It is the party that makes me and the party will be supporting me in Central Pendam too."

Mr. Tamang, who was also the Industries and Animal Husbandry Minister in the present term, admitted that the party had reposed great faith in him by sending him to Central Pendam.

"The party has shouldered me with great responsibility and I have to meet the expectations it has from me," he said, while adding that he would be arriving in Gangtok the next day [1 April] to take charge of his new responsibilities.

He also added that now that the emotions had lowered a bit, he was speaking with party supporters in Chakung and convincing them to accept the party decision in the right spirit.

FORMER LIEUTENANT SEES A DICTATOR IN BHANDARI

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 March: Chewang Dadul Bhutia, former Secretary of SPCC [I], has reacted sharply to media-reports of his being expelled from the party by its president Nar Bahadur Bhandari. Expelled day before yesterday for alleged "anti-party activities," Mr. Bhutia has termed the decision as mala-fide, arbitrary and against the interests of the Congress in the State.

"By expelling me from the SPCC, Mr. Bhandari has proved once again his dictatorial style of functioning for which he is known," claims Mr. Chewang.

He also calls the decision taken by Mr. Bhandari to field Sonam Bhutia from the Sang-Martam constituency as the Congress candidate as "equally arbitrary, dictatorial and



DADUL SAYS EXPULSION ILLEGAL; WARNS ELECTORATE AGAINST BHANDARI

undemocratic in a national party which is governed by a written constitution."

"I supported Mr. Bhandari for more than ten years and he always relied on me during his difficult days in the Opposition. He consistently projected me as the candidate to the Assembly from the Sang-Martam constituency. I have even spent my own money in nurturing the constituency. This decision to nominate Sonam Bhutia as the party's official candidate from Sang-Martam without even consulting me is most unfortunate," he says.

Mr. Bhutia has also accused Mr. Bhandari of violating the letter and spirit of the constitution of the INC as he was expelled without even

being served a show-cause notice.

"Therefore," he says, "the decision to expel me is illegal and mala-fide."

He says he has already written to the AICC president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi and the CWC [Sikkim] incharge, Salman Khurshid about his illegal expulsion.

Serving a warning to the electorate, Mr. Chewang appealed to the people of Sikkim and to those of Sang-Martam in particular to be careful and cautious during the ensuing polls.

"We cannot saddle Mr. Bhandari on the chair and make him a dictator for another five years," he says. "We are a democracy and we must elect democrats as our leaders to govern the state for the next five years," he concludes.

Tamang lobby wants one more ticket

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK, 31 March: A press release issued by Nima Norbu Lama, claiming to speak on behalf of the Tamang supporters of the Sikkim Democratic Front has demanded that one more member of their community be awarded a party ticket. Although ten names still remain to be announced, the release, while reiterating that the Tamangs of Sikkim continue to "stand" by the party president Pawan Chamling and SDF, stresses that Tamangs deserve one more candidate.

While appreciating the work of the SDF government especially in securing Schedule Tribe status for the Tamang and Limbu communities, the press release commends the SDF high-command for its timely intervention and struggle towards the attainment of this end.

But the community has taken exception to being given only one seat for the Assembly elections while the Limbus have been given four seats.

Claiming that the voter share of Tamangs has increased from 14,186 in 1999 to 16,000 according to latest trends, the Tamangs feel that the 4:1 seat declaration has created a sense of injustice among them.

The release has also voiced reservations about the party decision to field PS Tamang from Central Pendam as they fear that his transfer from a confirmed seat might leave the Tamangs with no representation in the Assembly at all.

The release also expresses hope that their "boldness" is "absorbed in a positive manner" since it is not an attempt to offend the party president.

The process of welcoming new faces continues

a NOW REPORT

NAMCHI, 31 March: After much suspense over who would find favour with parliamentary board of the SDF to win a ticket for Jorethang, an answer came with the announcement of KN Rai's candidature for the constituency. Mr. Rai was shifted from his constituency of Wok to this border constituency yesterday. Even though there were reservations over how Jorethang would react, reports indicate that this SDF stronghold has decided to respect the party high-command's decision.

Mr. Rai visited Jorethang today and was received by some 150 party supporters in an indication of this support. On his first visit to Jorethang since the announcement of his candidature, Mr. Rai also called on ticket hopeful Binod Rai at Mickhola.

"It was a simple meeting and not concerned with any political or campaigning strategies," Mr. Binod Rai later revealed. The area candidate will be coming to Jorethang again and will then declare the place and time for the launch of his campaign, he added.

The process of acceptance, which started yesterday with incumbent MLA from Rinchenpong, OT Lepcha, welcoming Dawcho Lepcha as the new candidate, continued with Tulsu Prasad Pradhan, sitting MLA from Hee Bermiock extending support to NK Subba as the new candidate for the constituency. A press release issued by him today calls upon the panchayats and party workers of Hee Bermiock to "whole heartedly support and work for the interest and success of the party and to ensure the victory of NK Subba with a huge margin in the forthcoming elections."

LIST IS FINAL, STRESSES DD

GANGTOK, 31 March: The Sikkim Democratic Front has reiterated that the list of 22 candidates for the Assembly polls released here yesterday was the final list and there would be no changes in it.

Addressing party supporters at the SDF head-office here today, the vice-president [administration], DD Bhutia said that the list had been prepared by the Parliamentary Board keeping in mind the aspirations and the welfare of the people of the State and has been approved by all sections of the party cadre. Being a party based on ideology and principles, all decisions taken by the SDF were for the well being of the people of the State, Mr. Bhutia said.

Meanwhile, the party workers from the Pathing Constituency in East Sikkim have welcomed the candidature of Mingma Sherpa and extended full support to him, a press statement from the SDF head office read.



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M.G. Marg, Gangtok

Russian Year of the Roerich's makes a Kalimpong stop

KARAN SHAH

KALIMPONG, 31 March: Helena Roerich, wife of eminent Russian painter Nicholas Roerich, spent the last eight years of her life in Kalimpong, where she settled with her son George in 1947. She was revered by the local people as a great spiritual teacher and philanthropist. A disciple of Mahatma Morya, she is best known for writing about Agni Yoga - a spiritual discipline she learnt from her guru.

As part of the initiative to honour Roerich, the Agni Yoga practitioners are converting

Russian Amabassdor visits Kalimpong, want's town's Roerich connection publicised

Crookerty, the house in which she lived, into a museum dedicated to the Roerich family.

Today, it was the turn of the Russian Ambassador Extraordinary to India and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation Alexander M. Kadakin to pay his respects by visiting the White Stupa where Helena Roerich was cremated at Buddhist Gompa [Durpin Dara]. Later he also visited her cottage, Crookerty.

"This year," he said, "has been dedicated to them in Russia and has been named as the International Year of the Roerich's."

In Russia postage stamps and coins have also been issued to commemorate the family.

"We'd also love if the history of the Roerich family and the White Stupa of Helen be included in all of the guide books and the history of the place," he said, while adding that

all organizations are welcome to invest in Crookerty now that it is being turned into a museum.

Roerich belonged to a distinguished Russian family, whose members had strong ties with India.

Helena Roerich dedicated her life to India in more ways than one. She worked for peace and understanding and was deeply involved in the country's spiritual heritage. The entire Roerich family has

helped strengthen Indo-Russian bonds. In many ways, the Roerichs remain the bridge that connects Russia and India on the cultural front. Though the Kalimpong initiative will not be handled directly by the Russian consulate, it will support local efforts by providing documents and samples of work.

Helena Roerich died in Kalimpong on 5 October, 1955.

BHANDARI'S BAZAAR YATRA

Contd from pg 1

former Chief Minister visits them in their homes.

But these are election times. And the netas are only too aware of the importance of reaching out directly to the people. A handshake, a few pleasantries exchanged. After all, Gangtok ko janata has always favoured the Opposition. It did so the last time around, and before that and before that...

The Congress MP candidate is also here. Biraj Adhikari says it is also the official kickoff of his campaign for the Lok Sabha berth as well.

The entourage stops at a popular Chia Dokan for chia ra samosa. The chiawalah is flattered; quickly adjusts chairs for to seat all Congressis. A group of ladies elbow their way closer. More khadas, more namastes. Even they are offered tea and samosas.

So, how are your chances this



Bhandari, flanked by party officials, on his MG Marg canvassing walk

time? "The Congress will form the next Government. The ruling party is breaking up. Lots of infighting. Bad condition," Mr. Bhandari tells

NOW! His coterie shake their heads in agreement. Plenty of smiles and lively chatter.

The public response. "Some excitement on a boring afternoon with hardly any business happening," says a shopkeeper, even as he waits outside his shop to greet the former Chief Minister.

The bazar ko janata give the former CM a warm reception. Whether this will actually translate into votes, we will have to wait and see. What the Bazaar yatra also confirmed is that Gangtok's getting Mr. Bhandari's candidature.

email NOW!
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Full fledged post office for Majitar



Amarnathan inaugurates the post office while Sameul [left] and Grewal look on

SAGAR CHETTRI

MAJITAR, 31 March: Majitar today got a new and full fledged post office inaugurated by Vice Chancellor, Sikkim Manipal University, LC Amarnathan. John Samuel, Postmaster General, North Bengal and Sikkim region was present as the chief guest for the inaugural function along with RS Grewal, Director, SMIT, Dr. Marak, Director Postal Service, Sikkim State, post office staff and SMIT students.

The welcome address was delivered by DB Rai which was followed by Asish John, general secretary, Student Council, taking the dais during which he thanked the postal department for the new PO at Majitar saying the student community there would greatly benefit from it. RS Grewal, Director, SMIT, too thanked the post master general for the opening of the new post office.

LC Amarnathan, VC, Sikkim Manipal revealed that the proposal had been forwarded by them a long time ago and since it filled a vital communication gap it had been

pursued till its realization.

Post Office festival

A Post Office festival and Philately Exhibition was inaugurated today, 31 March, at Majitar. Organized by the postal department, the venue for the three day festival and exhibition is the SMIT campus. Cultural programmes and a quiz competition are also scheduled for the entertainment of anyone interested.

The stamps on display are of a wide ranging variety; from games to personalities, from maps to cartoons. Also on display are stamps related to various periods in Indian history as well as unique Bhutan 3D stamps.

Dr. Marak, Director Postal Service, Sikkim in his welcome speech mentioned stamps to be jewels of the country. He then went on to relate the history of stamps.

Then John Samuel released the Special Cover a new type of letter pad cum envelope.

In his address he promised to equip other post offices in the state with advanced facilities as well as open a "post shop" where every postal item would be available.

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ACTUAL PRODUCT MAY DIFFER FROM THE PICTURE SHOWN.

Maoists explode three bombs in Bhaktapur, prohibitory orders imposed in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, 31 March: Maoist rebels exploded bombs at three separate ward offices of Bhaktapur Municipality in Nepal on Wednesday morning injuring two people.

The series of bombs exploded at Ward no. 12, 15 and 16 office buildings respectively at five-minute intervals. The explosions resulted in minor damage to the offices.

The explosion at Ward no. 12 of-

ice left two civilians injured, police said.

The injured are undergoing treatment at Bhaktapur Hospital.

In the meantime, Kathmandu District Administration Office [DAO] has issued prohibitory orders at more public places effective from today.

According to the order issued by the DAO, the extended prohibited areas include Bhotahiti, Jamal,

Teendhara Paathsala Chowk, Ghantaghar and Ranoddip Chowk. The measure bans demonstrations and protest programs in these areas.

The order has been imposed as per the Local Administration Act 2028 BS, DAO said. Earlier, DAO had issued prohibitory orders on 21 March, 2004 after agitating political parties intensified their protest programs in Kathmandu.

Tibet gets its first billionaire

The remote Himalayan region of Tibet has produced its first billionaire, the state media reported earlier this week.

Qoinpe Cering [49] was born in a poor family in a small village near Xigaze city in the Tibet Autonomous Region in southwest China.

He made a fortune by setting up a company specialising in building houses in the unique Tibetan style, Xinhua news agency reported from Tibet's capital Lhasa.

Before 1951, slave owners made up only five per cent of the total population of Tibet but controlled 95 per cent of its wealth. But today there is no dearth of millionaires in rural Tibet, the report adds.

However, Tibet is still a poor region as a whole compared with many other parts of China. The annual disposable income of farmers and herdsmen in Tibet averaged \$183 in 2002, against \$748 for farmers in Shanghai, China's largest city.

Here Comes the Punctuation Vigilante

In the land of Shakespeare, punctuation faced extinction until writer Lynne Truss came to the rescue with a clutch of carefully placed commas and colons.

Taking a zero tolerance approach to grammatical lapses, she wrote a sprightly guide to punctuation, "Eats, shoots and leaves," that has sold more than half a million copies in Britain alone and soared to the top of bestseller lists.

Now, honing her crusading zeal over misplaced apostrophes, Truss is off to the United States to ensure transatlantic tidiness reigns supreme on the printed page.

She fervently believes the Internet, e-mails and text messaging have widened people's horizons, but treat punctuation like unnecessary linguistic baggage.

Truss, who says she is a stickler for accuracy and not an obsessive pedant, thinks the English have lost touch with the language they invented and gave to the world.

But she will not cast the first stone at the Americans, often mocked by the haughty British for bastardizing their mother tongue.

"American education seems to take grammar quite seriously," she said before leaving on a 10-city,

coast-to-coast tour of North America for the launch of the book there next month.


"My sense of it is that British English is worse actually than American English. I think Americans really like rules. I think we in Britain are very slapdash and don't care if we are right or wrong."

But Hollywood has certainly enraged Truss, a feisty columnist and broadcaster who would happily reach for her marker pen to put in punctuation where Tinseltown offers none. "What about that film Two Weeks Notice? Where was the apostrophe?" she asks, enraged that there is no apostrophe at the end of Weeks.



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CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY

Contd from pg 2

Of course, what is surely not going missing on them is there is a pitchforked Prime Minister who goes by the name of (Surya Bahadur) Thapa. Excuse me for leaving out the names of equally illustrious ministers, who are presiding over the disaster while the nation cries. I wonder whether readers in Iceland or anywhere for that matter must be giving Nepal a longer thought given the fact that people there do not waste time the way we are known to.

Which, incidentally, explains the longevity of the illegitimate government just because we have failed to turn up at the city center as a mark of protest. Meanwhile, I envy the Spanish people in particular and the European people in general for general level of political awareness demonstrated by them soon after the blast that killed over 200 in Madrid.

Some two million people turning up at the city center would have long settled the issue dogging the nation back home for sure.

However the fact that whether they were fit for the job or not is altogether a different issue and could be debated separately on other occasions. Now suffice it to say that they were the true and legitimate representatives of the people but have been told to stand. Someone who said that there are people who have Prime Minister for breakfast must be a political genius and visionary. Sad to see that it had to happen here of all the nations in this wide, wide world.

This brings us to the initial argument whereby Thapa was flayed as bereft of not only personal dignity

and decorum but as also someone who lacked desired constitutional authority insofar as he dithered from fielding questions from reporters on Thursday. It is true that the reporters were there to submit a memorandum and never invited as press corps in the first place. But what was incumbent on the occupant of the government secretariat is that he should have behaved as a political animal and not dithered to even open his mouth fearing the unimaginable.

I am sure there is no fixed ways in which a politician must speak in public and in front of the press. Improvisation is the key and if the information can be of any use to Thapa, he must keep in mind that the person who has the desired dignity and moral authority for the position is none other than Krishna Prasad Bhattarai.

Blame, of course, the vagaries of politics that none can occupy the post forever. And Bhattarai was no exception. Reporters would certainly have come back a contended lot had they Bhattarai as Prime Minister instead of Thapa who could not dare to utter even simple statement fearing reprisals.

In fact he had all the opportunity to lash out at the errant politicians on this side of the political divide but given the consequences he decided to shut up and rightly so. Perhaps he had been told to keep shut following the Bhojpur faux pas in which he had famously condemned the massacre as a normal phenomenon before he was given a good pasting in private. This is the latest example as to why people say he does not have the desired constitutional authority.

Cry the beloved country.
courtesy: Kantipur Online

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Vajra Guru Dhungdrup

at Pemayangtse monastery, West Sikkim

The Vajra Guru Dhungdrup or recitations at Pemayangtse Gompa, Sikkim's premier monastery in West Sikkim will commence from 8th April 2003 (Lunar calendar : Dawa Nyipa Tsey Chopgay). The recitations will be headed by his Eminence Yangthang Rimpoche.

Devotees and interested persons from all over Sikkim who are interested to participate at the recitations are invited to join us. We would also like to inform that we will be providing free fooding and lodging for those participating at the recitations. However, please bring your own utensils like plates, mugs and spoons. Once again all are invited to join us for the recitations.

Dueche, Pemayangtse Gompa

BUY YOUR HOME NOW, PAY LATER

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

Never get taken in by advertisements/commercials that offer you loans at 8 per cent or now even 7.75 per cent interest rate.

There's always an ** over such figures. And if you can locate where that ** is explained in very, very fine print, you will see terms, like interest rates for fixed tenure, terms and conditions apply, et cetera.

Always go by one thumb rule: The bank that offers you the lowest EMI [equated monthly installments] is the best.

HOW TO CALCULATE EMI

Most housing loan sites have what is called an EMI calculator. Here you enter the loan you need, the tenure and the interest rate offered for that tenure.

You will get the amount that you have to pay per month.

INTEREST RATES

Almost all banks offer different interest rates for different tenures. The lowest interest is always offered for the short-term loans.

Hence, you will get the lowest interest rates for tenures up to 5 years. This will progressively increase as the term increases.

All banks offer floating rates and fixed interest rates loans, too.

A floating rate loan means that the interest rates prevailing will be applicable. So, if the interest rates go down your EMI will also reduce proportionately and vice versa.

A fixed interest rate means that your EMI is fixed and will remain unchanged despite fluctuations in lending rates.

Most experts feel that interest rates in India are on their way down and so a floating rate is the best option.

PRE-PAYMENT CLAUSE:

This is an important thing to look for. When you take a loan, you are always looking at it from the point-of-view of your present income levels. Five years from now, you are most likely to be earning at much higher levels.

Most will want to pay off their loans much faster. Always look for a bank that will allow you to pre-pay without any terms and conditions.

Some will allow you to only pay in multiples of EMI that you pay and allow you to pre-pay only so many times in a year. Select a bank that allows you to pre-pay any amount.

PROCESSING FEES:

Some banks will charge a fixed amount as processing fee. This is usually between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent of the loan amount.

A one-time insurance (works out to around 0.25 per cent) and a fixed advocate fee of Rs 2,500 too are charged.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU GET:

The standard is 48 times your gross salary. Most nationalized banks offer only 85 per cent of the cost of the property. But there are banks that will offer you up to 100 per cent of the loan amount, provided you can show them that you have the capacity to repay.

But remember there is stamp duty, registration and other charges that will work out to around 10 per cent of the cost of the property. Take that into your calculations.

DOCUMENTATION NEEDED:

Most banks will ask for your latest salary slip, your bank statement for the last one-year and last three years' income tax returns [would not apply in Sikkim].

If you're a businessman/ trader you will need copies of you tax returns for the last three years. And two guarantors.

FINALLY:

Once you have selected the bank you want to do business with, sit down with its officials and get a pre-approval for the loan before committing on the property.

Banks will only disburse the loan after you have paid stamp duty and registration, and your share of the money.

Do not pour all your savings on the loan. Keep a buffer amount in the bank for emergencies.

The prospect of owning a roof over your head and the ground beneath your feet couldn't be any more real than it is today. No longer do you have to put aside every penny over a lifetime to be able to consider such a big-time purchase. A combination of realistic and affordable property prices, an abundance of properties to choose from, low-cost financing options and attractive income-tax concessions have brought this dream closer to your doorstep.

If you have the inclination but not the money, don't fret. Help is at hand in the form of housing finance companies and banks, offering low-cost loans. Interest rates on housing loans are at an all time low with most banks offering around 7.5 per cent.

In Sikkim, the **State Bank of India** claims to offer the lowest rate of interest on housing loans. Housing loans are available for government employees. The schemes are divided into three categories, Teachers+, Police+, and Prashashan+. The bank has been reducing its housing interest rate regularly, with the present rate of interest being 7.25% for up to 5 years, 7.75% for 5-15 years and 8% for 15-20 years.

Says Kumar Gazmer, Deputy Manager, Personal Segment Advance Centre, Gangtok Branch, "We get a lot of applicants for housing loans. Not only do we offer the lowest rate of interest but we also don't charge a processing fee. We also try and disburse the loan in three sittings."

The newly opened **Oriental Bank of Commerce** is also marketing its housing loan segment aggressively. As in the case of other banks here, they only feel secure giving loans to government employees on the basis of a salary certificate. The bank has a special Griha Sewa Scheme for salary plus persons. The rate of interest for housing loan is 7.5%. Says R Khan, Manager, OBC, "We have a very friendly environment here. The scheme is easy, rate of interest is very low and response is also good from the people."

UTI Bank offers housing loans under its Power Homes Scheme. Salaried individuals working in government service or reputed companies and having salary account with UTI with a net minimum salary of Rs. 7500 per month are eligible for the loan, which comes at a higher rate of interest compared to other banks.

You can avail of loans from a minimum of Rs. 1 lakh to a maximum of Rs. 50 lakhs. The rate of interest is 9.75% up to 5 years and above 10% for more than five years.

Says Jayanto Chatterjee, Assistant Vice-president, UTI, "Yes, our interest rates are higher compared to other banks but we also give less harassment and process the loan very quickly."

Whichever bank you may decide to approach for a home loan there are some things you should know.

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LAND FOR SALE

Land for Sale at Sichey [above DC Court] and Tadong [above Manipal Hospital]. For details, contact: 9434028001

NOTICE

State Bank of Sikkim Employees' Association raffle draw extended up to 16.05.2004.

Norbu Tamang,
General Secretary
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281469 [r]

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Kutse Shegu

The 49th day Kutse Shegu of late Tshering Doma who left for her heavenly abode on 20th February 2004 falls on 7th April 2004. All friends, relatives and well wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Manjushree Niwas, Tadong, Gangtok. We heartily thank all those who stood by us during the time of bereavement and regret our inability to do so individually.

H. R. Sharma (Husband)
Vijay Sharma, Ajay Sharma (sons)
Neelam Sharma, Dr. Yogita Sharma (daughters)

Kutse Shegu

The 49th day Kutse Shegu of late Shyam Moktan (M/s Siam Brothers, Tibet Road), DOB 5 September 1959, who left for his heavenly abode on 16th February 2004 fall on 4th April 2004. All relatives, friends and well wishers are requested to kindly join us in offering prayers to be departed soul at our residence, Tashiling Secretariat Road, near Mani Lakhang, Gangtok.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who extended their help during our time of grief and bereavement.

Mrs. Tshering Deki (wife)
Hishey Moktan (son)
Preeti Moktan (daughter)
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today in History

1st April

1578: William Harvey of England discovers blood circulation.
1877: Ignoring the taunts of fellow miners who say he will only find his own tombstone, prospector Edward Schieffelin begins his search for silver in Tombstone, Arizona. He finds silver and Tombstone finds notoriety with the Wyatt Erap gunfight at OK Coral.
1918: The British Royal Air Force [RAF] is formed with the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps [RFC] and the Royal Naval Air Service [RNAS].
1927: 1st automatic record changer introduced by HMV.
1924: In Germany, Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler is sentenced to five years in prison for leading the Nazis' unsuccessful "Beer Hall Putsch" in the German state of Bavaria.
1973: John & Yoko form a new country with no laws or boundaries, called Ntutopia, its national anthem is silence
1973: Japan allows its citizens to own gold.



DUCHOVNY SET FOR X-FILES COMEBACK

David Duchovny is planning to return to the X-Files role that made him a household name. The actor, whose departure from the TV sci-fi hit led to the show's demise, is in talks with X-Files creator Chris Carter to recreate his Fox Mulder character for a new movie. And he doesn't mind the fact he'll most likely be appearing without his former sidekick, Gillian Anderson, because Carter has a much bigger movie star name to tempt him with.

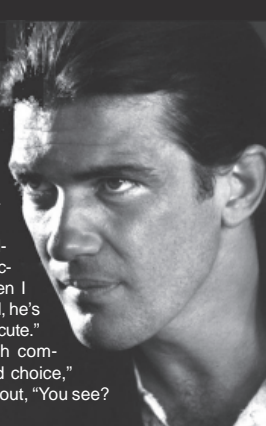
BANDERAS' ADMITS TO GERE CRUSH

Actor Antonion Banderas has named RICHARD GERE as his same-sex crush - and the Spanish hunk's wife Melanie Griffith approves.

The Hollywood couple attended the 15th annual Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD] Awards, where Banderas was handed the Vanguard Award.

Banderas playfully revealed, "I always found Richard Gere very attractive. He has a beautiful smile. When I was watching movies at 18 years old, he's the kind of guy I wanted to be. He's cute."

With nodding approval, Griffith commented, "I think that's a very good choice," which prompted Banderas to point out, "You see? We have the same taste."



THEFINALONE

ODDLY ENOUGH

STUDY: PUREBRED DOGS RESEMBLE OWNERS

SAN DIEGO: Those who think purebred dogs look like their owners are barking up the right tree, but matching a mutt to its master is another thing, a study suggests.

Research at the University of California, San Diego indicates that when people pick a dog, they look for one that, at some level, bears some resemblance to them. And when they get a purebred dog, they get what they want.

When given a choice of two dogs, judges correctly matched 25 purebreds with their owners nearly two out of three times. With mutts, however, the pattern went to the dogs.

"When you pick a purebred, you pick it specifically because of how it's going to look as a grown-up," said Nicholas Cristenfeld, UCSD professor of psychology and co-author of the study, which appears in the current issue of Psychological Science.

ALICIA KEYS TICKETS SELL OUT IN 16 MINUTES

Alicia Keys has proved a major attraction in Denmark - all of the 1,200 plus tickets for her concert at Copenhagen's Royal Theatre were sold in just 16 minutes yesterday.

The 23-year-old R&B singer will perform on 16 June (04) on the theatre's main Old Stage, which dates from 1874.

Officials at the Royal Theatre



say it is the first time ever that a pop star will perform there. The downtown playhouse dates back to 1770. Its repertoire includes classical drama, ballets, operas and concerts by philharmonic and chamber orchestras.

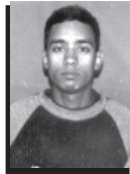
Earlier this month, tickets for Sir Paul McCartney's show in western Denmark sold out in 11 minutes.

THE FUTURE, NOW!

ARIES: Loving family relationships and warm personal and social contacts are emphasized now. This is a good time to create goodwill between yourself and others.
TAURUS: There is much activity; you move rapidly from one thing to another and a hectic, somewhat stressful pace is likely. Many errands, phone calls, letters which require a response, and other "busywork" is on the agenda. A minor but rather tense confrontation is likely.
GEMINI: Agreements and contracts will work out very much to your advantage now. A friend or person in authority may offer help or present an opportunity which will benefit you now or in the future. Also, you will reap rewards later for the generosity and aid you extend to others at this time.
CANCER: You are full of optimism and enthusiasm for new enterprises and plans. In fact, you may be foolishly overconfident and take on more challenges than you can really meet. This can, in fact, be a very productive time for you if you can keep your expectations within reasonable bounds.
LEO: This is a difficult time period! You feel caught in a rut that you are unable to break free from. Your daily routine feels oppressive, but improvement is not easily achieved. You may feel a "creative block" that prevents you from working with the same level of inspiration and originality.
VIRGO: There is much activity; you move rapidly from one thing to another and a hectic, somewhat stressful pace is likely. Many errands, phone calls, letters which

require a response, and other "busywork" is on the agenda. A minor but rather tense confrontation is likely.
LIBRA: An incident involving miscommunications, missed messages, or missed meetings which causes a change of plans is likely. Co-workers may be unaccountably inconsistent. You may also get a bit of news that you will wish you hadn't. Try to take these in stride.
SCORPIO: You are optimistic and possibly extravagant now. You are less cautious than usual, feeling that nothing can possibly go wrong. If you are inclined to indulge, overspend, or go to excesses in any manner, this tendency is exaggerated at this time.
SAGITTARIUS: This is a time when it is difficult to stay within a budget or on a diet. You want comfort and ease and have luxurious tastes. You need company and happy fellowship. It's a good time for a party, as long as you don't overdo it.
CAPRICORN: Intense, irrationally strong or compelling feelings emerge now and intimate relationships are deeply emotional. You're apt to overreact.
PISCES: Intense, irrationally strong or compelling feelings emerge now and intimate relationships are deeply emotional. You're apt to overreact.
AQUARIUS: There is much activity; you move rapidly from one thing to another and a hectic, somewhat stressful pace is likely. A minor but rather tense confrontation is likely.

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BERMIOK MARTAM, WEST SIKKIM

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