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**VOL 1 NO 51**  **Rs. 5**

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# THE CONFUSION

# OF A MERGER

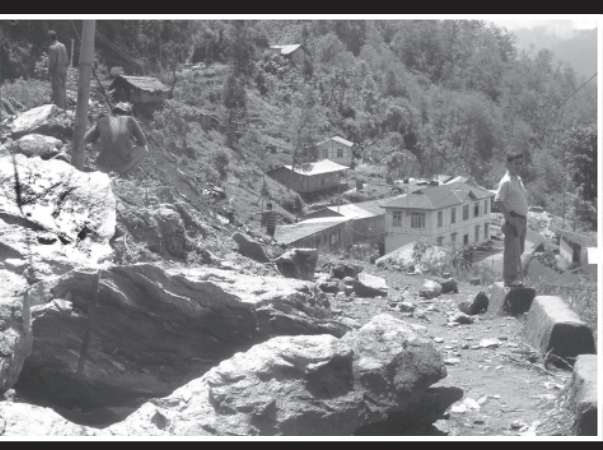


**ANGTOK:** This is not the first time that Mr. Chandari is attempting to merge his Sikkim Sangram Parishad into the Congress. His chances, however, are the tightest this time. In fact, his senior colleagues, in Delhi, along with him at present, insist that 99 per cent of the job "is done". "All conditions have been discussed threadbare and need only be agreed upon. Now only the announcement remains," a senior Sangram Parishad leader said NOW! The state-unit of the Congress [I], however, insists that the merger will still take some time. The Sangram Parishad leaders in Delhi, on the other hand insist that a "formal" announcement will come any day now. The confusion continues.

**THE SSP-CONG MERGER:**  
 Congressmen insist it will be months before a clearer picture emerges, Sangramis believe the announcement will come any day now...

# NO HASTY DECISIONS ASSURES "MADAM"

**TURN TO pg 3 FOR DETAILS**



## FRIDAY FURY

Friday the 13th proved truly unlucky for residents of Rongong Tumlong Gram Panchayat Unit, ward No. 4, Phodong, North Sikkim. The sleepy hamlet was hit by landslides which continue to put houses in danger.

**TURN TO pg 5 FOR DETAILS**

## 2 SIKKIM BRING HOP

New variants promise three-fold increase in large cardamom yield. Good news definitely given that 80 per cent of the crop in Sikkim is in need of replantation anyway...

**TURN TO pg FOR DETAILS**

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# SS

## In Anticipation Of Trade

Prime Minister will be in China by Sunday and if the agreement does not come about before he touches down at , then it will most probably be made during his state visit. Jeleppla or Jelepla will be opened for trade. Resumption of trade passes has been a consistent demand for Sikkim and at it is close to becoming a reality, the State needs to work out how it plans to benefit from it and how prepared it is. China will see who benefits most. China will undoubtedly be in beneficiary. Movement of goods over Nathula and Jeleppla port closer to Tibet which at present has Hong Kong nearest port. Supplies to this region will benefit most. Also, post so close to the major Indian markets will further the transportation costs for the cheap Chinese goods. India which tempts India to snap the deal is that opening of passes for trade means China's acceptance of Sikkim as a part of India. Sino-Indian trade in the region could never resume because China did not recognise the 1975 Merger as averse to commerce over disputed territory. Should the border be opened for trade it would be Chinese recognition of Sikkim as an integral part of India. Not that such acceptance will any difference within India, but it does take care of an emerging irritant.

The benefit for Sikkim will be essentially limited to tourism. The State can hardly benefit commercially since it does not produce anything that could find a market further north. But tourism is a hope. Not only will an open border attract the religious tourists (domestic and foreign), but will also entice the adventurers to retrace the footprints of those who opened Tibet at the end of the last century. It is here that Sikkim needs to negotiate with Chinese diplomats will try and get the best deal out for themselves. They might open the border for trade and domestic tourists and for Kailash and Mansarovar, but deny international tourism using the passes. Sikkim will have to pressurise the Centre to open the border for full-fledged tourism. China has an arrangement with Nepal which drives many tourists over to Lhasa, so why deny Sikkim? The environmental and demographic impact of the trade also needs to be studied. Trade will generate about yak caravans. Truckloads are going to cross Sikkim and thunder through its eastern extremities. There is a need to be increased human traffic and resultant impact on the lives of local population and the pressure on local infrastructure everything that Delhi needs to cushion for Sikkim. Local entrepreneurs also need to come up to speed to corner whatever e-commerce get left for Sikkim. The State could benefit much from an open border, but it has to be prepared and aware otherwise it will just watch from the sidelines as middlemen and bigger firms steal away profits which are Sikkim's by right.

## Abstinence - Not Really Aiding Awareness

Coming through a handbill on AIDS awareness, solutions are easy. If the policy makers believe that "avoiding sex till you are married" is a workable possibility, then medicine is a profession that could soon become obsolete. Why, for example, do we doctors to cure jaundice when all it will take to prevent people from contracting jaundice is abstaining from water. Come on, and instead of advising people on how to keep the water-diseases at bay, just tell them to stop drinking water. Sounds ridiculous? It is. But that is how Sikkim, falling in line with the state-wide AIDS awareness drive piloted by Ms. Sushma Chandra, plans to tackle HIV. An AIDS awareness pamphlet being distributed in Sikkim lists behavioural patterns which put people at risk: those with more than one sexual partner, having sex with partners with sexually transmitted diseases, sharing needles with intravenous drug users or using un-screened blood are supposedly at risk. The averages might put these people at risk, but then, why is the country in South Africa [the country with the highest percentage of population infected] not listed as a risk factor? The latest AIDS awareness has put a moral quotient on the epidemic. The information now being handed out on the disease, HIV, is something that infects only the debauched. Given the fact that the national focus is now on compassion for the infected, such stern attitudes could set back whatever advances we might have made in containing the spread of the disease. "Safe sex" is the simplest and most effective way to combat AIDS, but abstinence to be promoted. Our policy-

**T**hirty-two months of production is all that an attempt at an industry could last in Sikkim despite the fact that funds and loans seemed to be available to it on demand. Why Sikkim Vanaspati Ltd. was so pampered is now for the CBI to find out [the State cabinet handed them the brief a couple of weeks back], but the fact that it was pampered is for all to see. The paper-trail the failed enterprise generated since its inception in 1982 to its last shutdown in January 1995 [thirteen years in which its factory operated on a depleted capacity for barely two and half years] makes for some interesting reading.

Sikkim Vanaspati Ltd, Manpur, Melli, was registered on December 31, 1982 with Kunzang Topden as its promoter. It was authorised for a share capital of Rs. 2 crores and a 50 tonne per day vanaspati plant. In 1986, SIDICO was approached for participation in the Share Capital. SIDICO agreed and entered the board of directors after investing Rs. 93 lakhs, translating to 51.54 per cent of the stake, in SVL. The private promoters held 25.26 per cent of the share [Rs. 45 lakhs]. Then IDBI was approached for financial assistance to meet the cost of the

**Sikkim Vanaspati Ltd. was perhaps the most pampered of industries in Sikkim. Between 1982 to 1992, SVL availed more than Rs. 11 crores in loans in which the State Government sat guarantee. The liabilities have come back to haunt. It will be for the CBI to investigate the conditions under which SVL made SVL so popular for loans, but a study of how many loans availed still makes for interesting reading. A NOW FEATURE**

project. IDBI, acting as the lead institution sanctioned a term loan of Rs. 4 crores in consortium with IFCI and ICICI at an interest rate of 12.5 per cent per annum.

Everything moved rather quickly for SVL. The joint sector agreement with SIDICO was inked in July 1986 and the IDBI loan was cleared by July end the same year. One reason why the Rs. 4 crore loan was sanctioned so fast was perhaps because the Finance Department of the then Bhandari government agreed to execute an "unconditional and irrevocable" deed of guarantee for SVL's loan. The State government had now been roped in for the long haul.

Two years later, and SVL was yet to start production. Instead, it approached IDBI for additional financial assistance to part finance the cost over-runs. A loan of Rs. 40 lakhs was made available against the mortgage of the company's immovable properties. This was in July, 1988, and by Octo-

ber, the State Government was to sit guarantee on this loan.

Production commenced the same month, but closed in November 1989. Unfavourable conditions prevailing in the vanaspati market, shortage of working capital, transportation and communication problems were offered as the factors which made the enterprise unviable.

The unit remained closed for the next five years, until in November 1992, the management was handed over to Kolkata-based Pawan Saraswat Associates for rehabilitation package worth Rs. 1.5 crore. The Associates renewed the joint sector agreement with SIDICO and within a month, secured a 2 crore soft loan from IDBI. A hoc loan of Rs. 75 lakhs was made from SBI, Kolkata. Although the State Government did not sit guarantee on this soft loan, it was on the dotted line again for Rs. 3.63 crore cash credit.

- turn

## Outsourcing Outclasses

**I**t was only a matter of time for resources to run dry. The British and American economies are now beginning to realise the impact of outsourcing jobs to India. Across the world, resistance is increasing to outsourced jobs moving to India. They are now feeling the pinch.

The British media complains of 2,00,000 banking and insurance jobs moving to India. CNN reports that 1 million Indians work for US-based companies. Within India, there are reports that 40 million jobs have already been created in the English-speaking services segment. The United States of America, Britain, Germany, Netherlands and Malaysia are all countries where such resentment has surfaced.

With increasing protests in the US over outsourcing of jobs to India, especially in the IT sector, the American government has been forced to cut down issuance of H-1B visas for overseas professionals. Companies have also been asked to reveal how many Indians they are employing. The import of foreigners and export of jobs overseas has resulted in the loss of jobs

**DEEP FOCUS**  
**RANJIT SINGH**

investment proposal is approved in India, few people are likely to ask whether an Indian company is capable of producing the same goods. Yet, in developed countries, such questions are routine ones for cross-border movements.

Restrictions on global labour movement is a post World War I phenomenon. Yet, controls on immigration have now come to be accepted and the World Trade Organisation's services sector negotiations have minimum market access schedules for temporary migration of skilled personnel. Despite these commitments, barriers are erected by developed countries for such migrations and there ought to be a new classification of non-tariff barriers for labour movement. Security considerations have now compounded traditional concerns about immigration. If governments defy eco-

nomically advanced countries find difficult to accept. The developed world, in its comparative advantage, is moving manufacturing to southern and east Asia and thought it is in services.

Given that Indian salaries are one-tenth of those in the developed world, that assumed comparative advantage is also disappearing. Labour productivity and skills do not generally justify huge salary differentials. As outsourcing to India increases, few call centers, resentment muted. But increasingly, the process outsourcing means more than call centers and non-related managerial, administrative and clerical jobs especially banking and insurance are moving off shore.

Job losses and salary cuts in the developed world are a tangible outcome of globalisation, though transitory pains have been accentuated by continued recession in the West. However, the West cannot have its cake and eat it too. First, it cannot protect its trade and resist opening up its culture or textiles and garments. Second, it cannot push

...SSP-Cong MERGER: Congressmen insist it will be months before a clear  
 ture emerges, Sangramis believe the announcement will come any day no

# THE CONFUSION OF A MERGER

...c politics is boring and when it gets  
 it becomes confusing. Ditto for the  
 ing talks on the SSP-Cong merger.

**MA WANGCHUK**

**OK:** Mergers are always complicated and the proposed amal-  
 n of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad into the Congress [I] is no  
 t. The merger, which has been rumoured ever since the SSP  
 self in the Opposition bench back in 1994, gathered more ur-  
 ith its chief and former CM, Nar Bahadur Bhandari camped in  
 er the past week to renegotiate the terms of the merger afresh.  
 anied by some of his senior colleagues and a faction of the  
 radesh Congress Committee [I] members in favour of "imme-  
 rger, he has been meeting several senior leaders of the Cong-  
 h-command, including Sonia Gandhi, to ease through the  
 His aides, while talking to NOW! from Delhi, insist that the  
 s will sign on the dotted line by the time this issue hits the  
 ut SPCC [I] President, Namkha Gyaltsen maintains that it might  
 o early to break open the champagne.

section of the Congressmen in Sikkim are to be believed, the  
 cy which rumours had us believe about an impending SSP-  
 rger is too premature. The former CM who has flirted with the  
 ] several times in the past, might not yet return to a rousing  
 e at Rangpo as a Congressman. They insist that the merger still  
 a "proposal" despite the bid by those keen on rushing the merger  
 to directly approach the Congress high-command in Delhi.

rocess has to be followed in such things. The party high-com-  
 ill need feedback from us and because it was not discussed  
 state-unit we are not really in a position to advise the high  
 d on the proposal," SPCC [I] President, Namkha Gyaltsen,  
 W! Mr. Gyaltsen was in Delhi over the last weekend to brief  
 high-command on the political situation in Sikkim and also to  
 the proposal for merger. He admitted that he learnt of the re-  
 id for an SSP-Cong merger only upon reaching Delhi. A ploy,  
 r. Gyaltsen insists, is not how a merger can be engineered.

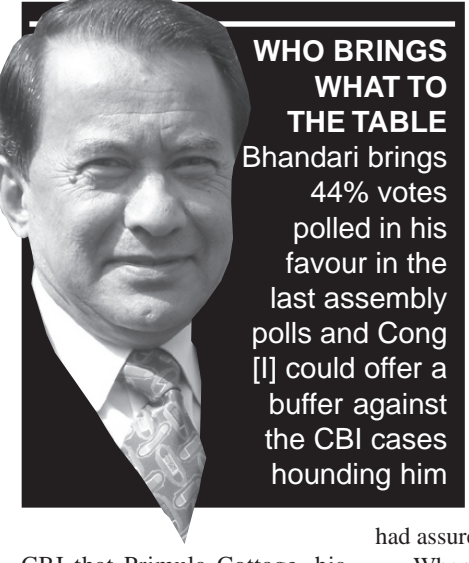
handari's merger bid in Delhi was reportedly instigated by some  
 ] members, who, sources reveal, convinced him that the merger  
 ail through if he approached the Congress high-command di-  
 ost office bearers in the SPCC [I] are seen as "anti-merger" by  
 y wanting Sangram to merge with Congress in Sikkim.

or Sangramis camped in Delhi at present, however, maintain  
 ers for a merger came from the Congress high-command this  
 plying that the AICC [I] side-lined the state-unit on purpose, a  
 andari aide who was in Delhi for "pre-negotiations" even be-  
 Bhandari arrived, said that even the Congress bosses in Delhi  
 lised that the party has been decimated under Mr. Gyaltsen's  
 tship in Sikkim.

ave seen letters welcoming Mr. Bhandari into the Congress.  
 ritten in 2001. The merger was cleared even at that time, but  
 by some members of the SPCC [I] at the last minute. The high-  
 d seems committed not to allow such delays any more and  
 a gesture of good faith, even replaced the partyman in-charge  
 m who was opposed to the merger," said a senior Sangrami  
 NOW! over the phone from Delhi.

ting to charges that he is seen as "anti-merger," Mr. Gyaltsen  
 d the suggestion and pointed out that it was he who first mooted  
 in 2001. Denying that the merger fell through because they had  
 to the ruling party, Mr. Gyaltsen said: "The merger could not come  
 at that time due to many disturbances. The unacceptable condi-  
 led by Mr. Bhandari defeated any hopes for a smooth merger."

or members of the state-unit further revealed that not only did  
 ndari want the SPCC [I] president's post, but also wanted a  
 ent from the party high-command that it would not "listen" to  
 idence to his functioning from the within the party's ranks in  
 These conditions along with a fund of Rs. 3 crores to kick-start  
 ] activities in Sikkim made the merger proposal unappetising



**WHO BRINGS  
 WHAT TO  
 THE TABLE**  
 Bhandari brings  
 44% votes  
 polled in his  
 favour in the  
 last assembly  
 polls and Cong  
 [I] could offer a  
 buffer against  
 the CBI cases  
 hounding him

CBI that Primula Cottage, his  
 Church Road, Gangtok, residence,  
 was made from money "given" to  
 him by Rajiv and Indira Gandhi.

But then, politics is known to  
 have no permanent enemies and  
 those working on the merger in  
 Delhi are convinced that "99 per  
 cent" of the work is done.

"The feedback has been consis-  
 tently positive so far. This is a  
 major development and obviously  
 many issues need to be ironed out,  
 but everything has been worked out  
 and now only a final meeting with  
 Sonia Gandhi remains," said a sen-  
 ior SSP functionary while claiming  
 that the formal announcement  
 could come by Wednesday morn-

ing depending on when they can get an appointm  
 Mrs. Gandhi, who has been keeping a busy schedu

These claims are in direct contrast with what th  
 [I] President believes. The merger, he states, mi  
 take some more time. The newly appointed AICC  
 charge for Sikkim, Salman Khursheed, will be in t  
 in the near future [not until July 15 though] to dis  
 issue with party-members here and hold talks with  
 involved and also look at other possible alliances  
 the issue is decided.

"It will still be some more months before a clea  
 ture emerges," he said. Mr. Gyaltsen, however, re  
 that he is not opposed to the merger, just that th  
 many sides to it which need to be understood.

"When we hold talks afresh, we will do so with  
 prejudice," adds another senior Congressman Ar  
 [I] member who met Sonia Gandhi last week in  
 tion with the merger proposal also revealed that "M

had assured that "no decision on the matter will be taken in ha

When asked what necessitated the merger, a senior Sangra  
 erated that the first move was made by the Congress high-com  
 "We also saw it as a good change. We now know the limita  
 regional politics and it will be good for Sangram to now get  
 tional politics," he said.

What Sangram brings to the table is its performance in  
 assembly elections where it cornered 7 seats and 44 per cen  
 votes. Congress bagged barely 4 per cent of the votes, so its c  
 tion to the merger would obviously come in the form of the ar  
 that a national party can provide in the various CBI cases that are  
 ing Mr. Bhandari as also the finances for sponsoring his bid to fo  
 government in the next elections.

Whether the latest bid at a merger works out or not will be  
 before the week is out, but it is now obvious that the merger  
 anything but smooth. The Congress state-unit is clearly divid  
 urgency of the matter and a section has been identified as opp  
 Should the merger come about, there is bound to be a major sh  
 in the party hierarchy in Sikkim which could take away som  
 gains that the merger promises for either side.

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## REPORT

**OK:** A presentation of Multi-Stage Pumping programme of Namchi from Rangit to Namchi and the surrounding areas in South Sikkim was held at the Rural Development Department conference hall on June 10.

The State government has approved an outlay of Rs. 6.50 crores for the project that will deal with the acute shortage of water in Namchi and the surrounding areas. The project has been designed keeping in mind the requirement of water over the next 15 years. Water from Rangit will be pumped to a height of about 1,200 metres through three stages. The treatment plant will have a capacity to treat 10 million litres per day. The annual operational maintenance cost of the project will be Rs. 76 lakhs in the initial stages once it is commissioned, as per an official Press release.



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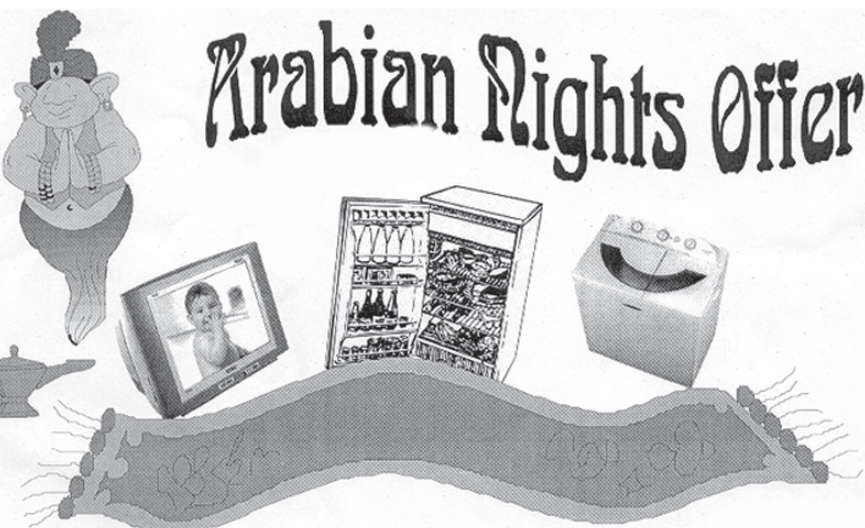
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# FRIDAY JURY

## DOBEROI reports slides that visited ong last Friday

NG: On June 13, last Fri-  
ple of Rongong Tumlong  
nchayat Unit, ward No. 4,  
, North Sikkim woke up to  
of Nature. At around 9am,  
py hamlet was hit by ma-  
slides which destroyed 3  
their corn and cardamom  
d killed 3 cows and 2 pigs.  
le speaking to NOW!, SB  
the area Panchayat, said  
whole experience was a  
re. "Ever since the village  
we have been trying to get  
shock. Throughout Fri-  
were trying our best to  
livestock and shift our-  
o the nearby school. Al-  
o one was hurt, these land  
ve taken our cattle and our  
hich are our source of in-  
aid Mr. Subba.  
slides have left many  
of unsafe foundations.



While one family had to shift to the hospital quarters, another moved into the principal's quarters and still others took shelter in the school. Although the families have since moved back to their homes, they flee every time there is a shower.

"The main reason behind these slides is the fact that the road above their houses has no supporting wall to share the load. Even the drains are clogged. With no drainage, the surface runoff loosened the soil and resulted in the slides," believes Bijay Subba, a resident whose fields have been destroyed. "Mero Doodh Dinay

Gai, Jersey Gai Maryo," shares another distraught villager.

The villagers however have no complaints with the relief package.

"The authorities have taken control of the matter now and have already visited the spot and promised compensation," informed Bali Raj Gurung whose house was also damaged by the landslides.

After the incident, the Panchayat reported the matter to the police and the SDPO (north) visited the spot to take stock and console the residents. Later, the area MLA, DC and SDM also visited the spot and assured "full support" to the victims.

om pg 2

y SVL from SBI.

December 25, 1992, com-  
production, albeit on a  
capacity, started at the  
complex again. In Janu-  
, barely months after the  
w a change in the seat of  
operations at SVL shut  
rmanently.

hings stand, an industry  
as loaned almost Rs. 11  
f which SIDICO contrib-  
2 crores, has now left the  
vernment straddled with a  
ility of Rs. 18 crores. And  
sharks are calling from all  
December, 1993 the High  
Kolkata passed a decree  
r of ITC. In March 1999,  
d SBI filed recovery pro-  
against SVL in the Debt  
y Tribunal at Guwahati.  
h the case has reached the  
disposal, the order has

## GREASED THROUGH

been reserved due to a stay order  
procured by SVL's last private pro-  
moter, Pawan Saraswat.

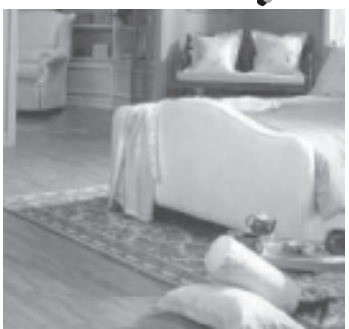
The lending agencies can be  
heard crying foul over the present  
State Government's decision to con-  
test the case. "It does not matter  
whose government guaranteed the  
loan. We sanctioned it knowing a  
State Government guarantee is safe.  
Such hesitancy will send out the  
wrong signals," said a senior bank  
official while talking to NOW!

There is no denying that not  
everything was above board in the  
handling and promotion of SVL.  
The bank's are not free of blame  
either since they themselves are  
guilty of having ignored many  
promising projects for lack of po-  
litical patronage in the past. They  
are lucky that their investments are  
not lost since the State can only

delay the payment and not deny it.  
If, in the meantime, they can  
dredge out the peculiar position-  
ing that SVL enjoyed, it could per-  
haps serve as a warning for simi-  
lar mistakes in the future.

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**ALLEGATION ON SSP V-P**

**HEM LALL'S IRE FALLS ON JOURNOS**

**REPORT**

**OK:** The pressure of going against the judiciary with allegations and getting back with a charge of perjury to be getting to the SSP President, Hem Lall. On June 11, just as the hearing on the perjury moved against him, Mr. Bhandari walked out of the courtroom and straight up to the journalists sharing a cup of coffee and launched into a tirade. Hem Neopaney, a reporter for the Nepali daily *Hamro Aakti*, while talking to Hem Lall revealed that Mr. Bhandari had been criticised by his paper's editor for his handling of the Sangram Day protests in Gangtok. Soon, he became more threatening and the reporter against filing a writ of habeas corpus of the day's proceedings fowl and abusive language threatened to search me

out and beat me up at home if I reported on the court case," Mr. Neopaney told NOW!

By then, another journalist entered Mr. Bhandari's wrathful line of vision. He turned his warnings towards Pema Leyda Shangderpa, the Sikkim correspondent for *The Telegraph*. The heated argument that followed saw the exchange of many angry words and it was only after some SSP youths intervened that Mr. Bhandari backed down.

The two journalists have since approached the Chief Judicial Magistrate with a complaint of criminal intimidation which has been handed over to the Sadar Thana for investigation. While the two admit that they perceive no immediate threat from Mr. Bhandari since even his own party colleagues seem to have had enough of him, they point out: "At present, he can only threaten because he cannot mobilise the muscle to get physical, but who will guarantee that he won't send boys

after journalists when he has more clout and power?"

For once, the journalist fraternity united in its condemnation of Mr. Bhandari's actions. Both, the Press of Club of Sikkim and Sikkim Journalists Association, while condemning the outburst as an assault on the fourth estate, have demanded public apologies.

Splintering out from the June 11 episode is an even more serious allegation. SJA, in a press release issued by its General Secretary, Sujit Chakraborty [editor, *Northeastern Weekend Review*] alleges: "Mr. Bhandari has been erratically and irresponsibly trying to foul-mouth the press and doing things that can be construed as sexual harassment of a woman scribe." This is a serious allegation that should give Mr. Bhandari's legally-trained mind more issues to chew upon. That is, after he has figured how to squirm away from the perjury and criminal intimidation allegations that he has to contend with first.

**direct taxes out**

**a NOW REPORT**

**GANGTOK:** Senior SPCC [I] office-bearers who were in Delhi recently to discuss the proposed SSP-Cong merger, also took the appointment granted with AICC [I] President, Sonia Gandhi, to petition her with a request to keep implementation of direct taxes in Sikkim at bay.

In a memorandum signed by the SPCC [I], Namkha Gyaltzen, the state-unit has pointed out that such implementation would go against the spirit of the Tripartite Agreement of May 8 and Article 371F which protects the Old Laws, of which the Income Tax Manual is one, of Sikkim.

Claiming that such an implementation is on the "verge" of getting forced through, the SPCC [I]

President has also requested that should the implementation be "unavoidable", the tribals of Sikkim be exempted from the provisions of this Act.

The Congress President has also been petitioned to ensure the policy of safeguarding the indigenous inhabitants of the state is continued. While welcoming the recent inclusion of the Limbu and Tamang communities in the Scheduled Tribes list, the SPCC [I] has also petitioned for including them with their "legitimate" political rights in the form of reservation of seats in the State Assembly.

Also reiterated in the memorandum is "adequate supplementary protection" for the Sikkim Nepalese by including "left out" communities in the Scheduled Tribe category.

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 one underground surge shaft 9.5m diameter 60m high.  
 one underground pressure shaft 2m diameter finished size 60m long and one surface type steel penstock 2m diameter 730m long branching into two small size penstock of 1.5m diameter long each.  
 one surface type powerhouse of size of 16m wide 61m long and 35m high near Lamaten village, Latuk Block, East Sikkim.  
 approximately 4.36 hectares of land to come under submergence.  
 to acquire private / forest land (29.0 ha) for various project component and roads around project sites in Rolep / near Lamaten Village, Latuk Block, East Sikkim.  
 as by notification of Govt. of India in the Ministry of Environment and Forest No. 60 (E) 27th January 1994, issued under sub-section (1) and clause (V) of sub-section (2) of section 3 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (29 of 1996) as made mandatory under Part-II section 3 sub-section (II) dated 10th April 1997, the State Pollution Control Board is required to conduct Public Hearing in the interest of the public for preparing recommendations based on technical assessment of documents and data furnished by the project authorities for obtaining necessary environmental clearance from MOEF, Govt. of India.

Therefore, notice is hereby given to all persons, including bonafide residents, environmentalists and other located at project site / sites of displacement, sites likely to be affected to participate and provide suggestions, views, comments and objections, if any and to attend the hearing to be conducted on 22.07.2003 at Rolep School, East Sikkim at 10:30 onwards. Any person, individual interested to submit other written suggestions, views or complaints can do so on or before the hearing date, which may be addressed to the Member Secretary, State Pollution Control Board, Department of Forest, Env. & Wildlife, Deorali, Gangtok.

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# Couple murdered by relatives from Nepal

**REPORT**

**G:** Greed for money led to a double murder at Tayong on the evening of June 10, last night. Nirmal Basnet and his wife, were brutally hacked to death by persons who could have been relatives. Their children Suraj, 10, and Arayan, 9, were lucky and escaped a murderous assault and were identified one of the murderers as Gopal Chettri, a Nepal national who had come to stay with the family fifteen days earlier. The murderer was taken away with a sum of Rs. 10,000 stolen from the house. The body of Nirmal's wife was

found in the cowshed, his wife's body was found dumped outside and covered with grass.

Statements given by the two minors suggest that after murdering the parents, the murderers turned their attention towards the children and strangled them. When they lost consciousness, they were probably left for dead.

The victims are both learnt to be Nepal nationals who had been here as tenants of one Arjun Subedi for the past ten years. Police sources told NOW! that the victims most probably were related to the murderers and that the murders might have resulted from a past feud.

The accused are absconding.

Even the dog squad which was put on their trail an hour after the incident lost their trace near Bermiok Martam. Police officials believe that the accused have fled into the jungles of Uttarey and on to Nepal. Although all check-posts have been alerted, no arrests have been made thus far.

The orphaned children, in the meanwhile are being looked after by the landlord.

**a NOW REPORT**

**RAVANGLA:** The next time a group of crew-cut, tough-looking youngsters come knocking, don't take their word for being cops. A former Mannazong Jogi Dara, about 6 kms from Lingmoo bazaar here, made the mistake of accepting 15 unknown persons as being policemen and are now poorer by Rs. 37,000 they had in their almirah. They have lost all their jewellery. Official sources reveal that the same group came calling on one Man Bahadur Chettri in the evening of June 10. Claiming to be policemen investigating a "case," they told Man Bahadur that they needed to search his house for a pistol belonging to one of his sons. The entire family was tied up and locked inside a room where they did not interfere with the "search". The group then proceeded to ransack the house and left with the booty. When the father of the family realised that they had been had, he filed a complaint and two of the men have been arrested since. No loot has been recovered as yet though.

# Minister unhappy with tardy progress of road repairs

**REPORT**

**OK:** In a meeting with the Minister of Roads and Bridges Department, the Minister, Bridges, RB Subba, expressed "great displeasure" over the slow progress of various road repairs under the Department. In an official Press release issued on June 12 to review the progress of various ongoing road works like carpeting and strengthening existing roads and constructing new roads and bridges.



Although not looked after by the Roads Bridges Deptt., the 9th Mile slide is one example of a problem spot that evades all solutions

During a division and district-level review of various projects, the Minister reportedly pulled up officials for the delay in completion of most projects.

On the onset of monsoons in the past, the Minister also directed officials to stop work once the rains had set in the earnest and to procure required materials at the lowest cost. Directions were also

passed to the concerned junior engineers to be present at the sites where work was in progress.

While urging them to expedite the works, he reiterated that no compromise be made on the quality of the projects. The release also informs that he reminded his officials that the roads sector has been accorded top-priority by the present government.

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# Theeng murder accused surrenders before CJM

**AMITAVA BANERJEE**

**DELING:** In a dramatic event, Kamal Gurung, alias inla, one of the prime accused in the Prakash Theeng murder case, surrendered before the Judicial Magistrate at the District Court on June 16. He had been evading the law, but the others named in the FIR. The Investigation Officer at the Poolbazar Police Station issued a FIR regarding the murder had been lodged, was not before the court, Police remand was given. Kainla was instead taken to Judicial custody. He, like the others arrested in the case, has been booked under Sec

302, 120B, 34 of IPC and Sections 25, 27 and 35 of the Arms Act.

Prakash Theeng, a Senior GNLFI leader and DGHC Bijanbari Poolbazar area Councilor, was shot dead on May 13 at Gok, 48 kms from Darjeeling with an improvised gun. Based on the complaint lodged by the eyewitness, Bhakta Jogi, who was accompanying Theeng when he was shot, an FIR has been lodged against six people. They are Vishal Rai, Milan Rai, Harkey Mangar, Man Kumar Rai, Kancha Kalikotey of Deorali and Kainla of Gok.

On the evening of May 22,

Bishal Rai, Milan Rai, Mann Kumar Rai, Kiran Thapa alias Harkey Mangar and Prabhat Kalikotey were arrested from Nayabazar Check Post on the Sikkim side of the Bengal-Sikkim Border in connection with this murder. Kancha Kalikotey of Deorali and Kainla of Gok were still at large then. Working on the leads, from the arrested accused, the Police had conducted several raids at Mangan in Sikkim but had failed to nab Kancha. However the Sikkim Police finally caught up with Kancha on May 26 at Mangan and handed him over to the Darjeeling Police.

## a NOW REPORT

**GANGTOK:** The Northeastern Region Tibet Support Group has asked the Prime Minister to play a "more pro-active role" during his forthcoming visit to China.

The Group met in Salugara in West Bengal for a two-day conference on June 13-14 and passed a four-point resolution, which included this plea to the Prime Minister.

"We request the Prime Minister to play a more pro-active role to bring the Chinese Government to agree to the pragmatic views of His Holiness the Dalai Lama so that there is genuine trust between the two countries and lasting peace in the subcontinent," Sonam Lhundup, co-convenor of the Con-

ference, says in a Press statement.

While welcoming the proposed visit of the PM to China, the Conference felt that apart from discussing the issue of trade, commerce and opening up trade-route through Sikkim, the issue of Tibet must also be discussed by the PM since the "Himalayan culture is closely linked with the culture of Tibet."

The Support Group voiced its view that the construction of a rail-link by China from Lhasa, leading up to the international border with India, "directly affect India's security and environment." The Group also resolved to appeal to the PM to also take up this issue during his visit, which they feel, is in India's security.

# Working on rural water supply

**REPORT**

**OK:** A one-day workshop on rural water supply and sanitation was organised by RDD (Rural Development) in collaboration with the Water and Sanitation Consultancy Services (WSS) on June 11 at the District Office here. The Deputy Minister Pawan Kumar was the chief guest on the occasion.

During the occasion, Mr. Pawan Kumar dwelt on the importance of water in day-to-day life and the need to preserve it. He said that the people of Sikkim were not fully aware of the importance of water.

The State had not yet experienced a water shortage. The State Government has still initiated various schemes on rainwater and roof water harvesting in drought-prone areas of the State, he informed.

Community participation in water harvesting, water quality monitoring and treatment and rural extension were some of the issues discussed during the workshop.

# Rabbitry training

**OK:** The State government through the Department of Animal Husbandry, has introduced a scheme on rabbitry funded under the National Wool Development Project and STEP. The Directorate of Handicrafts and Animal Husbandry has in turn started a training programme in rabbitry at the wool processing from May 2003. This programme has been started in collaboration with Dr. Arun Kumar, Consultant,

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# ON THE GARBAGE TRAIL

or most of us garbage management means little more than throwing our rubbish into the dustbin or the jhora, er happens to be closer. D&HD it means collect- enever possible in the few at they have and dump- at an open ground at . For the State Pollution Board it means collecting formulating action plan And yet, solid waste man- could soon be our nem- mediate attention is not it. According to Dr. B ta, Member Secretary, Pollution Control Board, is hurtling into an envi- al nightmare because of dustrialization and inad- nrastructure to control deluge." He goes on to at efficient waste manage- uld be our top priority. angtok, the responsibility ge collection and disposal h UD&HD.

has the department been efficient all these years? long has UD&HD been for all this. It is not only osibility. What about the ho don't seem to have most basic civic sense? out the State Pollution Board? I only found out back that solid waste man- falls under their ambit. they should spend some and time too," contends Pradhan, Additional Sec- D&HD. State Pollution Control as problems of its own. understaffed, it has one ientist, one scientific as-

**It is no great revelation to tell Gangtokians that they have a solid waste management problem. We live it. MITA ZULCA goes on the garbage trail to find out exactly how serious the problem is and who is doing what and how much about it...**

sistant and two lab assistants for all of Sikkim. The Board has under its jurisdiction every conceivable area related to pollution. From manage- ment of solid waste and hospital waste to monitoring of ambient air quality, noise level and water quality. Although eight technical posts have been sanctioned by the central government not one post has been filled. This, despite the fact that salaries for the eight posts were ensured by the central government till the end of the 10th five year plan, with the provision for extend- ing it in the 11th five year plan. So, what could be the hitch? No clear answers are available.

To get back on the garbage trail, each day 27,000 kgs of garbage is generated by Gangtok town alone. Many localities in town do not have access to waste collection depots. As a result wastes are dumped on any unused piece of land or into the jhoras. Around 60 per cent of the waste is collected by the seven UD&HD trucks daily. The rest are left as they are. The collected garbage is taken to the dumping site at Marchak on open garbage trucks and need to be loaded manually. Most of these trucks scatter refuse as they travel.

The dumping site at Marchak is an open one. Indiscriminate dumping is also creating the dan-

ger of polluting the Rani Khola. There is no attempt made to seg- regate the garbage at any stage. Organic, hazardous and biomed- ical waste is thrown out into the open along with plastic, bottles and chemicals. Obviously a less than perfect situation.

"We are aware of the situation but one has to be realistic. We have our own constraints. We have only five fully operational trucks at the moment for the East district. These big Tatas cannot go into smaller areas like Arithang or Syari. Why don't you ask the Roads and Bridges department why they are taking so long to complete the road from Arithang to the Bye-Pass. It would become so easy to remove the garbage then. Everyone has to do their bit. We are at present also short on manpower but are mak- ing amends for that," says Ms. Pradhan when asked why garbage is not removed for days and al- lowed to pile up in the suburbs.

"Who is creating this prob- lem? It is the elite. From the houses of the educated and the rich, maids come out and throw the garbage into the jhora. Do the peo- ple not have any responsibility at all?" she asks angrily.

The absence of safe disposal of biomedical waste is another matter of great concern. This waste is much more complex than mu- nicipal waste as it contains bio- non-degradable items along with highly infective waste. In Sikkim, there is no uniform method for the disposal of hospital waste. STNM hospital generates 300 kgs of in- fective and other waste daily. The hospital has only a 2 kg capacity incinerator. Most of the STNM



Garbage is not a problem. We generate enough of it. It is collection and disposal that we falter.

waste goes into UD&HD dustbins or into the jhoras.

"Work is going on to install a much bigger incinerator. Within a month we should have it," informs Dr. SC Pradhan, Additional Super- intendent, STNM.

What about the fear that plac- ing such an incinerator in a crowded locality will cause air pollution? "Initially, the nearby hotels raised some objections but we have been assured that there will be no air pollution. The smoke will come out at a height of more than 100ft and will not affect the people," the doctor adds.

Ask the State Pollution Con- trol Board if that is true and they disagree. "The hospital authorities know the rules but they have not yet approached us for permission. They are going ahead and doing it on their own when they should be consulting us. Of course it will cre- ate air pollution," says Dr. Gopal Pradhan, senior scientist, SPCB.

While the different depart- ments work out their own way to

solve the problem, there that things will soon get b

"We have prepared a and are working on an Acti- Things are moving and so problem will be solved. shifting the dumping si- Marchak to Martam. A solid waste treatment plan- installed there. All the y- collected by UD&HD will regated and treated here- closes Dr. Pradhan, of the

Lack of money is no lo- problem it seems. The cent- ernment has sanctioned Rs- for the project with the Sta- ernment chipping in with 10- of the allocated budget. UD- getting five more trucks for- collection. STNM hospital- dered supplies of different c- buckets to segregate the- waste at source. While thin- to be moving in a positiv- tion we can only hope that t- tiatives do not remain only- per but get implemented- ground level too.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

is for information of the three communities as- ioned below, in particular, and the public in- ral, that the Law Commission of Sikkim has- red a draft report on the Customary Laws and- es of the following Communities, namely:

- LEPCHA
- BHUTIA
- SHERPA

e Draft Report is being circulated amongst- ed people, village elders and knowledgabl- ns viz. members of Panchayats / Local MPs- As, Heads of Departments etc. calling for ob- n / suggestions, if any, before finalising the- t. The draft report is available with the under- d in the address given below and the same- be obtained for the purpose of perusal and- iberation.

therefore, resuested that the objections/sug- ons, if any, on the draft report may kindly be- itted to the undersigned by 30th June, 2003

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# Ecotourism on the wings

**Sikkim Development Foundation, in collaboration with Kewzing Tourism Development Committee is experimenting an ecotourism option - bird-watching. Sikkim, with its repository of some 600 bird species, should be a hit with the serious ecotourist as well as the hobbyist. Kewzing could soon be a destination that sails ecotourism the wings to sail on...**

## RIKAH ATREYA

**ANG:** Sikkim's avian community is excited even the great ornithologists of all times, Aristotle, into devoting an entire book to them. It is thus surprising that enough attention has been paid to bird-watching in on this state's wealth. This could be a game-changer. While the focus of the tourism industry in the State has primarily been on regular tourist activities such as trekking, and sightseeing, experts are of the opinion that the industry diversify and find new and innovative ways to promote tourism as well as conservation. Given the fact that Sikkim has 600 species of birds, bird-watching may just be the answer the industry is looking for. It is a relatively new concept promoted by a local Sikkim Development Foundation in an attempt to cash in on the natural resources of the State. At the same time promote eco-tourism and take conservation to the grassroots level. The first glimmer of this initiative came with the week-long programme - "Bird-watching for Conservation and Ecotourism" - at the rescue Kewzing village

from June 7-14. A joint-initiative of the Sikkim Development Foundation and the newly-set up Kewzing Tourism Development Committee (KTDC) the programme was funded under the "Sustainable Tourism Development and Income & employment Generation Project" sponsored by the Australian Foundation for Peoples of Asia & Pacific (AFAP) and supported by the Kathmandu Environmental Education Project, (KEEP).

The week-long programme saw experts from Nepal set up camp at Kewzing and interact with the locals on the nuances of bird-watching and conservation methods. The main resource person for the programme was Rajendra

Narsingh Suwal, ornithologist and president of the Lumbini Crane Conservation Centre, Nepal.

Nestled in the laps of the Maenam Hill, the Kewzing village in the Ravangla Sub-division is a mini-biodiversity hot-spot in itself. An abundance of birds are found in the areas surrounding Ravangla, Kewzing, Rayong and Maenam.

"In just three days of our stay here, we came across as many as 110 species of birds in the area, some very rare ones as well. This is a very encouraging sign," Mr. Suwal said. Some of the interesting species Mr. Suwal and enthusiastic members of KTDC located in the surrounding areas of



Kewzing and Maenam were the Munal, Mrs. Gould's Sunbird, the Sultan Tit, the Green Magpie, the Yellow-Necked Woodpecker, the White Throated Kingfisher, the Brown-Wood Owl and the Black Eagle.

"Some of the birds we came across are extremely rare and indig-

enous to the area. There are some migratory birds too, which indicates that the area is a thriving ecological hot-spot. Now the onus is on the State government as well as NGOs and locals alike to conserve the biodiversity of the area and minimize environmental degradation at all costs," Mr. Suwal said.

"We have realized that there is a tremendous scope for bird watching in Sikkim, which will not only promote ecotourism in a big way, but will also give a tremendous boost to our conservation efforts. This way, we can also initiate local participation in tourism promotion and conservation," Karma T. Takapa, Executive Director, Sikkim Development Foundation said.

In fact, the Foundation started the bird-watching programme a couple of months ago through the RTDC and its Ravangla Village Tourism Project, in which two young members of the

KTDC, Tsewang Rinchen Mongpo and Karma Sonam Bhutia underwent an intensive 15-days training in bird-watching in Nepal with Mr. Suwal. Now, they are using their expertise to educate the local villagers and school children on the importance of promoting bird-watching and conservation methods.



The Bird-watching for Conservation and Ecotourism programme received a tremendous response from the locals and children in particular.

The programme at Kewzing village concluded a day-long event organized by Kewzing Secondary School which was attended by students and the villagers, along with the members of the Four KTDC, Mr. Suwal and PTDC Executive Director, Kewzing Sherpa gave a talk along with a slide show on tourism in Sikkim while Mr. Suwal presented a show on bird-watching for conservation and ecotourism.

A painting competition on the theme "Birds of Kewzing" was also held for the students of the Kewzing Secondary School with the aim to generate awareness on the variety of birds endemic to the area.

The Sikkim Development Foundation the KTDC plans to prepare a detailed list of the birds present in the Kewzing-Ravangla in a brochure, which will provide relevant information on the population here for bird-watching. The Foundation is also planning to identify other places in the State that can be promoted as bird-watching corridors.

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**CIVIL DEFENCE THROUGH TREE PLANTATION  
a NOW REPORT**

**GANGTOK:** The Civil Defence Force in Gangtok, observed its Raisa Day here on June 8. In a departure from its earlier "Clean Campaign" focus this year was on tree plantation. Adhering to the slogan, "In the absence of trees are destroyed, and other calamities prevail," the Civil Defence team participated in a tree plantation campaign. Smriti Van in Bulbuley on June 8. The Additional Chief Secretary, Tashi Topden, Chief Engineer, Swastik, the DC, East, District Guard, T. Wangyal and members of the Civil Defence planted saplings. The Smriti Van to mark the occasion.

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The greatest use of life is to spend it on something that will outlast it  
-William James

**REQUIREMENT**  
A Site Engineer for projects outside Gangtok. Qualification: B.Tech. in Civil Engineering.

# TWO SIKKIMS BRING HOPE

## REPORT

**OK:** Two new variants of cardamom, Sikkim-I and II, developed by scientists of the Regional Research Station, of the Indian Cardamom Institute, have been approved by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and promise a three-fold increase in yield for all farm-plantations for these variants in Sikkim.

Utpal Gupta, Senior Scientist [Transfer of Technology], a scientist who has worked on developing the two variants, announcing the official said: "These two selected of a high-yielding types. Sikkim-I is suitable for cultivation in medium to high altitude. Sikkim-II is suitable for medium altitude."

Utpal further claimed that the two new variants promise a yield of 900 kgs per hectare. A 50 per cent yield leap from the 155-200 kgs per hectare that Sikkim average. To tap the full potential of this cash crop it is essential to replace the local unproductive cardamom with the new variants, he adds.

The new selections are needed for large scale plantations should come as good news for growers who have been struggling with the combined onerous effects of aging plantations and disease. On the disease front, a new strain of disease, different from the *Foorkey* and *Phytophthora*, which have plagued Sik-

## NEW VARIANTS PROMISE THREE-FOLD INCREASE IN LARGE CARDAMOM YIELD

Sikkim's large cardamom crop for quite some time, had troubled growers even more. Weather, too, played foul last year when hailstones destroyed a major portion of the local crop.

Dwindling produce in a region which accounts for 85 per cent of the nation's large cardamom has caused much concern at all levels - among the growers, wholesalers, the State Government and the Horticulture Department. Cardamom plantations spread across some 23,500 hectares in Sikkim and produce an estimated 4,000-4,500 metric tonnes of large cardamom annually. Cultivation of the cash crop employs about 16,949 framers, of which about 1,500 are small and marginal farmers. For many of them, cardamom is the only source of income and falling productivity of their plantations directly impacts their income.

Declining yield in plantations across the State has also been attributed to lack of re-plantations initiatives. Experts wager that over 80 per cent of the cardamom bushes in Sikkim require immediate replantation if the State is to stay on top in cardamom production.

Now that a new variant be available, it remains to be seen whether it gets the required support from the concerned department. Replantation. Scientists at the research institute are convinced that the local "unproductive" large cardamom needs to be replaced with the new variants for plantations across the State to remain economically profitable.

The RRS, incidentally, has set up a gene bank at Pangthang and has been carrying out extensive research in the development of a superior variety of cardamom to give a better yield. It has been working on the new strains since 1987 and testing and trail runs have already been conducted at Mangan in north Sikkim.

Now that the two variants have been approved and registered with the Union Ministry of Agriculture, cardamom farmers in the State can look forward to a better yield in the coming years. But it will be sometime before the new variants are introduced to cardamom cultivators as the RRS will have to transfer the technology to the Horticulture Department for large-scale production of cardamom rhizomes for distribution.

## GET READY FOR SOME ORIENTAL BANKING

## REPORT

**OK:** Despite the capriciousness as an extravagant banker, the Oriental Bank of Commerce opened its 993rd branch in the country here on June 15, with special focus on the lower income group.

The speciality of our bank are schemes like Suidha Deposit, Fixed Deposit Scheme, Current Deposit Scheme, Current Deposit Schemes which

The reaction from the people has been good so far, he further disclosed.

Earlier, while addressing a Press conference on the opening of the new branch, VK Chopra, Executive Director, informed that during the year 2002-2003, the Bank had achieved a total business of Rs. 45,486 crores showing an average growth of 11.6% in deposits and 17.6% in advances. Gross profit of the Bank stood at Rs. 1,163 crores against Rs. 320 crores last year.

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**M I S S I N**



since 8 June 2003. **NAR BAHADUR GURUNG**, age 62 years, height-5'6", wheatish complexion, resident of 15, Melli Bazar, South Sikkim. He was wearing a blue shirt, pant and hawaaii chappal.

**Contact: Police Station, Telephone No: 270203, 270259 (R) Tika Gurung, Melli Bazar, South Sikkim**

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# BOOST SPORTS SIKKIM

AND OBEROI

**OK:** Prasun Banerjee, Indian football captain and award recipient was here representative for the Sports Ministry of India on a 2-day visit on 10-11 and had some words to share with the State. Mr. Banerjee said that he was in Sikkim initially to thank the State Government, which, he said had done its way to promote sports in Sikkim and appreciated Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Singh's prompt gesture of donating 20 acres of land in Namchi and 30 acres in Gangtok village in South Sikkim for constructing sports complexes. Mr. Banerjee said that he was in Sikkim initially to thank the State Government, which, he said had done its way to promote sports in Sikkim and appreciated Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Singh's prompt gesture of donating 20 acres of land in Namchi and 30 acres in Gangtok village in South Sikkim for constructing sports complexes.

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# Governor's Gold Cup to return to Paljor Stadium!

**a NOW REPORT**

**GANGTOK:** Work on the Paljor Stadium, otherwise scheduled for a 2004 completion, is being accelerated so that silver jubilee episode of the prestigious Governor's Gold Cup football tournament in October can be held there.

Speaking to NOW!, the Director for Sports, HT Basi said that the

department was doing everything possible to hold the tournament at Paljor Stadium in October.

Confident that they will be able to meet the deadline, Mr. Basi revealed that although the stadium won't have a grass field in place, the other layers of the field would be complete. At present, the field is going through the multi-layering process which will filter the water and also provide drainage facility to the field.



**A WORK IN PROGRESS:** Paljor Stadium preparing a multi-layered field

## BCCI ON THE LOOKOUT FOR A BAICHUNG WITH A WILLOW

**a NOW REPORT**

**GANGTOK:** Board for Cricket Control in India has decided to adopt Sikkim under its "New Areas Development Programme," aimed at promoting cricket with the hope of finding new talent in northeastern region. This was offered at a meeting convened with officials of the Sports & Youth Affairs Department by the BCCI in Kolkata recently.

Under this programme, BCCI has offered to conduct an under-19 tournament between the northeastern states. All expenses like journey fare, lodging and boarding, expenditures in coaching and equipment will be borne by BCCI.

The Kolkata meeting was attended by the Minister Sports & Youth Affairs, CK Mohra, Director, Sports & Youth Affairs, HT Basi and Tika Subba, Joint Secre-

tary, Sikkim Cricket Association. While speaking to NOW!, Mr. Basi, said that his Department also put forward its case of affiliation of SCA stressing on the good performance of the State in various tournaments organised by the Board in the East Zone. Sikkim also put forward a proposal to make available top level coaches to train resource persons in the state who could later work as coaches with upcoming cricketers.

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