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GANGTOK, WEDNESDAY, Dec 10-16, 2003

NOW!

SIKKIM MATTERS

VOL 2 NO 24 □ Rs. 5

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GET SCARED. VERY SCARED

The final episode of NOW's three-part series on substance abuse in Sikkim narrates the story of Lakpa, a twenty year old who lost his leg to Spasmo Proxyvon. From a poor family, the future looks bleak for Lakpa. He is not only a victim of his own ad-

diction, but also of the society's indifference - a society that remains in constant denial and has still not realized that addiction has struck deep roots in the State. The horror of addiction is real and it is here. The third installment also speaks of what

needs to be done, of the policy decisions required and the social awakening necessary to save a generation from wasting away.

...WHEN HE CAME TO HIS SENSES, HE WAS SCREAMING IN PAIN, SAYING THAT HIS LEFT LEG, THE ONE THAT HAD BEEN AMPUTATED, WAS HURTING... HE WAS SUFFERING FROM PHANTOM PAINS...

MITA ZULCA puts a face to Sikkim's drug problem and hopes that the horror sinks in...

THE CAPSULE FROM HELL HAS ARRIVED AND THE BODY COUNT IS RISING



Lakpa, 20, has lost his leg to Spasmo Proxyvon

TURN TO pgs 8 & 9 FOR DETAILS

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NOW!

SIKKIM MATTERS

Stoned Immaculate

The pressure to lead with a newsy, event-based story is strong when packaging a weekly for the news-stands. Yet, the cover-story we have opted for this week is not based on a recent event, but it is still reflective of a trend that Sikkim ignores at its own peril. The regular readers will notice that this is also the second time in three weeks that we have put addiction on the cover. The decision was arrived at after accepting that at times sensationalism is the only way the media can draw attention to what it feels is a pressing concern. And, substance abuse needs to be prioritized for a solution by our policy-makers. That explains the disturbing photograph of a young life suffocated by a debilitating amputation and a headline that screams to attract attention. We hope it does. Not a week passes by without news of a life snuffed by a drug overdose. The age of initiation into drugs drops with each passing week and there has been one confirmed suicide by a 10-year-old unable to bear the trauma of withdrawals.

Do we still go on with life believing that addiction is not a serious enough problem?

Alcoholism has always plagued the Sikkimese society and although it needs to be addressed too, the abuse of Spasmo Proxyvon demands immediate attention. What makes the drug more dangerous is that apart from wrecking the usual fallouts of drug abuse, it is also mortally dangerous in the way it is abused. The prescription drug comes in the form of capsules which addicts dilute with blood, water and at times even with alcohol. SP does not dissolve completely and the burning sensation that addicts mistake for a "rush" is actually their veins getting scrapped by the undissolved granules. While SP commands a chemical dependence like any other substance of abuse, it also brings along complications in the form of gangrene which leaves amputation as the only solution. In light of this almost immediate fallout, one need not even get into detailing the dangers of intravenous drug use. And yet, we see no cohesive approach to combat the growing popularity of the drug among the youth.

In real terms there are only two organisations, both NGOs, striving to find a way out for those caught in the web of addiction. There is one drug counsellor at the STNM hospital. This is highly inadequate. Even in the absence of any statistics on how many addicts we have in Sikkim, one won't be wrong in believing that the current support system is highly inadequate. There are too many left out in the cold to deal with their addictions in isolation. NGOs have their role to play in combatting drug abuse, but before that we need a clear-cut policy on the issue and proactive community involvement. We have none in Sikkim.

Do we continue that way? Should we?

BOYS CLUB IS STILL "BOYS CLUB"

The article "Bhaichung's Club gets a sponsor" printed in NOW! Vol. 2 No. 21, dated Wednesday, 19-24 November 2003 has created confusion over the existence of our club "the Boys Club". So the founder-members and the players of Boys Club would like to complain over the subject matter.

We would like to inform you that Boys Club is still alive and kicking with all its founder members and players intact. Boys Club has not transformed into United Sikkim Sporting Club [USSC] as reported nor is USSC the club that gave Bhaichung to the world as printed in your paper but it is the Boys Club that gave Bhaichung to the world. In no way is USSC the new "avatar" of Boys Club.

Moreover, stating that Mr.

Karma P. Bhutia's association with the club right from its inception in 1983 is not true. However, he was the Club's president and managed the club from 1991 to 1994 and we will not deny his contribution to the Club. But the misinformation that Mr. Bhutia, as the founder of Boys Club, has now associated with the USSC suggests that the USSC is the new avatar of Boys Club [as printed in your paper]. This is not true. Nor is USSC a breakaway of Boys Club because all the founder members of the club are intact in the club.

Boys Club is a registered club with the Land Revenue Department, Government of Sikkim and if at all the statements carried out in your paper are true there have to be authentic documents and resolutions of the Boys Club meeting to transform Boys Club

TO THE SP [EAST] KHAKI ATROCITY AT RANGPO

The complainant begs to bring to your kind notice the following facts for favour of your immediate intervention and necessary action.

That on 25-11-2003, I had been to Rangpo bazaar to attend to some personal matter with the B.O. Forest Department. Since I was having some financial problem, I requested the said B.O. to lend me some money for enabling me to reach Gangtok. There after I was told by the said B.O. to go to Rangpo Police Station wherein, the police personnel present in the P.S. all of a sudden, without any rhyme or reason, assaulted me with kicks, blows and rolls.

While I was trying to save my body, the roll struck two fingers of my left hand thereby causing fracture of one of the finger. I was confined in Hazat for one night and I was released the next day. It is pertinent to mention here that I was mercilessly beaten up by five or six constables of Rangpo police station.

It is unfortunate to say that a police seen as the protector of law and public are abusing their power by torturing innocent people like me. If given opportunity to identify the police personnel involved in the said act I can identify them personally but I do not know their names. I request your good self to kindly constitute a committee to enquire into the matter and such police personnel who are harassing and torturing the public may be brought to justice.

Kinga Tshering Bhutia

ON EDUCATION

Although the present educational system in Sikkim is benefiting from the induction of trained teachers and the issuing of quality text books in government schools, the results are still not

favourable. The minds of the students are still the same as compared to the student's of the past.

Most government school students feel they are inferior to students studying in private schools. They feel that they won't be able to compete in the world later. These students come to school without any ambitions, knowing that it is futile to hope. Their society and their parents too find the education quite futile.

It is a sad irony to have students without ambition and awareness. The subjects which they are taught only provide them with enough to get through, but the spirit of learning is missing.

The students do not get any moral support and their minds are

ACTION MAIL

filled with negativity. We all know the effect of positive thinking in a person's life. If a student enjoys studying then each aspect of learning becomes fun.

The subjects imposed in government schools are all considered 'literatures of knowledge' and aim to provide information and knowledge on various subjects. To boost and to reflect a good image, the government should impose a subject of a new kind, 'Literature of Power'. The former literature may lose its relevance and but the latter remains unchanged and works to provide power and spiritual boost to us.

If the government promotes spiritual, ethical and psychological teachings in government schools, it will provide a tremendous boost to the students.

Pawan Bhattarai

TO THE SNT DEPTT BUSES FOR ALL

Our SNT Department needs waking up. As private ap-

peals to their office and officials have had no impact, perhaps a little public ventilating of grievances will do no harm.

The state of Sikkim by virtue of its geography is connected by only road transport.

Sincere thanks to the SNT Department for sufficient buses, but in many places the service is still not sufficient.

There are three buses that travel through Pakyong, Aho and Ranipool. These are Rhenock, Padamchen and Pakyong buses. The Padamchen bus is occupied by employees working in various government departments in Gangtok and the Pakyong bus too is reserved for Pakyong employees. The Rhenock bus is not an option. It is full beyond capacity, with passengers from Rhenock and Rongli. For the last few months the locals and college students especially falling under Pakyong and Aho zone are not allowed to get on the bus. The main excuse they give is overload.

It is the people with limited financial ability who prefer buses. Especially college students who have no income but only expenditure. These buses are their only option.

The fact cannot be denied that college students are given concessions. But what use is it if SNT buses do not allow them to get in? If this sort of thing continues, many students will not be able to graduate despite being enrolled in a college.

Why can't a separate bus be allotted for the government employees travelling to Gangtok and a separate one for locals? It is really sad that we should be inconvenienced in this way for weeks. I hope the situation does not remain the same and the public will force the authorities to take necessary steps.

Steve BK, Sikkim Government College, Tadong

LETTERS

into USSC in support of the article as printed in NOW!

Besides Boys club has been sponsored by K & Company and Sikkim Tourism in the years 1993 and 1997. Ongoing negotiations regarding sponsorship with probable companies at present are hindered due to the misinformation printed in your paper.

The members of Boys Club strongly feel that the media should print only the fact after investigation of the matter to avoid such misinformation and confusion as such the confusion created by your publication has compelled us to request you to take instant action on this matter or we will be forced to move to Court for legal action against the "misinformer" whoever it may be.

We shall be obliged if you could kindly take proper action against our complained matter.

You may meet us for further clarification of the matter and we assure you our cooperation.

Members, Boys Club

CORRECT ON ADDICTION

We, the students of North Sikkim Academy, would like to express our appreciation of NOW! in general and the series on drug addiction in particular. Abuse, we agree is a growing problem among the youth. We hope you continue highlighting such concerns in the future too.

NSA students, Mangon

POETIC REFUGE

The recent articles on addiction in NOW! brought me face-to-face with the alcoholism I deal

with in my family. I penned some lines on my ache and hope that the person it is meant for understands.

REFLECTION

*With a start I wake up in the night,
What was it that gave me a fright?
Then it all comes back to overwhelm me
The despair, the heartbreaks that no one can see,
When did it start? How did it all come about?*

*From a caring husband you turned into a drunken lout.
How I smile when thinking back to the early days,
When it was filled with fun,
laughter and constant frays
But we'd make up again and be together*

Until the sunny days turned gloomy

turn to pg 3

Mangan School model on alternative energy impresses Kalam



An impressed President APJ Abdul Kalam discusses the Mangan SSS model on Wino Solar Technology with Siporah Tshering Bhutia

DEEPAK SHARMA

MANGAN: Siporah Tshering Bhutia, a student of Mangan Senior Secondary School, and her teacher, Prakash Rawat, cannot stop beaming with pride. Back recently from the 30th Jawaharlal National Science Exhibition for Children, held at Dehradun from 17-22 November, last month, the two can still not believe that not only did the President APJ Abdul Kalam, himself a scientist, spend a long time discussing their model on Wino Solar Technology, but also made special mention of the Mangan SSS display in his speech delivered at the closing ceremony.

The Mangan SSS model, ex-

plains Siporah and her teacher, demonstrated the working of a "Sun synchronized power plant and a vertical axis wind turbine." The turbine, a still excited Siporah explains, rotates irrespective of the wind direction and adds that this project exploits the potential of both sources of non-conventional energy - solar and wind - and can be used to ease our dependence on the ever-shrinking reserves of fossil fuels.

The exhibition at Dehradun had participants from some 250 schools from all over the country, besides some schools from the Gulf countries.

When asked to share the high-points of her Dehradun experi-

ence, Siporah said that her interaction with the President was very encouraging. "The interest he showed, the questions he asked and the encouragement he lavished on us were proof that his scientific temperament has not dimmed despite his busy schedule as the President of the country. I was not only thrilled when he made a special reference to our model in his speech later, but was also convinced that I had to pursue science more seriously from now onwards," she said.

Needless to add, her school and her friends are all basking in the reflected glory of Mangan SSS' impressive showing at the national level exhibition.

Driver perishes as truck crashes 200 ft



a NOW REPORT

DIKCHU: On 5 December, last Friday, a truck [SK-03-1772] skidded off the road about one kilometre short of Dikchu [from Singtam], killing its driver, damaging one house and injuring seven of its passengers.

At about 10:30 am the residents of the PHC area [where the accident took place], here witnessed a truck plying from Siliguri to Chungthang skid off the road due to over speeding, plunging down some 200 feet killing its driver Ramesh Sundas, a resident of Tadong, Gangtok.

The accident also damaged the house of Man Bahadur Subba, who, along with his family, had a

providential escape since everyone at home [his wife and their 5 children] had left the house shortly before the truck crashed into it.

The vehicle had on board seven passengers, 5 of whom suffered minor injuries and two were referred to STNM Hospital in serious condition. The staff of Dikchu PHC was quick to react and reached first aid to victims immediately. Police personnel from the Dikchu OP and the local residents of Dikchu helped in the evacuation of the survivors and carrying them to the PHC and rehabilitating the affected residents of the destroyed house.

The case is now under investigation by the Sadar Thana. The cops are also awaiting the technical report from the Motor Vehicles department to ascertain the main cause of the accident.

Contd from pg 2

Then the evenings were full of tension
As the children and I had to be wary not to mention
All the forbidden topics that set you in a rage,
So we felt like cowering birds in a cage.
Then you threw my things left and right
Not caring that the children were in sight

How my heart breaks to remember their crying
As you ranted and raved, my love for you started drying
How long can we go on like this?
Only existing but so much we miss
The normal happy-go-lucky family life
As we struggle with all this constant strife
Then the final hurtful act of yours
To lock us out of our very doors
We may stumble we may fall
But for what its worth, we're still

standing tall
For there may be a lot of problems to face
But with God watching over us surely we'll win the race
I am a survivor so it goes in a song
For this I believe in and see no wrong
When evening comes I never again have to fear
As I live content and happy with those that are dear.

Name withheld on request

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POWER PLAY

CONGRESS WEARS A NEW LOOK

BHANDARI ANNOUNCES LIST OF NEW OFFICE BEARERS



NOW! pix

SARIKHAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: "The present state of affairs in the State has forced me to take on a more active role in Sikkim politics once again," said former Chief Minister and Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee-I president Nar Bahadur Bhandari as he read out the names of the office bearers of the newly-constituted SPCC [I] at a function held here at the Congress Bhawan on 5 December, last Friday.

The new body of the SPCC [I]

was necessitated with the recent merger of Mr. Bhandari's Sikkim Sangram Parishad with the Cong [I]. The delicate balancing act that Mr. Bhandari had to negotiate to accommodate old Congressmen and new entrants was obvious in the mammoth list of office bearers in the restructured SPCC [I] which has a post for everybody who was anybody in the erstwhile Sikkim Sangram Parishad, and, of course, in the former Congress unit.

Mr. Bhandari seemed un-

daunted by the triple beating the Congress took in three States in the recent Assembly elections and declared that the party was all set to take on the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front party in the Assembly elections scheduled for next year in the State.

"We will be launching a massive campaign from 14 December from Pakyong and gearing up for the Assembly elections," Mr. Bhandari said, without clarifying what campaign strategy the party would adopt. Given his tone

though, corruption charges against the SDF government will definitely figure in the Congress' strategy in the run up to the elections.

Declaring that the Congress was "the only party" in Sikkim that functioned according to the 8 May Agreement, Mr. Bhandari demanded that the Chamling government clarify how it intends to secure the constitutional right of the Tamang and Limbu communities now that they are declared

tribals. He also alleged that the SDF government had a hand in the closure of the CBI office here in Gangtok in order to avoid the corruption cases against it.

Mr. Bhandari said that tickets for the Assembly elections would be given to those party candidates who enjoyed the trust of the people, based solely on their performances.

In an obvious bid to please all,

MORE ON pg22

SDF LEADERS WARN AGAINST OPPOSITION'S "PROPAGANDA" OF DISINFORMATION

Empowerment for Rumtek youth

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Sikkim Democratic Front organised a Youth Empowerment meeting for the Rumtek constituency at Sikkim Government College ground here on 9 December, Tuesday. About 2000 people attended the meeting which had Food & Civil Supplies Minister, KB Chamling, as the chief guest. The meet was also attended by the area MLA and Tourism Minister, KT Gyaltzen, Chairman [STDC], Dorjee Namgyal, Uday Lama, DB Thapa and KB Gurung along with Zilla Panchayats, panchayat members and party workers from the Rumtek constituency.

Youth conveners for the Rumtek constituency were chosen during the meet. Kiran Rai was elected the convener while Naveen Chettri, Navin Poudyel and Rudra Kharel were declared vice conveners.

While addressing the gathering, Damber Dahal, SDF, Youth Convener for East District, stressed on the responsibilities and duties of youth towards the party and asked them to fight against the anti-social elements in the society. He said that



a NOW pic

the youth from the Rumtek constituency were efficient and bright and an asset to the party.

The STDC Chairman, Mr. Namgyal, in his speech, said that the Opposition parties were trying to create communal disharmony in the State by making issues out of non-issues and urged the people not to get carried away with such whisper campaigns and assured that SDF will ensure that the rights of the people are protected at all costs.

Hari Har Poudyel, East District, Zilla Upadakhshaya, spoke on decentralization of power and how it would benefit the people at the grass-roots level. He also asked the people to cooperate

with their Panchayats.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Gyaltzen, said that the main objective of the meeting was to apprise the people on the Opposition-sponsored "propaganda" aimed to mislead the people as the elections drew nearer. He said that politics was about providing social and economic benefits to the people and that SDF government was doing just that. He also urged the panchayats to play a more proactive role and spread the party's message of "janata sewa" among the people.

The Chief Guest spoke on the aims objectives and significant achievements of the government.

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CHAMLING COUNTERS OPPOSITION ALLEGATIONS, REVEALS DEVELOPMENT AS SDF'S POLL PLANK

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Perhaps energised by the recent awakening of the Opposition [with the Congress announcing its list of office bearers for Sikkim], or maybe buoyed by the monumental trouncing Sikkim's only Opposition suffered in three other states, the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was in a noticeably belligerent mood this Sunday at the inauguration of the State's first passenger ropeway at Deorali. Speaking at the function, Mr. Chamling targeted the Bhandari-led opposition with a barrage of political innuendos and responded to several allegations levelled at his government.

The State unit of the Congress came in the direct firing line of the CM, who spared no effort to drive home the point that the Congress and its leaders in Sikkim, in the absence of any issues, were resorting to "total lies" in an effort to "mislead" the people.

The CM, before he started the sledging match, clearly identified who it was being targeted at. While stressing that the national level Congress leaders at the All India Congress Committee [AICC] "may be good," Mr. Chamling maintained that the state unit was "nothing but a dustbin" collecting the spent forces of Sikkim politics.

"All those who have joined the Congress are themselves embroiled in corruption charges and still they speak of making corruption a poll issue. None of them has a clean image," he said.

Taking a dig at the various party colours that the present crop of Congressmen have worn in the past, Mr. Chamling likened them to snakes. "No matter how many skins they shed, they cannot change their true nature of opportunism," he said.

Pointing out that SDF had remained true to its ideology and vision ever since it was formed more than ten years back, Mr. Chamling questioned the "trust" that the present Opposition could evoke given the fact that its members have changed and shifted their loyalties and ideology so often. "How can anyone believe in a party that is run by people who do not think twice before abandoning the identity and ideology that had brought them to power at one time?" Mr. Chamling questioned.

Refuting allegations made by the SPCC [I] president, Nar Bahadur Bhandari that the SDF government had engineered the shifting of the CBI office from Gangtok, Mr. Chamling clarified that CBI was an "independent body" in which the State, or for that matter the Centre, has no say. "Mr. Bhandari, given his close association with the CBI, should

be aware of this," he said.

Mr. Chamling also let loose a salvo of caustic remarks at the Public Interest Litigations being filed against his government by some members of the Opposition. "These PILs are actually Political Interest Litigations and nothing else," he said.

Criticising organisations such as SIBLAC and GAC for "fueling communal passions" the State, Mr. Chamling maintained that neither his government, nor his party, had ever tried to "mislead" the people by citing the 8 May Agreement, something, he said the two organisations were constantly indulging in. "We are a part of the Indian Union and abide by Article 371F of the Constitution," he stressed.

Shifting focus to his government's performance thus far, Mr. Chamling said that the State's "emotional integration" with the rest of country was finally happening. While praising Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's "competent and dynamic leadership," Mr. Chamling said that the State had finally joined the national mainstream.

"The State has scaled great heights in the last nine years, which is matter of great pride for us. The SDF party is a member of BJP-led National Democratic Alliance [NDA] at the Centre and we also have a role to play in the



decision-making process at the national level," he said.

Hinting at SDF's poll-plank for the next assembly elections, Mr. Chamling said that the government has decided to complete all infrastructural requirements of the State in the next four years.

"Through the last nine years, our focus was on the social-economic and political upliftment of the people. We have strived to provide a better quality of life to

the people, protect and safeguard their rights and privileges. We have delivered on most of our promises, although work on infrastructure development has already started, we will accord more focus on it in the next term," he announced.

As the CM made obvious on Sunday, he is warming up for the assembly elections scheduled for the last quarter of next year. The countdown to the polls has begun.

BJP is open to pre-poll alliances in Sikkim

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The State-unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] has attributed the party's resounding victory in three States in the recently-concluded Assembly elections to "good governance and developmental programmes of the BJP-led NDA at the Centre".

The BJP, in a press release, said that the results also indicate that the voters, including the tribals, now have more faith in the BJP than on the Congress or other regional parties.

"The voters are now showing more inclination towards national parties. This is the trend even in Sikkim, as shown by the merger of the Sikkim Sangram Parishad

with the Congress," the release reads.

The BJP, it announces, will field candidates from all constituencies in Sikkim in the coming Assembly elections as well as the Lok Sabha polls.

"Since the BJP believes in alliance with other parties, it will try to form pre-poll alliance with other parties. If the BJP can forge a minimum common programme with other parties, seat adjustments can be made accordingly," the release adds.

The BJP State-unit "celebrated" the victory of the party by sending congratulatory messages to the party high-command, the Prime Minister and the deputy Prime Minister in New Delhi.

excuse me...

by PANKAJ THAPA

POSTMEN TO DRESS AS SANTAS FOR X-MAS MAIL



DEVELOPMENT



Sikkim cop in CBI net while on deputation with the investigating agency

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: DIG Sudhakar Rao, an IPS officer from the Sikkim cadre on deputation to CBI and posted in Vishakapatnam was arrested, ironically, by CBI sleuths on charges of graft, days before he was to return to Sikkim.

DIG Rao was arrested on 6 December, last Saturday, by a CBI special investigation team from Delhi along with two Andhra Pradesh government employees on charges of corruption. His residence, along with those of his two suspected partners in crime were also raided.

The DIG is alleged to have demanded a bribe of Rs. 10 lakhs

from a person to settle his case before he left the CBI to return to Sikkim and deputed the public prosecutor [one of the AP govt. employees] to collect the money.

The arrest brings the DIG's association with the CBI a full circle. He was posted to Vishakapatnam as SP, CBI, three years back and had been promoted to the rank of DIG only last month. Senior Sikkim Police officials, when asked to comment on the development expressed shock over it while adding, "Who knows the levels one falls to when driven by greed." Interestingly, the police administration was already preparing for Rao's return and had even arranged for his new post here.

Dikchu mixes entertainment with AIDS awareness

a NOW REPORT

DIKCHU: World AIDS Day was observed at Dikchu Bazar by the local NGO, Dikchu Youth Welfare Association in collaboration with the Sikkim State AIDS Control Society on 1 December. The programme was part of the year-long Targeted Intervention Project being carried out by the Association in the area.

Keeping in view the interests of the various sections of the people of the area, the programme included a number of activities both for the children and the adults. An Open Quiz Contest, a Talk on AIDS and Sit & Draw competitions were organized. A Musical Nite, with the theme "Help Prevent AIDS because this is the only cure," was

ing to this year's World AIDS Day's theme "Fight Stigma and Discrimination, live and let live" was the highlight of the function.

Folk songs, modern songs and dance competitions were held to entertain the general public while an AIDS Awareness session of the Targeted Intervention Project was also conducted by Chung

turn to pg 11

IT Deptt's call centre training wing posts 90% placement record

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Nine of the ten candidates of the first batch trained by the Call Centre Agent Trainers of the Department of Information Technology have been selected by Guwahati-based VNV Consultants after interviews held on 5 December, last Friday.

The first batch of thirteen, selected from 49 applicants, had only recently completed a 2-month call-centre training programme which began in October earlier this year. Although the first batch comprised of 13 candidates, three were selected for further interviews by 2COMS with chances of being employed in any of the numerous Business Process Outsourcing companies

even before they could complete their training. VNV Consultants have been selecting individuals from Sikkim and other north-eastern states and placing them in companies in Gurgaon and other cities. Incidentally, the ninety per cent selection record of IT Department's Call Centre Agent training wing is the highest in the North-east.

The training centre is an initiative partly funded by DONER [Department for Development of North-eastern Region] and is run by DOEACC and the IT Department of the State. The trainers have undergone special training for grooming aspiring call centre agents in Guwahati.

During the 2-month training course candidates are taught the

art of telephone etiquette and customer interaction for a course fee of Rs. 3,000. They are further made conversant in English, their accents neutralized and imparted basic knowledge of computers. Candidates should be higher secondary pass. Once employed with a call-centre, they stand to make anything between Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 20,000 per month.

Interviews for the second batch of trainees were conducted on 28 and 29 November, but since the dates coincided with the final examinations, the response was very limited. Taking this into consideration, the Department has decided to hold a second round of interviews on 10 December and another in the first week of January 2004.

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North prepares for a grander Namsoong Mela and Kagyad Dance

DEEPAK SHARMA

MANGAN: Namsoong is an important festival of Lepchas and is celebrated in a grand fashion at Namprikdang each year. The preparations are being launched on an even larger footing this year given that it will also be attended by the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling who is expected to visit Namprikdang on 27 December.

Although the festival is normally organized by the Namsoong Celebration Committee, the district administration is also pitching in this year with the prepara-

District administration to help with organization and donations

tions. This was evident in the meeting convened at the DAC conference hall on 2 December, last Tuesday, to finalise the dates and itinerary for the Namsoong celebrations and Kagyad dance at Ringhem Gumpa. The Kagyad dance forms an important ritual of Namsoong celebrations.

The meeting was attended by the Zilla Adhakshya [north], Lobzang Tenzing, the DC, PS

Targain, senior government officials posted in the district and representatives from the Namsoong Celebration Committee and Ringhem Gumpa.

At the meeting, Sonam Lepcha, treasurer of the Rinzing Choeling Gumpa Committee of Ringhem, voiced the financial problems faced by them in organizing the Kagyad Dance every year. Public contributions and government aid

fell short of the Rs. 65,000 required to conduct the dances he said. The budget would go up this year since they were also thinking of incorporating the Singhi Dance.

The DC in turn stressed the need to organize the Namsoong celebrations even better this year given the presence of the CM and other VIPs at Namprikdang this year.

The Zilla Adhakshya's suggestion that the budgetary problems

of the two events be eased with contributions from the officers posted in Mangan. This was immediately accepted by the officials present at the meeting. The officials agreed to raise Rs. 25,000 for the Namsoong mela and another Rs. 20,000 for the Kagyad Dance from within the ranks to assist with the events. This added to the budget already at hand and a handsome contribution promised by the Zilla Adhakshya should see the two events through. The organizers are now committed to make a success of the Namsoong mela and Kagyad Dance.

SCHOOL'S OUT!



A visit to the government primary school in the Nampatam block in north Sikkim brings one face to face with the apathy that plagues education. As the above photo bears out, the school is literally falling apart. The structure is obviously in urgent need for repairs and the moment one enters the classroom one realises that even the furniture needs to be replaced or repaired immediately. The doors hang askew on the hinges, the window panes are missing and the school cannot even be locked anymore – the door won't shut! How the school manages to impart any education is anybody's guess.

Driven to Wait

Patients might get driven in ambulances, but have to stand while awaiting their appointment with the doctors. Such is the plight of the provisions at the District Hospital at Mangan. Although more than a hundred patients arrive here for medical aid on an average every day, the hospital has only one bench to accommodate them. Even this solitary bench seems to be a reject from one of the offices. The locals agree that the hospital should provide better arrangement for the comfort of the visiting patients.



Namsoong Celebration Committee

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MITA ZULCA puts a face to Sikkim's drug problem and hopes that the horror sinks in...

Lakpa's story is not very different from that of other addicts. He was 16 when he took his first Spasmo Proxyvon tablet. A year later, he was completely addicted and had graduated to injecting the drug. As time passed, his need grew. Soon, he was running out of veins to inject. He ended up injecting in his groin. It was then only a matter of time before an abscess developed. Doctors diagnosed it as gangrene – the death of a part of the body.

Gangrene emits harmful toxins which circulate throughout the body from the infected part and proves fatal in a majority of cases. To save his life, doctors amputated Lakpa's leg from the thigh down. He was barely 19 at the time.

"When he came to his senses after the operation, he was screaming in pain, saying that his left leg, the one that had been amputated, was hurting. He was suffering from phantom pains which often happens to people who lose a limb," recalls PJ Pradhan, better known as "mama" who was counselling Lakpa and coordinating help towards his recovery.

When NOW! first heard of Lakpa, we knew that the time had come to give drug addiction in the state a name and a face. Too long had we changed names, too long used abstract images to talk about addiction. So we went to meet him.

Lakpa comes from a poor economic background. At present he's almost an invalid, finding it difficult to walk even with the help of an artificial leg. Malnourished and depressed, he can hardly get out of bed anymore.

His father allowed us to take photos and document his story. Not an easy decision, as many parents of drug addicts would vouch.

Lakpa's might not be the face that immediately comes to mind when we speak of addiction. Many of us may dismiss his tryst with drugs as something that only happens to kids like him from poor families. But we would be fooling ourselves. Drug abuse knows no social class or status. It can happen in any family. It is happening in most families.

We were hopeful that showing the real face of addiction, showing how terribly wrong things can go, would deter other youngsters from experimenting with this Capsule From Hell.

The next day, when we went unannounced to see Lakpa again, we were in for a shock.

We walked into the room to come face to face with an addiction we had only talked about till now. Even as Lakpa lay in bed, his leg lost to Spasmo Proxyvon, two boys, hardly out of their teens, were injecting themselves with the same drug. One had

The Way Ahead

What those dealing with addicts and addiction have to suggest as possible solutions to growing substance abuse and its fallouts:

Dr. IL Sharma, Psychiatrist, STNM Hospital:

"Catching an addict, putting him in lock up and beating him is not going to solve the problem. Sometimes this leads to more serious problems. What I want is that every addict who is caught should be brought here, preferably escorted by a family member. It is true that earlier we did not have sufficient manpower, but now, we have enough staff. We have a clinical psychologist and a trained drug counsellor.

Another problem is that the detoxification unit at STNM Hospital is inside the psychiatric ward. Many people don't want to come here, as they don't want to be branded as psychiatric patients. A separate ward needs to be created to house addiction patients. Maybe a family ward where family members can also stay."

PJ Pradhan, Addiction Counsellor:

"The Government should start more rehabilitation centres. Some of the private rehabilitation centres may not be affordable for those from poor economic backgrounds. The state has to either subsidize rehabilitation treatment or help NGOs give free treatment for addicts who cannot afford to pay. Another rising trend is of girls taking to drugs. A separate treatment centre and woman counsellor needs to be created for them. However, the problem of addiction does not stop with detoxification. Rehabilitation should be holistic. It is necessary to set up some kind of training and earning opportunity for the recovering addicts. Otherwise they will go back to the same environment and chances of relapse are more."

Dr. Namgyal Sherpa, Consultant, Medicine, STNM

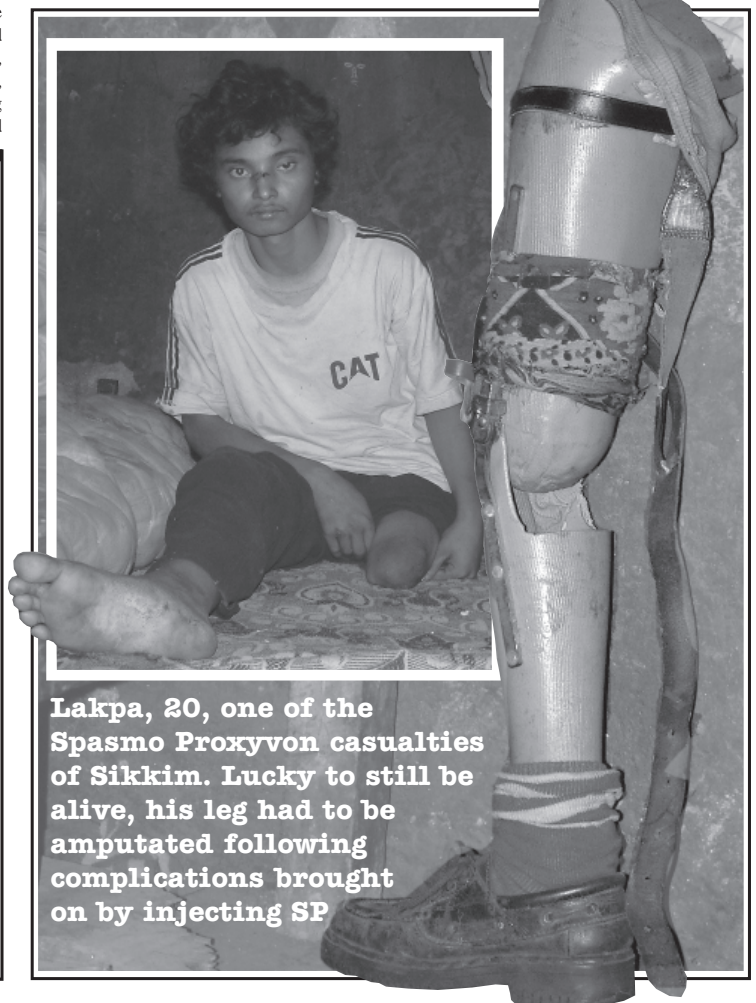
"If we cannot totally stop drug abuse, we should at least make it safer and get realistic about our goals. The danger of various infections spreading through addicts who share needles is serious. We should launch a needle-exchange programme, like they have in Manipur and Nagaland, wherein addicts can exchange their old syringes with new ones for free. If you can't control drugs, at least protect other people from infections before it creates a multi-burden on the society.

A weaning programme can also be launched where you wean away addicts from injecting themselves with the drug to taking the drug orally. This is a method of harm reduction. Of course we must not lose sight of the ultimate aim, which is to make all addicts give up drugs totally. I think we need more NGO involvement here."

THE CAPSULE

DRUGSTORY 3

GET SCARED VERY SCARED



Lakpa, 20, one of the Spasmo Proxyvon casualties of Sikkim. Lucky to still be alive, his leg had to be amputated following complications brought on by injecting SP



FROM HELL IS HERE

THE NOW! INITIATIVE

For help call:
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STNM - 220594
or NOW! 270949

It is difficult not to get involved with the story when it is as horrific as what Lakpa is going through. How does one ignore it? One doesn't. On its part, NOW! has decided to help with Lakpa's rehabilitation and Hope Centre has contributed to this initiative by subsidising Lakpa's recovery phase and bending rules to accommodate him in their detox & rehabilitation Centre. But more needs to be done. NOW! is working on setting up a Rehabilitation Fund and will approach its readers for support shortly. We hope the response to this call will be as positive as the past initiatives.

THE WAY AHEAD

Phurba Yolmo, Project Director, Sikkim Rehabilitation Centre :

"Social Welfare Department should encourage the setting up of more NGO's. SRC can be the mother centre which will provide treatment for addicts and training for service providers. Networking with other treatment centres is also important.

Self help groups are not very strong here. You need to have more frequent meetings. When the recovering addict has an urge to take the drug he should be able to reach someone immediately. Long term follow-up is necessary for long term recovery. Banning the drugs is no solution. But a programme can be launched for exchanging of old needles with new ones to prevent infections. Although this may be controversial, it is a realistic approach."

Akshay Sachdeva, SP, East:

"There is no alternative to enforcement. I believe in a combination of strict enforcement of law along with therapy and rehabilitation. However, don't expect the police to be reformers. That is not our job. There are other agencies to do that. Police needs to do the dirty job of identifying and arresting people. Let us do that. The state government should enact a special law for those peddling in prescription drugs. At the moment I have either the NDPS Act or nothing. NGO's should be more involved. When we arrest addicts they should call and provide therapy for the arrested addicts. It should not be the other way around, although we are willing to mediate with parents and bring about a solution. Media needs to spread more awareness on this problem."

his pants down, in a desperate search for a vein that would ensure his next fix. There was blood on the floor.

We were horrified. Apart from the brutality of the whole scene, what hope was there of using Lakpa's story to dissuade others from taking the same route, when his own friends continued to inject in the very room that he lies in with an artificial leg propped against the wall?

Is the battle against drugs all but lost? Is there any way to get the message across to the young that doing drugs is not "cool"; that it can deform... kill??

The "Say No To Drugs" campaign has hardly worked. Will drug scare stories be more effective?

And there are many of those. Of a boy who couldn't urinate because of regular injecting in his groin. Of how urine started coming out of his mouth and nose. And the ten year old who kept hurting himself with a compass because he couldn't bear the pain that withdrawals brought. Of how his parents found him hanging one morning when the pain got too much. What of the boy who died of overdose and his stomach simply exploded in the coffin that he lay in.

What a generation weaned on the romanticised notions of substance abuse, thanks to their music and their idols, don't realise when they get inducted into the habit is that addiction does not even allow the

victim dignity in death. It is not unusual to find an overdose victim crumpled in a filthy alley way with his pants down and a syringe in hand. No matter how lyrical "cold turkey" may sound, there is no poetry in the pangs that come with withdrawals [as the 10-year-old proved with his compass].

"Spasmo Proxyvon is more dangerous than even Brown Sugar," says Phurba Yolmo, Project Director, Sikkim Rehabilitation Centre. "Users have begun to take a cocktail of drugs mixing SP with other drugs and even with rum. This causes a burning sensation, a rush, this is the high that they seek, not realising that the rush they feel is actually their veins burning up under the combined assault of minute granules and alcohol," he explains.

Those who know say that unlike other drugs, SP has no fixed period of gratification. The frequency of injecting depends more on availability of the drug than the need, leading to dangerous physical consequences.

"Used for long periods of time, it affects your central nervous system. A sudden loss of consciousness, or an SP black-out kills thousands of neuronal cells in the brain. In future this may be a precursor to mental illness as well as epilepsy," informs Dr. IL Sharma, Psychiatrist, STNM Hospital.

Abuse of the drug can block arteries, can cause heart attacks and even paralysis when the artery to the brain gets blocked. Inject-

ADDICTION: Neither A Vice Nor A Habit. A Disease

By PHURBA YOLMO

Different people have different views on addiction. Law enforcement agencies view addiction as a crime; Religious communities view addiction as a sin; Moralists view it as a moral deficiency; Psychiatrist believe it to be a problem of anxiety and depression; while a layperson views addiction as a lack of will-power.

All are wrong. At least not completely correct. And these myths and misconceptions make diagnosis and treatment more difficult.

In the late 1930s, after working several years with alcoholics, Dr. William D. Silkworth, seen as a medical saint, came to the conclusion that "Alcoholism is not just a vice or a habit, it is a compulsion, a pathological urge. It is a disease."

In the year 1956, American Medical Association acknowledged addiction as a disease and in 1958, World Health Organization also declared it to be a progressive disease.

In the last few years, addiction has become rampant in this region. I am an ex-addict myself and have been working in the field of rehabilitation for the last seven years. Recently, I came across the case-history of a 15-year-old boy who has been injecting a lethal dose of Spasmo-Proxyvon for the last three years. Today this trend is prevalent among our youngsters, indicating the seriousness of the situation.

Addiction is not just an addict's problem, but also everyone else's. Today it is in someone's family, but tomorrow it could be yours. The answer to the problem is awareness, information and talking about it. If you already have a problem in the family, seek professional help. The resources of helpline, counselling, detoxification and rehabilitation are available.

Don't make addiction a family secret. Acquire a proper attitude, don't hide. Addiction is like a poison mushroom that grows best in the dark. Don't expect your children to come forward and say, "Mummy, I love you, but I have a drug problem." It is not so easily admitted because of the social stigma attached to addiction. It requires intervention.

What is the cause of addiction? Over the years, I have come across more than 500 addicts, and come to realise that there are many reasons. Some do it to become more popular with their peer group, others, to deal with boredom or psychological problems or as with some, out of initial curiosity.

How to identify the problem?

Sometimes an addict openly admits to his drug use, but more often than not, he denies it. It is left to the observance of the family to look for tell-tale signs to recognize an addict. The addict manifests a marked change in his behaviour. He may take to staying awake at night and sleeping during the day. A sudden change of friends and meetings behind closed doors; mysterious phone calls, even telling lies, etc. Family members may notice that the addict spends large sums of money, borrows from others, or that things around the house are missing. The person may become lethargic and apathetic with a loss of interest in personal hygiene, become moody and withdrawn, restless, irritable and discontent.

Commonly used drugs in the hill regions are pharmaceutical drugs such as Phensydyll, Spasmo Proxyvon, Nitrosun-10, Fortwin, Relipen, Morphine, etc. The gateway drugs are alcohol, ganja and nicotine. Volatile substances like Dendrite, correction fluids are common among school children.

It is better to suspect, even if one may be wrong. Confront the addict repeatedly with evidence that make you suspect and seek professional help early.

The writer is the Project Director, Sikkim Rehabilitation Centre

ing the drug can be particularly dangerous. The tablet does not dissolve properly, sediments start accumulating and an abscess develops. Blood supply gets blocked and the limb starts rotting. There is then no option but to amputate the limb. The bolus or the undissolved part of the tablet can get stuck in a vital organ, like the heart, lungs or brain which can be life threatening.

"Injecting is extremely dangerous. You don't know which blood vessel they are pushing into. Injecting into an artery can be fatal," adds Dr. Namgyal Sherpa, Consultant [Medicine], STNM Hospital.

Dangers apart, Drug addicts do not receive any sympathy from the public. No one cares whether they live or die. Sometimes

not even their family. And yet, no one is born an addict. Those who abuse drugs are themselves caught in a vicious cycle - one they cannot break without help. The twin terrors of denial and confrontation have to be faced collectively by all. Parents need to come forward and speak out. Police needs to get more serious about dealing with peddlers and suppliers - how difficult can it be to find these merchants of death in a one street town?

The state government too needs to evolve some drastic measures before we head in the direction of other North-eastern states, which are now finding it impossible to combat the problem.

Or, we can reconcile to an army of amputees on our streets.

BHUTAN'S CATCH 22

Kingdom urges India to help identify Nepali aliens

BIJOY SHANKAR HANDIQUÉ
in THIMPHU

Boxed in by an increasingly anxious Indian government keen to see an end of foreign support to north-eastern militant movements on the one hand and the militants lodged in the jungles of the Himalayan kingdom on the other, the Bhutan government has been at pains of late to understand the toll that a possible attack on the militants could take on its own population. The situation gets more complicated given the growing fears of the Bhutanese being gradually outnumbered by the immigrant Nepalis, or Lhotshampas ["southern Bhutanese"], from Nepal, Darjeeling and Sikkim living in the six southern hill districts of the country.

"More than 66,000 Bhutanese people will be directly affected in 304 villages in 10 dzongkhags [districts], should the government launch military operations against

the North-east rebels such as the United Liberation Front of Asom [ULFA], National Democratic front of Bodoland [NDFB] and the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation [KLO], now in the jungles of Bhutan," said Bhutan Finance Minister Wangdi Norbu in an exclusive interview at Taschho Dzong in Thimphu.

The disadvantages of a frontal attack against the militants seem heavily tilted against the Himalayan kingdom, with 50 per cent of its population living in the border areas of the eastern and south-eastern regions - areas that the possible operation would cover - which receive their supplies through Assam.

"The sufferings would be unimaginable," Dasho Norbu said. Not to mention possible retaliatory strikes by the rebels against Bhutanese citizens in Assam. More than 13 Bhutanese citizens have been killed and 19 others injured by Bodo militants in the past three years, informs the Minister.

"We have already cut down on vehicular traffic through Assam and all traffic is now being re-routed through the Phuentsholing-Thimphu highway via West Bengal," he adds.

The average Bhutanese is already beginning to feel the effects. "Transporting essential goods from Phuentsholing to the border districts has already increased the costs manifold," the Finance Minister reveals. Also at stake: food-stock worth Rs. 6 crores imported from Assam every year and the Rs. 4 crore worth of agricultural produce exported to India through Assam.

For now, the Bhutanese government has set up warehouses in Samdrup Jongkhar and Mongar to provide food and essential supplies to people of the border area in case of a conflict. At this juncture, while the Bhutanese government says a war against the militant camps should be a short one, it is also prepared for a long drawn out assault, says Norbu.

indian ultras and the nepali issue

Quite expectedly, the Bhutanese government feigns ignorance when it comes to the issue of how north-eastern militants entered the country. If one were to go by the mercenary theory and the often made presumption that north-eastern militants were offered facilities in exchange for support to neutralise Nepali dissidence and perhaps push them out, Bhutan's inviting in the ULFA, or for that matter the NDFB or the KLO into their country does not seem to have helped. Once there, the militants simply dug in, not just going back on a possible deal of helping Thimphu rid itself of the Nepali problem, but, according to reports, tying up with the Nepalis instead.

That the ultras have an equation with the Nepalis, at least the Maoists ultra among them, is perhaps substantiated by the fact that the ULFA has now been offered space in the Maoist-controlled areas of Nepal in the event of a Bhutanese assault.

"There are over 55,000 non-

Bhutanese workers in the kingdom, some of whom have lived and worked in Bhutan for many years. All of them would, at some point, claimed Bhutanese citizenship," said the Bhutanese Foreign Minister Khandu Wangchuk.

"The main agenda of the Nepalis in Bhutan is to bring into the kingdom a large number of non-Bhutanese people of Nepali origin, take over the country's political power and government machinery and provide themselves and other people of Nepali origin with land and Bhutanese citizenship," says Dasho Wangchuk.

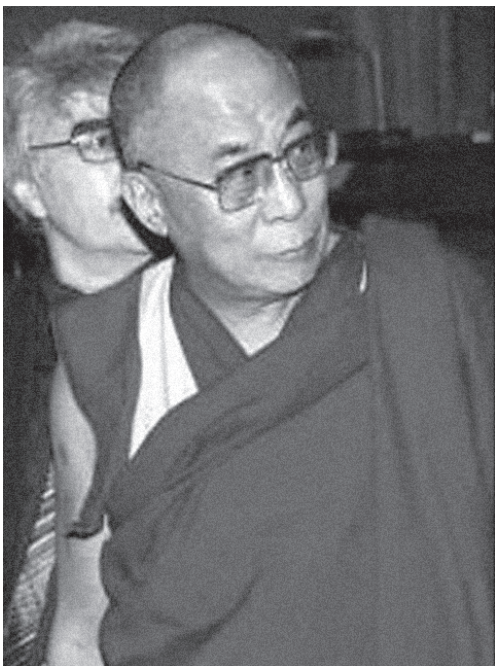
According to reports, while Nepalis comprise 30.82 per cent of Bhutan's total population of 7 lakh at present, another 16 per cent are in the "refugee camps" in Nepal. Bhutan's crisis under the circumstances would be obvious: a return of refugees from Nepal and India would mean the Nepali population in Bhutan increasing to 46.82 per cent.

"It is imperative that any return of people from Nepal or elsewhere is dealt with strictly according to the law of the land," says Wangchuk. "We urge India to assist us in identifying the Nepalis to be taken back from the refugee camps of Nepal."

In Bhutan's scheme of things, that probably would have a stronger bearing on its response towards Indian ultras based in the kingdom.

[By arrangement with Newsfile]

China "open" for talks with Dalai Lama



The doors of communication between China's Central government and the Dalai Lama are wide open, a senior Chinese official was quoted as saying on Thursday by Xinhua news agency, Beijing.

Zhuang Congsheng, an official with the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, made the remark at a recent news conference.

But Zhuang said talks with the Dalai Lama would depend on his abandoning any move to seek independence for Tibet.

"So long as the Dalai Lama abandons his position on seeking Tibetan independence and publicly recognizes Tibet as an inalienable part of Chinese territory, contacts and discussions between him and the central government on his own future can be carried out," he said.

The Dalai Lama, even at a press conference held in Darjeeling during his recent visit to the hill station said that he was willing to forego the demand for independence if Beijing grants greater autonomy to Tibet. Senior officials of the Tibetan government have held talks with Chinese officials in recent months.

Tibetan Chant CD Nominated for Grammy

A recording of sacred Tibetan Buddhist chants by the monks of Sherabling monastery near Dharamsala, is one of the nominations for the 46th Annual Grammy Awards, which were announced in Beverly Hills, California, on December 4, last Thursday.

"Sacred Tibetan Chant: The Monks Of Sherab Ling Monastery," released by Naxos World has been nominated in the Best Traditional World Music Album [Vocal or Instrumental] category. This audio CD was released in January 2003.

The CD includes Buddhist chants, Mahamudra Lineage Prayer & Meditation, Mahakala Puja [Yeshe Gonpo], Invocation and offering to Mahakala, and Receiving blessings and dedicating the merit to world peace and harmony. It presents the lineage prayer with which the monks of Sherab Ling Monastery begin their day, offering respect to a line of great meditation practitioners going back as far as the seventh century. It also includes part of each day's closing ritual in which the monks ask for purification and dedication to all sentient creatures.

Incidentally, Sherabling Monastery is the seat in exile of the Tai Situ Rinpoche. The monastery is located in the Kangra Valley near Dharamsala.

The 46th Grammy Awards will be held on 8 February, next year at Staples Center in Los Angeles, USA.

courtesy International Campaign for Tibet

RECAP SIKKIM

DO NOT FRUSTRATE LITIGANTS: JUSTICE RK PATRA

Chief Justice calls for judicial introspection

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The judicial officials of the State gathered here at the High Court on 6 December, last Saturday, for what the Chief Justice RK Patra in his inaugural address said was "not just an ordinary get together." Inaugurating the Conference of Judicial Officers of the State of Sikkim, 2003, Mr. Justice Patra said the conference was "an occasion" for introspection.

The Justice disclosed that although he was keen on holding such a conference at an earlier date, it could not be organized for "certain reasons." A conference like this, he said, was necessary to "consider" whether the judiciary was moving "on the right track."

While pointing out that the Constitution has assigned the judiciary "the role of sustainer of the rule of law," the Justice stressed that the subordinate judiciary was the "life-line of the entire fabric of the state judiciary."

Making an interesting observation, Mr. Justice Patra said that in a socialist democratic republic like India, the State was responsible for raising the standard of living of the masses and reducing the disparity between various classes and ensuring equality of opportunity to all groups. "The process of ensuring equitable distribution among the public has resulted in filing of cases in the courts. As a consequence, the responsibility of the courts has increased, both in volume and measure," he said.

Since every citizen has the right to receive "speedy, inexpensive and unpolluted justice," introspection at conferences such as

the one held last week were important, the Justice said. "In order to preserve the faith of the people in the administration of justice and rule of law, judiciary as a whole has to remain vibrant and effective," he stressed.

Speaking on the judicial affairs of Sikkim, the Justice admitted that unlike other states, Sikkim was not facing the problem of pendency of arrears in courts. This situation, however, may be a temporary phenomenon, he warned. "The time may not be far off when we may have to face such problems," he said while enumerating the reasons which delayed disposal of cases. Pointing out that one of the reasons was "Court-made," the Justice rattled off lack of punctuality, laxity, lack of control over case records and court proceedings by Judicial Officers as factors contributing to the delay. While stressing that the Court's time was "precious" and must be "respected," the Justice said that a Presiding Officer must not rest easy just because they meet the target. "This kind of attitude can well be described as that of an ostrich which fails to take note of the danger lying ahead because once backlog starts, it tries to percolate gradually and time would come when we may not be able to cope with the menace of mounting arrears," he said.

In this regard, the Justice reminded the gathered judicial officers of the frequent circulars issued by the Court for early disposal of old cases and those relating to senior citizens and atrocities committed against women and weaker sections of the society. He urged his officers to "lo- cate and examine" such pending

cases and dispose them "as expeditiously as possible."

He also stressed that it was "necessary" for Chief Judicial Magistrates to periodically visit jails located in their jurisdictions and hold court in jail if the situation demands. Similarly, he also called on district judges to make periodic inspections of subordinate courts under them. "Such inspection should be effective and productive and there should be constant and regular vigilant monitoring in the matter," he said.

While speaking on the infrastructural facilities of the judiciary, Mr. Justice Patra revealed that the Court, in modification of its previous resolution, has decided to have two Fast Track Courts, one each at Namchi and Gangtok. "The judiciary has power, but without purse," the Justice said while adding that it has to depend on the executive for the finances of administration of justice. In this regard, he pointed out the lack of residential accommodation for several judicial officers has already been intimated to the state government for immediate attention.

The Justice urged that every judicial officer see himself as a "legal aider, totally committed to achieve the goal of equality before law."

He rounded up his inaugural address with the words: "May I state that when a litigant knocks at the door of the Court and waits with great expectation, he should not be frustrated. We cannot forget the declaration of the great charter of Magna Carta to none shall we deny justice, to none shall we delay justice and to none shall we sell justice."

Dikchu mixes entertainment with AIDS awareness

Contd from pg 6

Chung Tongden Lepcha, project coordinator.

A total of seven local NGOs - Sangam Youth Club, Lower Rakdong, Srijana Club, Lower Marchak, Sojaka Club, Lower Rakdong, Yuva Jagrai Sangh, Lower Samdong, Sunakhari Club, Lower Kambal and Shivalian Club, Middle

Tumin participated in the event.

Residents of different villages from around Dikchu, as also laborers of Teesta Stage V hydro electric Project [dam-site] attended the programme in large numbers.

Dr. Kalzang Diki, NGO Adviser, Sikkim State AIDS Control Society, graced the occasion as Chief Guest while JK Limboo, District Youth Coordina-

tor, Nehru Yuva Kendra, Gangtok was the Special Guest. Rosie Connor from California, USA was the Guest of Honor.

The Dr. Diki reminded the people of the alarming increase of AIDS cases in our country as a whole and in Sikkim in particular.

All the speakers stressed on the need to lead a healthy and risk-free life to save the society from this dreaded disease.



TASHI NAMGYAL ACADEMY

Gangtok - 737101, Sikkim

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2. TRAINED GRADUATE TEACHER - 1 Post

- Candidate should possess B.A., B.Ed Hindi / M.A., B.Ed with Hindi as one of the subjects and should be able to teach other general subjects also.

Pay Scale Rs. 5,500 - 175 - 9000 plus other benefits as per TNA Board Rules.

3. TRAINED GRADUATE TEACHER - 1 Post

- Candidate should be B.Sc or M.Sc. B.Ed. with physics/ chemistry as the subjects to teach ICSE classes. Pay Scale Rs. 5,500 - 175 - 9000 plus other benefits as per TNA Board Rules.

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PRINCIPAL

NOTICE



TASHI NAMGYAL ACADEMY

Gangtok - 737101, Sikkim

Parents are hereby informed that all classes in Tashi Namgyal Academy are overcrowded with students. Number of students in each class cannot exceed the present number of students. Hence, we regret our inability to admit students in any class in the Academic Session 2004.

PRINCIPAL

DEVELOPMENT



[left to right]
The Chief Minister at the main control room of the ropeway at Deorali. Deorali, as seen from inside one of the cabins on its climb to the tower at the State Legislative Assembly at Nam Nang.

all pix NOW!

Float from Deorali to Secretariat in 7 minutes!

Chamling inaugurates Sikkim's first passenger ropeway

SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: It has been promised, then postponed; announced, and then postponed again and just when Gangtokians had stopped taking the ropeway project seriously, the one kilometer long passenger "bi-cable, jig-back" ropeway from Deorali to the Tashiling Secretariat rolled its debut run on the flick of a button pressed by the Chief Minister Pawan Chamling at an elaborate inauguration ceremony held at the Deorali junction on 7 December, Sunday.

Dedicating the Ropeway to the "people of Sikkim," Mr. Chamling said that it was a "historic day" for the State.

"The completion and commissioning of the ropeway is the fulfillment of the long-desire of my government to provide eco-friendly means of transport to the people which would also double as a major tourist attraction," he said.

Asking the people of Gangtok to be "proud" of such landmarks, Mr. Chamling said that the ropeway had "added more beauty" to the Capital and that it was like an "ornament" that adorned its beautiful landscape.

While speaking on the safety aspect of the system, Mr. Chamling assured that the ropeway was "absolutely safe" and urged everyone to use it frequently.

The Rs. 14 crores project was designed and constructed by Damodar Ropeways & Construction Co. Pvt. Ltd [DRCC], Kolkata and took exactly 3 years to build.

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director, DRCC, CL Chamaria admitted that the project was a "challenging one," since the ropeway had to be built over the populated Deorali area, along the busy stretches of the National Highway 31A, and at the same time, made attractive enough to "make it definite destination for tourists."

"Right from the designing stage, these aspects were taken full care of and the project crafted to com-



The Chief Minister, with his wife, Tikamaya Chamling, on his side, unveils the plaque announcing the inauguration of Sikkim's first passenger ropeway.

ply with these objectives," he said.

Also topmost in the minds of the designers was to proceed with the work causing the least disturbance to the people living in the area and not interfering too much with the flow of traffic on the Highway.

"In order to meet these objectives, we adopted the bi-cable jigback technology," Mr. Chamaria said. Thanks to this technology, no tower was required between the Deorali and the Assembly terminals. Pulling the huge cables over the Deorali Bazar's tall buildings and over the busy traffic was "a huge challenge, and this could not have been possible without the co-operation and assistance from various departments such as Urban Development and Housing, Forest and Sikkim Police," the MD said.

While also expressing his gratitude to the residents of Deorali for the "support" they offered to the project, Mr. Chamaria said that project could be completed without any mishap due to

their support and assistance.

The inauguration ceremony was also attended by the UD&HD Minister, TT Bhutia, Secretary, LB Rai, Chief Secretary, SW Tenzing, Cabinet ministers, MLAs, senior officers from DRCC and the State administration and a large gathering of local people. Although free joyrides were on offer on the inauguration day, a one-way ride is being ticketed at Rs. 30 per head while the two-way fare has been fixed at Rs. 50. Monthly tickets for government employees will reportedly cost Rs. 500.

Interestingly, the State government is in the process of constructing two more ropeway systems in the State - one connecting Namchi with Samdruptshe where a 135 ft statue of Guru Rinpoche has been constructed, and the other between Maenam and Tendong. Also in the discussion stage are ropeways from Gangtok to Tsomgo and from Jorethang and Dhupidara.

About the Ropeway



The Jigback system, on which the new Ropeway is based, has two cables-one called the track rope that supports the cabins and the other called the Haulage rope which pulls the cabins. The technology enables the two cabins move in opposite directions at the same time.

The electrical control of the movement of the cabins is another engineering feat involving accurate deceleration and positioning of the cabins in limited pre-fixed locations in the terminals.

There are three terminals along the one-km route - Lower Terminal Point at Deorali, Middle Terminal Point near the Assembly and the Upper Terminal just below the Secretariat. There are no supporting towers between the Lower and Middle Terminals, which is a single span of 700 meters.

Each cabin has the capacity to hold 25 people, including one attendant. There are lift facilities in the Lower and Middle Terminals, for the ease of the passengers.

The speed of the cable cars is set at four meters per second for the present with the provision of increasing it to 5.5 meters per second. The trip from Deorali to Secretariat thus takes about seven minutes.

The safety aspect of the Ropeway system has been the primary concern with DRCC. The system has been fitted with fully computerized modern safety mechanism of international standards that takes care of all possible snags like mechanical and electrical failure and high velocity winds. The movement of the cars is constantly monitored by the main control room and in case of a power failure, a standby 250 KVA generator is primed for backup. In case the generator too fails, a diesel engine will bring the cars back to the stations. Each car and the three terminals are equipped with safety signal devices and intercoms. The executing agencies of this project were Voest Alpine Austria Draht [Austria] and Doppelmayr Tramway Limited [Switzerland]. The brake system for the ropeway is imported from Switzerland and the cable lines from Austria. Both are countries with an extensive network of ropeways. The cabins were manufactured by DRCC.

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**GANGTOK SAHAR MEIN
MAARO GHAGRA JO
GHUMIO...**

The Sikkim Food & Cultural festival came alive with the vibrant colours and flavours of the deserts of Rajasthan on 6 December [Saturday] when the Marwari community showcased their contribution to the cosmopolitan Sikkimese society through a special cultural show.

The stage pulsated with the foot-tapping strains of Rajasthani music, the swirling of the rich tapestry of the Ghagras and the different hues of the colourful Safas [turbans] even as the eager locals jostled for elbow-space to try the mouth-watering desert cuisine.

"This is definitely a refreshing change from the routine Sikkimese song and dance programmes which were becoming repetitive," said a local girl. "Even the food is a good change from the usual momos and rolls," she added.

The food stall, put up by the Innerwheel Club of Gangtok, laid out a scrumptious fare that included Jodhpuri Halwa, Kesariya Jalebis, Mung Dal Chilla [pancakes] with Lesun ki Achar and spicy chaats.

The crowd, which definitely seemed to have had enough of "local" cultural programmes, enthusiastically joined in with the artists from Surilo, a Marwari Cultural Troupe from Siliguri, who belted out traditional Rajasthani folk songs and dancers gyrated to popular desert tunes from Bollywood.

The icing on the cake was a Nepali dance item put up by the troupe, much to the delight of the crowd.

the fest surges to an end



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
The Kyi De Khang Violin Orchestra in full swing. Marwari ladies give Gangtok a taste of Rajasthan. KDK tinytots chill out in beachwear.

**AND THE STRINGS
CAME ALIVE**

Friday was a different experience all together. Young violinists from Kyi-de-Khang Secondary School Violin Orchestra provided a much needed break from the braying and screaming rock shows that the festival kept forcing on the Gangtokians. With a little help from certain quarters, the young musicians caressed the strings with as

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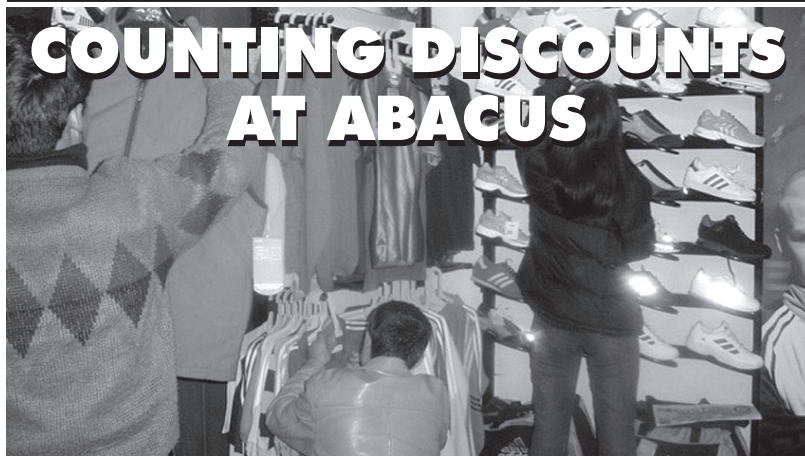
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extraneous THE GANGTOK STATE-OF-MIND



COUNTING DISCOUNTS AT ABACUS

a NOW REPORT

The ongoing sale at ABACUS in Deorali has been extended till 30 December on overwhelming public demand. The 50 per cent discounts offered on Adidas Sports Wear and more than 60 per cent discount on unbranded goods brought from Nepal and Bangkok have been attracting crowds by the dozens.

"We thought this will be a good time to hold the sale as the next few weeks have a lot of festive occasions and what better way to celebrate than buying new

things!" says Sonam T. Yaka, proprietor, Abacus.

The Adidas range is full of new arrivals and has a variety of articles on offer from shoes to jackets, to even headwear. With prices scaled down for all items, the discounts are making it possible for everyone to buy these branded goods.

Abacus has also brought the WILLS Lifestyle franchise to Sikkim. The range has both casual and formal garments for ladies and gents.

"Wills is an exclusive brand that is doing very well in the

metros, so I thought of bringing the Wills Lifestyle experience to Gangtok," explains Sonam.

Abacus has exclusive dealership for Nike and is launching the Levis wear for the tough jeans wearer.

"The other shops in the Rajdhani don't sell authentic and branded stuff. Their goods don't have quality and durability. Here, the customer can get value for money and buy authentic goods," boasts Sonam.

However, even with the discount, things are not so cheap. But remember its ORIGINAL.

In preparation for X-Mas

a NOW REPORT

A three-day Pre-Christmas Celebration was held at Community Hall, Gangtok, from December 5 to 7.

Organized by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim, Gangtok, in collaboration with Presbyterian Synod of Mizoram, the celebrations saw a good turnout of members of the church as well as the general public.

The audience were treated to melodious carols and group songs. Solo songs were performed by the renowned Sukmit

[Tasho] Rai and Mrs. & Mr. George Suman Pasha, followed by teenager Christina Bishwa.


Other performances included lively cultural dances by students from PNG, a skit by Penlong EPCS youth, a mini-orchestra from Subhang Pegha's Melody Academy along with the children of Kyide-Khang school, who brought the house down with their charming version of "Mary's Boy Child".

The highlight of the musical programme was Handel's Messiah with the all time classic "Hallelujah" sung in Nepali by the Mizo choir.

Ministers representing the

government assured the Christian community of the government's continued support. While delivering his Christmas message, Elder Lalthlangliana from Aizawl thanked the government for its amiable relationship with the Church. Appreciating the role of Reverend PS Tingbo and the organizing committee for the celebrations, he said that they were encouraged to hold similar programmes in Mizoram along with the talented Sikkimese youth.

The function in the final evening ended with the presentation of mementos to the Mizo guests.



A correct entry (decided by draw of lots) will win 2 FREE TICKETS to the latest flick playing at VAJRA CINEMA, Digital Surround Sound.

Last week's answers:
Farhan AKhtar / Pretty Woman
WINNER: JP Sharma, 5th Mile

- Who portrays *Chameli* in the movie by the same name?
- In which movie will you get to see Sanjay Dutt as *Moosa Bhai*?

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Kutse Shegu

The 49th Day Kutse Shegu of late Lassim Bhutia who expired on 26 October 2003 falls on 13th December 2003. All relatives, friends and well wishers are welcome to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Sang, East Sikkim. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who extended their help in our bereavement.

Namgyal Tshering Bhutia, Norbu Tshering Bhutia, Lakpa Tshering Bhutia & Lachung Bhutia (sons)
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QUESTION OF THE WEEK -

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WINNER: Passang Lepcha, Rakdong

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rajdhani

WHAT THE CAPITAL'S BEEN UP TO

Management Talks By Chinmaya Mission

Vedanta, the Science of Management, has always provided excellent guidelines for management of the state. Its teachings can be used in industry, business or at home. These guidelines have become all the more important in the present times of chaos where effective management is so essential. For all those interested in reduction in costs, creating competitive advantage and improvement in quality of products and services, a series of management talks based on the Vedanta are being organized by Chinmaya Mission.

Acharya Kailas Chaitanyaji will share his insights in the four-day training camp which will address themes like Value-Based Management, Stress Management, Time Management and Team Work. The talks will be held at Conference Hall [top floor] of the Accounts & Administrative Training Institute, Kazi Road, Gangtok from December 11 to 14.

For registration contact GK Pradhan, Ph.224132/ 222421 or SK Sarda, Ph.224132/223594

BSNL FUN N' GAMES



The mist rolled through the TNA ground and the winter nip in the air was strong last Thursday, 4 December. The perfect setting for some exercise which came in the form of BSNL, Gangtok's annual sports day, organized for the first time and open to not only BSNL employees, but also their families, telecom users and the press and media. The focus was on fun with a dash of sports. So, there was a skipping race, a pot-breaking competition, spoon race and a round of musical chairs. Everyone participated, the invited guests, the BSNL officials, kids and even the Press present to



cover the event. GM, Telecom, MK Seth while speaking to NOW! announced plans of holding simi-

lar fun-cum-sports meets for the disabled and the destitute children who did not go to schools.

Towards Inclusion

Inclusion – To be a part & not apart, was the theme of this year's World Disabled Day, observed here at the Community Hall on 3 December, last Wednesday. Spastic Society of Sikkim organized the programme in collaboration with Department of Health & Family Welfare. Other participants at the function were National Association of Blind [NAB], Sikkim and Sikkim Viklang Sahayata Samiti. Children from the three centres put up an entertaining show of songs and dances for the audience. Speaking on the occasion CK Cintury, Secretary, Social Welfare, assured that the demands raised by these organizations with the government would be addressed as soon as possible. Chief Guest, ND Chingapa, Additional Chief Secretary, said that the cause of the disabled needs to be addressed at all levels, including taking awareness to the villages. Other guests present were Manita Pradhan, Chairperson, Sikkim State Commission for Women, officials from Health and Education Departments, doctors, teachers and resource persons.

Dr. Dhakal, General Secretary, SSS, presented the annual report of the society. In the evening the children put up a delightful performance at the Tourism Culture & Food Festival.



Rs. 4.97 crore workspace for auditors

a NOW REPORT

The days of working out of rented accommodations are over for the staff at the Auditor General's office in Gangtok. They are now preparing to move into a Rs. 4.97 crore complex complete with lifts, central heating and well-lit cubicles.

On 3 December, last Wednesday, the Comptroller & Auditor General of India, Vijayendra Nath Kaul, laid the foundation stone of the new Audit Bhawan coming up below the SITCO complex. Among those present were Principal Director [Staff], PJ Mathew, Accountant General of Sikkim, AWK Langsteih, his deputy Deepak Kapoor, and senior officers of the AG office.

The Comptroller & Auditor General of India, Vijayendra Kaul, lays the foundation stone of the Audit Bhawan coming up below the SITCO office in Deorali.

Interestingly, work on the new office building started some months back and is already "24 per cent" complete. The Sikkim AG's office is expected to move into its own Bhawan in the first quarter of the next year.

The new AG office, apart from the facilities mentioned earlier, Mr. Langsteih revealed will also include a gymnasium for the staff. Obviously the planners have realized the need to have the auditors sweat out the muddle of figures they handle through the day to remain fresh and energized for

the next round of auditing.

The CAG, Mr. Kaul, in his address lauded the "vibrant" service rendered by the Sikkim AG office "in enforcing the mechanism of accountability" since it was established in 1981. He also thanked the State Government for its "wholehearted" support and co-operation extended to the audit organization through the years. While listing the improved amenities being worked out for the AG office staff, Mr. Kaul revealed that a 33 unit residential complex will be constructed in the coming years for them.

During the function the CAG also planted a sapling in the complex.

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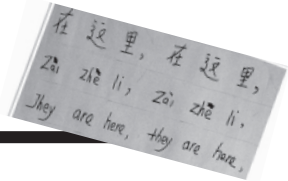


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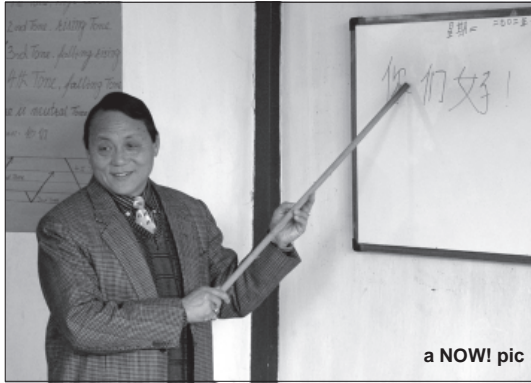
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ME SIKKIMESE, SPEAK CHINESE



a NOW! pic

SAGAR CHETTRI

Language can unite people as nothing else. So says MB Rai, Chairman, Sikkim Milk, who has started the first Institute of Chinese language in the state.

With a Diploma in Interpretation of Chinese Language, from the School of Foreign Languages, New Delhi, Mr. Rai has been quick to cash in on the proposal to open trade through Nathula.

"People who know the language can benefit immensely when the trade starts," he says.

The institute which is temporarily operating out of OBC Bhawan, offers classes in Mandarin, the official and most widely spoken dialect in China.

"Learning this language can create employment opportunities for the locals. They can become interpreters, teachers or even get a job in China. Travel agents can benefit a lot by having someone who knows the language," adds Sunmit Lepcha, who has an MA in Chinese from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and teaches at the new institute.

Courses offered are of six months, one year and three year duration and costs Rs. 1,000 per

month. However, in accordance with government policy, 50 per cent concession is available for those living below the poverty line.

For the 18 students who have enrolled for the classes since it opened in October this year, the excitement of learning a new language, knowing that they will be the first ones to have the advantage when trade between the two countries finally happens, is a strong motivation.

"It has been only two months since we started the classes. I expect it to increase a lot in the coming days," says Mr. Rai.

Those who want to learn Mandarin can call the Institute of Chinese Language at Ph. 231108, 250297 or drop in at OBC Bhawan, near SNT Depot, PS Road.

OBITUARY

- MALCHAND AGARWAL -

Lall Bazaar's Soul

The 56 year old Malchand Agarwal who passed away on 4 December, 2003, last Thursday, might have been born in Taranagar in Rajasthan, but was a Sikkimese at heart. Sikkim, after all, had been his home and later his karambhoomi ever since he accompanied his father to Gangtok in 1948. He was barely two at the time. His father, late Rameshwarlal Agarwal was known popularly as the "Dahibadawala" by the Gangtokians who were introduced to this north Indian delicacy by Malchand's father in the late forties.



Malchand went to school in Gangtok and studied till class VIII. By the time he celebrated his sixteenth birthday, he was married and soon started his own business. After trying his hand at various businesses, he finally settled for a cloth shop at Lall Bazaar.

Since he was one of the more senior Lall Bazaar-based traders, he was elected the General Secretary of the Lall Bazaar Traders Association when it was formed in 1981. He provided yeoman service to the concerns of Lall Bazaar traders from this chair. He was elected the president of the Association in 1983. He held the post till his death last week. His social commitment was, however, not limited to Lall Bazaar and there are many who will vouch of his contribution to the capital's affairs in general.

An astute, committed and honest person, his loss is being deeply felt by the traders at Lall Bazaar as was apparent in the huge turnout at his funeral.

He is survived by his wife, three daughters and two sons.

NORTH-EASTERN MODELS IN DESI SETTING



Snow Pulse promises to bring northeastern cultures and fashion to Gangtok in a two-day fest

a NOW REPORT

The Rajdhani will see models from all over the North-East sashay down the ramp in a cultural exchange that is being promoted as the first of its kind in the State. Snow Pulse, a North East India Inter-State Cultural extravaganza showcasing the best of models and fashion designers will be held here at the Sikkim Government College Auditorium on December 13-14.

Organizers of the event say that top models and designers

from Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya and Sikkim will come together in the show, which will also consist of folk music and dances. Various stalls displaying arts and crafts of the NE States will be put up during the two days of fashion, glamour, and song and dance.

From Sikkim, fashion designer Jyotsna Pariyar will be participating in the show along with models Chimi and Pooja.

The show promises to add just the right sparkle to the Rajdhani and cozy up the locals in the freezing December evenings.



the fest surges to an end

FROM ExtrasCover

much ease as Yoyo Ma during his coming-of-age days.

Other shows by KDK were also commendable, but for the Tibetan gypsy dance which could have been done away with, since TIPA's excellent rendition of the same was still fresh on everyone's minds. A lighter side to the evening came in the form of beachwear fashionshow by tiny tots.

KDK took the stage again on Sunday as part of the Cultural Music and Dance competition where they once again displayed their dexterity in the form of Gurkha dances, Limbu songs, Bhutia dances etc.

Come Monday, Gangtokians were treated to one 'solid' popsicle when the band from Siliguri belted out one item-number after another with titles ranging from Kal Ho Naa Ho to Deewana et al.

DONT

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CAKES *COOKIES* *CHOCOLATES* *PASTRIES*

the trespasser — 

by NIKHIL PRADHAN

Just when they had lost all hope of ever finding a flat within their budget in Mumbai, the agent mentioned the cottage. Both, the rental and the deposit were well within their budget, but, for some reason the agent seemed reluctant and hesitant, and when they asked to see the cottage he gave them the keys and directions, but refused to accompany them.

The cottage was perfect. It was small - just right for them - near the business district so they wouldn't have to commute far, and the windows looked down onto a small garden with a large Peepal tree and a bench beneath. Now, as Neeta looked out of the window, she saw that a woman was seated on the bench and looking straight at her. The agent hadn't mentioned that there was anybody staying there, and Neeta nervously walked upto her, hoping that there wouldn't be any complications in renting the cottage. By the time she got out of the front door, the bench was empty. Whoever the woman was, she was gone.

When she mentioned the incident to the agent, his face turned white, but he insisted there was nobody living there. Probably some trespasser, Tarun insisted. Relieved, she nodded and they finalized the deal. A week later, they moved in.

The first night in their new house, it was past three and Neeta was fast asleep when a knock, a light repetitive tapping, like a knuckle gently tapping on wood woke her up. Nervous, she woke Tarun up but he found no one at the front door. He could hear the light knocking too. Must be the window rattling in the wind, he told her. I'll check it in the morning, he promised and went back to sleep.

But, a few hours later, he woke up again. The repetitive tapping had begun again, it was unbearably hot - there had been a power cut and the fans weren't working. Groggy and half asleep Tarun, opened the bedroom window. It brought instant relief - not only was it cooler, but the knocking also seemed to stop. Disoriented and very tired as Tarun got back to bed he didn't notice that there was a woman seated on the bench. He didn't see her as she got up and started to walk towards the house, towards the open window.

The next morning Tarun woke up and found Neeta missing. He looked all over the house and then found her fast asleep on the bench near the Peepal tree in the garden. It was strange - she couldn't explain how she had got there. And her eyes... The first thing that had appealed to Tarun when he had met her had been her light brown eyes. But now, as he stared into them looking for an explanation, he saw that they had turned blue... Neeta herself seemed very different... something had changed... Perplexed, Tarun started following her everywhere. Most surprising were the places she visited. A laser disc video-parlour, a computer centre, a gun shop, a high-tech electronic shop, and she always stared at any neon light board displayed on the front of shops. Then suddenly one day she stopped eating and vomited something purplish. Tarun was horrified.

Then for the first time in two days she spoke: "Tarun... I am okay."

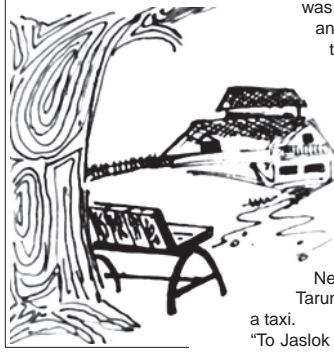
"Of course not!" shouted Tarun, "you must visit the doctor."

"No", screamed Neeta, "I ...am all right."

Suddenly Tarun noticed that Neeta was having difficulty in speaking.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" shouted Tarun, "you must come with me to the Jaslok Hospital!"

"No" screamed Neeta again in a strange and heavy voice which Tarun had failed to notice earlier in the excitement. Tarun approached her slowly, but suddenly he



was pushed heavily towards the wall by an unknown force. He crashed against the wall and hurt his head, and could feel blood streaming down from the wound.

"Sorry, human!" Neeta said, again in a heavy voice. Then suddenly she moaned and slumped to the floor. She had fainted. Tarun got up quickly and bandaged his wound with whatever first aid he could lay his hands on and rushed out of the house with Neeta in his arms.

Tarun ran as fast as he could and hauled a taxi.

"To Jaslok Hospital, fast!" he commanded the cab driver.

On reaching the hospital, Tarun went to the nearest door announcing "Doctor In." He put Neeta down on a chair and then described her symptoms and her strange behaviour to the doctor seated across in great detail.

The doctor looked at her suspiciously. He shook her and woke her up. Neeta looked around wildly. The doctor put his hand inside his coat pocket and took out a small kind of remote control and pointed it towards Neeta.

"No" screamed Neeta.

"My...suspicions were correct," said the doctor, "Now, the rebellion is over."

Tarun noticed that the doctor was also finding it difficult to speak and his voice too was heavy like his wife's.

"Save me!" screamed Neeta, "He is going to kill me!"

Tarun failed to understand what was happening around him, but he sensed fear in his wife's eyes. Swiftly Tarun drew out a gun which Neeta had bought during her shopping spree, and before the doctor, who was screaming "no...the rebellion...must be...stopped," could press the button Tarun fired a fatal bullet aimed right at the middle of his forehead. The doctor fell down. Tarun then suddenly swung his gun towards Neeta.

"You are not Neeta my wife, who the hell are you?" shouted Tarun.

"Since you saved my life I will tell you everything about myself. I am from another planet. An alien in your language. The ruler of our planet is a tyrant and I am the leader of a small pack of rebels. The ruler has hired an assassin to kill me. I escaped and my spaceship landed on earth. I did not know that the assassin was following me until I saw this doctor aiming that weapon at me. Since, I landed here, I started looking for weapons to help us in our rebellion. This is the reason you saw me visiting gunshops and high tech places. I needed a disguise of an old woman but because people did not know me I just could not disappear everyone thought... I was a supernatural being. So that I could roam about without being noticed I took the disguise of your wife," as she said this the alien pressed the button on the bracelet it was wearing, and suddenly a blue ray of light appeared and through the beam of light from the window, appeared Neeta.

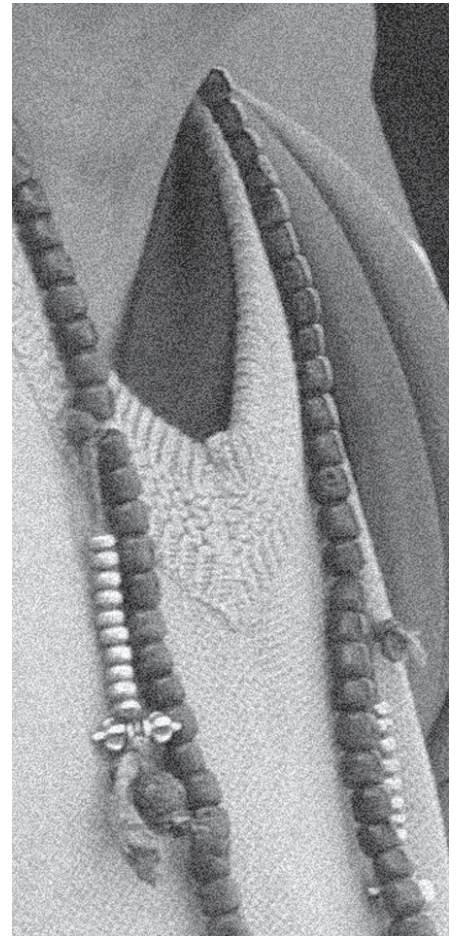
"Oh! Tarun, I was so scared." She cried and ran into his arms.

For a fleeting moment Tarun had forgotten about the alien, the doctor and everything else and was very happy to see Neeta again, cuddled in his arms. The words of the alien suddenly brought him back to his senses and realized that he was inside the Jaslok Hospital, encountering an alien from another planet. The alien was speaking to them.

"I must leave now. It was nice meeting you and thank you once again for saving my life."

With these words the alien pressed the button on its bracelet again, and was surrounded by blue light. Then in front of Neeta and Tarun's eyes it disappeared, leaving the dematerialised body of the "doctor".

The writer is studying at Kirorimal College, New Delhi, and this short story has also received a prize from SONY TV.



a time and place

There's a time and place for everything
That's what 'they' all say
Don't even ask who 'they' are
I never got to know at all
Who these mysterious 'they' were
But today I feel the need to ask
Were 'they' some wise old men
Or some tender young fools
Who thought they knew all?
Is there a place for silent grief
Where you retreat in deepest sorrow
Or is it a public, public place
Where you must proclaim your grief
To make others believe in it
Is there a secret place somewhere
Where you can unburden yourself
Of the anguish festering inside
Or are you forever doomed
To silently contain within yourself
What feels like Hell on Earth?
Is there a time for grieving alone
And a time for recrimination
Or does it all happen together
In this chaotic world we inhabit?
But what I really want to know
Is, is there a time for letting go
A time for moving on in life
Without someone who still now
Was a permanent fixture in your life
A person you will forever miss?

- TENZIN C.TASHI -

WOMEN NOW!

MASSAGE THERAPY

IN GANGTOK!



nipulation of the soft tissue structures of the body to prevent and alleviate pain, discomfort, muscle spasm, and stress; and, to promote health and wellness. It improves functioning of the circulatory, lymphatic, muscular, skeletal, and nervous systems and may improve the rate at which the body recovers from injury and illness. Massage involves holding, causing movement of soft tissue, and applying pressure to the body.

How is massage medically beneficial?

Therapeutic massage can help with a wide range of medical conditions, including: Allergies, Anxiety and stress, Arthritis [osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis], Asthma and Bronchitis, Chronic and temporary pain, Circulatory problems, Depression, Digestive disorders, including constipation and diarrhoea, Headache, especially when due to muscle tension, Insomnia, Myofascial pain, Sinusitis and Sports injuries, including pulled or strained muscles and sprained ligaments.

And for women, the benefits can go beyond just cosmetic. It is beneficial for ladies with menstrual problems, post-delivery problems such as sagging muscles and lower back pain, depression, mood swings, tension, anxiety and fatigue.

Noticed mothers smearing warm mustard oil, tempered with garlic flakes and fenugreek [methi] seeds, all over a child's body before a bath? How mothers rave about the oil keeping away the cold and making the child's skin feel good?

Such massages for newborn babies and post-natal mothers is common practise. The friendly-neighbourhood mid-wife who gave the massages to the mother and child would talk endlessly about the benefits of such sessions and how important it was for their health.

They definitely knew what they were talking about. Such massages are an ancient practice that not only does it have tremendous therapeutic value, but is also an integral part of our culture.

But as one grew up, the massages stopped. So did the pink glow in the cheeks, the soft and supple skin and the endless supply of energy. Stress became a permanent fixture. You long for a soothing, hot bath, somebody rubbing your back and neck and massaging the fatigue and stress away. Suddenly, you remember the pre-bath oil rub your mother used to give you. You can't afford a trip to a five-star spa in the metros. Don't you wish there

The Power of Touch

was similar service here... in your town... at an affordable price?

If you see yourself in the above situation, here is some good news.

Ladies, massage therapy has arrived in Gangtok, complete with aromatherapy, acupressure and your regular health massage.

The White Orchid Beauty Parlour, located at MG Marg, is offering the ladies professional massage therapy at a price everyone can afford. It offers a whole range of massage therapy services through a highly qualified woman massage therapist, who is trained in Native American Healing and other forms of massage therapies from America and Thailand. She is also a yoga therapist to boot.

Yoli Maya Yeh, the therapist, says that massage is all about touch, the most basic form of therapy.

"Over time, we have forgotten the healing powers of touch. Touch is enormously important to human well-being, especially in the modern world where social inhibitions stop us from touching each other. In Indian society, and definitely in Sikkim, massage therapy is so much a part of a mother and child relationship. But we lose that as we become adults and the pressures of daily life make us more susceptible to stress and tension and other modern-day ailments. This is where massage therapy can be very beneficial," she says.



First, the benefits of massage therapy. A massage doesn't just feel good, research shows it reduces the heart rate, lowers blood pressure, increases blood circulation and lymph flow, relaxes muscles, improves range of motion, and increases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Therapeutic massage may enhance medical treatment and helps people feel less

anxious and stressed, relaxed yet more alert. Massage therapy has proved to be very beneficial, particularly in areas where conventional medicine has not been as successful, including chronic arthritis, musculo-skeletal syndromes and chronic headaches, among others.

So what exactly is massage therapy? Therapeutic massage involves the ma-

"Whether seeking relief for a medical condition, searching for a method to help deal with the stresses of daily life or wanting to maintain good health, more and more people, especially in the Western countries are now turning to therapeutic massage," says Yoli.

The services that Yoli provides are wide-ranging. A one-hour de-stress full body massage costs Rs. 400 and aromatherapy massage with essential oils Rs. 500. There are also regular health massages done in 21 sittings over a period of time at Rs. 200 per sitting. Therapeutic massage consists of acupressure preliminary conservative treatment and special acu-therapy treatment for Rs. 400 each. A herbal massage is available for Rs. 500.

"There are different massages for different ailments and every woman should make massage therapy a part of her regular health and beauty regime," advises the therapist.

So ladies, take an hour off and experience the healing touch of this ancient art that has been practised for centuries.

Massage Therapy Services
The White Orchid Beauty Parlour,
New Market, MG Marg, Gangtok
For appointment call: 222660
LADIES ONLY

NOW! can be reached at 270949. e-mail: sikkimnow@rediffmail.com

GRAVEDIGGER

Cyrus Jones 1810 to 1913, made his great grandchildren believe you could live to 100 and 3

a 100 and 3, is forever when you're just a little kid so Cyrus Jones lived forever
Gravedigger when you dig my grave could you make it shallow so that I can feel the rain

Gravedigger

Muriel Stonewall 1903 to 1954, she lost both of her babies in the second great war

now you should never have to watch your only children lowered in the ground I mean you should never have to bury your own babies

Gravedigger ...
Ring around the Rosy Pocket full of posies ashes to ashes we all fall down

Gravedigger when you dig my grave could you make it shallow so that I can feel the rain oh Gravedigger

Little Mikey Parsons, 67 to 75

He rode his bike like the devil until the day he died

when he grows up he wants to be Mr. Vertigo on the flying trapeze oh, 1940 to 1992

Gravedigger... (til' fade)



dave matthews band

MOVIES
4 FREE

ONE CORRECT ANSWER TO THE FILM QUESTION WINS 2 TICKETS TO

DENZONG



Identify this actor

Answer: _____
Name: _____
Address: _____

LAST WEEK'S ANSWER: Preity Zinta
Winner: : Lawrence Lepcha, SNT, Gtk.

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LAST WEEK'S WINNING MSG:

HI PALDI Though You are fat and short, your hair color makes you look like Preity Woman. Be dat way always.
ADORABLE ANEESHA

DEAR SUNITA

You're the best thing to happen to me. Hope I make a wonderful birthday gift too.
Love you **ANAND**.

FOO BROTHER!

Happy Birthday! Whadduya want? Hehe. Sneaks? Jacks? Tell us huh! We'll order it from down-under!
ME&SHE!

OYE ESPEE KHAMPA

Yo pali ta party hunai parchha. Party ma chicks haru pani hunu parchha. Mero fone number ta chha nee hoina? **HAPPY BUDDAY!** Gift DUE chha la? **BONES!**

DEAR PEMA... HAVE A WONDERFUL BIRTHDAY.
With Regards from **YESHI!**

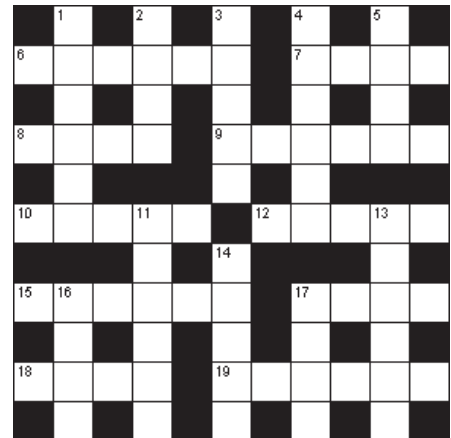
Dearest JC Da & Bhauju!
May your marriage cruise through smoothly always!!!
T2, PD & YD!

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THE LITTLE CROSSWORD - 075
WINNER GETS FREE DINNER FOR TWO AT

little **italy**
SNOD Complex, Deorali, Gangtok. Ph: 281980

Solve the crossword correctly. Rush it to Oberoi (MG Marg) or NOW!, on or before Sunday and a lucky draw of all correct entries will decide who wins FREE DINNER FOR TWO at LITTLE ITALY, DEORALI SNACKS COUPONS TO BE COLLECTED FROM NOW! OFFICE



ACROSS

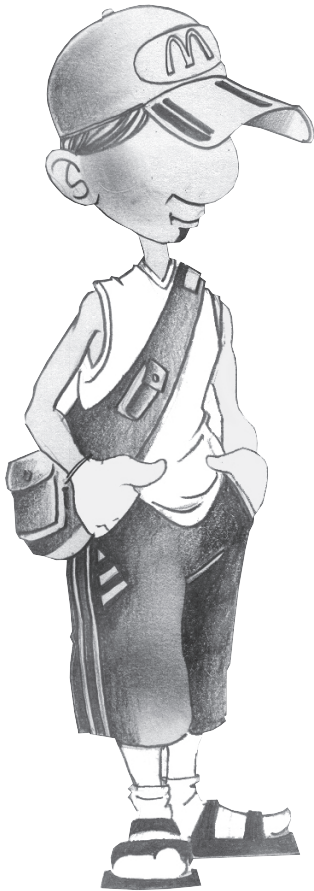
6. Stately mansion (6)
7. Wife of one's uncle (4)
8. Anger (4)
9. Minister (6)
10. Bring (5)
12. Wraith (5)
15. An opportunity (6)
17. Inner surface of the hand (4)
18. Ballot choice (4)
19. Departs (6)

DOWN

1. Injury (6)
2. Talk irrationally (4)
3. Entice (5)
4. Disappear (6)
5. Finishes (4)
11. Curved outward (6)
13. Person who sells (6)
14. Recently (5)
16. Covering for the head (4)
17. Highest point (4)

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS: **ACROSS** : 1. household 8.alley 9.prone 10.expand 12. hawk 14. lord 15.paddle 17.tooth 18.leake 20.printable **Down** 2.oil 3.saying 4.hops 5.leopard 6.satellite 7.beekeeper 11.parlour 13.paella 16.when 19.ail. **WINNER: NO CORRECT ENTRIES**

NOW! extracurricular...



Handyman Aayo!

Handyman Plus. Midas Touch Inc. could not have thought of a more appropriate name for their new range of service that they are offering to the residents of the Rajdhani.

A Handyman is what we all need. Someone to pay our bills, arrange for carpenters and plumbers when we need them and ease out the little details of life. Now you can have all this and more for only **Rs. 60** a month. Sounds too good to be true? Read on.

The services offered are Bill Payment Plan [BPP], Emergency Plan [EP] and Privilege Card Plan [PCP].

The first service offers the facility to have your electricity, water and telephone bills collected from your doorstep by the Handyman Team, who will do the needful and hand the receipt back to you.

The Emergency Plan ensures that in an emergency situation ,

NUINTOWN

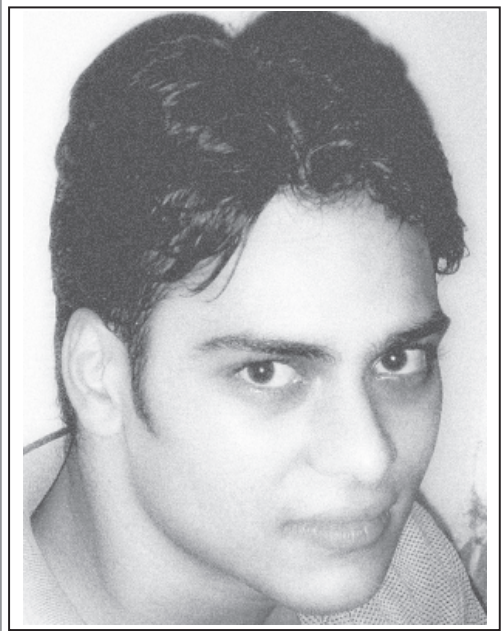
you can call their office to arrange a Carpenter, Plumber, Electrician or Sweeper. They will get them for you in less than two hours. No extra amount will be charged for this service except the actuals that you will have to pay to the workers directly.

A registration fee of Rs.20 means that you become a member and within a month will receive your Plastic Identity card, Partners information Booklet and a brochure. Your identity card will also double as a privilege card and can be used to avail discounts and special schemes at partner outlets.

Similar services have been offered earlier by other firms, but going by the track record of Midas Touch, the Handyman Team will deliver. And we could use their help.

For further details contact:
MIDAS TOUCH INC., Gangtok - 225521 / 220677 / 9832054742
 and we will be glad to answer your queries or send our marketing team over to explain the scheme.

FACE of The WEEK



ASHOK. MSc student at SMIT loves modelling.

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the FUTURE is NOW

ARIES: You may get an opportunity to travel abroad. Business will be brisk. Your status will improve. Social status and popularity will be high. You may receive a promotion. Teachers will be very busy.

TAURUS: You will see easy success. You may get a job opportunity abroad. Social status and popularity will be high. Expenditure will decrease. Financial status will be very good.

GEMINI: Export business will do well. Cash flow will be very good. You may get a new vehicle. You should not be too optimistic regarding news coming in. Textile, chemical and food businesses will be very profitable.

CANCER: You can try your luck in speculation to earn money. Small-scale industry will do well. You may commence new business. Students will perform as expected. Employees will

have the support of their superiors and subordinates.

LEO: You may go on a long trip. Expenses will be higher than before. Litigation will be postponed. Plastic and rubber businesses will do very well. Encouraging communication will be received from the person you are waiting for.

VIRGO: You may go for new business activities. Partnership businesses will be brisk. Social status will be maintained. Understanding with you life partner will be good. Income from your business is indicated.

LIBRA: Business will be very brisk. You will maintain good health. You will have to watch over your father's health. Expenditure will be as expected. You will be in a position to take a decision at work.

SCORPIO: You may acquire property. You may go on a long trip. You may get a job overseas. Students will do better.

Social status and popularity will be maintained.

SAGITTARIUS: Financial crisis will be over. Income through speculation will be low. Financial position will be good. Worries are indicated. Tension due to spouse and business partner is indicated.

CAPRICORN: You may start new business. Business will be brisk. Worries will be over. Uncommon expenses will be reduced. Peace and prosperity will be maintained.

AQUARIUS: You may go for a long trip. Social status and popularity will be maintained. Business will be very brisk. Encouraging communication will be received.

PISCES: Business will be brisk and busy. Employees will be rewarded for their work. Those who have applied for a loan may obtain a huge amount. Domestic happiness will prevail. There may be a new child in the family.

NEXT CHANGE

DENZONG DOLBY DIGITAL, SURROUND EX FROM FRIDAY

*Wah Wah
Rang Di*

Paresh Rawal, Gulshan Grover

11:15; 2:30; 5:30

VAJRA ULTRA STEREPHONIC SURROUND SOUND

NOW SHOWING

11:15; 2:30; 5:30



KAL HO NA HO

PREITY ZINTA, SAIF ALI KHAN & SHAH RUKH KHAN

www.sikkiminfo.net/vajra

TASHI MOVIE CLUB LATEST ARRIVALS



MATRIX REVOLUTIONS IN HELL (Jean Claude Van Damme)

RUNAWAY JURY (John Cusack, Gene Hackman))

KILL BILL (Uma Thurman, Lucy Liu)

HOLLYWOOD HOMICIDE (Harrison Ford)

alphabets

A BOOK SHOP

Einstein: The Life & Times by Ronald W. Clark

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl

The Spirit of Peace by HH The Dalai Lama

Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

PS ROAD, OPP. HOTEL TIBET



RECAP SIKKIM

GOC flags off rafting expedition

ANAND OBEROI

MANGLEY, SINGTAM: The Teesta White-Water Rafting Expedition of the National Defence Academy, Pune was flagged off by the General Officer Commanding, 17 Mountain Division, Maj. Gen. Deepak Anand, VSM, on 8 December here.

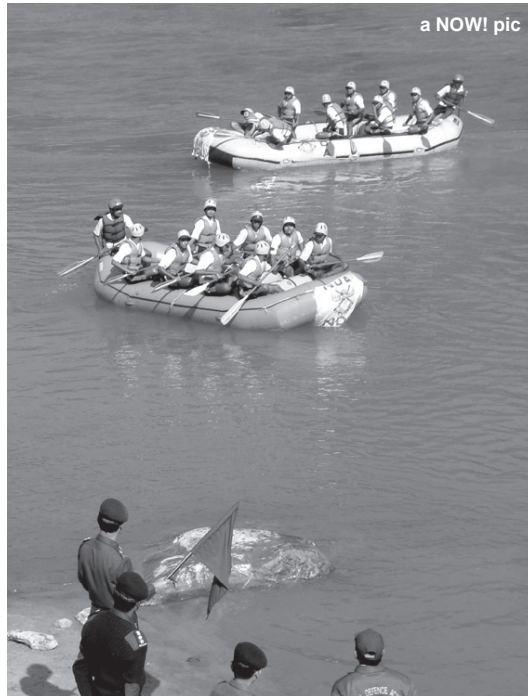
During this expedition, 14 NDA cadets and their three instructors will cover about 100 kms on Teesta in three days from Mangley to Sevoke with night halts at Bardang and Teesta.

The first phase of the expedition will cover 18 km from Mangley to Bardang. On the second day, the white-water rafters will cover 35 kms from Bardang to Teesta and the third and final phase will cover 43 kms from Teesta to Sevoke. The expedition will be carried out on treacherous, ice-cold rapids ranging from grade 2-4 [grade 5-6 are the most dangerous].

Of the various water sports, white-water rafting happens to be the most challenging and adventurous. It was started in 1869 by Sir John Powell in the Australian Army and has been fast gaining popularity with the Armed Forces in India. In 1992, white-water rafting was first introduced at Raiwala, near Rishikesh, followed by ECANT [Eastern Command Acqua Node, Teesta] at Bardang. Teesta was chosen for this expedition as it is considered to be one of the more challenging rivers and makes considerable demands on the technical and physical skills of the enthusiasts. Training and expeditions on Teesta by armed forces personnel are conducted under the aegis of the Gangtok-based 17 Mountain Division.

The present expedition comes under the Adventure Sports Training Programme of the NDA which is held every six months during vacations for the cadets in the Fifth Term who volunteer to train for adventure sports. These expeditions are carried out in different parts of the country to challenge the mental, physical endurance and stamina of the young cadets.

The 17-strong NDA team comprises of two naval cadets, five air force cadets and seven army cadets along with the officer in charge of the expedition Capt. Mutthana and instructors Lt. Gupta and Lt. Sareen of the Indian Navy. The team was groomed on extensively by instructor, Lt. Nagen and river



guides, Das, Vijay and Bhagat of ECANT for 20 days on Basic Rafting Techniques.

While speaking to NOW!, Capt. Mutthana said that the expedition will be carried out on two rafts which will have eight rafters and one river guide each.

Cadet Arjun Singh [Army], while sharing his experience said: "This group of 14 was shortlisted from 90 volunteers. It feels great to be here. The expedition will be full of adventure and thrills. It is my first time and I realize it takes a lot of courage to do this kind of thing which also teaches you team work."

Another cadet, P Nehra [Navy] said, "In the beginning it was dif-

ficult. The water and the weather were different, but now we adapted. Now, it has become enjoyable, rafting on one of the most challenging rivers of the world will be an experience to remember."

The confidence on display was commendable given the fact that the cadets lost a colleague to the treacherous rapids during training on 28 November. Cadet Ashok Pavu [Air Force], from Kochi in Kerala, drowned while he was swimming alongside the raft in which some of his friends were being trained on rafting. His body was recovered almost a week after the incident when Navy divers were pressed into service.

1,000-line telephone exchange inaugurated at Balutar

a NOW REPORT

SINGTAM: The latest technology Telephone Exchange of 1,000 lines capacity was inaugurated jointly by SK Mittal, GM, NHPC [Sikkim], and MK Seth, GM, Telecom [Sikkim] at Balutar on 5 December, last Friday.

The new exchange, informs a BSNL press release, has all modern facilities to cater to the needs of the local clients. This new Exchange is a Rs. 3 crore project and has such facilities as faster STD service, multi-party conferencing, faster internet access, call-waiting and call-transfer facility, DCR, detailed bill recording, ISD facility, morning alarm, faster mobile access and more STD and ISD junctions for calling remote locations. With the new exchange in place, telephones will now be provided on instant demand, assures Mr. Seth.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Mittal expressed satisfaction for the developmental work done by BSNL in Sikkim and for its continued support for the communication requirements of NHPC here.

Ranipool peddlers get the cop sting

a NOW REPORT

RANIPOOL: When Yankee and Mangal Pradhan woke up last Thursday, 4 December, they did not know that the time had come to pay their dues. The duo, as well as Chewang Bhutia and his wife Bunu Chettri are suspected to have been peddling in drugs for some time now.

Acting on a tip off, Ranipool Police raided and seized a substantial amount of drugs from their homes last Thursday.

Although the Police had prior information on these dealers, it did not have sufficient proof to make arrests. However, on the morning of 4 December, they received information that a large quantity of drugs could be found at both the residences as fresh supplies had come in.

A decoy customer sent by the police came back with Nitrosun-10 tablets, along with Phensydel and Corex bottles, cough medicines which are routinely abused by users.

The Police team of SDPO, Gangtok, OC and second OC, Ranipool along with constables raided the two residences and confiscated a substantial cache of

prescription drugs abused by addicts in Sikkim.

They recovered 57 files [456 capsules] of Spasmo Proxyvon, 16 files [157 tablets] of Relipen, and twenty tablets Nitrosun-10 from Mangal Pradhan's house and 34 bottles of Phensydel, 11 bottles of Corex, 11 files [88 capsules] of Spasmo Proxyvon, 29 Nitrosun-10 tablets and a carton containing 40 empty bottles of cough syrups.

While Yankee and Bunu Chettri were arrested after the raid, both the husbands managed to escape. Chewang Bhutia was arrested the next day when he was found "loitering" around his Ranipool house. There is still no trace of Mangal Pradhan, who the investigating officials suspect has fled to Delhi.

The arrested trio have been booked under section 22/ 27 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances [NDPS] Act which can send the guilty to 10 ten years of imprisonment. The two drug dens were reportedly servicing addicts in Gangtok and although the investigations are still in the preliminary stages, it is suspected that they got into the trade only recently.

ACADEMIA SIKKIM

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Anthyesthi Krirya



The 12th Day rituals of Late Malchand Agarwal, president of the Lal Bazaar Traders Association who left for his heavenly abode on 4 Dec 2003 falls on 15 Dec 2003. All friends, relatives and well wishers are requested to accompany us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Church Road.

**Bhajan Lal Agarwal (brother)
 Tikam Chand Agarwal (son)
 Mohit Agarwal (Son)**

RECAP SIKKIM



Conservation week observed at Dhamelay Khola-I watershed



Members of the Dhamelay Khola-I Watershed Association perform a short play on conservation at Ralap Primary School ground as part of the National Conservation Week celebrations.

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The national land resource conservation week [14-20 November], was observed at Dhamelay Khola-I watershed in a colourful celebration of community participation at the Ralap Primary School recently.

The celebration had Minister Agriculture, GM Gurung, present as the Chief Guest and was also attended by the area MLA [Khamdong], Gopal Lamichaney, and senior officials, Soil & Water Conservation.

The function started with a welcome address by the secretary, Dhamelay Khola-I Watershed, followed by the Jt. Director, S&WC, speaking on the need to conserve land and other natural resources.

The watershed initiative at Dhamelay Khola-I is barely a year old in its 5-year project span which aims at improving the

water availability condition in this dry belt. Recovery of barren land and conservation initiatives are other aspects of the project which is proposed by the locals and delivered in assistance with the S&WC department. The area is under the care watershed development officer Mrs. Nawang C. Tonyot with Deputy Director, Namgay Dorjee Bhutia, as in-charge.

Since the project is essentially about community participation, the day had many activities earmarked for people. The painting and quiz competitions had participation from students from Ralap Primary School and Makha Secondary School, who also put up an energetic cultural programme for the guests. A short play on the virtues of conservation was also put up by the members of the Dhamelay Khola-I Watershed Association and was well received by the gathering.

Limbus observe

Srijonga Teyongsi Sawan Tongnam

GANGTOK: The Limbu community's biggest festival, Srijonga Teyongsi Sawan Tongnam, was observed all over the State on 8 December, Monday.

The biggest celebration was held at Martam, Hee-Bermoik, West Sikkim, which had the presence of the Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling as chief guest the attendance of a large gathering of Limbus from all over the State as well as those from Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dooars and Nepal.

The day marks the birth anniversary of Te-Ongsi Srijonga Sing Thebe, the patron saint of the Limbus. Special prayers and pujas were held at the Manghim, a temple dedicated to him at Martam.

Te-Ongsi Srijonga Sing Thebe,

believed to be an incarnate of King Srijonga Hang was born on the Mangsir Purnima [full moon] of 1704 in Sinam village of Yangwarok district of Limbuan in Eastern Nepal. Since an early age, he dedicated his time and life to the promotion of Limbu language and script and in the dissemination of modern education among the Limbus in Limbuan.

In 1740, he is believed to have arrived in West Sikkim via Chewabhanjang along with eight of his disciples. Once in Martam, he started teaching the Limbu language and religion to the people of the area. Seen as a great threat to Buddhism and the Tibetan language and script by the Buddhist monks, he is believed to have been assassinated in 1741 at Reshi Wadham.

CONGRESS WEARS A NEW LOOK

Contd from pg 4

Mr. Bhandari urged the office bearers and members to "forget the past" and work together on a common platform. This need to call for a united effort may have stemmed from the fact that there are reportedly a number of disgruntled voices in the revamped SPCC [I]. Those with prominent posts in SSP and with the Congress earlier, all want to play major roles in the new set-up. The need to satisfy all may have led to the exhaustive list of office bearers.

The Central Executive Committee members include vice-presidents KN Upreti, chairman [Press & Media], OT Bhutia, chairman, [general administration], Phuchung Bhutia, chairman

[transport], Thukchuk Lachungpa, in-charge [general elections], Maj. T Gyatso, chairman, [ex-army administration], Dawa Lhamu Targain and CC Sangderpa, [women's wing], PR Subba [youth organization].

Former SPCC-I presidents Karma Topden, Penzo D. Namgyal and ex-chief minister Sanchaman Limboo and former power secretary LP Tewari [who joined Cong-I on the day] have been given the posts of Special Invitees and advisors of the party. The post of the treasurer has gone to former Gangtok MLA Balchand Sarda.

Most of the prominent faces in SSP have now secured important portfolios in the SPCC [I]. Former SSP vice-president Biraj Adhikari is now the general secretary and the

spokesperson of the party. Similarly, Hem Lall Bhandari is general secretary [legal and office administration] and Pintos Chopel Lepcha, general secretary in-charge of East District organization. Jigme N. Kazi, the general secretary, Press Media and Publicity [English], DN Nepal, Press and Media and Publicity [Nepali] and Sonam Lachungpa, general secretary, [general administration and discipline]. Former SPCC [I] general secretary, Tseten Lepcha is now general secretary in-charge of North District, while Taraman Chettri and BB Subba take on South and West districts respectively.

Likewise, Bharat Basnet is the new president, District Congress Committee, East, along with Anil Lachenpa, North, JK Rai, West and Parshuram Rai, South.

BLIA to hold health camp at Chota Samdong

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: The Sikkim chapter of Buddha's Light International Association [BLIA] has announced plans to hold a one-day health camp at Chota Samdong in Chakung constituency in west Sikkim on 14 December, 2003. A BLIA press release informs that specialists from the field of gynaecology, ENT, pediatrics and general medicine will conduct the camp and medicine "as far as possible" will be distributed free to the patients.

The BLIA's Sikkim chapter is run under the presidentship of GS Lama and has organized a similar health camp in upper

Dzongu in the past. It has also undertaken tree plantation drives and weeding programmes at the Bulbuley Smriti Van and has been providing financial help to poor villagers for medical treatment. It is also actively involved in socio-religious activities like observance of Buddhist festivals. Since last year, it has started maintaining an annual calendar of activities in pursuance of the "humanistic Buddhism" preached and propagated by BLIA founder Master Hsing Yun.

The Association has also expressed gratitude towards the Department of Health & Family Welfare for its "invaluable support and guidance."

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SATA shortlists 9 for Sikkim's Taekwondo team to NE Games

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Sikkim Amateur Taekwondo Association has selected the team for the 18th North-East Games, to be held at Imphal, Manipur from December 16-19. Nine players consisting of 5 boys and 4 girls have been shortlisted to represent Sikkim in various categories after a grueling training camp.

Rupen Pradhan (fin weight),

Mahadev Tamang (fly weight), Rajesh Thapa (bantham weight), Jyoti Pradhan (feather weight), Lahrab Bhutia (light weight), Tenzing Dolka (fin weight), Pempa doma Tamang (fly weight), Dekkim Doma (Bantham weight), Meera Chettri (feather weight) have been selected.

While Hira Narayan Pradhan will be the Team Manager, Wanchuk Atuk will preside as the coach. Rajen Subba and Dawa

Tamang are going as technical officers.

"All the selected players are experienced and talented and we have great expectation from them," say Dawa Tamang, Joint Secretary, SATA.

Expectations are especially high from Rupen Pradhan, Jyoti Pradhan and Meera Chettri for bringing the gold home.

The Sikkim Contingent leaves on Thursday, December 10.

East lifts Inter-district School Athletic trophy

Nimden Lepcha, the sole record-breaker

SAGAR CHETTRI

GEYZING: East District emerged as state champions in the just-concluded Inter District School Athletic Meet, 2003, held at Kyongsa Ground, Geyzing from December 7-9.

Organized by the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, the meet had 420 participants from the four districts. However, only one new record was set when

Nimden Lepcha, reached the 31.01 metre mark in Javelin throw, in the Under-19 for girls.

Day One started with a marathon of U-19 & U-14 boys and girls. This was followed by a march-past of all the participants after Chief Guest, VB Pathak, Secretary, Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, declared the meet open.

This is the second time that the meet is being held in Geyzing, with

the last one held in 2001. According to Thupden Rapgyal Bhutia, DSO [east], this time, records were being maintained more meticulously for future reference.

The medal ceremony was held after every three events, with medals given to the winners by girls attired in traditional costumes.

The grand finale on 9 December had HT Basi, Director, Youth & Sports Affairs, as Chief Guest.

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SPORTS

CONGRATULATIONS!

Chamchuk Lama becomes first local referee to conduct national tourney

a NOW REPORT

GANGTOK: Sikkim Football Association's Chamchuk Lama, an empanelled national referee, has become the first Sikkimese to conduct a senior national level match. Mr. Lama left for Kolkata on 8 December, Monday, to officiate at the National Football League, 2003-04, which gets underway soon.

This is the first time that a referee from Sikkim has been selected to conduct matches at such prestigious tournaments. The National Football League will see the country's top 12 clubs battle it out in Kolkata. Interestingly, the All India Football Federation has displayed no reservations on Mr. Lama's neutral refereeing by selecting him to conduct the clash between East Bengal and Churchill Brothers to be played at Salt Lake Stadium on 16 December. On that date, there will be two Sikkimese on the field - Baichung



representing East Bengal and Mr. Lama conducting the match.

The SFA President, Tempo Bhutia, has thanked the AIFF for giving such an opportunity to a local referee and expressed confidence in Mr. Lama's capabilities. Another local referee, Bikash Pradhan, also a national referee, missed the chance to conduct matches at the tournament having failed to attend the Cooper Test conducted by AIFF recently.

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