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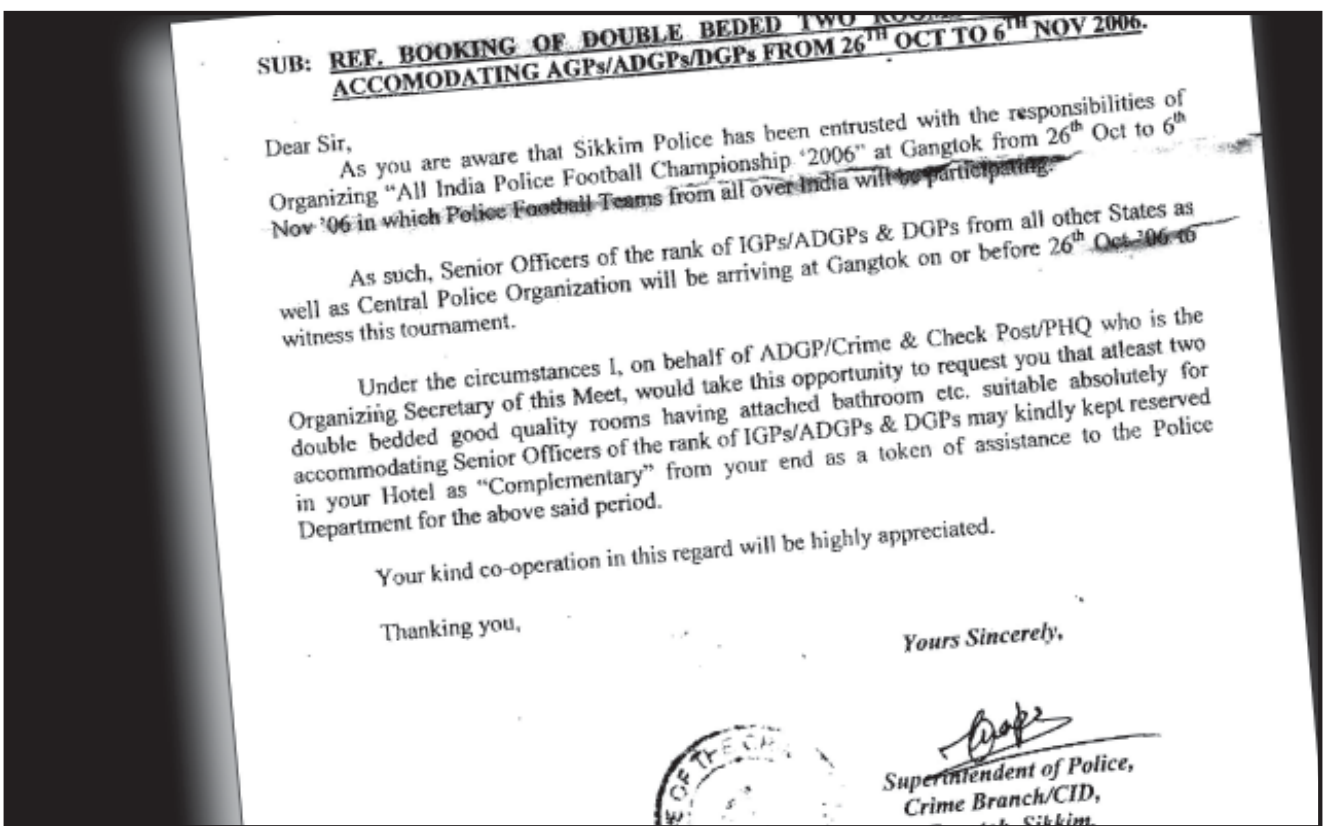
MIDWEEK

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

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'DUGDI'

COMPLETE STORY ON PAGE 3

HOTELIERS IN THE CAPITAL FURIOUS OVER 'REQUEST' FOR COMPLIMENTARY ROOMS FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CMYK



A.D. gets Ready!

SHRP PREZ EMERGES AS MAN OF THE MOMENT

PEMA L SHANGDERPA

GANGTOK: While the Central Executive Committee [CEC] of the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front was celebrating the Garibi Uthan Diwas at the SDF headquarters in the Indira Bye pass road on 22 September, another man heading a regional rival outfit was hogging all the limelight. Sikkim Himalaya Rajya Parishad party president AD Subba had the audacity to come out in the streets even if it was with a thousand odd supporters on a day that also happens to be the birthday of the SDF supremo. The foot rally organised by the SHRP turned heads while Subba basked in the new found attention. This was SHRP's way of registering their protest against what they called anti-people policies of the State Government.

Making the leaders of the state units of national parties like the State Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party look like mere 'arm chair' politicians, Subba and supporters, suggest some, displayed nerves by coming out in the open. The party took to the streets in a peaceful manner to protest against the recently announced notification of the delimitation of assembly constituencies in

the state. SHRP was also protesting against the non reservation of seats for the Limbu and Tamang communities in the state. They submitted a memorandum to the Governor protesting against the delimitation and asking for its cancellation. Copies of the memorandum were also sent to the Chief Electoral Officer, Sikkim, the Chairman of the Delimitation Commission and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Speaking to Midweek, Subba said that the protest was also against the hike in prices of all essential commodities which he claimed had gone up as high as 3 to 10 times. "The people in the villages are already feeling the burden of the hike in power which is absolutely unnecessary and uncalled for. While the government claims of harnessing huge power, the people are burdened with such hikes, he accused, adding, "We have also taken serious note of how the government has not been able to pay up the contractors and in some cases the salaries of its employees. The situation is grim while the people are waiting to celebrate the Dasain."

Started on 02.02.02 [2 February, 2002], a date that Subba likes to emphasize on,

SHRP has been working at the grassroots level in West Sikkim. Although the party hardly got any votes in the last election, it is believed that it now has considerable support. Sounding upbeat, Subba said that the people have been accepting the programmes of the party and were expressing a desire to join and participate in SHRP's drive for change. "We have to change the government. The old foxes should go. All are looking for new faces, new issues, new planks, new administration and we have been working on a network of supporters," he claims further adding that about 800 members had joined the party since the rally.

Reacting to the SHRP rally and Subba's assertions, a senior leader of the SDF said "Every party has a right to echo their discontentment. We have not prevented them from organizing the rally and it went without any hindrances. This proves democracy has taken roots in Sikkim. This will also not harm our traditional vote banks. Obviously there are some sections that are not happy and they are with them. Everybody has a right to raise their voice. But it has proven that the other leaders of the state units of national parties are only arm chair politicians' and paper tigers."

Domestic servant robs couple

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The trend of domestic servants turning into criminals is fast growing in the State, with the Police arresting a person in connection with a robbery.

Ranipool Thana on September 23 arrested one Navin Chettri after receiving complaints from Clement Rai of Assam Lingzey about a break-in at his house.

According to the complaint registered at the Ranipool Thana, Clement Rai, along with his wife, had gone for an overnight visit to his sister-in-law's house, leaving behind the house to their domestic help, Navin Chettri. When the couple returned back the next day, they found that someone had broke into their bedroom through a window and ran away with Rs. 65,000 in cash and 8 tolas worth of gold jewellery.

The suspicion immediately fell on Chettri, a resident of Bhutia Busty, Darjeeling, who was missing when the couple reached their house. Clement

Rai lodged a complaint with the Ranipool Thana, and the Police immediately started to search for the absconding Chettri. The Police, during the course of its investigations found out that Chettri had relatives in North Sikkim. A Police raiding team led by Ranipool OC Sub-Inspector Karma Bhutia carried a number of raids and finally managed to arrest Chettri at Phodong in North Sikkim.

During interrogation, Chettri admitted to his crime and revealed to the Police that he had stayed at Hotel Lachen Valley in Mangan after decamping with the loot. When he was arrested, Chettri was on his way to Gangtok from Mangan. Police also recovered some gold jewellery and cash amounting to Rs. 21 thousand from him. Chettri told the Police that he had used some money in buying clothes and shoes for himself. He has been booked under 381 of the IPC and is presently in Police remand.

Man arrested for attempted rape

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: A 22-year-old has been arrested in connection with attempting to rape a 14 year-old girl in South Sikkim.

Mahesh Subba, a resident of Dalep Busty, was arrested by Temi Police, following a complaint registered by the victim's aunt. According to Mrs. Man Maya Subba, a resident of Rashep Busty in South Sikkim, the accused offered a lift in his vehicle to her and her niece when they were returning to the village around 4:30 pm on September 22. However, when they reached Mrs. Subba's house, Mahesh refused to stop the vehicle and continued driving.

When Mrs. Subba started to raise an alarm by shouting for help, Mahesh stopped the car and allowed her to get down but managed to speed away with her niece still in the vehicle.

The girl returned home later in the evening and two days later told her aunt that she had been raped by Mahesh. Mrs. Subba filed a complaint with the Temi Police, who based upon a rough sketch of the accused prepared on details provided by the victim, arrested Mahesh on 25 September. His Bolero, allegedly used for the crime was also seized by the Police. Mahesh has been booked under 365/376/511 of the IPC.

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'DUGDI'

HOTELIERS IN THE CAPITAL FURIOUS OVER 'REQUEST' FOR COMPLIMENTARY ROOMS FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: This letter (cover & extreme right) requesting for two rooms each has been sent to 60 hotels and lodges in the capital, most of them within walking distance of the Police Headquarters. MIDWEEK has a photocopy of one such letter.

While a handful of hoteliers are willing to comply with the request, there has been growing unrest and resentment amongst the majority ever since they received the letter. Apart from the fact that providing the rooms 'complimentary', as the letter states, is completely out of the question, as things stand, the dates of the 'All India Police Football Championship 2006' coincide with the busiest time of the year for those in the hotel industry, this being the peak season. Most hotels have already got their booking charts full and in fact have been forced to turn down more bookings.

Apparently some hoteliers approached the authorities and tried to explain that it was not possible to have the required rooms reserved for the police

THE COST OF ASSISTANCE	
1 Double Bedded Room (Deluxe)	Rs. 2,000/- (approx)
2 Rooms per Hotel	Rs. 4,000/-
Number of days required	12 (Twelve)
Assistance from each hotel	Rs. 48,000/-
Number of Hotels	60 (Sixty)
Total Cost of Assistance	Rs. 28,80,000/-

All rates have been approximated for the European Plan (rooms only) of an average Gangtok hotel.

officials on account of the peak tourist season. But the Police authorities would not hear of it. The hotel owners were then asked to accommodate their guests, some of whom have had confirmed bookings since June 2006, in some other lodges elsewhere in the capital at their own expense. Further, a hotel owner was asked to give in writing that he would anyhow manage to have two luxury rooms in his hotel vacant before the dignitaries arrived for their complimentary stay for twelve days when he repeatedly refused.

"It is not fair of the Police Department to expect us to cancel confirmed bookings, for which we have already received advance payment, and that too for so many days," says a disgruntled hotelier. It stands

to reason too. Consider the economics involved. Providing 'Two double bedded good quality rooms having attached bathrooms, etc suitable absolutely for accommodating Senior Officers of the rank of IGPs/ADGPs and DGPs' complimentary to the Police department means a serious loss of revenue to the hoteliers in peak season.

A deluxe room that meets the above criteria will cost a minimum of Rs.2000 that too being a conservative estimate. A loss of Rs.4000 per day for 12 days means a total loss of Rs.48,000 for an individual hotelier. Take that amount and multiply it by the number of hotels this letter has been sent to and one can get a fair picture

No.896 ADGP/C&CP/AIPEC 2006

Dated: 24.08.2006

Sub: Ref. Booking of double bedded two rooms required for accomodating AGPs/ADGPs/DGPs from 26th Oct to 6th Nov 2006.

Dear Sir,

As you are aware that Sikkim Police has been entrusted with the responsibilities of organising All India Police Football Championship 2006 at Gangtok from 26th October to 6th November in which police football teams from all over India will be participating.

As such, senior officers of the ranks of IGPs / ADGPs and DGPs from all other states as well as Central Police Organisation will be arriving at Gangtok on or before 26th October 06 to witness this tournament.

Under the circumstances I, on behalf of ADGP / Crime & Check Posts / PHQ who is the Organising Secretary of this Meet, would take this opportunity to request you that at least two double-bedded good quality rooms having attached bathrooms etc. suitable absolutely for accommodating Senior Officers of the rank of IGPs / ADGPs & DGPs may kindly kept reserved in your Hotel as 'Complimentary' from your end as a token of assistance to the Police Department for the abovesaid period.

Your kind cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Thanking you


Yours Sincerely

**Superintendent of Police
Crime Branch / CID
Gangtok, Sikkim**

of the overall magnitude of the 'assistance' the Police Department expects private hoteliers to provide. This gesture of support is a truly expensive one, to the tune of a whopping Rs. 28,80,000!

As it is, private hoteliers hardly receive any concrete assistance from the Government and it is due to their own marketing efforts that they have been able to get guests. Besides, cancelling confirmed bookings will result in a serious loss of credibility for the hoteliers within the trade both with guests and their travel agents.

All facts taken into consideration, hotel and lodge owners find no immediate redress except wait and fume about it internally since the only place they could go with such problems was the Police. But in this case they fear that the Police will favour their own interests and only lead to more harassment and *dugdi* for themselves since they could not provide a 'token of assistance to the Police Department.' Hoteliers who feel that the whole episode is nothing but '*police dugdi*', still fear repercussions as is clear from the fact that they spoke to MIDWEEK only on the condition of anonymity.



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Gurudongmar Lake in north Sikkim.
Photo: KARCHOONG DIYALI

Tourism booming, but time still for a rethink

SAMTEN YANGZOM

GANGTOK: Sikkim has firmly established itself in the tourism map of the world. So we want to believe. We would also like to believe that Sikkim is the hottest "ecotourism" destination today. We have hard sold ourselves and are

now ready to reap the benefits. We would like to believe in the statistics and the awards we have won. We are "small, but beautiful." We are everything that Darjeeling is no longer - and even more.

Really?

Before the euphoria sets in and we begin to bask in the

reflected glory, it's time for a rethink.

Agreed that the numbers are impressive. Last year, we broke a record of sort. The number of visitors making a beeline towards Sikkim was unprecedented. A total number of 2,68,267 visitors (domestic and foreign according to the

Sikkim Tourism Department figures) arrived in Sikkim. This year, we are all set to break that record. Already, we've had 1,79,385 visitors till June this year. No wonder the State Government has attached high priority to tourism.

Tourism activities in the State have no doubt gone up in the last one year due to the persistent efforts of all the sectors - be it the private or public or even the NGO sector and there's no denying the fact.

The Tata Consultancy Report Tourism Master Plan for the State has projected a gradual growth of tourism related activities till 2011. The tourist inflow to the State has exceeded the projections in the Master Plan for domestic tourists but in case of international tourists, it is still way below the projected estimates.

The numbers may be heartening but are we getting the right kinds of visitors? And are we fetching the right prices for the products?

The growth in tourism in the State notwithstanding, there is a flipside to it. There is a growing concern on the impact of the tourism boom in the State which is still ill-equipped to handle massive flow of tourist traffic. Do we have adequate infrastructure to meet this burgeoning demand?

Also pertinent here is what is the optimum quantum of tourism needed in the State? Is it a "boon or a curse" to the sanity of our State? Has the gains from tourism been equated by the impact, positive or negative, it has made on us and on our environment?

Experts agree that we are getting mostly low-end budget tourists. So would it be feasible in the long run to foster a tourism economy that is solely based on the domestic market? Or are we exploring other growing international markets? Initially it was to be high value low volume tourism and what we have now is high volume low value tourism. "High value is a very small component really since our experience for the traveller is very poor and ill conceived," says PD Rai, founder member, Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS). A typical example would be a high-end tourist arriving here in a SUV and staying in a star hotel. But once in Tsomgu Lake he would be rubbing shoulders and experiencing the same thing with a guy who has stayed overnight in a Rs. 120 room sharing it with 5 others.

Therefore, there is a need to properly tap the high-end

tourists along with the international markets. There are very few private tour operators concentrating on this segment, which brings to fore a vital issue - the lack of joint marketing in the State. There is virtually no collaborative effort between the private and public sectors. Both sectors are doing it their own way, without consultation or collaboration with each other. "The Government must only work on the policy. After that it is up to the private sector and the NGOs to go ahead and work and plan. Private sector is profit driven and so can create the most efficient and effective logistic arrangements," opines Mr. Rai.

On the role of the private sector, Travel Agents' Association of Sikkim (TAAS) president, SK Pradhan says that TAAS has been consistent in its promotion of Sikkim as a tourist destination. "We play a vital role in supporting the State Government's efforts in tourism promotion."

This brings us to the promotion of Sikkim as the "ultimate ecotourism destination." Ecotourism is indeed the buzzword for Sikkim today but in the absence of any set definition, the dictums guiding ecotourism practices are not defined in the State, thus leading to its rather pretentious understanding and promotion. "Ecotourism is the only way to save this situation. By creating the best experience and narrowing down the target segment we can hope to differentiate the product - one size does not fit all. We can charge more but provide a good experience of eco-tourism and local culture to the visitors," says Mr. Rai. Experts feel that if the State Government is serious enough, then it will have to immediately plan an ecotourism policy and put it in place. Also it will provide funds for capacity building in the designated sites.

Ecotourism should not be confined to just huge hoardings on the wall but best practices put in place. The rush to build more hotels and other ghastly infrastructure is telling on the eco-system and fragile environment. Quality of life for most citizens has actually gone down. We see numbers but this does not speak of the negatives that are overwhelming us. It is time for a serious rethink on our tourism policy, if we indeed want to hold on to the "ultimate ecotourism destination" title and actually do justice to it.

Orchid named after Gandhi family member

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: A new orchid hybrid *Brasso laelio cattleya* [BLC] from Sikkim has been named after a member of the Gandhi dynasty Miraya Vadra Gandhi, the granddaughter of Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

The hybrid orchid now known as BLC Miraya after the daughter of Priyanka Gandhi was released on 26 September by the UPA chairperson at Old Sikkim House in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. The brief naming ceremony was followed by a flower show showcasing Sikkim's flora. The function held at the Old Sikkim House also saw the presence of Priyanka Vadra Gandhi. Earlier, Chief Minister Pawan

Chamling and his wife Tikamaya received the UPA chairperson and Priyanka at Sikkim House.

The hybrid was prepared by former chief secretary and a well known orchid expert and conservationist KC Pradhan at his Wayside nurseries in Tadong here.

Speaking to MIDWEEK over phone Agriculture and Horticulture Minister Somnath Poudyal said that the programme was very successful and was appreciated by the UPA chairperson. "We are grateful that Madame could set aside time to grace the function and we would like to thank her for her presence which will boost Sikkim's efforts on developing floriculture," Poudyal said.

Poudyal also said that the release of the new hybrid in New Delhi was an attempt to popularise the orchids of Sikkim at the national level. "The function was itself a big achievement for Sikkim and was an attempt to give the state recognition in the floriculture map of the country," Poudyal added.

Earlier in 2003, during the visit of the then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a hybrid orchid was named after him. When asked to give a name for another dendrobium hybrid, Vajpayee named it as Kalpana Chawla after the Indian astronaut who was killed in the Columbia tragedy. Both these hybrids were also developed by KC Pradhan and his son Sailesh Pradhan.

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8-year-old Raju has his day cut out for him. He gets up at 7 in the morning, sweeps the floor and collects packets of milk from a nearby shop. By 7:30, it is time for "Bhaila" to get up, and wash and get ready for school. He helps his Bhaila to wash, dress and then carries his heavy school bag all the way to the school. Throughout the day, Raju runs errands for the family and by noon, he has to take Bhaila's lunch to school. In the afternoon, he makes another trip to the school to pick up Bhaila. When Bhaila spends his time playing games on his expensive PlayStation or his computer, or simply decides to channel surf, Raju's duty is wait on his little master and ensure that his every demand is met promptly. Raju cannot read or write but dreams of becoming a "businessman" when he grows up.

Sita's daily routine consists of cleaning the house, washing the dishes and running after an overactive 5-year-old. She arrived here with nine of her "friends" and "brothers and sisters" from somewhere "near Siliguri" last year, to work as domestic servants for various families in Gangtok. Sita has no clue how much she earns-her monthly salary is directly given to "Bhaiya," the man who acts sort of a middleman between her family back home and her employees. This 8-year-old is not allowed to ride on her employer's son's bicycle and does not go to school. She has no idea where the rest of her friends and siblings are.

GANGTOK: From October 10, life might change for Raju and children like him when the Central Government's ban on employment of children below 14 in homes, hotels, roadside eateries and resorts comes into effect.

The law makes it clear that no home or hotel can employ children below 14 years. Yet, very few are aware of the fact one could be fined or even jailed if one is found guilty. The penalty for violators is a jail term ranging from three months to two years and/or a fine of Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000.

Early in August, the Central Labour Ministry announced that it was expanding the list of hazardous occupations in



Photo: Karchoong Diyali

Employing children under 14? Now you can go to jail for this

which child labour is banned under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 by including the ban on children below 14 working as domestic workers or servants and employed as helps in dhabas, restaurants, hotels, tea shops, etc. by October 10, 2006.

The decision was taken on the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee on Child Labour. The ban is meant to come to the rescue of thousands of children who are often subjected to physical violence, psychological trauma and sexual abuse when they work in homes and hotels. The Committee stated that children employed in roadside eateries and highway dhabas were the most vulnerable, especially to sex and drug abuse.

But can a mere ban resolve the complex socio-economic issues involved? Raju and Sita's stories are those of hundreds like them in Sikkim and especially here in Gangtok. Every second household employs at least one domestic help. With the breakdown in the joint family structure, the support system

in the nuclear families in the form of grandparents and cousins is missing and there is a real need for domestic help, especially when it comes to looking after a small child.

Here lies the predicament. Poor children in India begin working at a very young and tender age. Many children have to work to help their families and some families expect their children to continue the family business at a young age. Though most children begin working at a young age due to economic reasons, doing so allows them to break from some social constraints and escape abstract poverty back home. Some of the children are sole bread winners for their families. And the scenario is no different here in Sikkim.

But with the Central Government this time determined to ensure that the ban is properly implemented, the question that everyone's asking right now how serious is the State Government on this issue and what will be the fate of the hundreds of child domestic helps already employed?

Given the lack of proper

awareness and publicity amongst the people on the ban, most people are clearly not in the mood to comply with the latest directive. The ban is being taken with scepticism and many wonder how effective it will be. The role of Sikkim Police in implementing this ban would be limited to assisting the primary agency-the Labour Department-in carrying out periodic checks. "We will support the Department in making sure that the checks are conducted free of any untoward incident," DIG Range Akshay Sachdeva said.

Interestingly, the State Labour Department does not maintain a record of the children working in the State as domestic workers. All efforts to talk to senior officials in the Department on the measures taken to properly implement this ban proved futile. MIDWEEK was told to write an application addressed to the Department Secretary outlining the "queries" or "any other information."

With the State Government yet to publish the gazette notification, and implementing authorities still in the dark

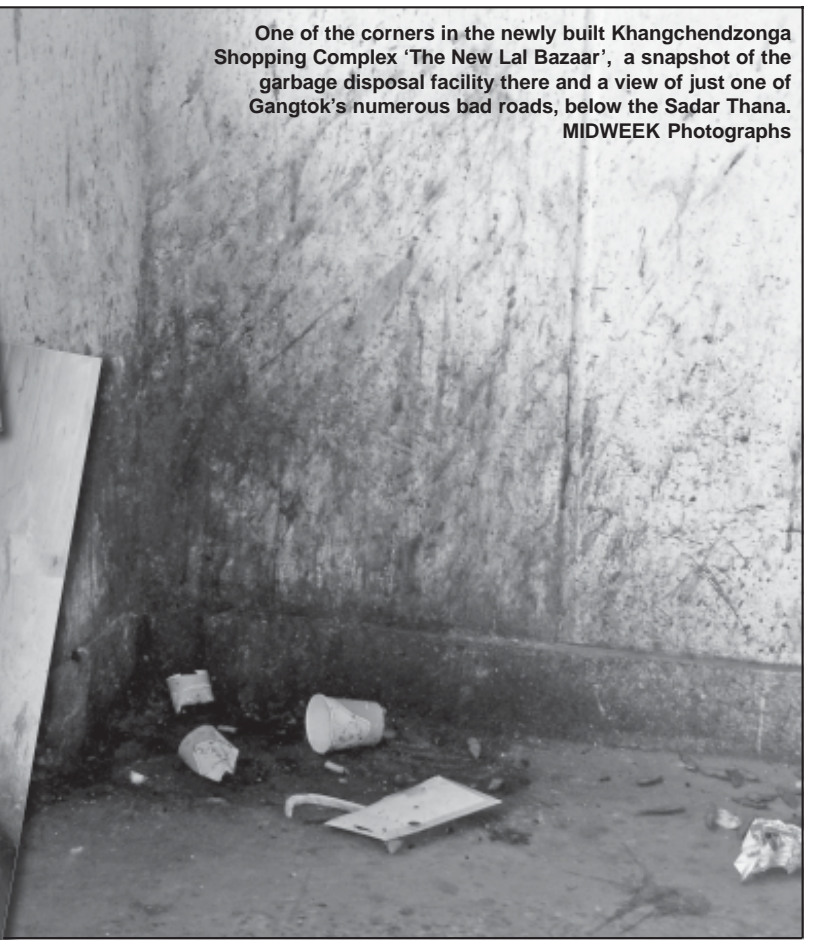
about the extent of the net of the ban, the future of the domestic helps is in a quandary.

There is a sense of defiance in the employees. Mrs Chettri, who has two girls from Islampur near Siliguri employed with her since the last three years, is not too worried about the ban. "I am told that the Police will come to every household to check for child labour. But I will just tell them that I have sponsored their education and stay and they are not domestic helps." Like her, most of the employees have a ready excuse up their sleeves. "I brought Passangkit here because her parents left and she had a better chance here in the town with us than in her village. I am her guardian now. How can the authorities say that she is a domestic help and that is illegal?" asks Mr. Lepcha. "If the authorities are so serious about implementing the ban, then they should first go the houses of the politicians, ministers and the bureaucrats where there will be at least 3 such children working for them. But they will go scot-free because they will come up with the argument that they have adopted the children."

There is also a growing concern about the fate of the children once the ban comes into force. "What will happen to the children? Who will take responsibility for this? Has the Government thought about how it is going to manage the child labourers when they have no where to go? Are we going to give birth to a whole new set of anti-socials and delinquents?" asks a social worker, echoing perhaps the sentiments of a majority of so-called offenders here. "At least I have provided a home and regular food to Passang. If he has to go back to his village, he will probably have nothing to eat," reasons "Chumla".

Already, the Centre has started putting pressure on the State Governments to enforce the ban in both letter and spirit. Now the onus of implementing the ban is on the State Governments. They have been directed to begin sensitising the people to the ban and strictly enforce it from October 10.

- by SARIKAH ATREYA



One of the corners in the newly built Khangchendzonga Shopping Complex 'The New Lal Bazaar', a snapshot of the garbage disposal facility there and a view of just one of Gangtok's numerous bad roads, below the Sadar Thana. MIDWEEK Photographs

IT STINKS!!

TENZIN C TASHI

Of the many problems faced by Gangtokians, indiscriminate garbage dumping, potholes, too much vehicular traffic, bad roads, no parking available, rash driving, suicides, concerns of personal safety and the like take centre stage.

Due to their proliferation, we focus on the more obvious woes, or what we can actually see and experience for ourselves, and tend to downplay the root cause of most of our problems. It's essentially a matter of attitude. And the general attitude of Gangtok, I'm sorry to say, stinks. In more ways than one.

Perhaps it is only to be expected that progress for all that its worth will also usher in a flip side. Somewhere along the line we seem to have lost the simplicity Sikkim in the past was famous for and traded it in for a very self centered complicity.

Practically every problem can be traced back to an attitude problem. Take garbage dumping. Go anywhere, forget the well known mother lodes like Syari, Nam Nang and Arithang, every place is an impromptu dump. Every home, every business establishment cleans up the immediate area of concern, be it the home or the shop and rather than make an effort to collect the rubbish and wait for the garbage collection truck, uses the cover of darkness to clandestinely tip the rubbish at the nearest public area. This is a bad health hazard with stray dogs foraging for a bite or two in the rubbish and scattering it over a larger area.

Bad roads are the fallout of myopic planning. Our roads are dead enders for the most and there seems to be absolutely no co-ordination between the Roads Department and the PHE. We see the road in a particular area being tarred and before we can even begin to enjoy the feel of smooth

roads, the PHE or some cable guy or telephone guy will come along and dig up the newly done roads. Why can't Departments co-ordinate with other Departments and lay the pipes or whatever it is and then tar the road? After all no Department can afford the luxury of working in isolation. Also, rather than repair potholes when they are just starting to form, it seems the protocol is wait till it's a seriously big crater across half the road and then repair it on war footing. Bad roads reduce the vehicle's fuel efficiency and thus actually add to the burden of the nation's oil deficit.

Rash driving is partly because most of the drivers behind the wheels of taxis are underage youngsters. In most cases, they are self promoted handyboys who are learning on the job. Only they are risking the lives of a lot of people in their hurry to make the maximum runs. In these days when a Sikkim Subject can be

faked, faking a birth certificate is easy as pie. Also, their 'stay off the roads' retaliation to the recent police crackdown on over the top hike fares is also indicative of much cockiness on their part.

Parking in town is a virtual nightmare and one wastes a lot of time, energy and petrol circling around MG Marg in the hope of getting a parking space. How can we then miss the cars which are coolly occupying two parking spaces? The attitude seems to be, 'As long as my car's safely parked, let others fend for themselves.' A very cavalier attitude truly but oh so common. Should drivers park their cars in only one slot, there would be at least 7-8 slots more available on any given day.

The much tom tommed 'Litter and Spit Free' zone is the single largest example of all inherent flaws in the system. If today the same zone is a little cleaner, it is not because people have stopped spitting or littering. It is only due to the

greater deployment of sweepers. Simply designating an area as a litter and spit free zone will never work. To be truly successful, any change has to start with a change in attitude. People have to necessarily develop a better civic sense and a sense of communal ownership which at the time of going to print is sadly absolutely zilch.

But there's hope yet. The same people who spit and litter willfully and are inveterate garbage dumpers at home are surprisingly well behaved in other places. I've myself bumped into Sikkim people on holiday in the cities sheepishly exhibiting a terrific civic sense, collecting their rubbish in plastic bags which they then dispose of carefully. Charity, they say, begins at home. Maybe it's time we all did a rethink and learnt that communal resources are collective resources and tried to be less casual about it all.

Aisa Bhi Hota Hai

THE CAG FILES

a MIDWEEK REPORT

The Animal Husbandry, Livestock, Fisheries & Veterinary Services Department [AHLF&VS] incurred wasteful expenditure of Rs. 24.65 lakh on pay and allowances of 44 employees engaged in three animal farms having no animals!

The Animal Husbandry Department maintains a number of farms for rearing of animals, of which the three farms at Chujachen [East], Ravangla [South] and Ralang [South] are under the

administrative control of East and South districts.

Audit noticed in August 2004 that none of these animal farms had any animals since 1999-2000, but the Department continued to deploy employees in these farms. Thus, due to non utilisation of their services a sum of Rs. 24.65 lakh incurred on their pay and allowances during the last five years was a total waste. The infrastructure available in these farms worth Rs. 52 lakh also remained unutilised.

In reply, the AHLF&VS stated in February 2005 that [i] Chujachen farm would be utilised as Backyard Poultry without further delay, [ii] Ravangla farm had started rearing cross-bred heifers and

reared 10 heifers, and, [iii] Ralang farm was proposed to be used for rearing bulls/calves after its handing over to Sikkim Livestock Development Board.

While the Department stated that it had initiated alternative activities for Ravangla farm as late as February 2004 the other two farms, Chujachen and Ralang, were not utilised for the purpose for which these were established, rendering the expenditure on pay and allowances of staff for the last five years wasteful.

What can we say to that? Three animal farms, 44 employees, a sum of over 24 lakhs spent on them and no animals. Yes, *Aisa Bhi Hota Hai*

Baba to 'retire'

a MIDWEEK REPORT

Baba Harbhajan Singh of Baba Mandir will 'retire' from active army services in December this year with full pension and other retirement benefits. According to a transit-warrant issued by the army, Baba, who left for his last official leave on 12 September earlier this month, will retire on 1 December, 2006.

According to legend, Harbhajan Singh, a soldier of the Punjab Regiment drowned in a glacier while escorting a column of mules to a remote outpost. He was found after three days and cremated with full military honours. It is believed that it was Harbhajan Singh himself who led the search party to his body, and later, through a dream, instructed one of his colleagues to build and maintain a shrine after him.

Today, venerated as Baba Harbhajan Singh, he is the presiding deity of the Nathula Brigade. Every soldier in the brigade pays his respect to 'Baba'. Every Sunday, a *langar* is organised at the temple. All the soldiers posted here believe they are blessed by the Baba, who looks after their well-being.

Legend also has it that in the

event of a war between India and China, Baba would warn the Indian and Chinese soldiers three days in advance. During the flag meetings between the two nations at Nathula, the Chinese set a chair aside for the saint. Every year on September 14, a jeep departs with his personal belongings to the nearest railway station, New Jalpaiguri, where it is then sent by train to the village of Kuka, in Kapurthala district in Punjab. A small sum is also sent to his mother each month.

But the name of Baba was recently dragged into courts in his home state Punjab. A petition has been filed in the Jalandhar District Court by Pyare Singh, a retired subedar of the Indian army stationed at Nathula and said to be a close relative of Baba. In his petition, Pyare Singh has accused the Indian army of propagating superstitious beliefs among the general public by venerating the name of Baba Harbhajan Singh and treating him like a live person. The court has issued a notice on the respondents to respond to the issues raised in the petition. The next date of hearing has been fixed for sometime in October this year.

Celebrations conclude at Holy Cross School

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: Sikkim can have a financially secure and independent next generation if collective efforts are made for the empowerment of youth with quality education and employable skills. This was said by BB Goroong, Chief Advisor to the CM, on 21 September during the concluding day function of the two daylong Sesqui Centennial Jubilee celebrations of the Holy Cross Congregation held here at the school auditorium.

Mr. Goroong, who was present as the chief guest on behalf of the Chief Minister, said that the rapid change the state had seen in the last three decades had been very disorienting for the youth and it was time these problems were recognised and tackled properly.

Several awareness initiatives are already underway to address problems such as growing substance abuse and escalating suicide rate in the state, he said, adding that the elders needed to get involved in the whole process and strengthen it with their support. He further stressed on the society's responsibility towards imbibing the right virtues, proper social responsibility and compassion in the youth.

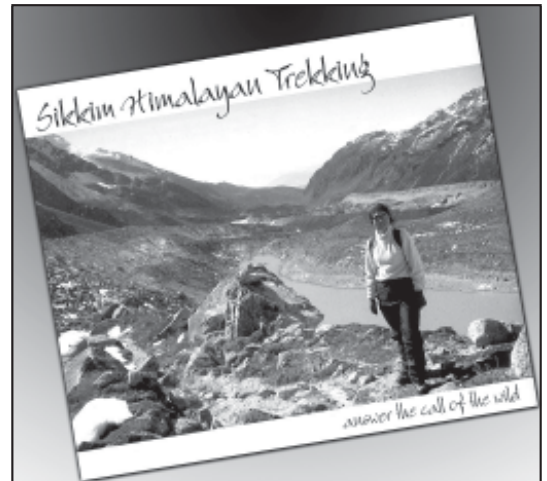
Lauding the Holy Cross School for having constantly worked toward imparting quality education to the children, Mr. Goroong said that the school had done well at distilling the treasures that textbooks hold into the minds of the youth, besides grooming them to be more responsible and compassionate citizens.

Speaking a day earlier as the

chief guest, Commissioner cum Secretary of the Commerce and Industries Department CL Denzongpa had congratulated the school on the occasion and had also lauded them for being conferred with the State National Award for Best School in Overall Performance for the year 2006.

During the function, Avika Tsherin Kaleon, Laden Ongmu Pakhrin, Sulochana Dahal, Sukriti Tiwari, Rabina Sherpa and Monica Pandey of Holy Cross School, Tadong, were also awarded the Ratna Pradhan Memorial Award for the Best Girl in School for the years 2000 to 2006.

The Sisters of Mercy of Holy Cross Congregation was established in Switzerland in 1856 by Father Theodisius and Mother Maria Schrer and the congregation arrived in India in 1894.



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Ani Deorali Runchha

34 years after it was first staged the play still connects with the audience

SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: After a gap of 30 years, theatre lovers of Gangtok were treated to a classic Nepali play, an experience that was quite unforgettable. For many, it was a trip down memory lane, having seen the play during their school or college days in Darjeeling; for the old timers it was nostalgia all the way.

"Ani Deorali Runchha" brought about a massive emotional deluge in the audience, who were left with a lump in their throats and varied emotions in the two days that the play was staged here at the Sikkim Government College auditorium on 25 - 26 September by the Indrakhill Natya Manch. The play was received with as much enthusiasm here as when it was first staged in Darjeeling.

The year was 1972. The theatre scenario in Darjeeling was alive and vibrant. A well-known playwright, theatre actor and director, Man Bahadur Mukhia had just finished writing a new play. Little did he realise at that time that his play would bring about a cultural revolution of sorts in the Darjeeling Hills and no Nepali-speaking individual would be left untouched by it.

Later that year, the Gorkha Dukh Niwarakh Sammelen (GDNS), a prominent social and literary organisation in Darjeeling staged the play, directed by Man Bahadur Mukhia himself. The response it received was unprecedented and overwhelming. "Ani



Photo: SARIKAH ATREYA

Deorali Runchha" ran for a record seven consecutive days to a packed house, making the play one of the most successful Nepali plays of all times.

The success of the play took the theatre scenario in the Darjeeling Hills to a new level altogether. Some critics even hailed it better than cinema of that time. Backed by a power packed performance by MB [as Man Bahadur Mukhia was fondly referred to by his peers] who played one of the pivotal characters himself, the play brought together some of the best known names in the Darjeeling theatre world. Well known actor and writer, P. Arjun, who played the central character of Randhoj, is still remembered for his powerful performance. Menuka Pradhan, another well-known actor and theatre personality from Darjeeling, was also part of the original cast. With classic music by Karma

Yonzan and lyrics by Durga Kharel, the songs of the play are heard and sung even today.

"Ani Deorali Runchha", with its performance and storyline and a perfect blend of emotions, romance and humour that every Nepali could relate to, had managed to strike an emotional chord in the heart of every Indian Nepalese in the Darjeeling Hills. Says poet and actor Kalu Singh Ranapaheli, who was also part of the original line-up of casts in the play, the play reached out to every section of the society. He even remembers the first Chief Minister of Sikkim, Kazi Lhendup Dorjee sitting in the audience and watching the play in Kalimpong in the 70s.

The essence of its success lay in its simple yet realistic story-telling and the powerful social message it carried with it. Written in chaste and rustic dialect spoken by the Nepalese of Nepal, the play depicted the struggle, the hopes and the aspirations of the marginalised sections of the Nepalese society of Nepal in the early 20th century. It depicts a society that is steeped in feudalism, with the landlords always ready to extract their pound of flesh from poverty-ridden villagers, often neck-deep in debt. It also portrays the fears and the hopelessness of the villagers whose poverty and deplorable lives has led them to pawn their lives away to the landlord. The poor villagers are oppressed by the landlord, who takes advantage of their illiteracy and

ignorance and demands his share in everything, including the firewood collected from the forests and the fodder for the cattle. Even the fish in the village river cannot be caught without the permission and equal share of the landlord and his ever-scheming and manipulating accountant. The appalling status of women and their several social constraints is also well depicted in the play. Moreover, the play also questions the validity of untouchability in the Nepalese Hindu society, steeped in the rigidity of the caste system.

The play also tries to comprehend the social and economic causes that forced the Nepalese from Nepal to migrate to India looking for a better alternative. It was common for villagers to flee to "Munglan" as India was called,

in search of a livelihood. It was also a means to escape the oppression and the debt-trap laid by the landlords.

Various aspects of the Nepalese cultural tradition, such as village weddings, Tihaar, Deosi and Bhai Tika are also well incorporated in the play. The emotional upheavals and the sense of rootlessness experienced by the villagers when forced to leave the land of their birth and everything they ever possessed, send a powerful message in the play.

Over the years, the play has been staged by different theatre groups and was last staged here in Gangtok some 30 years ago. Man Bahadur Mukhia also took the play to Nepal where it was received very well by the King then. Even after three decades, "Ani Deorali Runchha" remains an all time classic.

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a MIDWEEK Report

After monsoon ends and autumn begins, one of the biggest festivals of the year for Hindus and Nepalese Hindus in particular, is here. Just saying "Dasain" conjures up images of windy days and blue kite-dotted skies, new clothes, plenty to eat and family gatherings that bring the entire clan together.

During the month of Kartik in the Bikram Sambat calendar (late September and early October), Dasain is the longest and the most auspicious festival in the Nepalese annual calendar, celebrated by Nepalese of all caste and creed throughout the world. The fifteen days of celebration occurs during the bright lunar fortnight ending on the day of the full moon. Throughout the Hindu world the goddess Durga in all her manifestations is worshiped with innumerable pujas, abundant offerings and religious fervour. But, Dasain is no longer just a purely religious festival; it has over time become a cultural festival. The longest holiday of the year provides the perfect opportunity for family reunions, and a time to relax.

The first nine days of Dasain are called Nawaratri. Ghatasthapana, literally "pot establishing" marks the beginning of the festival. The *kalash*, water vessel is placed in the prayer room. A leaf plate filled with sand and covered with cow dung is shielded from the sun and placed in front of the image of the Durga. Barley seeds are sown onto the sand

Dasain Aayo Hai!

The significance of Vijaya Dashami and Dasain

block and water from the *kalash* is sprinkled on it to nurture the seeds everyday during the morning and evening puja. The ritual performed at a certain auspicious moment determined by the astrologers will provide the yellowish green seedling known as *jamara* considered a blessing of Durga and bestowed by elders atop the heads of those younger to them during the Tika.

From the days following Ghatasthapana to the seventh day pujas are offered everyday and regular rituals performed. The life force is embodied in the divine energy and power of the female, depicted as goddess Durga in her many forms. All goddess who emanated from goddess Durga are known as Devis, each with different aspects and powers. In most mother goddess temples the deity is represented simply as a sacred Kalash, carved water jug or multiple handed goddess holding murderous weapons. During these nine days people pay their homage to the goddess. If she is properly worshiped and pleased good fortunes are on the way and if angered through neglect then misfortunes are around the corner. Mother goddess is the

source of life and everything.

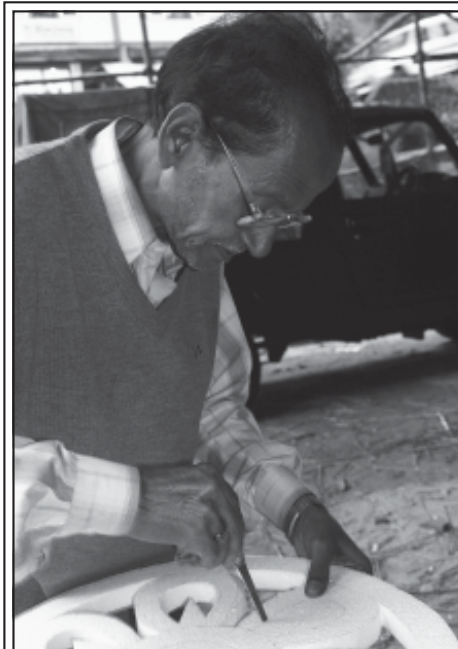
As days passes by regular rituals are observed till the seventh day. The seventh day is called 'Fulpati'. In Fulpati, the *kalash* filled with holy water, banana stalks, *jamara* and sugar cane tied with red cloth is carried by Brahmans on a decorated palanquin under a gold tipped and embroidered umbrella, led by dancing and singing cultural

troops across the town. With the end of the Fulpati procession, the Dasain feasting starts.

Maha Asthami or the eighth day of the festival is the day when the goddesses Durga and Kali have to be appeased. The night of the eighth day is called Kal Ratri, the dark night Animal sacrifices of buffalo, goat, sheep, chicken and duck are made.

The ninth day is called 'Nawami'. On this day the god Vishwas Karma, the God of creativity is also worshiped. All factories, vehicles, any machinery instruments and anything from which we make a living are worshiped.

After ten long days the battle is over and victory has been achieved, good prevail over evil. The tenth day is the 'Dashami'. The day elders put *jamara* and *tika* upon the foreheads of those younger and bless them. The importance of Dasain also lies in the fact that this day brings family members and relatives from far and wide to receive *tika* from the head of the family. *Tika* continues for four days and in the last day people stay at home and rest.



Midweek Photographs

The Decorator

65 year old D N Burman has been putting up and decorating the pandal here at the Sarbojanin Durga Puja Celebrations in Development Area for the last 18 years. Proprietor of Jay Guru Decorators in Champasari in West Bengal, he has been in the business for 25 years now and has been decorating the pandal himself in Gangtok since 1988, meticulously cutting out the styrofoam sheets into floral designs and insignias with his steady hands.

MIDWEEK

Vol. 1 No. 4

It's a shame

Last year nearly 2, 68,000 tourists visited Sikkim. This year the figure is expected to cross over 3 lakhs. Sikkim can now boast of being one of the more popular destinations of Eastern India with the State Tourism Department assiduously promoting the state with the slogan 'Small but Beautiful'. Is it really so? What do we offer the tourists who spend good money to come here? Let us just focus on our capital town for a moment. And our roads. The basic infrastructure required to travel. The first impression a tourist gets as he gets down from the vehicle at the private taxi stand is of a severely damaged and broken road. If he has the misfortune of having to travel the one way DPH lane to wherever his hotel is, he will be assured of a bone rattling adventurous ride along the dirty crater filled road. Nearly every arterial road in the capital is in the same state of disrepair. Many are in such a sad state it is difficult to believe they belong to a state capital. There is really no point in trying to emulate Switzerland or Singapore when we have the basics so very wrong. How hard can it really be to fix the roads once and for all? The government's priorities are a little misplaced, perhaps. We build huge statues and bhawans, spend a whole lot of money on many other things, so the constant refrain of not having funds for road repair is beginning to wear thin now. We can blame the public for lack of civic sense, for dumping garbage in the *jhoras* and not keeping the town 'Litter and Spit Free'. But the onus of providing good roads has to fall on the government. One excuse for the constant 'repairing' that our roads go through is given to the bad weather, in this case the rain. We are told the contractors do not get time to complete the strengthening period, with the water acting as a lubricant and not letting the tar set in. But why is it that all 'repair' work happens either just before the monsoons or during it. Winter, some would suggest, would be an ideal time. Fact is that collusion between contractors and others ensures that 'road repair' always stays a work in progress. Good navigable roads is the right of every citizen of the capital and of every visitor who spends money to come here.

It is time the State Government turned this into a priority area.

Note from the publisher

Dear readers,

It's been quite a time for us at MIDWEEK since its inception earlier this month. The Dasain break offers us an opportunity both for reflection and looking ahead. We set out with certain objectives, some we have managed to achieve, others we've had to keep aside for now. We are not ashamed to admit that we're high on ideals and low on funds but that's a choice we have made. It's the only one that allows us to remain independent, our loyalty only to our readers.

We take this opportunity to thank all those who have lent their support to this venture. Our readers, who have regularly bought the paper and kept us encouraged with their letters and calls, as well as all the advertisers who have shown faith in us in our early days.

A beginning has been made - let us now journey together and create a platform from which every voice can be heard. Let us make this truly a People's Paper.

MIDWEEK will be back on the stands on Wednesday, 11 October.

Happy Dasain!

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A Cry from Dzongu

Dzongu, the homeland of the Lepchas and a restricted area, is a place of much historical importance. However, since the past couple of months, the area has been in the news for all the wrong reasons. We are the citizens of the biggest democracy in the world yet the current ongoing activities in Dzongu are far from democratic.

Our protest against the proposed hydel power projects are not against national interest. We are simply exercising our right to protect our motherland, culture and traditions. We, the Lepchas, are already categorised as the 'Vanishing Tribe' and the tribe is on the verge of extinction. Though the government should be taking effective measures to protect the aboriginals, its policies are going quite the other way.

The place, which is known for its peaceful environment, abundant natural resources and

places of religious significance, today stands threatened by these proposed hydel power projects. Today when all the developed countries in the world are according top priority to environment protection, here we are heading towards the opposite direction. Dzongu is very rich in forests, flora and fauna, and various endangered aquatic life thrive in its rivers. And it is the government's duty to safeguard these very resources from going extinct.

Public hearing is not for public to listen to speeches from the authorities; it is an opportunity for the public to express their opinion regarding pertinent issues affecting them. Unfortunately, the public hearing held here recently was not conducted properly and it went completely against the democratic procedures of public hearing.

If the government is intent

on carrying on the project in Dzongu, then the people here have a few questions. What does a restricted area mean? What is Article 371 F of the Constitution of India all about? What is environment protection? What is public hearing? Why did the government not make an effort to ask the people of Dzongu if they actually wanted the projects to be carried out in their area? What importance does the opinions of the minority hold in a democracy?

It is my appeal to all the people of Sikkim to lend their support to the people of Dzongu in their attempt to save their land. Dzongu might be divided into two if the project is carried ahead. Ultimately, no one is going to win, but most importantly, it is the Lepcha community of Dzongu who will be the biggest losers.

Gyatso Tongden

BALANCED BUT FOR SUPERNOVA

First of all congrats guys for this effort. Midweek is actually bringing back the pleasures of reading through the week. Your paper seems to be doing a nice job of balancing good reports with some trivial ones. My gang of pals enjoy reading Midweek but... don't take it to your hearts we are very surprised to see this overdose of Supernova or whatever that reality show is called. Hey, how many of us in Gangtok actually watch that show? And what makes it so important that you carry the report for three issues? And that too you filled up the whole youth page with that? Hey, Midweek rock fans, we do not think that an average Sikkimese

is interested in what a bunch of old rockers from dozed out rock bands want. We sincerely think that this did not merit a whole youth page when there are more important and more interesting issues that concern the youth. We would rather know about what is happening in Sikkim -

local talents, bands, NGOs, government policies, young achievers etc than Supernova. Did you guys in Midweek run out of story ideas? Wake up guys... understand what we really need. Today.

Karma and Friends,
True Sikkimese at hearts!

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for your critical and useful inputs on the Official Website of the Government of Sikkim in your article titled "What we love about the Official website of the Government of Sikkim". We are making the necessary corrections. Please do not hesitate to let us know of any other discrepancies.

Rajesh Verma, Director
Dept of Info.Tech.
Govt of Sikkim

OLD WINE

Midweek is nothing but old wine in new bottle. C'mon guys do something new.

Rohit Pradhan, Gangtok

CONGRATULATIONS

I must say that I love it. It is every much readable, as in - one enjoys the write ups while reading them - without putting any effort into it. Congrats!

Jarina Tingbo
received
over email

Contemplating Suicide

The 1999 data for suicide rates in the country give the incidence of suicides in Sikkim at 19.7 per 1 lakh population. The data is old, but since it speaks in percentages, the trend should hold true even today. As per the 1999 study, Sikkim ranks fourth in the list of states with high suicide rates. Above it are Karnataka with 24.18, Tripura, 25.2 and Kerala, 30.48. At a recent awareness programme at a local school, a psychiatrist informed that Sikkim ranks second in the nation in suicide rate figures. This is definitely a societal trend that needs to be stemmed; a problem that needs to be addressed.

It would be too simplistic to suggest that suicides are a recent trend in Sikkim. Given that most psychoanalysts here believe that the high number of suicides result from untreated cases of depression and other mental ailments, it would be inadvisable to argue that suicides are a recent phenomena. In all probability, suicide rates have always been high in Sikkim, but it is perhaps only now that it is attracting concern since the improved modes of communication and information available in the State see to it that news of a suicide reaches a wider audience now. It would thus be more advisable to accept that Sikkim's suicide rate has become a matter of concern only now because it gets reported in newspapers more regularly and the numbers present a trend that is too disturbing to ignore. This consistent coverage of suicides has had the desired effect. Not a week passes anymore without an awareness programme against suicides in schools

FRINGE BENEFIT

PEMA WANGCHUK

or panchayats. This approach is well advised as it covers both, the grassroots and the age-group where a positive change to inculcate more respect for life is most possible.

These, however, are essentially short-term measures. Of course they are required because something needs to be done on an urgent basis, but if the problem has to be addressed and resolved more effectively, then a more detailed action plan will be required. For starters, Sikkim will need to identify, scientifically, why so many people all over the State decide to take their lives. It is accepted that the decision to commit suicide is not of a stable mind, but there are too many factors at play in a person's life to establish mental illness as the only, or even the leading cause for suicides. What about the role of the society? Since people lead their lives and make their decisions with one eye on societal acceptance, does not a high number of suicide cases suggest the weakening of the society's role? While admitting that suicide rates are a complicated issue and individual cases have their own triggering causes, we focus on one of the aspects here – the deterrent effect that a strong society could play.

It needs no emphasis that suicide is a social problem. Not only does it reflect poorly on the social

net that secures individuals, it also generally ends lives at their most productive stage, at times even earlier. Suicide in itself may be an individual act, but is essentially a result of social factors which surround an individual. Several people contemplate suicide at various stages in their lives. Only few actually commit it. When more and more people start doing so, it should become cause for worry.

The society's role in preventing suicides has been accepted by most religions which have not only universally tabooed suicides as a sin, but some have even put in place 'punishment' for the one who takes his or her own life. The intent behind such 'punishment' is not so much to actually 'punish' the dead person, but more so to discourage the rest of the believers from taking the same course. This approach also spreads responsibility among the people to save those at risk of ending their own lives and involves the whole community in the ensuring psychological comfort for all its members. The social stigma attached to suicides is an effective deterrent, but for this stigma to remain a deterrent, the society has to remain involved with the individual. If it is not involved, then it won't notice, and if does not notice, there will be no stigma and no fear of damnation and one more reason less to decide against self destruction. Social scientists have argued that the strongest contributor to an increase in the number of suicides is the deregulation of society, a normlessness that comes

- continued on page 16

Dear Musharraf Bin Laden

Hi folks, I'm back from good old Dilli once more with some more you know what to dish out! The state of the capital reflects the state of the nation and Dilli is going from bad to worse. Let's look at the Army shall we... the heroic defenders of our frontiers. There is a buzz doing the rounds that the Defence Headquarters in Delhi may soon become a channel exclusively dishing out soap operas. After the recce into this hitherto unknown territory by the wife of the Chief of Army intelligence and in which the Army chief's wife too was, 'strategically' involved, the covert operation climaxed in an unimaginably exotic shoot at strategic locations (from which us common citizens are banished), not to mention breathtaking chopper shots over some sensitive spots as an added bonus! Though the whole, 'encounter' (for lack of a better word), did produce a film, I unfortunately cannot tell you if it was a box office bonanza. Intelligence, 'moles', within the Army HQ tell me that the whole charade of initial criticism and scorn in the Government and Media on the issue was in effect a meticulously planned covert operation by Military intelligence and Bollywood in the desi version of George Bush Bhai's super duper hit, Shock and Awe in Eyerag! A, 'depthroat', in the deep in you know what US administration told me that he was inspired by, once again our homegrown Dawood Bhai who excels

at the job. That's why the film, which one Al Qaeda spy reasonably high up in the ranking...oops casting order told me was titled, 'Love in Kargil', is now top top secret; which is why poor me hasn't seen it as yet. But what I have seen is far more interesting as espionage is a double edged sword, isn't it, and I have the advantage of being on both sides. For starters the mole got his plum character artiste role in the film and also an entry into a restricted but accessible and expansive studio currently under construction in South Block at the furious pace in which operations were conducted in the now countrywide famous, 'Extract Prince' operation that I mentioned in my last piece. He handed over to military intelligence, copies of a French intelligence report procured for him by the Qaeda cell in Paris, which had in turn been copied from photocopies provided by Saudi intelligence reports secretly copied by alert Saudi intelligence officers from the original document tucked away in a safe at the printing press of a distant relative of Bin Laden. The contents of the document, a letter from Osama to his relative are quite cryptic... and revealing.

(Text of letter translated into English from original Arabic handwriting)

Dear Musharraf Bin Laden

I am no longer in the world of the living. Bush bhai and his motley cohorts have killed me so many times over and may the curse of Allah be upon them! (##\$\$\$@#). That is why I voluntarily discontinued my dialysis and am writing to you from heaven where I was*



received with great gusto by Atta of 9/11 fame. Though a distant relative, you are closest to my heart and I therefore anoint you my successor. Inshaallah you too will secure your place in the annals of history by rubbing the infidel Bhai Bush off the face of the earth! This alongwith your heroic admission of the use of the, 'jihad' doctrine applied in the Kargil misadventure in your soon to be (in)famous book, 'In The Line of Fire', will surely result in immortality and Allah be praised. But beware of the wily Sardar Mannu at Geneva where I suspect he may put you in a bind, because there is a crafty infidel woman behind this successful Man (no pun intended!) Just be tight lipped for a change and all will be well. I have asked the Al Jazeera friends to telecast the funeral footage they shot at a time which coincides with your attaining the coveted title of Bhai Musharraf that even Generals and Presidents don't enjoy and to point the world focus to

my worthy successor.

I eagerly await your arrival at the pearly gates.

*Your onetime foe and current mentor
Osama*

It is this incriminating, 'evidence', that has led to the forming of a Channel called, 'Fauji' (Inspired by the legendary King Khan's soap), I hear, to redraw the battle strategy now that the Top gun is no more for sure. One division each has been allocated to the jobs of direction, production, cinematography, editing and research for possible story ideas. What's more, Bhai Bush has also assured Manu of support from the Hollywood industry. The strategy is simple...bomb the sods with so much of the opiate of the masses that guns can be then dispensed with as a rockin enemy would agree to anything and everything that Sonu and Manu dear propose on the Western Front! Well, I must say that it is a masterstroke as well, a first in military strategy and like in the case of Manu dear success is assured because of the now savvy spouses of the Army top brass who are all jumping into the act posthaste. I shall reveal further tantalizing exposes on this breaking story as soon as I connect with a talking rhesus monkey, Mian Nawaz Sharif, who is a, 'loose canon operative' out to get Musharraf Bin Laden and bounces in and out of South block every now and then when he visits from Saudi Arabia.

Until the next skirmish then folks.
Maddy

MANGALBAREY

On the road to development



P J PRADHAN

In the mid-1930s, Mangalbarey was a small sleepy village with hardly any development in the area worth writing home about. The area comprised of around five villages with about 100 houses and was covered with dense forest infested with ferocious wild animals. Lack of road connectivity, communication and water supply were the major problems stunting the development of this area. Some elderly folks say this village in West Sikkim was like a desert.

Despite this, the place was famous for its gambling and local wrestling matches that were hosted every week. Since the area was remote and people could not afford to visit it every day, they decided Tuesdays would be the day for merrymaking. Perhaps, Mangalbarey derives its name from this practice.

Seeing that people had started flocking to this area once every Tuesday to participate in these activities, some women folk of the area took this opportunity to sell sweet potatoes, *simal tarul*, and home brewed alcohol. Taking a cue from these local women, other traders started following suit and started doing brisk business.

The village took its first tiny steps towards development in 1940 under the initiative of late SL Dawa Kazi, the landlord of the entire area and Mangalbarey's pioneer in education. He established a primary school in the area, which was later recognised by

the government; encouraged traders to supply essential items and groceries to the area among whom M/S CD Ruchhinbong & Sons were the foremost; and even donated land for the construction of many structures that are today the important landmarks of Mangalbarey. Today, there are four fast food counters, three PCOs, three grocers, four tailors, one haircutting salon, a laundry and even a luxury resort named The Bliss Resort.

However, the area witnessed significant developments only after Sikkim became the 22nd state of India. Electricity made its debut in the area in 1990, a three kilometre road linking Mangalbarey to the rest of the state was constructed in 1996, and telephone exchange was established in 1998. The parched area got its biggest relief when provision for regular water supply was made under the direction of minister PS Goley.

Probably the biggest scandal in the area was reported in 1972 when 13 valuable statues were stolen from the oldest monastery at Rinchey. However, after the establishment of a Police Department here, no major crime has been reported from Mangalbarey. Besides its excellent records on law and order, many government departments are functioning here efficiently, which is something not every small town can boast of.

Even in the field of education, sports and extra curricular activities, Mangalbarey has a good track

record. It has three government and two private schools, which boast of excellent football players. The girl footballers have already become the state champions and four of them have already been selected to represent Sikkim in the nationals. These players are selected and groomed by chief coach Palden Bhutia who also runs a hostel which provides accommodation to these talented girl footballers.

Besides sports, students from Mangalbarey Government Senior Secondary School have won the state-level patriotic song competition and

already have two Nepali audio albums under their belt. The credit for this accomplishment goes to the collective efforts of the students and Siddarth Yonzon, a PGT in the school.

Another academic institution that has proved itself worthy of praise is Springdale Academy. Established in 2000, the school today has 244 students. Apart from its focus on providing quality education, the school lays equal stress on extracurricular activities, including dance and music. Trained under Mrs. Sujata Rai, an excellent choreographer, the students are regularly invited to

perform during various events both within the state and outside, including the famous Darjeeling Carnival.

The legacy of late SL Dawa Kazi, who had initiated various developmental activities in the area, is today being continued by Dr TR Gyatso, former Principal Secretary of the Health Department, who has shown his commitment towards promoting any cause worth undertaking. It is with the persistent hard work and dedication of such people that Mangalbarey has evolved from a sleepy village to a rapidly developing town.

SRC to finally get a proper water supply system

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Though lack of a proper water supply system is one of the problems being faced by Sikkim Rehabilitation Centre since its inception, this might soon change with some direct intervention from the Sports and Youth Affairs Minister PS Tamang. Further, the centre may also get a grant from the department under the National Service Scheme.

The assurance came from the minister himself during the function held at the centre on 21 September to mark the foundation day of its female wing where he was present as the chief guest. The minister assured he would raise the need for

a proper water supply system with the concerned authorities besides providing the rehab a grant from his department for its laudable work.

The female wing has, till date, treated around 28 patients. Among them, 17 have successfully completed their four and a half month-long treatment programme and are living a 'clean' healthy life, nine are currently undergoing the programme and only three have opted out.

During the function, it was informed by Karma Chewang Nima, project director of the centre, that of the discharged female patients, 41.11 per cent

were still clean. He further added that apart from rehabilitating those abusing drugs or alcohol, the centre had also taken up the challenge of containing HIV/AIDS.

Since its establishment at Nimtar in 2002, the rehab has treated 548 people, of which 411 were discharged after successful completion of the rehabilitation programme. Its high success rate in rehabilitation of addicts has today patients from Nepal, Bhutan, West Bengal, North Eastern states and other parts of the country checking into the rehab for treatment.

Meet Nagina Shah, 51. He wakes up every morning at about 4 and begins his daily grind. His daily regime that completes the picture of growing up in Gangtok. His morning predicament which becomes the genesis of hundreds of jokes and tell-tales everyday, the staple snack for numerous teenage romances, something that has provided respite from the bitter chill of winter for as long as we remember, something that is to Gangtok what hotdog is to America.

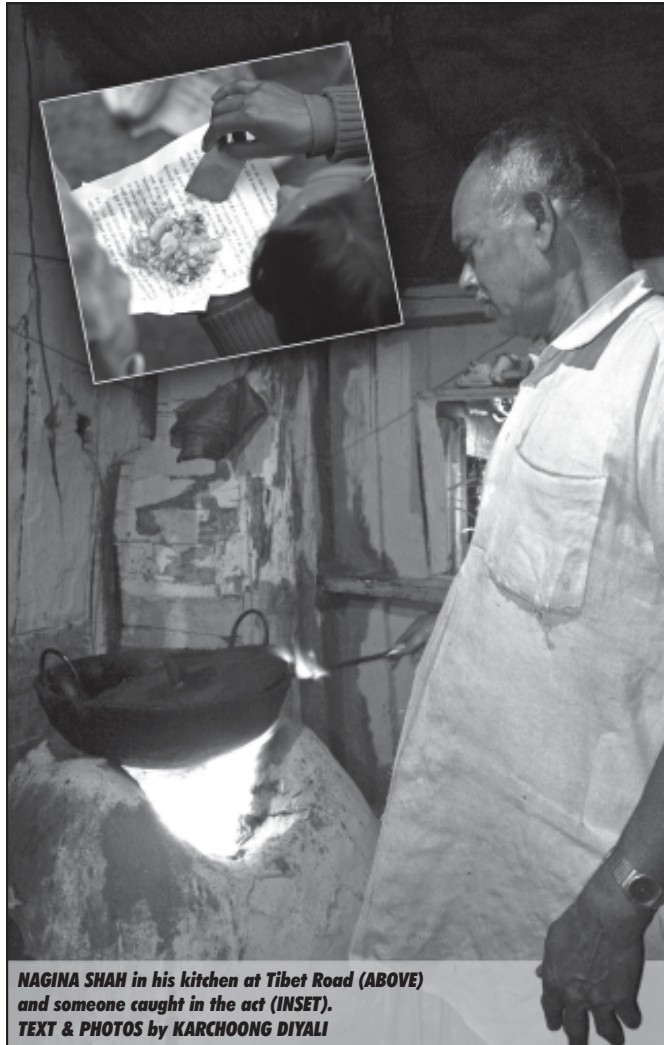
This is not Nagina's story though. It is the story of *Aloo Chewra*, without which the Gangtokian palate is not complete.

"My father Narayan Shah who is 95 now and *SNT ko Bajey Chanawala*, who is no more, were the first *chanawalas* to sell *aloo chewra* in Sikkim," says Nagina. "He used to sell *aloo chewra* during Chogyal Sir Tashi Namgyal's time. Those days I remember I used to run around naked in this same establishment (at Tibet Road) while horses and mules used to stop by for some snacks here," he runs out of breath, excited.

It has been 40 years now and Nagina stirs the same 'tried-n-tasted' recipe every morning on the huge earthen hearth. He says that *aloo chewra* was not something that was brought over to Sikkim from somewhere else. It happened here, with whatever was available in town those days. It was a recipe that his father and *bajey chanawala* cooked up, and the Sikkimese took to it like flies.

He added that back then it was a novelty of sorts. *Chanawalas* were stationed at West Point school (now Pay & Accounts Office) near the Masjid, Higher Secondary (now Tashi Namgyal Academy) and Paljor Namgyal Girls School and gathering around the *chanawala* was not just a phenomenon restricted to the students, almost all the townfolks used to be there. "LD Kazi le ta dus dus paisa ko *aloo chewra*

GANGTOK'S UBIQUITOUS ALOO CHEWRA



NAGINA SHAH in his kitchen at Tibet Road (ABOVE) and someone caught in the act (INSET).
TEXT & PHOTOS by KARCHOONG DIYALI

khanuhunthyo tyo zamaana ma." (LD Kazi used to have 10 paisa worth of *aloo chewra* everytime he was around those days).

Since then, lots of other *chanawalas* have come about and added newer items (like '5-star mix' which means a mix of five different *chanas*) to the old menu and even fastfood parlours have adopted the *aloo chewra* in their menu but Nagina feels this has not harmed his business at all. "The amount of *chana* I used to sell earlier, I still sell the same today (West Point). The number of consumers have increased, hence the number of vendors must increase too. And regarding the fastfood parlours and restaurants, people tell us that they don't taste as good as our *aloo chewra*," he smirks.

And how could it? It doesn't come wrapped in the pages of somebody's biology notebook, the definition of chlorophyll smudging away under the scoop cut-out from the Bata shoe box while the *chanawala* squeezes the last drops of lemon with his soaked fingers (nails lined with turmeric).

Nagina has a son and four daughters. His daughters are studying and will be married off eventually and his son is also studying. In a sad tone he says that he will continue till he can and that nobody knows what fate has in store for his son. Whether he will continue with his studies or...

CLOSING LINES: "Sir, yo sabai kura haru paper ma aayo bhaney kehi problem ta hundaina hola? Yasailey hamro jeevika chali raheko chha, kehi problem bhayo bhane tah!" he is worried. (Sir, I hope this article you are talking about will not create any problems. This is the only source of livelihood for us, if anything happens..)

Well, does anyone have any problems with *aloo chewra*? Does anyone have any problems with something that has bred and raised generations of healthy Gangtokians for so long?

Vegetable HAMBURGER anyone?

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Defeat of the jokers

Maloy Krishna Dhar, an Intelligence Operator was sent to Sikkim by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) after the 'merger' of Sikkim with India in May 1975 to look after the internal and counter intelligence functions. In his book *Open Secrets: India's Intelligence Unveiled*, Dhar offers an insider's view on prominent people and events of the time.



EXCERPTS FROM THE CHAPTER PEOPLE'S VICTORY - DEFEAT OF THE JOKERS

I returned to Gangtok from a short stint of a holiday in the southern peninsula, on January 23, 1977, after receiving a message from the IB that I should get back to my station after cutting short my holidaying... Back in Sikkim the Kazi government and the Congress Party were not in the best of health. The contentious issue of citizenship and Sikkim subject had brought to the fore the latent communal bitterness that existed between the numerically superior Nepalis and the politically superior Bhutias and Lepchas. In his heart of hearts Kazi was not in favour of granting citizenship to all and sundry Nepali settlers and he was keen to go by the letter and spirit of Sikkim Subject Register.

Narbahadur Khatiwada had raised his voice in favour of Nepali rights even when he enjoyed the confidence of Kazi. His Nepali proclivities had also alienated Kazini Eliza Maria. But Khatiwada used his Youth Congress plank to advocate the Nepali cause

The ambience of merger-romance was over and the forces of disintegration had started cutting out new furrows

more than any other Nepali politician did. But the dazzling spark of Sikkim's revolution had other things in mind.

Little before Jagjivan Ram reneged against Indira, Kazi called me to his office and wanted my opinion on accommodating Khatiwada in his cabinet. The idea was not new. But Khatiwada was an anathema to RC Paudyal, BP Dahal and even SK Rai, a party stalwart. They were opposed to his induction to the cabinet and their efforts were fortified by some of the bureaucrats on deputation, against whom Khatiwada had spoken vociferously. I supported the idea and advised Kazi that by inducting Khatiwada he could

My human assets informed me that 11 legislators of Kazi's Janata Party, including four ministers were on the verge of defecting and toppling the government

avert an impending split in the party. I sent a report to Delhi on my discussions with Kazi and also kept the Governor posted.

However, Eliza Maria and some of the cabinet colleagues prevented Kazi from doing so. I was given to understand that the Governor too was opposed to the idea. After a couple of days of the formation of Congress for Democracy by Jagjivan Ram, Narbahadur Khatiwada dropped in at my residence well after midnight and informed that he was quitting Congress to join the new party floated by Jagjivan Ram. He was in touch with Ram's son Suresh and

few other rebel Congress leaders. I was not concerned with his political decision. My concern was the professional link that I had assiduously built up for over last two years. We maintained our relationship strictly on professional basis and his political somersault did not affect my performance. But the irrepressible police commissioner, who had mounted surveillance on Khatiwada, was not happy over my links with the stormy petrel. He summoned me to his office and demanded a clarification. I was aghast over the audacious attitude. Khurana was a drunken blob. But I was surprised to see that he had lost his professional sanity too. I returned after giving a curt reply that my relationship with my professional friends did not come under his policing jurisdiction.

The ambience of merger-romance was over and

the forces of disintegration had started cutting out new furrows. Some of them were in touch with the directionless and unfocussed leaders of the Janata conglomerate. The former Chogyal had started reshuffling his cards with great care. I was not capable to sit on judgement on the correctness or otherwise of the merger of Sikkim. I was not the instrument either to undo what the political leadership did in 1974-75. I was there in Sikkim as an instrument of the government of India to generate intelligence on the security ambience of the newly merged state and to perform counter intelligence operations along the Chinese borders. Having sensed that Delhi had lost its bearings I kept myself confined to honest reporting. But the high drama of political instability reached the apex around the Deepavali day of 1977. My human assets informed me that 11 legislators of Kazi's Janata Party, including four ministers were on the verge of defecting and toppling the government. Their plan included two vital aspects: formation of an alternative government and passing a majority resolution demanding annulment of the 'deceitful merger of Sikkim' with India. Some pro-Chogyal elements had started spreading rumours that once the State Assembly annulled the merger the new sovereign Sikkim would be recognized

by a few international powers. The illiterate people of Sikkim were misled by such whispering campaign. I shared the information with Delhi and Calcutta and waited for instructions. Nothing came.

Around 7 pm. I received a call from the Raj Bhawan and was advised to see the Governor immediately. Governor BB Lal was already seated in his ornate office room and was in the process of discussing the matter of political instability with Davy Manavalan. I was promptly ushered in and on demand from the Governor I shared with him the precise intelligence that I had. I also told him that about 12 legislators were herded together at a secret place in the capital. It was a sort of 'action camp' to motivate the legislators and to finalize the rough edges of portfolio allocation and distribution of moneybags. The governor summoned the police commissioner for rescuing the 'camped' legislators. I requested him not to compel me to discuss the delicate matter in front of the police chief. But he insisted that I share the complete information with Khurana. I had to give in.

[Excerpted with permission]

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China to lift restrictions on travel to Tibet



S K SARMA

Since the reopening of Nathula on 6 July 2006, Sikkim Chamber of Commerce has been urging the Indian Government to influence the Chinese government to waive the Special Permit requirements for foreigners visiting the Tibet Region of China. Communications in this regard were also sent to Commerce Ministry, Government of

India. Recently, when His Excellency, the Vice President of India was in Sikkim, a delegation of the chamber met the Vice President and submitted a memorandum which among other things also dealt on this subject.

On 12 September, 2006, the Chinese government announced that travel to Tibet will be eased on 1 October when the Chinese government

will no longer require foreign tourists to have special permits to enter the highest region on Earth, according to Wu Jilie, vice-chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional government. The government in Tibet will waive existing travel restrictions and open more areas of Tibet for tourism, the government official told journalists in Lhasa on the day.

"With an eye on flooding the roof of the world with tourist dollars, China is moving to scrap a strict entry regime for Tibet and make it easier for visitors to come in with a single Chinese visa," a top government official said. In the next decade, several billion dollars are to be invested into Tibet, that will include links to India, Nepal and into western Tibet.

It is worth mentioning here that visitors to Tibet have to apply for a Special Entry Permit which is obtainable from the Foreign Office at Beijing. The Chinese Embassy in India issues Visas but does not issue Special Entry Permit for Tibet. The Indian tourists have to reach Mainland China on a visa and again after reaching Mainland have to apply for a Special Entry Permit for Tibet Autonomous Region.

Prior to 1980, the Chinese required rigorous physical exams of all passengers prior to boarding their flight to Lhasa. Since then, however, this requirement has been waived for many groups. But visitors with high blood pressure, or any respiratory or heart ailments, are advised to

attend to the risks and reconsider their travel plans.

Meanwhile, on 23 September, 2006 at 8.28 a.m. the first train T264 from Guangzhou, the capital of China's southeast Guangdong Province to Lhasa sold the first ticket priced at 451 Yuan. Along with the ticket, passengers are being provided a register card of personal health conditions and a handbook of travel tips to the Tibet Plateau. According to current regulations, overseas passengers shall present Tibet entry permission authorized by government before boarding the train, says China Tibet information Centre.

Once the relaxation is formally withdrawn on 1 October 2006, Indian tourists with visa can visit TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region). It is not yet clear whether the Chinese will allow Indians to enter Tibet via Nathula or any other Indian land frontier.

It is interesting to note that there is no way to fly direct between Beijing and New Delhi on any Chinese or Indian carrier; the only way to do so is on Ethiopian Airlines. It is likely that at the first instance China may allow entry into Tibet by air from any Indian airport and later may allow for entry through land frontiers. But as it appears, the Chinese government is very keen to develop Tibet and wants tourists to visit Tibet so that it can raise the economy there.

[SK Sarma is the President of Sikkim Chamber of Commerce]

PARAGLIDING IN SIKKIM

Flying high in the sky

R S SHRESTA

Ever since the beginning of time, man has dreamt of flying independently. Flight, as we know it, was a fantasy possible only in dreams or in myths, a glorious example being the flight of Icarus. No longer - we now have new method of taking to the air with the help of latest technology with low cost and simplicity to make the reality of flight accessible to everyone. Paragliders and Hang-gliders have made all these possible and brought about cherished flying within the reach of common people.

We fly through invisible fluid [air] that must be understood in order to thoroughly know and limitations of flying wings to gain control. Understanding this, his skills yearn for flying higher and further entering new realms, where the dreams come true.

A comparatively new sport in India - it actually appeared in this country in 1991. Sikkim had a taste experimenting paragliding and hang-gliding very recently. In Himachal Pradesh, which plays a leading role in the field, it was introduced only in 1994 after Roshan Lal Thakur from Manali acquired some skill in flying from foreign pilots often visiting Manali as tourists, reports the official government website on Bilaspur. Experts do not think joyriding a serious paragliding. They want to bring it to people as a sport and want people to know what paragliding is. It is an amazing feeling up there, they share the experience.

Paragliding is often confused with hang gliding. Paragliders are non-powered air, 12 to 15 kg, and can be carried in a backpack to any flyable site. A paraglider is lighter than a hang

glider [which usually weighs about 55 kg] is easier to launch and manoeuvre, and only requires a good slope for launching. It is made of Nylon cloth, reinforced and polyurethane coated to make it non porous. It is inflated and maintained purely by the movement of air across 'sits' below the wing, in a harness that is connected to the wing by suspension. He steers by pulling on one of two lines, known as brake lines. A paraglider takes less effort to unpack or to dismantle than a hang glider as it weighs only about 12 kg, is slower flying, softer landing, and generally much easier to handle and to learn.

Hang Gliders too are non-powered aircraft that weigh more and are bulkier. They are fixed wing aircraft and take more time to rig up and dismantle. Being bulky they can not be carried by one person of a car but need to be strapped onto the roof of a vehicle. The pilot lies in and maneuvers with the help of a bar that he holds in-flight. Hang Gliders and paragliders, being rigid, can consequently take off in stronger wind conditions.

An engine-less glider in which power is provided by the pilot's legs, a hang glider is a light, portable piece of equipment consisting of an aluminium frame fitted with a parachute. Additional

equipment required includes a harness, a safety belt and a helmet. The pilot takes off on a hang glider by running down a slope, ideally at an angle of about 40°, until the glider's stalling speed, of between 15 and 3 kmph, is crossed. Alternately, a hang glider can be launched from a plane or

helicopter.

Since the Himalayas offer immense scope for paragliding for joyride and as an adventure sports for tourists as well, it could be as well a good new avenue for self-employment to the youth in Sikkim. Arrangements are being made to send our youths for a complete course in paragliding at Manali in Himachal Pradesh next month. Depending upon their individual aptitude and capacity in the five-day basic course, some will be taken for the intermediate course for the next seven days and a very few of them finally for the advance course of 20 days.

A candidate should preferably be a graduate and free from asthma and cardiac disease, with his physical fitness certified by a government doctor and his life duly insured. He should also undergo this training at his own risk. The cost of journey, stay and training is paid by the government as a part of the recently announced capacity building programme under the Sports and Youth Affairs Department. Efforts are being made to send two candidates from each constituency. Concerned MLAs have been requested to send the names of interested and willing youth from their constituencies by 10 October, 2006. Once the successful trainee returns home, he should be in a position to train other interested youth in his area and establish himself as an entrepreneur.

Further course for flying experience is available for solo paragliding as adventure sports and tandem paragliding [2-seater] for joyride as well.

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SCA drags BCCI to court

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Following what the Sikkim Cricket Association calls Board of Cricket Control in India's indifference towards its various long-pending legitimate demands, SCA has filed a petition in the High Court of Sikkim against BCCI and its president, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar. The petition demands

the SCA, which is till now only an associate member of BCCI, be granted full-fledged membership.

The High Court, following the filing of the petition, has issued notices to the BCCI, its President as well as the board's General Secretary Niranjn Shah.

During its hearing on 19 September, SCA contended that all its repeated requests

for a full-fledged membership had been ignored by the BCCI for far too long. This, the association said, had resulted in not only SCA losing out on its voting rights to the BCCI elections, funds for infrastructure development and other benefits but local cricketers were also not getting a chance to play first class cricket at various championship trophies and avail of benefits given to the first class cricketers by the BCCI. At present, cricket in Sikkim is played only in Under-15, 17, 19 and 22 categories.

The High Court, besides issuing notices to the respondents, has made it clear that any action taken by the respondents shall be subject to further orders of the High Court of Sikkim.

SCA, formed and registered in 1987, was granted associate membership in 1991 by the BCCI. Though the association should have been accorded full fledged membership by the board after five years of being granted an associate member status as per the rules, SCA is still awaiting recognition even though almost 16 years have already passed.

HC upholds tender process, dismisses Balchand petition on PMGSY

PEMA L. SHANGDERPA

GANGTOK: The High court of Sikkim has upheld the tender process and bidding system applied by the State Rural Management & Development Department for phase 5 of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) works in the state.

In an order passed by a division bench of Chief Justice B. K. Roy and Justice A. P. Subba, the court on 21 September dismissed the writ petition filed by a Class I A contractor Balchand Sarda against the department. The writ petition was filed by Sarda in May this year contesting the terms and conditions and the guidelines, arguing it was against the central public works department codes and manuals and the public works code of the state of Sikkim.

Speaking to MIDWEEK Secretary, Rural Management and Development Department V. B. Pathak said 'truth has prevailed' ultimately, after three months of litigation which had disturbed the entire process of work and time.

The High court dismissed the case mentioning that Sarda did not fulfill the eligibility criteria under the terms and conditions as prescribed under the tender form.

The court also held that the press notice to be issued under the PMGSY guidelines was not directory and mandatory since there were no consequences prescribed for violation of it as per the guidelines. The court

upheld the preliminary objection raised by the state government that Sarda had no locus standi since he does not have the requisite criteria as required by the tender documents.

The petition was in the news since the amount of works tendered under the phase 5 of the PMGSY was to the tune of Rs. 150 crores and was to connect all the major rural areas in the state. Some 59 rural roads are being constructed all over the state under the scheme by the state rural roads development agency (SRRDA).

Sarda in his petition had claimed that the Notice inviting tenders was published without any authority of law and had glaring anomalies. He had deposited Rs. 2, 30, 000 against the cost of tender forms and another Rs. 45.76 lakhs as earnest money at 2.5 per cent of the tender cost while he was disqualified at the pre-qualification bid. Sarda had also claimed that instead of issuing a press notice for pre-qualifying the bidders, the department opened the technical bids much before the financial bids which were submitted together.

The department had contested that the petitioner did not fulfill any of the conditions of qualification laid down in the standard bidding document and as such had no locus standi which the court has accepted in merit.

SIKKIM TOPS AMONG EASTERN ZONE TEAMS IN SUB-JUNIOR C'SHIP

GANGTOK: The home team has emerged as the top team in the eastern zone for the 29th Sub-Junior National Championship being played here at the Paljor Stadium. Team Sikkim topped the rankings with 12 points having defeated all the other four teams of the eastern zone, viz. Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar and Chattisgarh.

The team who are through to the final round of the national championship will play their first match with last year's winner Mizoram in Chennai in the second week of October.

Sikkim did not lose a single match in the eastern zone league beating the other teams

with huge margins. In the last match of the league played on 24 September, Sikkim defeated Chattisgarh 7-0.

Jharkhand has been placed second in the eastern zone with 9 points.

The Sub-Junior Championship was held for the first time in the state and the Sikkim football association [SFA] was entrusted to host the eastern leg of the tournament by the All India Football Federation [AIFF].

"We are happy that the team has performed very well. The team has the right combination and fitness to play and win matches with teams from the other zones," a senior SFA official told MIDWEEK.

- continued from page 11-

Contemplating Suicide

with fragmentation shattering a very effective defence against suicides.

Does the above template apply to Sikkim? Every individual will have to find an individual answer for that. But what needs emphasis is that the awareness drive against suicides will have to soon

graduate to the level of involving the society and not just institutions. Curbing suicides is no easy task. Prevention demands a whole series of initiatives ranging from provision of best possible conditions from bringing up children and youth, to a strong health services network which

makes effective treatment of mental disorders accessible, to a sustained awareness drive that involves the society as a whole and reminds it of its responsibilities towards the individual. Once individual members of the society accept that their continued disinterest is allowing more lives to slip through the protective social cushion then there will be that many more hands reaching out to assist every life at risk.

Agreed, these are but incomplete thoughts. They would have served their purpose if they get at least some people thinking. Maybe then a workable solution will offer itself.

[The writer is Editor, NOW!]

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Trekking expedition in memory of mountaineers

a MIDWEEK REPORT

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab police adventure sports club has announced it is organizing a trekking expedition in memory of three mountaineers who died while scaling a Himalayan peak in Sikkim last year. The police expedition will trek from Sep 23 to Oct 2 in Lahaul and Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh and parts of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir. The expedition is being organized in the memory of additional director general of police P.M. Das and two constables, who died on a peak in Sikkim Sep 24 last year.

A keen mountaineer and Mount Everest climber, Das was the founder of the police adventure club and had trained several officials and personnel in mountaineering.

Serving officials and personnel from the club would undertake the trekking expedition in memory of their colleagues.



Hotlix gets ready to move

The number of eateries that have mushroomed over the years in the Capital have certainly delighted the gastronomes, with new places offering diverse and exotic cuisines to tickle our taste buds, otherwise used to the more staple diet of steaming momos, thukpas and 'chow chows'. Eating out has never been so much fun. The choice is varied, from pastas from Italy and aromatic fragrance of Lemon Grass from Thailand to the complexity of dismantling a lobster or a crab, you can find it all here.

And one place that has, over the years, held its own with good food and prices that suit everyone's pocket is Hotlix, a multi-cuisine bar and restaurant located here at

Deorali Bazar. In less than three years of its opening, this small but compact restaurant has become immensely popular for its scrumptious food and quiet ambiance. Regulars swear by its great pizzas, with generous toppings with authentic Italian condiments such as olives, basil, oregano and cheese. The Chinese fare is equally good, with mild and savoury favours that don't over-dose on ketchup and soy sauce. And if you like it good old Indian, the Kormas and Tandoori items are delightful. The bonus: great coffee for the price.

This week Hotlix moves to a new locale: the Deorali terminal of the Ropeway. Says Chef and owner Suraj Chettri: "We needed to expand and the

space at the Deorali Ropeway terminal is just right for us. We will now be able to accommodate about 45 persons and there will be no parking problem now." And the view it will provide will add to dining pleasures. The new Hotlix will have some more surprises up its sleeves. From food festivals to live music, the focus will now be on a more innovative menu. "We will be introducing daily specials which will keep changing every day. Also, we plan to add Thai cuisine in our menu," says Suraj. A full-fledged bar will now serve cocktails and mocktails, outdoor catering will be introduced. Great location, great food and great service. Something that will surely leave you licking your fingers!

Dhanda Manda Hai



a MIDWEEK Report

Dasain is just round the corner but the pre-Dasain shopping that precedes it shows no sign of taking off this year. In fact, according to most shopkeepers, Dasain is yet to turn *ramailo* for them. Empty shops stare back at the few who do venture out and no amount of discounts or sales seems to tempt those who prefer to stay away. Blame it on the bad weather or a dip in earnings but Dasain business is witnessing a definite downturn.

"Unlike earlier most people now do their Dasain shopping in Siliguri or other cities," says Rajeev Agarwal of Rajeev Electronics, disheartened at the poor response his Loan Mela received recently. 'Dhanda is definitely manda,' add the people at Amber Electronics. But, those who are really feeling the pinch are the traditional jewelers and cloth merchants, who claim that sales is less than

half of what it was in previous years. While some of the shop owners at MG Marg blame the no traffic rule after 5pm for the reduction in sales, others claim that lack of parking facilities is discouraging people from shopping here. All however agree that there simply is less money moving around this Dasain. 'We are still hopeful,' tells Karma Loday, owner of a garments shop, 'the government employees are supposed to get advance salaries on 25 October, maybe there will be an increase in business then,' he adds.

As the shop owners wait for this sudden spurt in business, let us hope it does materialize, or else its time to wake up and smell the coffee. Maybe, there are just too many shops and too few customers to go around. This should be a signal to all the prospective businessmen who plan to overwhelm this small town with big malls.



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KELSANG PHUNTSOK	GANGTOK
KESHU BHUTIA	GANGTOK
ROSIELA GURUNG	GANGTOK
TSE TEN DORJI	GANGTOK
WANGYAL BHUTIA	GANGTOK
YOGESH PRADHAN	GANGTOK

The prizes are being sent directly to the winning customers address.

MIDWEEK

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NEW ARRIVALS AT:

STYLE

MG MARG, GANGTOK



LIFESTYLE

Below Bank of Baroda M.G. Marg, Gangtok

MTV Roadies All Set To Splash At X'Cape

20-year-old Parul Shahi, winner of the MTV Roadies 3



Roadies hit Gangtok!

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: If you are a bike freak and music your soul food, love the idea of challenging your lean mean machines to some extreme road trips across the country, here's some great news. MTV Roadies is coming to town! Don't believe us? Well it's true!

India's biggest reality show just got bigger and better and grittier. And for the first time, it makes it way to the land of the Khangchendzonga.

Well, so what if you ain't part of this extremely popular reality show on bikes and living, riding and competing with a bunch of strangers for a huge cash prize, not to forget a brand new bike, MTV's is making sure that you be a small part of the fun, in your own town.

MTV Roadies 4, which is

now at its final leg of the race for the big prize at this moment, is making inroads to Gangtok, as part of its road trip to North Bengal and the North East. After negotiating the treacherous curves and bends along the Teesta in driving rain, the contesting bikers are arriving here on September 30. And MTV is holding this big Splash at X'cape, the hottest club in town in the evening. This may be your chance to rub shoulders with not only the Roadies but also with MTV VJ Ranvir, who hosts the show.

And starting from September 25 to September 29, MTV is holding promotional events in major Colleges around here such as Sikkim Government College, Tadong, SMIT Mahjitar and Sikkim Manupal Medical College, Tadong. During the events, MTV will be handing out

plenty of exciting freebies, including 100 passes entry passes for the MTV Roadies Splash at X'cape on September 30 evening! The evening promises to be a real deal, with great music, plenty more freebies and of course MTV!

Roadies is just not about biking. It's another ball game altogether. There is a lot of fear factor involved. There are those strenuous physical tasks-like rappelling down a steep slope, tight rope walking across some crazy roaring river and having to endeavour sleeping in the same tent as your awful, obnoxious and bitching fellow contestants! Upto 5 lakhs for the winner, but hey, its just not handed out-you have to earn it! The money has to be earned by the Roadies, a little incentive to make sure everyone puts in that extra bit of effort.

To add that extra bit of zest,

that is so vital to a reality game show, there is a vote out each week. Yup! The same Roadies you hang with, travel with, and bitch in front of the camera for whole country to see, could also vote you out. How's that for a little drama? And just to balance it out, the contestants could get immunity. Immunity is something the finalists earn as by winning a task which means they escape a potential vote out for that one task at least. Whew!

And just for the record, the winner of Roadies 3 was 20-year-old Parul Shahi, a petite Delhite, who is actually an Indian Nepali! After travelling for nearly 2500 kilometers, enduring tough tasks and beating 12 competitors, Parul walked away with a Hero Honda Karizma and booty of close to Rs. 5 lakhs. Now that's some tough girl.

बॉम्बेगोल्ड ड्रीम रदार्पु
ह्याप्पु वेवडवान



Yuksom Engineering Works (Pvt.) Ltd.
Class I-A Government Contractors (Power & SPWD)
Gangtok, Sikkim

WARNING: There are chances you may come across too many exclamation points in this piece. And there are chances some anti-exclamation mark pressure groups might send the Editor an excruciatingly long petition against the unnecessary use of this punctuation mark by this weekly and ask if we have run out of ideas on how to gracefully use other punctuations! But let me assure you, the subject matter demands that almost every sentence in this article ends with an exclamation point. Also please don't expect the subject matter to be dealt in a chronological order. I'm just too mentally traumatised to recount the fashion trends of the 90s as well as its major flubs, some of which I myself have committed!

The 1990s sure was a strange time, with strange fashion trends and equally strange fashion flubs. And I shamefacedly admit to having committed quite a number of them myself, including strutting around town wearing a pair of spandex tights, known during those days as 'cycling shorts'! What was I thinking! That I was Axl Rose minus the stubble, bandana, and Jack Daniels? Jeez!

Those were the dark ages when sporting a Tibetan terrier hairdo was considered cool. Ah, those not-so-glorious days of side-parting, straight long fringes completely covering one eye, painfully tilted necks [to keep that fringe hanging over that particular side of the face] and the resulting stiff neck at the end of the day! After my pet Apso saw that hairdo on me, the bitch insisted on getting a crew cut. How mean is that!

Topping the list of other popular hairstyles that had once swept Gangtok was Crew cut, a hairdo sported by delusional guys who, after an overdose of Vietnam War movies, believed they were in the US Army. After the release of Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore starrer *Ghost*, getting the short Demi Moore crop was a must for every 'cool' school girl while every other guy wanted an *Aashiqui* cut a la Rahul Roy. Sales of shampoo, as well as lice killer potions, shot up like crazy that season, I've been told.

A denim jacket worn over anything, even formal pants [!], was another fashion statement back in the 90s. My few attempts to make such a statement in school got too loud for my teachers' liking, resulting in a couple of quick detentions and the eventual confiscation of my prized denim jacket on charges of repeated offence. Soon, it became cool to wear torn

jeans, jackets and bags started sporting 'patches' and our fashionable people became walking billboards for anything from the US Postal Service to some obscure oil company in the UAE!

But the determination of fashion-conscious peeps hell-bent on wearing a tight pair of denims during those Lycra-less days was amazing. If getting into those awfully tight pair of 'Jeans pants' was an ordeal, getting out of them was a mission almost impossible. Groans, grunts and frantic looks around to see if there's anyone to lend you a hand, or two, to get you out of that contraption. And all that pain for what purpose? To make yourself look like a ridiculous replica of Big Ethel, with the denim covering your knees protruding as if your knees were on Viagra! The results were more disastrous on a pair of bow legs.

Other horror-inducing fashion rages of the time were baggy pants and shirts with bat wing-like sleeves [I plead guilty to having worn these absurdities], puffed sleeves, Iron Maiden t-shirts, *jabar-jasti ko* denims bell-bottom [regular denim pants cut open at the seams and a V-shaped piece of cloth, known as 'rockets', sewn in between to make the 'flares'], fluorescent clothes that made everyone go blind [thanks to MTV], platform sneakers that elevated you to new heights with layers of rubber soles, and fake Doc Martins that threatened to weigh you down by their sheer weight besides giving you corns. And then there were the days when people walked the streets of Gangtok wearing combat pants and boots when the nearest war going on at that time was in the Arabian Gulf! Thank God, PVC clothing failed to find a market here.

Missing an episode of *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Fauji* starring a young Shah Rukh Khan was a cardinal sin, so was addressing your friends by their full name. Those were the days when geniuses like us were too mentally preoccupied to spell out all the syllables in a name. So Mahesh became Max, Savitri became Savvy, and Thupden became Thups! If names were a race, we'd be looking back at those times as an era marred by genocide.

Then somewhere around mid-90s we saw a late emergence of the grunge fashion [seems like it took the trend some time to reach here from Seattle].



This was the age of the 'anti-fashion' fashion when we proudly went around looking like we just rolled out of bed in oversized plaid flannel shirts [in summer!] worn over t-shirts endorsing heavy metal bands. The look was not complete unless the flannel shirts were accompanied by dirty denim pants, a wallet chain [optional], a pair of dirty canvas shoes and a thatch of equally greasy hair. This trend continued until the time hip-hop street fashion took over in the fag end of the 90s.

At least the good thing about those days of horrible fashion trends was that they lasted for quite some time before they became 'oh so last season'. These days, the fashion changes so rapidly that in a couple of months' time, someone might be writing a somewhat similar piece on 'the unthinkable fashion trends we followed last season' here and demanding a barf bag at the uncomfortable thought of his/her fashion flubs of last season! Baarffff!

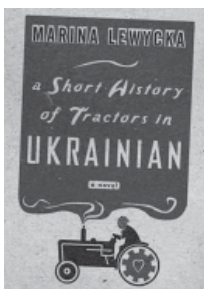
- SERAH BASNET

TARANTULA - Bob Dylan



Tarantula is in the stream-of-consciousness style of Dylan's liner notes to *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Bringing It All Back Home*. The publisher did our beloved author a great disservice in labeling these writings 'Poems'. These short pieces - interspersed with pseudo-missives - are literally unbridled prose, brimming with wit, sarcasm and absurdities. Only Dylan can say for sure what they're all about. A poet is not necessarily one who writes rhyming verse, but formlessness is not poetry either. To call *Tarantula* 'poetry' is to turn a blind eye to Dylan's assault on traditional prose narrative forms. That said, *Tarantula* is a great book to have on the shelf, but it's not easy or especially rewarding reading unless one is primarily interested in the author. Because it's Dylan's only book [aside from published lyrics], it's a rather important book.

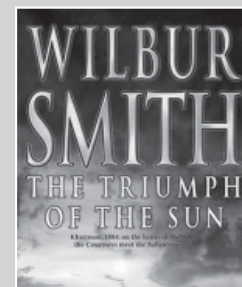
A SHORT HISTORY OF TRACTORS ON THE UKRAINIAN - Marina Lewycka



For years, Nadezhda and Vera, two Ukrainian sisters, raised in England by their refugee parents, have had as little as possible to do with each other - and they have their reasons. But now they find they'd better learn how to get along, because since their mother's death their aging father has been sliding into his second childhood, and an alarming new woman has just entered his life. Valentina, a bosomy young synthetic blonde from the Ukraine, seems to think their father is much richer than he is, and she is keen that he leave this world with as little money to his name as possible. If Nadezhda and Vera don't stop her, no one will. But separating their addled and annoyingly lecherous dad from his new love will prove to be no easy feat - Valentina is a ruthless pro and the two sisters swiftly realize that they are mere amateurs when it comes to ruthlessness. As Hurricane Valentina turns the family house upside down, old secrets come falling out, including the most deeply buried one of them all, from the War, the one that explains much about why Nadezhda and Vera are so different. In the meantime, oblivious to it all, their father carries on with the great work of his dotage, a grand history of the tractor.

THE BOOKSHELF

BESTSELLING 10 At RACHNA BOOKS



1. *How Not To Say What You Mean: A Dictionary of Euphemisms* - RW Holder; Rs. 375; 510 pp
2. *Memoirs of a Geisha* - Arthur Golden; Rs. 265; 503 pp
3. *A Short History of Tractors on the Ukrainian* - Marina Lewycka; Rs. 405; 280 pp
4. *Out of My Later Years* - Albert Einstein; Rs. 450; HB 280 pp
5. *Lifeless* - Mark Billingham; Rs. 249; 470 pp
6. *How to Lose Weight* - Christina Michael; Rs. 295; 192 pp
7. *Tarantula* - Bob Dylan; Rs. 440; 116 pp
8. *First Proof 2 Penguin Book of New Writing From India* - Rs. 275; 290 pp
9. *The Joy of Laziness* - Peter Axt; Rs. 150; 160 pp
10. *The Triumph of the Sun* - Wilbur Smith; Rs. 290; 630 pp



EAST COKER MEETS WORST SONG

Sometimes it would seem that NOTHING MUCH happens on in Gangtok. This is attributable to the fact that the wonderful people who live in Gangtok, actually stay home for the weekends and think about non-italian related things. And I'm not being facetious, the people who live in Gangtok are wonderful, and I don't begrudge them their time off in the slightest. People need time off, even me. I took a few hours off tonight to have dinner with Bobby THE DRUMMER and then went to a couple of little parties with him and Noel THE BASSIST. I'm so decadent, aren't I? Taking time off to socialize when I could be home NAPPY CHANGING. Hhmm...I wish I had a better understanding of Latin and ancient Greek. I'm such a dilettante, I only know your basic *persona non grata* phrase. Whenever I meet someone who can actually read or speak Latin I'm always impressed. It must be a rather heady high, actually, to be able to speak Latin to the ladies (or men). *Veni vidi vici* when rearranged has some very dirty connotations. Forgive me, it's late and I'm being willfully obscure. Hhmm... it's 11 pm, already. Time for bed. But before I tuck myself in let me say that the worst song of all time is probably : How can I live without you? by Michael Bolton. But the pleasure derived from really bad songs almost invariably renders them wonderful. If you can listen to How can I live without you? you won't be disappointed. It makes you want to find this man and study him, for how is it possible that a human being could make something so awful? Any thoughts, people? And remember, George Bush is an evil dimwit! And dwarf pornography is disturbing in many ways. ARE we allowed to have cursing on this PAPER? I hope so. It's always troubled me that some PAPERS try to, hhm... "discourage" the use of "questionable" language.

GMK



Duran Duran and Justin Timberlake to collaborate?

Duran Duran have posted a bulletin on their official MySpace page, addressing longstanding rumors that they will record with the one-and-only Justin Timberlake. Gossip about a potential D2/JT partnership apparently started after the new wave quintet and former boy-band star struck up a friendship at the Brit Awards in 2004. "Since there has been some speculation about Justin Timberlake working with Duran Duran in the media, we can confirm that ever since Justin presented the band with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Brits they have all expressed an interest in working together." Duran Duran's MySpace post reads. "To that end, some of the band members met up with Justin recently in New York to discuss a possible collaboration." No further details about this possible collaboration - which would effectively bridge '80s, '90s, and new-millennial teen pop - are available at this time.

Peppers, Peas, Mariah Spice Up AMAs



If the folks behind the American Music Awards are trying to reverse the perception of being the most predictable award show out there, well, they aren't doing themselves any favors with this year's list of nominees.

For the second consecutive year, despite having failed to release an album in nearly 18 months, Mariah Carey leads the nominations at the Dick Clark-produced trophyfest. Carey, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, the Black Eyed Peas and Nickelback each snagged a field-best three nods for the 2006 American Music Awards.

For her part, *The Emancipation of Mimi* songbird is once again up for Favorite Female Artist in both the Pop/Rock and Soul/Rhythm & Blues categories, as well as a nod for Favorite Album in the latter category.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers, who also led the nominations for last month's MTV Video Music Awards, are competing for Favorite Artist in the Alternative Music category, and Favorite Band, Duo or Group and Favorite Album for their chart-topping *Stadium Arcadium* in the Pop/Rock field. Their primary challenger in all three races

seems to be Nickelback. As for Fergie and her fellow Peas, their *Monkey Business* is up for Favorite Rap/Hip-Hop Album, and the group will vie for Favorite Artist in both Rap/Hip-Hop and Soul/Rhythm & Blues.

Also racking up multiple nominations were virtually any artists who managed to score some airplay this year: Mary J Blige, Kelly Clarkson, Eminem, Kanye West, Jamie Foxx, Rascal Flatts, TI, Carrie Underwood and Pussycat Dolls all scored two nods apiece. Underwood and Pussycat Dolls will do battle with Chamillionaire in the redundantly named Favorite New Breakthrough Artist race.

Other nominations of note include Disney's hugely popular High School Musical soundtrack competing against the Chili Peppers and Nickelback for Favorite Pop/Rock Album, and Johnny Cash earning a posthumous nod, as his *The Legend of Johnny Cash* faces off against Tim McGraw's *Greatest Hits Volume 2* and Rascal Flatts' *Me & My Gang* for Favorite Country Album.

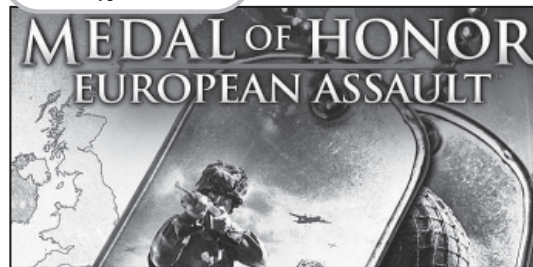
Winners will be selected by a nationwide poll, and the awards will be doled out live at the Shrine Auditorium 21 November on ABC.

COMPLETE LIST OF NOMINEES

- POP/ROCK**
MALE ARTIST: Nick Lachey, Sean Paul, Kanye West
FEMALE ARTIST: Mariah Carey, Kelly Clarkson, Nelly Furtado
BAND, DUO OR GROUP: Nickelback, Pussycat Dolls, Red Hot Chili Peppers
ALBUM: All the Right Reasons, Nickelback; Stadium Arcadium, Red Hot Chili Peppers; High School Musical, Various Artists
- COUNTRY**
MALE ARTIST: Kenny Chesney, Toby Keith, Keith Urban
FEMALE ARTIST: Faith Hill, Carrie Underwood, Gretchen Wilson
BAND, DUO OR GROUP: Brooks & Dunn, Montgomery Gentry, Rascal Flatts
ALBUM: Legend of Johnny Cash, Johnny Cash; Greatest Hits Volume 2, Tim McGraw; Me & My Gang, Rascal Flatts
- SOUL/RHYTHM & BLUES**
MALE ARTIST: Chris Brown, Jamie Foxx, Ne-Yo
FEMALE ARTIST: Mary J. Blige, Mariah Carey, Keyshia Cole
BAND, DUO OR GROUP: Black Eyed Peas, The Isley Brothers, Jagged Edge
ALBUM: The Breakthrough, Mary J. Blige; The Emancipation of Mimi, Mariah Carey; Unpredictable, Jamie Foxx
- RAP/HIP-HOP**
MALE ARTIST: Eminem, T.I., Kanye West
BAND, DUO OR GROUP: Black Eyed Peas, Dem Franchize Boyz, Three 6 Mafia
ALBUM: Monkey Business, Black Eyed Peas; Curtain Call, Eminem; King, T.I.
- ADULT CONTEMPORARY**
ARTIST: Michael Buble, Kelly Clarkson, Rob Thomas
- ALTERNATIVE MUSIC**
ARTIST: Nickelback, Pearl Jam, Red Hot Chili Peppers
- LATIN MUSIC**
ARTIST: Daddy Yankee, Don Omar, Shakira
- CONTEMPORARY INSPIRATIONAL**
ARTIST: Aly & AJ, Casting Crowns, Kirk Franklin
- BREAKTHROUGH [ALL GENRES]:**
ARTIST: Chamillionaire, Pussycat Dolls, Carrie Underwood



This week, MIDWEEK presents cheat codes for...



CHEAT MODE

Pause the game, then hold L1 + R1 and press Circle(2), Left, Triangle, Circle, X. If you entered the code correctly, the phrase "ENTER CHEAT" will appear. The following codes may now be enabled after L1 + R1 are released:

INVINCIBILITY

Enable the "Cheat mode" code, then press Square, L2, L1, Triangle(2), L2. If you entered the code correctly, the game will automatically resume.

Repeat this code to disable its effect. This code must be re-enabled with each new level. Your health will still decrease, but you will not die when it reaches zero. Note: You can still kill yourself with your own bazooka or grenade explosions.

INFINITE AMMUNITION

Enable the "Cheat mode" code, then press L2, L1, Square, L2, L1, R1. If you entered the code correctly, the game will automatically resume. Repeat this code to disable its effect.

FULL ADRENALINE METER

Enable the "Cheat mode" code, then press L1, R2, R1, Up, Triangle, Circle. If you entered the code correctly, the game will automatically resume.

Matters of the Heart

We heard them sing at the recent Pang Lhabsol festival in Gangtok. Yes, we also took note of that catchy 'eeya eeya eeyo, o yea o' refrain of the song which had the revelers dancing to Lhamu and Rebecca's tunes. Now, we bring you the lowdown on the two songbirds' latest album *Manai Ta Ho - Simply A Heart*. The album - a Sur Sudha presentation - attempts to do a bit of everything: opening with traditional, folksy tunes, the album progresses towards more contemporary sounds, with upbeat, up-tempo songs occasionally interjecting these tracks.

The album opens with the title track *Manai Ta Ho*, an I-can-survive-without-you themed song written and composed by Rajen Ghimirey, followed by *Samla*, an interesting, nicely paced flute-driven folksy duet between

Rebecca and Rajen Ghimirey. Another interesting folk tune worth a listen is *Kaichimarey Pharia* where an excited would-be bride sings praises about her knight in *daura surwal* and the dream trousseau she wants to wear when she accompanies her beau to his village. Written and composed by Noel Lepcha, it is one of the few songs from the album that stands out.

In fact, *Manai Ta Ho* boasts of a host of renowned artists and musicians collaborating to put this album together, from veterans like Rajan Ghimirey to the young and rock 'n' rolling Abhaya Subba of 'Abhaya and the Steam Injuns'. Despite this, the album fails to rise above the mediocre.

Two songs that could have been hits among the lovers of contemporary Nepali music are *Katai Kahin* and *Chunauti*

Paila if only the vocals had gone where the songs require them to. Unfortunately, that is not the case. *Katai Kahin* demands much more than Rebecca's vocals can deliver and all attempts to pull a Hema Sardesai here fall flat. *Chunauti Paila* is an interesting song - with a dash of bluesy rock - about overcoming obstacles. Though Abhaya's arrangement sets it apart from other tracks, what puts a dampener to the song is the lack of punch in Lhamu's vocals, something that this particular song strongly demands.

Another song that should not have made it through the final cut is *Party Girls*, a Nepali-English bilingual disco track about partying hard - Asha Bhonsle *ishstyle* - with some unimpressive rap bit thrown in for good measure. Though this is definitely intended to be a

dance floor scorcher, we can't think of any local DJs who'd want to play this one. This song is another example that dance numbers don't require much coherent lyrics and even arm-farts accompanied by an upbeat tune can do the trick. Hitting the skip button recommended on this one.

The plus point for this album is its lack of those overtly love songs. Though the theme of 'having loved and lost' appears more than a

couple of times, it's handled more positively, with the protagonist choosing to move on instead of dwelling in the bitter past. *Ritu Naya* is one such up-tempo track with a catchy 'eeya eeya eeyo, o yea o' chorus and a little bit of rap. This track, we believe, will be honoured with a repeated play this *dassain*.

Rating: 2/5

- WYLDE





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Anarchy in the SMIT

GANGTOK: Girish Pradhan and limelight have this tendency of bumping into each other every time there's a rock contest. The frontman of Anarchy, a Gangtok-based rock outfit, Girish repeated the feat he had performed last year and again bagged the title of Best Solo Vocal title during Kaalrav 2006 held recently at SMIT, Mahjitar. The contest was held on 23 September, the second day of SMIT's three daylong annual inter-college festival.

His band, Anarchy, also secured second spot a day earlier in The Battle of the Bands.

This year, Kaalrav saw eight colleges, both from Sikkim and elsewhere, vie for the top spot in various contests held as part of the festival. To add some icing on the cake, Mantra from Darjeeling, present as the guest band, also rocked the crowd with their usual dose of Nepali rock.

the PROFILER

SARITA CLOTH EMPORIUM



Sarita Cloth Emporium, reads the sign above this little shop in **New Market**. You walk in and find out first impressions are decidedly deceptive, for it is long and narrow and there's an amazing variety of goods to keep you busy for quite a while. We think the word 'Cloth' should get chucked out of the signboard fast!

This shop is a big hit with tourists for it's full of quaint surprises. Want to buy prayer flags or 'dhajas'? Walk right in. Want an umbrella? It's in here. A brocade bakhu? Check. A cap for your kid? Check again. Saved up for a nice idol of **Guru Rinpoche**? Your search ends here. Want a warm jacket or a sheer vest? Yes, you get it here. Funky jewellery? Yesssss, you get it here.

Hey, how come you have so much of religious stuff here, we ask owner **Gopal**. He laughs as he offers his own pearl of wisdom, 'Fashion changes very fast. Monks clothes remain the same'. Point taken. Indeed a lot of monks frequent his shop for their needs. He stocks 'shendep' 'khenza' 'zen' 'kera' and the whole set of monks garments. He even supplies the spellings of the garments names!

If you've ever wondered where to get religious items at a reasonable place, this is it. There are prayer wheels, big and small chumi, mandalas, 'gyamcho' or butter lamp sets, vases or 'bhumpa', 'dilbu' or bells, why you even get the 'phurba' and 'dorji' so essential to religious ceremonies.

There are nice idols of Buddhist Gods like

Guru Rinpoche, **Chenrezig** and **Lord Buddha** in a variety of sizes such as 4", 5", 9", 12", 15", 17" and so on. Brightly painted wall scrolls of Hindu Gods like **Hanuman**, **Lord Shiva** and **Lakshmi** are available too, a testimony to the entrepreneurial genius of the Chinese.

Umbrellas, jackets, socks, baby shoes, sweaters, incense, belts, caps, jewellery, prayer beads, water bottles, tiffin boxes, khadas, stockings, bags, handbags, sunglasses, jewellery boxes, felt hats, Chinese bowls, cups, mugs... everything co-exists happily in **Gopal's** shop.

QUICK PICKS:

- Nice socks in different sizes, from tiny ones with attached teddy bears for new born babies to socks sporting football boot designs for youngsters. Prices start at Rs. 30 and go up to Rs. 50
- Khadas and prayer flags
- Tiny bejeweled jewellery boxes which can be used to store your earrings or sindoor. Rates start from Rs. 30 and there are several sizes.
- Umbrellas in a variety of styles and designs.
- Very nice felt hats for the local gentlemen. They're around Rs. 250 and you can sport a sober brown or a funky one in multi tones.
- Small idols, only few inches high, of Buddhist and Hindu gods
- Gold paint for thangkas

WHAT WE LIKE

- The small knick knacks and the big smiles that greet you here.
- The two fold gents umbrella that is huge when unfurled but surprisingly handy to carry, around Rs. 180

SCORCHING THE SHELVES:



Calling all mothers...and the rare father, bless his soul, who shops for his kids' clothes. Has **Junior** again outgrown his vests? You're in luck, **Raj Shree** has some terrific stock of **kids' vests** this time around. Since there's always been something about bargains and women that make them inseparable, no one, I'm sure, will need directions to this shop.

A t-shirt slogan goes, a Man is someone who will pay double the money to buy something he needs and a Woman is a person who pays half the money to buy two of something she doesn't need. But basics like kids vests are surely exempt from this sage saying!

There are different ranges of vests from the offerings of small time companies that

cost Rs.25/- for a medium sized vest to the well known **Bodycare** brand that retails at much higher prices.

Ladies, if you are prepared to squat, your rummaging in the mounds of vests stashed in awkwardly placed looooooow shelves will find you some real treasures that will have your kids raring to wear the vests. There are vests with stars all over and there are comic characters.

The **Disney** range from **Bodycare** boasts real Disney toons not those horrible caricatures of the same passed off as the real mc Coy by small -time companies. Take your pick from **Winnie the Pooh**, **Mickey**, **Donald**, **Superman** and other toon friends. Vests start at Rs.40/- and go up to Rs. 65/- but

they're in pure cotton with bright piping on edges and a good investment.

PSST: If your kid wears size 24, make a beeline cos that's the size most in demand and all the good pieces are getting snapped up fast.

.....

Once upon a time, there used to be a super bleach called **Ala**. And it really used to whiten the whites and remove colours with just a dip. But alas, **Ala** went off the market and some women are still asking for it by name in the shops. I asked my shopkeeper friend to recommend a good replacement to whiten whites especially school shirts discoloured over time.

Here's his recommendation: **New Robin Liquid Blue** from **Reckitt Bensicker (India) Ltd.** for dazzling whiteness. All it takes is a few drops of **Robin Liquid** in some water and you instantly get whiter, brighter clothes, he says. At Rs.9/- for a 75 ml bottle, it's worth giving him the benefit of the doubt.

There are some hidden complications with scoring this column. Ever since **Madam Editor** parked me on this page, the better half is refusing to accompany me to town. I'm accused of chatting up the shopkeepers! And those that I know personally accuse me of favouring certain shops. So okay, this **Robin** thing is available in ALL or most retail shops!

- TINA



If you want to be featured in The Profiler series or have new products that you want featured in our bazaar page call us at

320169 or email: sikkim.midweek@gmail.com

Pops-to -be club!

A male friend admitted that he secretly reads the moms-to-be feature. He confessed he's feeling really mixed up ever since his wife got pregnant so how about a pops-to-be feature?

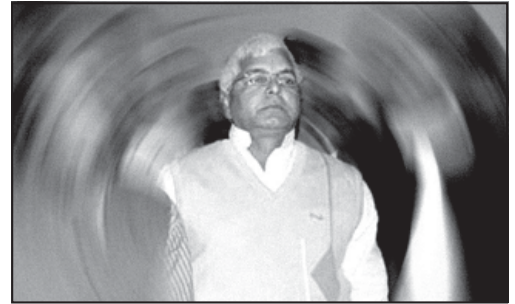
Let me tell you about this other friend of mine, who recently became the proud father of a lovely daughter. He had smsed me about his wife's pregnancy in a very sweet way, 'We're pregnant again'. That's a good attitude, for while the woman is the one who actually goes through the pregnancy, the man is also dragged along nilly willy on the pregnancy roller coaster.

What's a man to do, my friend groans. Plenty, you bet!

1. Top of the list, quit smoking. That's your unborn baby forming in your wife's womb and you can't afford to put wife and baby at increased risk of passive smoking.
2. Be involved. Keep track of the dates of hospital visits and drive your wife there... willingly.
3. As your wife becomes bigger by the day, her self esteem takes a dive. Reassure her she's still attractive to you. That's your baby in there!
4. Realise that while your wife obsesses with her pregnancy, your own feelings are also undergoing an upheaval. It's natural to feel

- apprehensive about the new addition to the family.
5. Most men worry about finance, plan for baby's needs long before he / she comes.
 6. Some men feel jealous that they are no longer the centre of their wives' worlds. A very simple remedy is, grow up fast!
 7. Enjoy the pregnancy for once baby comes, you and your wife will have to wait for empty nest syndrome before you can be a twosome again.
 8. You could always develop the Couvade Syndrome. For details please ask your nearest gynaecologist or med school intern! (or read next issue of MIDWEEK!)

MAN ON OUR RADAR



Lalu Prasad Yadav! *Lalu*, you ask? Here's why:

- He ruled his long time fiefdom by proxy by installing his Devi, Rabri on the Chief Minister's political throne.
 - He is the only politician to boast his own doll likeness.
 - Most importantly, he is the man behind the incredible turnaround of the Indian Railways.
 - He actually wowed the cream of the country's management brains in the making at IIM Ahmedabad by holding forth - INTELLIGENTLY AND KNOWLEDGEABLY- on the Railways success story.
 - He appeared in his rustic white kurta, doggedly referred to the haloed IIM as "Bharatiya Prabandhan Sanstha", and delivered his lecture in chaste Hindi.
- More power to you, Lalu!

PRESCHOOLERS AND PARENTS:

From the 'Wondertime' website:

Tracy Rasmussen, a young mother shares the three things preschoolers really need to know. She says from her personal experience these are what she calls the 3 S's:

- SELF-CARE
- SITTING STILL
- SHARING

MIDWEEK tip:

Your child is never too young to start toilet training. A toilet trained child is a joy to take anywhere and is much easier on your pocket.



THE WORLD'S TEN RICHEST INDIANS:

- LAKSHMI MITTAL \$20 BILLION
- ASIM PREMJI \$11 BILLION
- MUKESH AMBANI \$7 BILLION
- ANIL AMBANI \$5.5 BILLION
- KUSHAL PAL SINGH \$5 BILLION
- SUNIL MITTAL \$4.9 BILLION
- KUMARMANGALAM BIRLA \$4.4 BILLION
- TULSI TANTI \$3.7 BILLION
- PALLONJI MISTRY \$3.3 BILLION
- ANURAG DIKSHIT \$ 3.1 BILLION

MIDWEEK take: Well, ladies, while all that lucre is a deadly lure, not one of the men on the list are remotely handsome, worse, they're all married or taken, and, yes, a man in your hand is better than one with cash in his hand any day.

A QUOTA FOR QUOTES



'Adam could not be happy even in Paradise without Eve'- Lord John Lubbock



'So many beautiful women And so little time'. -John Barrymore

HEALTH-WATCH

MIDWEEK

The power of organic

- Organic farming uses crop rotation and other traditional methods to keep soil fertile.
- Organic food is the end product of organic farming, which is grown and transported without the use of chemical fertilizers, genetic engineering, growth hormones, irradiation or antibiotics.
- Organic is not same as natural. Natural foods are preservative free and minimally processed. Organic food can be natural food but all natural food is not organic food.
- Chemically dependent farming produces unhealthy food.

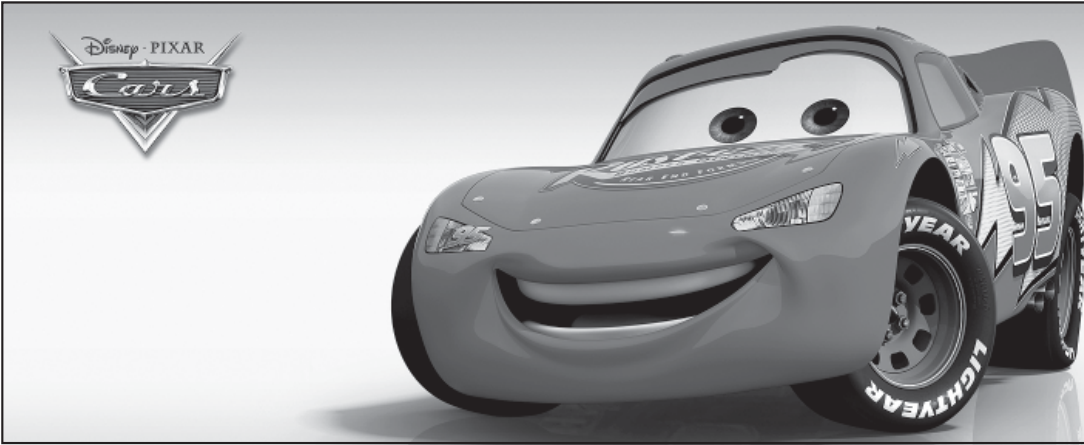
It's also expensive, and pests become resistant to chemicals over time.

Organic products have more minerals, less water and less artificial chemicals, as a result of which the taste is more natural
 MIDWEEK says: Our very own Temi tea is now available in 'organic in transformation' version. Though the price is upped to Rs.125/- a pack, our Temi tea now has a snazzy packaging that finally does it justice. The earlier yellow pack looked a little sorry as a gift for friends from outside the state.

MIDWEEK

DIAL : 320169

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SYNOPSIS: Lightning McQueen (voice of Owen Wilson) is a feisty, self centred rookie racing car aiming to win the ultra prestigious Piston Cup against his two chief rivals, the veteran King (Richard Petty) and the mean hearted, ever-second Chick (Michael Keaton). When he's waylaid in the little town of Radiator Springs on Route 66, bypassed by the new interstate highway, he gets into trouble and detained on community service. Anxious to get to the big race in Los Angeles, Lightning is befriended by the rusty tow-truck, Mater (Larry The Cable Guy) and the attractive solicitor Sally Carrera (Bonnie Hunt) who helps him in court. They, plus the local judge with a secret past, Doc Hudson (Paul Newman) and the other townfolk, teach Lightning some values he was missing, before he heads off to race for the Cup.

THE BIG REVIEW

Cars is a brilliantly executed movie with a well tuned screenplay built on the simple but evergreen character elements that gave old Hollywood its golden glow: decent human values. The good, the badly mangled and the ugly are all embraced as valuable members of the community, and winning hearts earns greater status than winning prizes.

Lightning (Owen Wilson) is a likeable but shallow, self centred show pony of a racing car who sees winning

as the only thing of value. When his selfishness gets him off the beaten track and into trouble, he is ordered to make good the damage he's done. In the process, he is befriended by the community's ugliest member, the busted and rusted, low brow tow-truck, Mater - rhymes with tomatar - marvellously voiced by Larry The Cable Guy. Mater, a symbol of sincerity, is an example to Lightning, as is old Doc Hudson (Paul Newman) who is the town's wise old judge, hiding a secret that surprises and

humbles Lightning.

The community spirit worn effortlessly by the pretty blue Porsche, ex-big city lawyer Sally Carrera (Bonnie Hunt) also engages the young rookie, leading to a romantic possibility the screenplay toys with for our amusement.

The hardship caused to the town by the freeway taking all their passing traffic trade, and the brief reflection that people used to travel from A to B to enjoy the trip, not to shorten it, also supports the film's overall moral tone, which helps give the entire story some depth.

Lightning's willingness to learn and his ultimate act of decency on the race track drive home these positive messages, but to their credit, John Lasseter and his writers never forget to have fun at every opportunity. One memorably funny scene (later reprised with a twist) has Mater and Lightning playing a mischievous game one night among the local tractors, who are portrayed as the equivalent of dullard cows.

Inventive and witty, Cars is a well oiled Pixar movie-machine that deserves its victory lap.

BOLLYWOOD snippets

HRITHIK ROSHAN SPORTS MANY GUISES IN 'DHOOM 2'

It is a common knowledge now that Hrithik Roshan plays a clever conman in *Dhoom 2*. What is little known is that he will sport many different looks in the film.

The movie buffs are eager to see Hrithik stepping into the shoes of a thief who remains ever elusive for the cops [played by Abhishek Bachchan and Bipasha Basu] in the Yash Raj Film's much-awaited venture *Dhoom 2*. It is a role for which Hrithik trained extensively in dangerous sports like roller-blading, sand boarding, snow boarding, sky-diving and bike stunts also.

And if this was not enough, speculation is rife that Hrithik will be seen in as many as 15 different guises in the film. The movie's theatrical promos already show Hrithik in 3-4 different get-ups. And the buzz is that Hrithik also guises himself as a dwarf and as a woman in the film. He adopts all these different looks to mislead the police. *Dhoom 2* is slated to hit the theatres in November.

AMEESHA PATEL WANTS TO PLAY THE FEMALE TAPORI CIRCUIT

Since Ameesha Patel has swatched *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, she can't stop raving about it. She loved the role of Munnabhai, but goes fida over the role of circuit. She likes its tapori style and wants to play the female circuit sometimes in future.

JOHN ABRAHAM MAY SIGN A FILM OPPOSITE LIV TYLER

John Abraham may sign a film opposite Liv Tyler, titled *The Good, The Bad and The Avon*. It will shoot completely in Mexico from June next year. A source says, "John has a very international look and can easily pass off as a Mexican actor. This is the reason the role has probably been offered to him." However, John's business manager Bhaskar Shetty said, "He has not signed any film, but is in serious talks with various production houses aboard."

SHOWING FROM FRIDAY

IDENZONG

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
11:00 AM, 2:15 PM, 5:30 PM



P R E V I E W

Piecing The Puzzle

In the glitzy entertainment capital of Mumbai as dusk descends, famous actress Suna Azim (Kangana Ranaut) slashes her wrists in a hotel room, in an attempt to kill herself. When this news reaches film maker Aditya Garewal (Shiny Ahuja), he is devastated. Aditya has been searching for Sana all over the world. Sana who was intensely involved with Aditya, had mysteriously disappeared from his life without any explanation, three years ago, only to surface now in what could be the last moments of her life.

As Aditya waits outside the ICU in a death watch situation, praying to be reunited with her, he is hurled back into the perfumed days and champagne nights of his memory, wherein Sana Azim played the role of both, lover and mentor to a struggling Aditya.

Everything was perfect,

except for an enemy which lurked in the shadow, waiting to destroy their love. An enemy which neither of them saw till it was too late...

When Aditya realizes that the only way he can save Sana from total devastation is to take her away from Bollywood and the vested interests that threaten to destroy her completely, he runs away with Sana putting his career on the line. Those moment lived in the sanctuary of their love are like an oasis in the desert.

Until one day, suddenly, she disappears, leaving him with unanswered question. Why did she leave at the very acme of their love, when there seemed to be hope? What pushed her to attempt suicide? Will be finally be able to piece together the puzzle that has been haunting him and almost destroyed him? And most important of all, will be reunited with his love?

FROM FRIDAY

woh lamhe

STARRING:
Kangana Ranaut, Shiny Ahuja



ULTRA SURROUND SOUND
SHOW TIMINGS:
11:00AM / 2:15PM / 5:30PM

THE MIDWEEK HOTLINE
320169

Dasain ko Ramailo

Nepali film Aama ko Kaakh to add to the Dasain festivities

SARIKAH ATREYA

GANGTOK: Come Dasain and it is time for a fortnight of festivities and merry making. It is a festival that is universal in its appeal and there isn't any section of the Nepalese Hindu society that is untouched by it.

And adding to the Dasain fervour are Nepali films, which have over the years, become an integral part of the festivities in Sikkim and the Darjeeling Hills. No wonder, Nepali film producers choose this time of the year to release their films.

Last week, "Aama ko Kaakh" was released at the Denzong Cinema Hall here. Entirely a local venture, this film has been produced by an enterprising group of seven locals from a NGO, Uddisa, under the banner of Sai Gayatri Productions. In the past, Sikkim has seen very few independent ventures into commercial Nepali filmmaking, but this nascent business is now slowing picking up, with more interest being shown in the movie business by the locals.

With "Aama ko Kaakh", Sai Gayatri Productions has achieved quite a feat. Not only has this film brought some of the biggest names in the Nepal



film industry today, it has also brought back to the silver screen Tripti Natkar, a popular actor of the 80s and 90s. Tripti makes her comeback in this film after a gap of nearly 17 years. Known for her memorable performances in Nepali superhits such as Saino, Samjhana, Kusumay Rumaal and Lahuray, Tripti at one time,

ruled the Nepali film industry, before deciding to settle for domestic bliss.

This film also brings

together an ensemble of famous names-Rajesh Hamal, Pukar Gurung, Amar Dahal, Pushpa Lata Lama and of course, the reigning queen of Nepali films-Niruta Singh. According to the producers, getting the stars of "Kollywood" as the Nepali Film Industry in Kathmandu, Nepal is rather ludicrously referred to, was quite a challenge. "Most of the actors who have worked in the film are very busy stars. Getting their dates proved difficult but in the end, we managed to shoot and complete our film on schedule," says one of the producers. Made at a budget of Rs. 50 lakhs, the film has been extensively shot in Sikkim and in Mirik in Darjeeling. The post production was completed in Mumbai.

Written and directed by Bijay Kerang, who has earlier assisted noted Nepali director Tushi Ghimirey, the music for the film, which is already a big hit, is composed by Sambhu Rai. Revolving around a story of a mother and her plight, the film promises "good entertainment" with plenty of action and romance also thrown in for good measure.

Released in Nepal on August 4, the film has been running to packed houses there. "The response in Nepal has been overwhelming. The film

has been received very well," says a producer. Sai Gayatri Films has been registered with the Producers body in Nepal. The film is scheduled to be released in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jaigoan, Malbazar in North Bengal and Phuentsoling in Bhutan from October 20 this year. "We have plans to take the film to all Nepali-speaking areas of the country and also overseas to places like Hong Kong and Singapore, where there is a sizable Nepalese population," the producers say.

This film may be a great promotional tool for Sikkim but making a film in Sikkim is still an expensive and exhausting affair. With growing interest of even Bollywood producers to shoot here, it makes sense for the State Government to create the right environment for film making. There is a need to bring down the entertainment tax levied on films here as well as loosen the red tape to allow films to be shot in some of the restricted areas in North Sikkim, which are breathtakingly beautiful. The production costs are expensive here, with most of the shooting equipments and technicians being hired from outside of the State. The lack of infrastructure for film-making can hinder Sikkim's larger involvement in the business of movies.

Hungry Kya? Rush to Rasoi



Rasoi, the newly opened fully vegetarian restaurant located at the old Blue Sheep restaurant in M. G. Marg is the talk of the town. With its tastefully done décor and reasonably priced buffet breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner, the place is a hit even before it gets down to serious business. Taken on lease from the Tourism Department who has offered it to private investors, it has been taken by two local businessmen who now look set to turn the place around. Whether it is for a quick breakfast or lunch one can just rush to Rasoi and feast on the vegetarian delights the place has to offer. The best part is that each day a new menu is designed for the buffets.

- authentic mughlai cuisine & bar
- biryani : mutton & chicken [lucknow style]
- rolls : chicken & paneer
- 100% coal tandoor, always on, so tandoor items served instantly
- fast service & reasonable price is our motto
- take-away service



SNOD Shopping Arcade, Deorali, Sikkim. Ph: 320171



STATE BANK OF INDIA
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 Gangtok-737101 Sikkim

NOTICE

FOR URGENT ATTENTION OF CUSTOMERS HAVING ACCOUNT AT STATE BANK OF INDIA, GANGTOK BRANCH

We are providing On-Line banking facility under Core Banking from mid-October 2006. All our customers are requested to personally call at the Branch immediately to verify/ record their latest Signature /Addresses so that they may not face difficulties in availing themselves of the On-Line advantages after the migration. Please call us at 202224,201535,220641.

Asst. General Manager,
 SBI, Gangtok.

THE CONTENDER

SHRP leader AD Subba's rally may have been silent but it certainly resulted in a lot of noise in the local media, as newspapers went to town both downplaying and exaggerating the strength of the rally. While one English daily claimed less than 500 people turned up, another said it ran into thousands. Whatever may be the exact figure, to take out a rally in Gangtok on the birthday of OUR LEADER was symbolic, at the least. Apparently, the gentleman is creating quite a buzz in the rural areas and just by being so visible is giving Bhandari the creeps, who cannot bear the idea of another opposition leader taking center stage when HE is around. The fact is that Subba is working the crowds while all that the rest are doing is rushing to Delhi with petitions and then rushing back with press releases. The other day someone was mentioning how AD Subba reminds him of the pre 1994 Chamling. Ouch, that surely must hurt.



Buzz

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Did anyone see or rather could anyone miss the large banner put up in front of Krishi Bhawan wishing the CM on his birthday? So considerate of the department, considering its minister just lost his constituency in the recent delimitation notification. Central Pendum, so full of NBC's is now reserved as a SC seat and poor Somnath Paudyal, the giant killer of last elections must now graze new pastures.

FATAL ATTRACTION

Now what would this **n**o **w**o **n** be without its extra marital affairs. The list of people making out with other people who are not their legally wedded partners is long and varied. Upar se neeche tak, I have the dope on all but kya karein being so ethical and all I can't really give out the names. Lekin, have to share this with you guys. A very high ranking official is having the most sordid affair in his office with a staff of his. The gentleman is of course much married and wifey at home knows not a thing. Anyway, the other day when a friend went to his office for some work, he found the door bolted from outside. Much to his shock, he later found out that busy-hands was actually inside with his paramour! Oh dear ladies, you who play such dangerous games please remember what happened to Sheila Pradhan, who was loved to death [so to speak] by a married bureaucrat she was having an affair with. Atleast that's what news reports tell us.

THE SHUTTERSPEED CHRONICLES

by KARCHOONG DIYALI

www.shutterspeedchronicles.blogspot.com



Just another day of drying laundry besides Community Hall.

SLIGHTLY-OFF-CENTRE/SLIGHTLY-OFF-CENTRE

X-Rated Font Used on Third-Grade Handout

MONROE, NY: School officials apologized after an X-rated font was used on a third-grade spelling packet handed out to parents. The font showed male and female stick figures in provocative poses to form the letters of the alphabet.

Officials with the Monroe-Woodbury School District in Orange County apologized last week after parents at Pine Tree Elementary School were given the spelling packet at an open house.

Administrators said the teacher did not use the font intentionally. Monroe is about 45 miles northwest of New York City.

THAI LEADERS ORDER SOLDIERS TO SMILE

BANGKOK: Thailand is often called the 'Land of Smiles', and the military's coup leaders apparently don't want to ruin that image. So, soldiers have been ordered to smile.

Army radio broadcasts are reminding soldiers to be friendly and courteous, especially to children and anyone who wants to take pictures with them. Since the recent overthrow of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, tanks and soldiers have been stationed at strategic points around Bangkok, instantly becoming a must-have photograph for many

Thais and tourists. "People take their children to see the tanks and take pictures with the tanks and soldiers. The soldiers should promote a positive image and continue smiling, and be polite," the Army radio said.

It's unclear if soldiers were also ordered to let civilians hold their M-16s, which some Thais and foreigners did as they posed for photographs that were published in local newspapers.

Many Thais have described this as the friendliest coup this country has ever seen.

Cop pays price for his mating dog

MALDA, West Bengal: A policeman charged with guarding industrial plants in West Bengal has had his salary cut for failing to stop his guard dog from becoming pregnant, officials said. Authorities at a steel plant in Malda, 220 km southwest of Kolkata, took a dim view of constable Sunil Kumar's oversight after the dog mated with a stray and gave birth to 10 puppies. "It is a very sensitive issue in our department," said Deputy Inspector General of the state's Central Industrial Security Forces, S Bhatnagar. "The Labrador could not carry out her duties properly during her pregnancy and at time of delivery she was on leave," he added.

Kumar, whose pay has been cut from Rs 3,540 a month to Rs 3,295 last Wednesday appealed against the decision in the Kolkata High Court. "When an animal experiences the urge to mate, it does not pay heed to its trainer," he told reporters in his defence. But his boss is sticking to his guns. "A biological phenomenon relating to a sexual urge is a different issue, but it had been established he was not serious about his duties," Bhatnagar said.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

♈ Issues that have been brewing in relationship[s] are coming to a turning point. You and another may be vying for emotional control. This can be very subtle and create long term conflicts that occasionally explode to the surface. You already know control is not satisfying.

♉ Relationships are focused with high intensity during this period because Mars and Venus [male and female] are in tension. Sexual and creative energy increases, particularly in solid partnerships. A relationship lacking shared power is likely to demand a confrontation or shakeout.

♊ This could be a thoroughly exciting week. You have multiple favorable aspects that bode well for travel, love life, relationships to children, legal interests, or anything high-tech. Whatever you do will bring educational rewards. This is a good time to be a Gemini. Explore whatever you wish!

♋ You likely will have cause to feel a sense of pride about recent activities. Others are happy to give you credit, even if that makes you a bit uncomfortable. Meanwhile the probability is high of hearing from someone you thought long gone. It could be a former lover, and at the very least, an old friend.

♌ During this eclipse season you are probably bringing something to a successful conclusion and preparing to move on to the next project. The next month brings more than normal numbers of telephone calls, emails, and communications of all kinds. You may be traveling nearby.

♍ This eclipse is in your sign and it especially strong for those born Sept 16-21. You may be feeling as though you have only one opportunity to pursue an area of great importance to you. It is true that the circumstances will probably not come along again in this way.

♎ Changes may be occurring in your primary relationship. One or the other of you is probably trying to hang onto what is familiar. Transformation must be allowed to happen or the relationship will become stale. Let things flow naturally. Don't jump to conclusions.

♏ It is necessary that you give attention to an issue of control that threatens to split one or more of your relationships. Either one of you may be the one who is seeking power and it may be quite subtle. You may be attempting to get what you want through manipulation.

♐ If you have been channeling your energy into a project that has positive value for many you may be receiving recognition and applause now. If, instead, you are working on something that is purely to make your ego more shiny, you will find others are fighting you every step of the way.

♑ You are moving in the right direction. For the next several months your life will not be such a heavy, weight bearing grind. You will have more and better options from which to choose. Segments in the life of the goat tend to come in chunks of time. Your daily life is not as changeable as many of the other signs.

♒ You may receive positive news from people who live far from your home. Activities that involve travel, especially if you will be near the water, are particularly restful. You would prefer to spend your time this week in R&R, or in the arena of learning/education. Aspects bode well at this time.

♓ Make an effort to see your life with a touch of realism now. Don't take risks against foolish odds. You are willing to help almost anyone in need, but your judgment about just who is truly deserving of your energy or money may be murky. Whatever you give, expect nothing in return. Then there might be a surprise.

JEST LIKE THAT

BY PANKAJ THAPA



Dasain Cheer

Tis that time of the year again when the clouds finally part to let the sun shine. With Dasain around the corner, there's a definite buzz in the air. Tailors going at their machines like locomotives, trying to complete the flood of orders. Their desperate clients wringing their hands raw wondering if their new threads would be ready in time. Or worried that their meticulously chosen outfit/ prints/ design/ pattern/ etc.etc. may have become passé already. Social visits begin and end with inquiries about the level of preparedness ("Where's the time to find something nice for myself?") Equally meticulous are the grocery lists, gift lists, guest lists, and misc. lists that give nightmares about nose-diving bank balances. ("Will that much anticipated bonus come through in time to make the ends meet between meat and enlightening spirits? Do you know anyone in the Army Canteen?") When the ubiquitous khassi is served up in more varieties than the good Lord intended, and eaten in more quantities than the good Lord intended the body to



by PANKAJ THAPA

digest. When relatives working in banks are hassled by benevolent grandmas for crisp bundles of low denominations. Bulging tummies and bulging pockets, - sure signs of a prosperous dasain. When Lady Luck has to work overtime to try and pacify all her devout followers paying obeisance to her throughout the night.

As a child, Dasain meant new clothes, squeaky shoes and plenty of pocket money and friends to create chaos, with minimum control from the elders, who tended to be more magnanimous during this time.

When you didn't feel silly running around with garlands and itchy rice on your forehead. (Since scratching the rice tika off your forehead was taboo, we soon discovered that a couple of scrunches a la Jim Carey created enough space for your pinky to scratch.) But if that was what it took to receive the moolah, then so be it.

Today it has become more of an opportunity to catch up with friends and family members distanced by increasingly hectic lifestyles. When neglected relationships can be repaired and strengthened. A time when the tika becomes more precious, not only because it blesses, but also because we are blessed to still have family elders who can bestow their blessings. And the older you get, the more treasured the tika day. The missionary schools taught us about the Spirit of Christmas and Christmas Cheer. Our forefathers taught us about the Spirit of Dasain and Dasain Cheer. When 'tis the season to be jolly, to meet, eat, drink and be merry, - and reach for the bottle...of Hajmola or Gelusil. Happy Pujas everyone!

WEB DESIGN

email: self@arthurpazo.com

WEB DESIGN

HIV / AIDS

SIKKIM RESPONDS

- ✓ Rural HIV / AIDS Awareness Programme
- ✓ 8 Targetted Intervention Projects
- ✓ Telecounselling Services : Ph. No. 1097
- ✓ 143 Schools Covered Under School AIDS Education Programme
- ✓ Inter-Sectoral Collaboration With Different Government and Non-Government Organisations
- ✓ 90% Training Programme of Medical, Non-Medical and NGOs Completed
- ✓ Advocacy of Opinion Leaders / Stakeholders
- ✓ 5 Voluntary, Confidential Counselling & Testing Centres
- ✓ 5 STD Clinics
- ✓ 6 Prevention of Parent-to-Child Transmission (PPTCT) Centres
- ✓ Promotion of Condoms for Protection from HIV / AIDS

*We Can... We Shall... We Will
Fight AIDS Together*



SIKKIM STATE AIDS CONTROL SOCIETY
Kazi Road, Gangtok