

96 Crores In Dispute

NO BUMPER WIN FOR
SIKKIM IN LOTTERY

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OFF TO OXFORD

**LACHEN PIPON
IS ANGRY**



**FIND OUT WHY
on page 3**

MIDWEEK

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11 - 17 OCT, 2006, GANGTOK

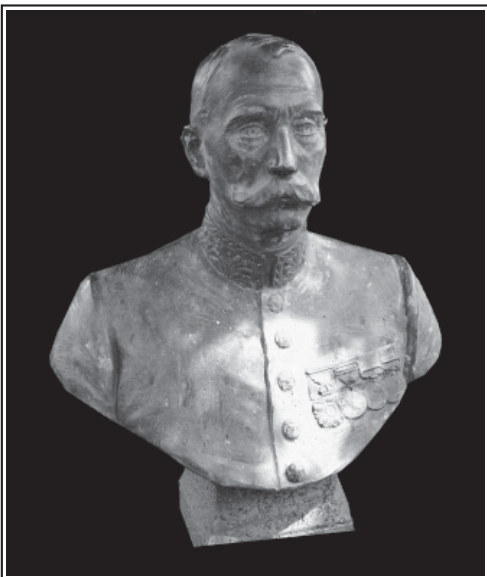
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'PILFERAGE' worth Rs. 2.68 crores uncovered at STCS

CMYK

**DUMPED, CHARRED
AND STILL STANDING TALL**



THE JOURNEY OF JC WHITE on page 6

THE COMPLETE STORY ON PAGE 2

SPIDERMAN ESCAPES, AGAIN!

Spiderman strikes! And he has given the police the slip yet again. The fourth such escape for the 22 year old in a row. This time he has escaped from the undertrial hazaat of the district courts at Namchi, the south district headquarters. PEMA L SHANGDERPA reports for MIDWEEK

GANGTOK: Spiderman strikes! And he has given the police the slip yet again. The fourth such escape for the 22 year old in a row. This time he has escaped from the undertrial hazaat of the district courts at Namchi, the south district headquarters.

Sikkim's most wanted criminal Rakesh Rai known more popularly as Spiderman for his ability to climb high rises and scale walls has fooled Sikkim police yet again, giving them the slip while being produced for the trial hearing for his double murder case at the Namchi district court in the afternoon today. He was driven to Namchi from the state jail at Rongyek here in Gangtok this morning.

According to Superintendent of Police (South) Mrinalini Shrivastava, the escape took place around 12.30 pm on 10 October and the district police were informed immediately. The police have launched a massive man hunt for Spiderman with all the outposts being asked to keep vigil as well as several search teams being sent off to various locations. Sniffer dogs have been pressed into service. The checkposts at Melli, Rangpo, Ramam have been alerted. Police have also been asked to keep vigil at the river routes in Jorethang as well as several other jungles in the district.

Continued on page 4

STCS under the scanner

Performance audit finds 'pilferage' of Cement, LPG worth Rs. 2.68 crores

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: One of Sikkim's best known and biggest public sector undertakings, the State Trading Corporation of Sikkim (STCS) has come under the scanner of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

According to reliable sources, STCS has been pulled up by the office of the Accountant General, for 'pilferage' of Cement and Liquid petroleum gas (LPG). STCS is the authorized agency for the supply of the two goods. While they supply cement to the State Government they are also the authorized distributors of LPG cylinders in the state.

Sources inform that a detailed review and performance audit of STCS being carried out at present by the CAG has revealed that both Cement and LPG were 'pilfered' to the tune of Rs. 2.68 crores. The figure is, however, cumulative with the short supplies having been passed down the years for the past several years. Majority of

the pilferage was found to be in the case of cement.

A physical verification of the stores is said to have revealed that there were short supplies of both the goods in the stores. It has also been learnt that this is the first time that the audit has carried out such physical verification of the goods in the state. The verification was carried out by STCS themselves in presence of the personnel from the audit. The verification was insisted for 'public interest' since public funds were involved.

The audit has found out that the accounts in the registers did not tally with the goods in the store when the verification was carried out, with the figure running above 2.5 crores. The goods which were found unaccounted for tantamount to pilferage.

Meanwhile, it is learnt that the chartered accountant of the STCS has also been hauled up by CAG since they had been certifying the reports without test checks or

physical verification. The chartered accountant audits the STCS accounts every year. Without verifying or without veracity they had certified the accounts annually purely on 'book value'.

A major cause for the pilferage is said to be the weak internal control system in the Corporation. This was informed to the management by the audit when they held regular discussions. STCS was also advised to improve their checks and balance system. The department themselves had never carried out such a physical verification.

High sources within the government have revealed that the office of the Accountant General under the CAG has asked the State Government for a Vigilance enquiry into the pilferage. They are said to have already written to the State Government with the request.

STCS itself has already initiated actions within the department for collection of the 'pilfered' goods.

STCS initiates enquiry following audit revelations

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: With the State Trading Corporation of Sikkim (STCS), under threat of a vigilance enquiry, the STCS management has initiated damage control measures starting with internal enquiries. It has now surfaced that the 'pilferage' took place at the supervisory levels with the store keeper and distributors being indicted for the lapses, which led to misappropriation in the supplies. STCS has attached the property of the store keeper as a means of recovery with some Rs. 26 lakhs recovered from him so far. Apparently, the store keeper has admitted to the misappropriation and the management at STCS hopes to make further recoveries.

Enquiry committees have been formed and two separate one man enquiry committees have been instituted to look into and investigate the pilferages in the supply of cement and LPG. While the chief general manager Gyamtso Bhutia will enquire into the lapses in Gangtok, general manager Menla Ethenpa will investigate into the Jorethang lapses.

It has been learnt that apart from the various lapses like not checking and keeping a tab on the supplies of cement to the store, even the sale proceeds in the case of LPG were not deposited on time. This had continued regularly at the supervisory levels leading to the huge accumulation of unaccounted accounts. "We have formed our internal committees and once they place the report we will fix the responsibilities on those who are involved" STCS Managing director Tempo Bhutia said while speaking to Midweek. Bhutia also said that the management was verifying their accounts to see if the pilferage actually amounted to the huge figure as was being quoted.

Recently, the board of directors of the Corporation held a meeting to discuss the issue and they have forwarded a suggestion to the State Government to form a committee to look into the details. Personally for Bhutia, well known for his managerial abilities and as one who has worked hard to give a new image to STCS, this has come as a huge blow and he admits to feeling 'let down by his supervisory staff'.

NE Commerce Ministers to meet in Gangtok

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Sikkim will host the two-daylong meeting of Commerce and Industries Ministers of the North Eastern states in the last week of October. The meeting will deliberate and review the North East Industrial Policy [NEIP] 1997 and 2003 as well as on the Look East policy of the union government, besides thrashing out several issues connected with border trade in the NE region.

Speaking to MIDWEEK, the State Commerce and Industries Minister RB Subba informed that the Forum of Commerce Ministers of the North East, headed by Assam Commerce Minister Pradyut Bordoloi as its chairman, will meet here to discuss how best the industrial packages can be modified for the NE states and attract more investors to the region.

The Gangtok meet will be a sequel to the recent meeting held in Guwahati as well as

their delegation to New Delhi where they met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Union Commerce Minister, asking for several sops and extension of the excise subsidy under the New Industrial policy, the Minister stated.

One of the bigger aspects of the NEIP is the demand of the NE ministers to extend the Excise subsidy under the NEIP which expires in March 2007. The ministers want the subsidy to be extended up to 2017 which was also the demand placed before the prime minister in their Delhi tour recently. Mr. Subba said that both the Prime Minister and the Commerce Minister gave a patient hearing but it was still left to them to pressurize and push harder for the cause.

In the case of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, the excise subsidy was already extended but it was not done for the NE states, Mr. Subba said, adding, "In real terms these states are

much advanced than Sikkim and North East as far as industrial development is concerned. When they have got the extension why not us?"

"We want to make our case strong when we meet to discuss so that we can again approach the Government of India unitedly," he added.

Several incentives and sops are also likely to be demanded under the new industrial policy to attract investors to the region. Setting up of special economic zones in the region is also likely to come up during the two day deliberations. The ministers will also discuss border trade through Moreh in Manipur, the two other border trade through Arunachal Pradesh, one in Nagaland and the one through Nathula in Sikkim.

The Commerce and Industries Minister also said that while a new Industrial Policy 2006 for the country was being framed, the forum wanted to discuss and suggest

various schemes and subsidies for the NE region for the policy.

He, however, said that there were still misgivings and misunderstanding at the bureaucratic level in New Delhi who have this notion that the money is not being utilised and put into proper use in the right places. "They have not visited the region and are mistaken in thinking since this is not the real picture," he said.

Speaking on the Nathula

trade, Mr. Subba said that while the volume of trade was small, it was the confidence building measure between the two countries that was impressive. He said that traders from both China and Sikkim were very happy with the trade so far and the Chinese traders even invited traders from this side to interact at the Rinchinggang trade mart on the last day of trade on 30 September last month.

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Why is Lachen Pipon angry?

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: It's 'hardware' as well as 'software' that is making Lachen Pipon Chyo Rabzor Lachenpa's head spin and fume with anger. The Pipon of Lachen Dzumsa has come out in the open with allegations against former senior north district officials, whom he accuses of misappropriation of funds under the United Nations Developmental Programme [UNDP] schemes sanctioned for Lachen Village. The nonsense Pipon does not mince words in making direct accusations against PW Lepcha aka Joe, the former sub divisional officer (Mangan) and PS Targain, former district collector (North).

He claims he wants to expose their misdeeds as he is answerable to the people of Lachen who need to know the truth.

The funds to the tune of Rs. 70 lakhs were sanctioned under the Rural Tourism 'hardware' Scheme (RTS) and the GOI-UNDP Endogenous Tourism 'software' project (ETP). Claims that works totaling upto only Rs. 14 lakhs have been availed by the people of Lachen under the schemes so far, the Pipon now wants the officials to be accountable for the balance amount.

Under the 'hardware' schemes fell the construction of a giant

a MIDWEEK photo



prayer wheel in the village for Rs. 7 lakhs, development of area around the prayer wheel at a cost of Rs. 2 lakhs, illumination of village street lighting for Rs. 7 lakhs, provision of flatstone footpath for Rs. 15 lakhs and funds for beautification and fencing of Lachen monastery, construction of toilets, erection of signage and construction of internal drainage, the works totaling Rs. 40 lakhs. The Pipon has claimed that the giant prayer wheel and the monastery gate was left unfinished and was completed by them

through their own funds recently. "In our religion leaving such works unfinished is a bad omen and does not reflect well for the village and in fact for the whole of Sikkim, as Lachen is the fountainhead of the state. So we decided to take up the work on our own and we have completed it under the Food For Work Programme [FFWP]," the Pipon told Midweek.

He also said that the people of Lachen toiled to complete the flatstone footpath in the village. "We

brought the *kalo pathar* 3 lakhs. "There were complaints that some of the villagers including the former Pipon who were part of the trip were kept in dormitories in the Delhi heat. There were also no interactions in Ladakh", he claimed.

He also accused the officials of not paying any visit to the area despite several requests by them for an inspection, saying that the co-ordinator was supposed to have made monthly visits.

Informing that the matter has been now brought before the UNDP officials, the Pipon has asked the officials to give details of the money given to the previous Pipon who has since expired. "The officials claim that they have handed some money to him. One cannot blame someone who has already passed away and if there were any transactions please furnish the details including the cheque details since it must have been done officially," he said.

Under the 'software' schemes of the project, funds were earmarked for conducting workshops for awareness on tourism industry, social mobilization, conducting baseline survey and trainings for visitor handling, skill development, local hospitality, guides and reception. While funds were set aside, no such trainings or workshops have ever taken place. He said instead of the villagers being sent for exposure and study trips outside to places where tourism is flourishing, it was officials and influential people who made the trip to Ladakh spending almost Rs.

3 lakhs. "There were complaints that some of the villagers including the former Pipon who were part of the trip were kept in dormitories in the Delhi heat. There were also no interactions in Ladakh", he claimed.

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The Pipon also feels that Lachen was being neglected while all the development was in Lachung, "We are like orphans. Lachung has the minister and officials to back them while we have no one," he said.



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Work on 1,200 MW Teesta-III hydel project to start by Jan '07

RHEA SHARMA

GANGTOK: Work on the 1,200 MW Teesta -III hydroelectric plant is to start in January 2007. This was disclosed recently by Hydro power company Teesta Urja. The Rs. 6,000 crore project is the biggest hydel project to come up in north Sikkim. According to the company, the project has received techno-economic and environment clearances and is likely to get forest clearance within a month. The mega project is expected to make the state self-sufficient in electricity generation and also enable it to sell surplus power to other states. The project would be completed in four-and-a-half years. It envisages building a dam on the Teesta river at Chungthang from where a 13.32 km long tunnel would stretch to Singik. An underground powerhouse consisting of six units of 200 MW each would be constructed at Singik.

But even as preparations are on full swing to kick start the project, doubts have been expressed over its location. According to the "Carrying Capacity Study of Teesta

Experts claim project located in earthquake prone zone, express concern over location

Basin in Sikkim", a study initiated at the instance of Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, the proposed area falls on Zone-VI of seismic zoning map of India. An earthquake of the magnitude of 6.0 Richter scale was recorded on November 19, 1980, with epicenter located 15 km ENE of Gangtok and focal depth of 47 km. Importantly the epicenter lies on the surface trace of Gangtok lineament and this project area also lies along this lineament. The study suggests that a comprehensive seismic surveillance plan is formulated during the initial planning stage of any hydroelectric project in this region to tackle the probability of occurrence of earthquakes.

The study also states that the project is situated in one of the most ecologically sensitive area of Sikkim. The geological sensitivity of the catchment is characterized by huge deposits of moraines in

the catchment upstream. These deposits are precariously placed and are in equilibrium with the natural conditions of these areas. Some of the glaciated areas have a history of being blocked by the debris resulting in the formation of temporary lakes, which upon bursting are known to bring this material downstream to deposit at various places in the river. This is evident from the recent deposit of debris along the course of Lhonark Chhu as evident from recent satellite data. A number of small and medium sized glacial lakes have developed in these areas. All these lakes are potential source of hazard generation. The Glacial lake Outburst Flood [GLOF] can create havoc in downstream area endangering the structures and habitations. The study has asked for proper monitoring and observation of the behaviour of these lakes. Any activity resulting in displacement of

accumulated debris would have disastrous consequence downstream.

Huge sediments, flowing into the river through landslide activity may lead to siltation problem, causing flash floods to occur endangering the structures.

Meanwhile, the appeal filed by the Affected Citizens of Teesta [ACT] with the National Environmental Appellate Authority [NEAA], New Delhi, in protest against the environmental clearance given to the 1200 MW Teesta Hydro Energy Power project is to come up for hearing on Wednesday, 11 October.

Dissatisfied with what it calls a 'total mockery' of the

Public Hearing for Stage 3 the Sikkim Pollution Control Board conducted in Chungthang in North Sikkim on 8 June earlier this year, ACT has filed an appeal with the NEAA to cancel the environmental clearance granted to M/s Teesta Urja Ltd, the developer for the Teesta Stage III power project.

The State Pollution Control Board was also served a legal notice to refrain from forwarding what the ACT calls, 'anti-environment and anti-people'. ACT is also accusing the SPCB of 'hurriedly forwarding a distorted version of the proceedings of the Public Hearing to the MOEF, and the expert committee set up by the MOEF also accepted the proceedings in gross violations of the instructions laid down for MOEF for environmental clearance.

Continued from page 1

Spiderman escapes, again!

Police said that he removed the iron frame of the ventilator and escaped through another hole in the narrow passage in the back of the building. He then crossed the short fences to freedom. All this while there were several other convicts and undertrails inside the hazaar, as well as escorts from the state jail and the Reserve lines guarding outside.

The frame of the ventilator was recently installed with the plaster still fresh. The renovation was done recently as part of the initiative to give improved and cleaner cells in the courts.

Spiderman had made his third attempt to escape from the prison in July last year

Jail authorities, however, had foiled the bid. Having managed to remove the nuts and bolts of the locked door to Cell No 4 (solitary confinement), he had attacked two warders who were on duty then. Both the constables were struck with wooden planks while fast asleep. The guards' cry for help had alerted the authorities, who nabbed the convict.

The most wanted criminal has been accused of numerous thefts and a double murder. But

what brought him first to the headlines was the theft in a four star hotel at M G Marg, where he robbed Swedish Bofors engineers of their money and belongings. He had scaled the wall and entered the rooms through the windows. He repeated this at another hotel where he robbed foreign and domestic tourists.

In September 2004 he had escaped from the state jail at Rongyek by scaling the walls with the help of a fibre optic cable tied to a watchtower. He was rearrested a week later in Jorethang after an attempt to enter the malkhana of the district court at Namchi to destroy evidence against him.

Spiderman had also escaped from the ventilator of a toilet at the district court in Gangtok after his arrests in the robberies at the Gangtok hotel earlier. He was being produced there for the trial hearings. Later, after his rearrest in Siliguri, his involvement in a double murder was discovered. He had killed Sonam Dadul Bhutia in the Dentam-Pelling road. Several days later he killed Bhutia's girl friend and threw the body off the road near the coronation bridge on the 31 A national highway near Siliguri.

Strike resumes at SMIMS

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: With the 31 September deadline for the affiliation of Sikkim Manipal Institute of Medical Sciences, Tadong, by the Medical Council of India set by the MBBS students over, 99 interns here have resumed their strike after the puja break.

Upset by MCI's delay in granting affiliation to SMIMS, the students, who have passed out from the college and are to complete their one year internship next year as junior doctors in Central Referral Hospital, have gone on an indefinite strike and boycotted their duties. The students are resolved that the strike will go on until the affiliation comes through and the State Medical Council is set up.

The interns had called off the strike earlier in July after carrying it on for two weeks

after receiving assurance from the SMIMS authorities that the affiliation would come through by 31 September and the State Medical Council set up within the same deadline.

The matter relating to the immediate affiliation of the institute had been taken up by the SMIMS authorities with the MCI and the Union Health Ministry earlier in August. Not only had the Ministry responded positively to this, it had also overruled MCI's objection to STNM Hospital being used by the SMIMS students.

Following the Ministry's directive, the MCI officials had visited SMIMS for a final inspection in the first week of September and were to submit its final report on a priority basis. However, the council's delay in submitting its report had resulted in further delay in the procedure relating to SMIMS's affiliation.

The Vice Chancellor of Sikkim Manipal University, K Jayakumar, meanwhile said that the matter was discussed in detail with the Union Secretary in the Ministry of Health and it was decided then that the MCI affiliation will not be delayed beyond October end. He said it was only a matter of time that the affiliation would be granted. He said that the executive council of the MCI was slated to meet on 18 October and it would be known after this sitting.

He also said that the Sikkim Medical Registration Act and the setting up of the State Medical Council passed by the Sikkim Legislative Assembly earlier this year was sent to the President for his assent and had not come back since. Any further action on it would come only after the assent of the President.

Gangtokians root for all Nigerian team



Midweek photos



a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: They have played in Nepal as a team and have already made a mark there by lifting the National League Championships as well as the Dharan Cup.

Nigeria United is now here in Sikkim albeit with a different name GMHK Lions XI as the 'surprise' team to participate in the 28th All India Governor's Gold Cup Tournament being played at the Paljor Stadium. The team is already garnering

huge support and fan following here in Gangtok, especially after their first win against last year's Gold Cup champions BSF Jalandhar.

The team comprises of players who have played for bigger clubs and teams in both Nepal and India. "We are a good team and we hope to perform well here. There are already very high expectations and lot of support and it is important we play well," Fuja Tope, the coach of GMHK Lions told MIDWEEK.

Strikers Muri Subair, Eze Collins and Daniel Ekong, who have earlier played for Sporting De Goa and Air India are some of the players to watch out for. Another 'star' is Abdul Okegbimiro.

While they responded to an invitation made to teams in Nepal by Sikkim Football Association (SFA) to participate in the tournament, three members have sponsored their participation here. Human Resources Development Minister G.M Gurung, Health

Minister Hishey Lachungpa and SFA Vice President and Bhaichung Bhutia's mentor Karma P Bhutia have chipped in to patronize the team for their Sikkim tour. That is also how the name GMHK evolved. The letters stand for the acronym of the three patrons.

Their Sikkim tour will create visibility for the talents and make it easier for them to be picked up by other teams and clubs from India.

Coach Tope, who also doubles as the manager of the

players said that while they do not have any corporate sponsorships at the moment, any help coming their way would be appreciated if given a chance. "Our intention is also to market the players for the bigger teams. We have plans to go to Malasia next to play in the leagues there if we are lucky with sponsorships," he told MIDWEEK.

With the huge local support behind them, the Lions already look like the favorites to clinch the title this year. Way to Go, Lions!



Lack of star teams disappoint fans

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The 28th All India Governor's Gold Cup Tournament is Sikkim's biggest sporting event. The event is much bigger this year with prize money of Rs. 5 lakhs announced by the Sikkim Football Association.

However, the huge prize money and the new 'ultra modern' Paljor Stadium has failed to woo the bigger names in soccer. There was a time when the presence of high profile teams like East Bengal, Mohun Bagan, JCT and Mohd. Sporting, etc., were a constant but although the facilities have got better, the participating teams not so.

For Gangtokians, waiting all year for this annual event, the non representation of big teams has come as a dampener. The All Nigerian team GMHK

Lions was the only solace for football aficionados in Sikkim this time.

One remembers the old Paljor Stadium where the big guys came to play in the sandy field with supporters cheering on from run down wooden stands. "Goa and Bengal are the most well known states as far as football is concerned. We are yet to see a good club or team from these two states play" is what a football fan had to say to Midweek. Adding that even last year's runners-up Tata Football Academy did not make it this year and the only other team from Bengal, Calcutta Customs, were out of the tournament.

SFA, however, clarified that the big teams were playing the IFA shield and that is why they could not make it to the tournament this time.

DUMPED, CHARRED AND STILL STANDING TALL

*John Claude White
Political Officer in Sikkim from 1889-1908
Erected by public subscription in commemoration
of his many
valuable services to the Sikkim state*

This is the inscription on the half broken stone pillar on which stood the bronze bust of the most famous Britisher who lived and worked in Sikkim for the better part of his life. His many 'valuable services' have been long forgotten. Even the bust of this engineer-administrator-photographer-historian on Sikkim has had an ignominious journey down the era, weathering several disgraceful moments, ravages of time and even a fire. Finally the statue of JOHN CLAUDE WHITE has got a respectable resting place at a picnic spot in Namli. PEMA L SHANGDERPA and KARCHOONG DIYALI track down the bust and its journey so far.



A part of the pillar that once held White's bust with the inscriptions still intact (TOP LEFT) and the bust as it stands today at the picnic spot at Namli. Midweek photos.

Crisscrossing heaps of garbage dumped along the route to the upcoming science city at Namli and next to the Rani khola is an upcoming picnic spot with swimming pools. The construction activity is still on at this sprawling 7 acres of land. A bronze statue of a mustachioed man under the shade of a mango tree attracts attention. On a closer look, you find it is none other than John Claude White, the first British political officer to Sikkim.

How the bust got here is an interesting story in itself. White's bust atop the pillar was first installed at the present Mintokgang-Whitehall junction here [then the part of the Palace ridge] in the capital sometime in 1932 when the White Memorial Hall was built to commemorate his services to Sikkim. The statue was uprooted from the Mintokgang-Whitehall-Ridge junction in the early 1980s and replaced by that of the first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was then dumped at the dingy store room of the PWD building at Zero Point here, where it lay for almost a decade. In the early nineties, when a major fire destroyed the building, the bust fortunately survived the fire. Basudev Pradhan, a contractor and businessman from Ranipul, got the contract to clear the debris. Realizing the historical significance of the statue, he decided against disposing it off to scrap dealers along with the charred remains of the building.

Today, the statue finds a 'respectable' resting place under the shades of a mango tree at his resort in Namli.

White's bust atop the pillar was first installed at the present Mintokgang-Whitehall junction here in the capital sometime in 1932 when the White Memorial Hall was also built to commemorate his services to Sikkim.

John Claude White was not only the first British Political Officer of Sikkim but also its most famous historian, being the first to capture the people, the landscapes and the monuments of Sikkim Himalayas in camera. Having governed the state for almost 20 years, he has rendered many invaluable services, including the introduction of a proper administrative system.

He is also responsible for giving Sikkim most of its old laws, rules and regulations, land reforms and taxation system, many of which are today protected under article 371 [f] of the constitution that our politicians and leaders resort to at regular intervals to claim Sikkim's special status.

Claude White also built the present Raj Bhavan during his tenure here which was then called the "The Residency" or *Burra Kothi*. After Independence, it became the Political Office of the Government of India and later the Raj Bhavan with the merger of Sikkim into the Union.

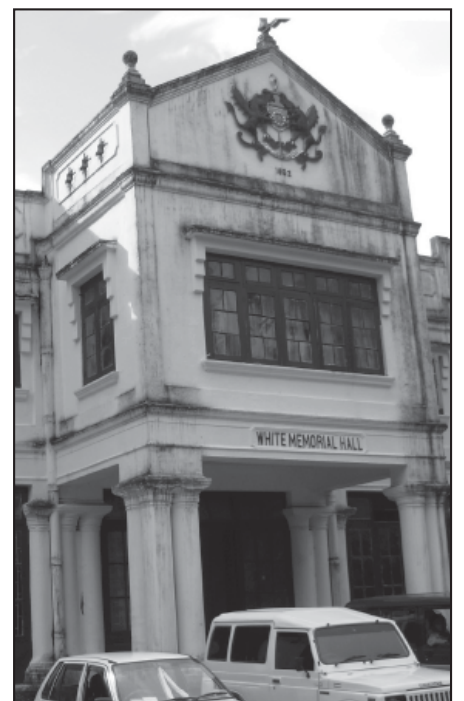
White visited Sikkim in 1887 for the first time. In the following year, he joined the expeditionary force sent to the Sikkim-Nepal war as Assistant Political Officer and stayed in Sikkim as the first Political Officer for twenty years. During that time, he went to the Talung glacier and also Lhonak. When he returned to Lhonak in 1902 as a member of the Sikkim-Tibet Boundary Committee, he carried out detailed explorations. In 1903-04, he accompanied the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa.

White was also a keen photographer and was associated with the Calcutta-based studio of Johnston and Hoffman. He started writing articles for the *Geographical Journal* and the *National Geographic Magazine* with photographs to accompany them. He focused on the sublime more than on the beautiful in his landscapes and photographs of gaunt, forbidding mountains and imposing buildings in Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet. White has taken some of the earliest and most breathtaking views of the Khangchendzonga and Sinolchu.

However, none of White's recorded documents of the period can be found at the State Archives here today. On the final part of his tour recent tour of Europe, chief minister Pawan Chamling, who reached London, seemed to be keenly interested in the political history of Sikkim and requested the British government to provide him historical documents pertaining to the influence of the British in Sikkim from the British Library in Euston, London. For a better understanding of the bygone historical links,

Chamling solicited the details of the agreement in the 1930s when Darjeeling was gifted by Sikkim to the ruling British government in India. He has also asked for the document written by John Claude White who was the first administrative official posted in Sikkim.

However, the respect due to Claude White, a legend in his lifetime, has not been given to him. Today, the journey of his bust is a sad reflection of our disregard for history. Even the White Memorial Hall (below), which was built to commemorate his services to Sikkim, remains a neglected heritage site which is used only as an entrance to the Annexe building which houses the Sports and Youth Affairs Department and several other offices.





SBI holds interactive session with customers

GANGTOK: The State Bank of India [SBI], Gangtok branch, will go online by the end of this month, hopefully making transactions more efficient and faster. This was announced on 9 October by the bank's Regional Manager R Ghosh during an interactive meet held here between the bank officials and the 'citizens of Gangtok'.

The bank, it was informed, had also recently tied up with the Indian Railways and was in the process of installing ATMs at railway stations. In fact, installation of the bank's ATMs at popular tourist destinations in Sikkim was one of the

suggestions made to the bank officials by those attending the meet. To this, the officials assured that Gyalshing would soon get an ATM, followed by installation of ATMs all over Sikkim in a phased manner depending on the economic viability of the place.

Suggestion to accord Sikkim a regional office of its own was made by former Tourism Secretary Tashi Densapa. He pointed out that besides Sikkim's status as a state of India and existence of a large number of the bank's branches in the state, it would make sense to open a regional office here instead of making the bank's

clients depend on the Siliguri office for sanction of loans, etc. He further suggested that if the bank's facilities and schemes were made available in smaller towns and rural areas, it would boost SBI's credibility in these areas.

Other suggestions placed before the bank authorities included giving the bank's interiors a facelift, besides ensuring that customers have enough privacy while handling their account details so that their confidential details are not compromised, better marketing strategies and attractive offers, and accessible extended customer service.

SIKKIM HAS HIGHEST TELE DENSITY

Offers galore from BSNL

a MIDWEEK REPORT

GANGTOK: On turning six, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has announced several offers for the festival season till the end of the year, which includes reduction in rentals from Rs. 299 to Rs. 225 per month. They have also revised the tariff for all calls with calls coming to as low as Rs. 1. 10 for 180 seconds call.

These offers were announced on 6 October by SC Ahluwalia, General Manager Telecom, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited Sikkim. He was speaking to the media here on the achievements and future plans of BSNL Sikkim in relation to BSNL completing six years of operation in the country on 1 October. During the meet, the GM also informed that Sikkim has topped the national list for being the state with the highest tele-density with the density of telephones standing at more than 20 for a population of 100.

The BSNL is also offering fixed line pre-paid schemes while post paid BSNL callers

can now avail calls within the circle at 40 paise. In broadband services, one can now avail unlimited download and upload facility on Data One broadband for Rs. 900 per month. The Excel Power also allows BSNL mobile users to call one land line and mobile number frequently used at 10 paise per call.

They have also been offering rebates from 10 per cent to 20 per cent on outstanding dues of landline connection for more than two years. A new mobile user now get 200 SMS free with activation for the first two months while full talk time on all recharge vouchers.

Mr. Ahluwalia informed that the BSNL is aiming to further strengthen the basic telephone network to make it more reliable and the services will be available in all the villages of Sikkim by the end of the year. Wireless technology is being introduced in the remote and inaccessible places. BSNL has also committed to provide high speed broadband internet services to all the towns, sub divisions and

district headquarters and the bigger villages.

Besides this, BSNL, which has 62, 000 mobile users in Sikkim alone, has been making the mobile services congestion free and available in all the nook and corners of Sikkim, including main roads and villages, informed the GM. For this purpose, BSNL has planned 50 more base transmission stations in all the interiors of Sikkim in the next few months. They will also be using state of the art overlay access network and optical fibre to build high speed data networking within this year at selective places. They will be installing underground OFC for more than 100 kilometres in order to strengthen transmission network and minimize the overhead cable network.

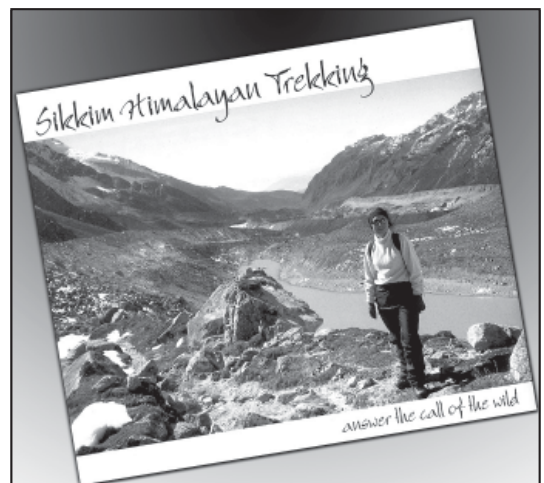
The BSNL, however, has been plagued by cable thefts in various parts of the state and have appealed to the people, civil administration and the police for help to take effective measures to minimize such thefts.

BHARAT

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NO BUMPER WIN FOR SIKKIM IN LOTTERY

96 Crores In Dispute

RHEA SHARMA

The State Government has lost out on almost a hundred crores over the last 5 years due to a deal gone bad between the Directorate of Lotteries and marketing agent Tashi Delek Gaming Solutions. The case is now in arbitration under the jurisdiction of Retired Justice Maloy Sen Gupta. A claim for around Rs. 96 crores was filed by the Directorate of State Lotteries in August 25, 2005. 17 sittings have already taken place with the next one slated to be held between 22-25 November. The Directorate of Lotteries is hopeful that this will be the last one with the judgment going in its favour. "We are hopeful for a favourable response," said

CM Sharma, Director, State Lotteries, speaking to Midweek

The State Government had entered into an agreement in August 2001 with the latter for a period of seven years for operation, maintenance and marketing of the State's online lottery. According to the agreement Government of Sikkim was to get 20 per cent of the gross revenue earned through sale of tickets every year for seven years, which was to be deposited with the government on a monthly basis.

The government introduced two lottery schemes, the Sikkim Super Lotto and Sikkim Thunder Ball in 2002. Due to stiff competition from other States and imposition of

ban on sale of lottery ticket by the government of Tamil Nadu causing fall in sale of tickets, the marketing agent requested the State Government in June 2003 to lower the state share from 20 per cent to 5 per cent in both the games so that the prize pool could be increased from 45 per cent to 60 per cent with a view to make the games more attractive and increase the ticket sales.

The cabinet approved the proposal in November 2003 with the condition that arrears of revenue should be cleared within 15 days. The matter was to be reviewed after a period of three months for inserting enabling clauses in the agreement. But even till July 2004 the conditions laid down by the cabinet were not

adopted. Although the reduction in the state's share from 20 per cent to 5 per cent was immediately effected from the sale of the online lottery draws with effect from 25 November

2003, corresponding increase in the prize pool from the existing 45 per cent to 60 per cent was not made by the marketing agent.

Even the minimum assured revenue of Rs. 45 crore for 2003-04 and Rs. 65 crore for 2004-05 was not paid. In addition, there was clear violation by the marketing agent of Clause 12 of the agreement, which stipulated that sale proceeds would be deposited with the Government on a monthly basis.

Now with the matter under arbitration, the State

Government is hopeful that the judgment will go in its favour. It is worth remembering here that the last time the State Government went into arbitration against MK Subba in 1993, over lottery funds, the case was awarded to the latter with the government being asked to pay damages amounting to Rs. 33 crores. The government appealed against the decision and after a long protracted legal process which took almost ten years, the case came up for hearing at the Supreme Court, which finally dismissed the case. If the present case is to be dragged for as long, each year the State Government will continue to lose a large amount of money with no guarantee of ever getting it.



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BJP wants easier access to information under RTI

GANGTOK: A petition has been made to the State Chief Information Commissioner by the state unit of Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] to initiate action against the State Information Officer of State Trading Corporation of Sikkim for flouting the Right to Information Act, 2005.

In its petition dated 5 October, the party has demanded that the official be directed to provide information to the party it had requested earlier and imposition of a penalty of Rs. 25,000 on the said officer for not providing the information within 30 days as prescribed by the Act.

In its press release, BJP has accused the STCS Information Officer of not offering any reasons for rejecting the party's request and failing to inform the applicants the period within which an appeal against such rejection could be made.

Stating that this will probably be the first case in which the Commission has been petitioned to take action against an information officer for denying information as per the Act, the party has expressed its hope that the Commission will "prove its impartiality and credibility".

The BJP has further appealed to the State Chief Information Commissioner to direct the Departments of Personnel, AR and Training and Rural Management and Development to provide information requested by it, which it is yet to receive, on CDs or floppy disks.

Earlier on 28 August, the party had requested the Chief Information Commissioner to use the power under section 18 sub-section I [f] of the Right of Information Act, 2005, and

amend the State Right to Information Act and include a provision to make information available in electronic format, such as CDs/floppies or email. The rate for providing information on such electronic format should be fixed at Rs. 50 at par with the Government of India and most of the state governments, the release adds.

The party has further demanded that the application fee should be reduced from Rs. 100 to Rs. 10 and the charge of photocopied material from Rs. 10 to Rs. 2.

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Song and Dance at Hee-Bermiok

PJ PRADHAN

HEE-BERMIOK: There is no dearth of young talents in rural Sikkim. This was amply proved during a District Level Song and Dance Competition organised here recently by Hee-Bermiok Tourism Development and Heritage Conservation Society of West Sikkim. The competition held over two days, on 27 and 28 September, saw nearly a hundred participants from West Sikkim vie for the top spots in these two categories.

Among the 26 participants in the dance category, securing the top five spots were Pooja Kharel [Soreng], Kiran Karki [Soreng], Rupesh Nepal [Bermiok], Suren Subba and Chandra Kala Portel respectively. Similarly, in the song competition, Nanda Kumari and party of

Gyalshing, Priyanka and party of Legship and Nimkit Lepcha of Central Martam secured the first three spots among the total 72 contestants.

The first and second place winners in both categories were awarded cash prizes of Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 7000 as well as trophies and certificates by Forest Minister SB Subedi, the chief guest of the concluding day's programme who also took on the stage and presented a Nepali song.

Also to leave their mark during the talent hunt show were Poonam Rai and Asha Lepcha, both 10, who despite not having won any prizes, enthralled the audience with their beautiful voices.

Applauding the talented young participants, Winnie Fred Rai, a post graduate teacher of Gyalshing Girls' Secondary school and one of the judges of

the dance competition, observed there were only winners in the contest.

Apart from the competition, another highlight of the programme was the commendable presentation of Sabin Rai's *Kalo Kalo Raat Ko* by Abhishek Shah, Prashant Rana, Kushal Rai, Kushal Khawas and Gyaltsen Tamang of Springdale Academy.

The contest, which was a huge success, shall now be turned into an annual feature of Hee-Bermiok. Plans are already on to turn this competition into a state-level event.

Present on the first day of the programme as the chief guest was Sanchaman Limboo, Advisor to the Chief Minister. Area MLA and the patron of the Society, NK Subba, was present on both days.

Wooing Tourists



Since its formation three years ago, Hee-Bermiok Tourism Development and Heritage Conservation Society has been working towards developing and promoting Hee-Bermiok as an eco-tourism destination. The society has been actively organising various activities related to tourism development and heritage conservation. Their efforts have today borne visible results with the area witnessing development of tourism infrastructure in the past couple of years.

Besides its wealth of natural resources, the area also has a rich cultural heritage. The society also aims to incorporate these two and promote village tourism. It already has started working towards developing and promoting the concept of home-stays in the area for both national and foreign tourists.

Apart from eco-friendly village tourism, the society feels spiritual tourism is another area that needs to be tapped. TN Sharma, president of the society, says the area has ample places of religious importance which could be promoted among the tourists. The famous Sirijunga Falls and the Sirijunga Holy Cave located at the confluence of Kalez and Reshi Khola at the foothills of Martam village is one such area.

There is also a beautiful Limboo temple known as Manghim at Martam. This is the area where Teyongsi Sirijunga, after arriving here from Nepal, is believed to have first imparted his teachings on the Limboo script and literature to the people. This is also the spot where Sirijunga gave his preaching on Yuma Samyo to his followers.

In addition to this, there are a few cave temples of religious importance, the big statue of Teyongsi Sirijung at Hee-Bermiok constituency, as well as man-made tourist spots like a boatable lake at Hee-Kyangbari. Once the construction of a 13 km trek route from Hee-Kyangshari to Barsey is completed, it can also serve as a mountain biking route.

To make its presence felt in the tourist map, Hee-Bermiok has already launched its own website. The society has further put in its bit and published a tourist brochure and created a documentary CD. A constituency profile has also been published to provide information on the area. Heritage Festival is another annual feature organised by the society every year in May.

It's a Holiday!

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Though the six-day long puja break was officially over some days back, Sikkim, it appears, is yet to get over the holiday mood. With the state government employees getting the afternoons off after 2 pm to watch the football matches at the ongoing Governor's Gold Cup Football Tournament being played here at the Paljor Stadium, the government offices here wear a deserted look. Football season apart, it looks like the mood to work is all lost with hardly any attendance in offices

since it reopened on 6 October. Apparently, an office memorandum was first released in 1995 granting the employees early leave in the afternoons to watch the Gold Cup matches. Sources said that according to certain clauses and para in the memorandum, it was not necessary for a circular to be released every year and the leave could be taken according to 'precedence'. However, another paragraph in it mentions that the employees would have to either produce certificates or tickets, including season tickets, to the heads of the department or relevant

authorities to take the leave for the 'period of the match'.

The holiday mood is to continue till Diwali is over. Soon after the football season ends on 19 October, the administration again goes for a five day break from 21 to 29 October for the Diwali.

Government employees in Sikkim enjoy some 40 days of holidays, including both national and state holidays. Add another 53 Sundays and 12 second Saturdays and it is 105 days off in a year. Not added to the total calculation is the one month of earned and casual leave each employee is entitled in a year.

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MIDWEEK

Vol. 1 No. 5

Need for proper rehabilitation

The ban on child labour has come into force from Tuesday but there is little cheer for millions of working children as their future appears uncertain in the absence of a comprehensive rehabilitation package. Questions have been raised on how the government will ensure the effective implementation of the Child Labour [Prohibition and Regulation] Act that bars children under 14 years from working as domestic help or servants at roadside eateries and other non-hazardous jobs.

While the Central government has decided to crack the whip, a ban without a proper rehabilitation plan will backfire. As per official estimates, 11 million children in the country work doing odd jobs. Unofficial figures put it at 75 million. Most often its crippling poverty forces them to send their children, sometimes as young as five or six, to work in other people's homes or in factories. Most of these children are made to work in unhealthy conditions for long hours and paid poorly.

Even though the intentions of the Union government may be sincere but the implementation of the Act would be quite difficult. To see the Act work, the government would have to come up with a plan to help these children and their families. Extreme poverty is one reason why parents of children are compelled to send their kids for work. Illiteracy is another. Therefore creating awareness among the poor parents would help them to help the kids first. At the same time the employers find cheap labour in children. The employers also need to be educated. But can a mere ban resolve the complex socio-economics issues involved? There is also a growing concern on the fate of the children once the ban comes into force. What will happen to the children? Who will take their responsibility?

There is no point freeing children from employment if their families have no viable alternative source of income because they will simply find themselves new work. If the ban is to be effective, then the government must intensify its schemes to reduce rural poverty, and offer better opportunities to convince parents and children that it really is worth staying in school.

SHOCKING AND FALSE REPORT

A shocking news item has been published in your Midweek news paper on its front page in its 27 September to 3 October 2006 Gangtok edition with the headlines "DUGDI".

A letter addressed to some hoteliers of Gangtok by SP/ Crime Branch of Sikkim Police was also published, requesting for 2 complimentary rooms in their respective hotels in view of the ensuing All India Police Football Championship being held in Sikkim.

The letter reflects the very humble nature of the request made by Sikkim Police. In fact, the hosting of such a prestigious National Championship requires the cooperation of all sections of society. This is a State Level event and we are proud that Sikkim Police is hosting the Championship.

The Sikkim Hotel and

Restaurant Association has not received any complaint from any hotelier of Gangtok regarding "Dugdi" or any sort of pressure from Sikkim Police for booking of rooms. The Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association strongly condemns the article, its contents and the way the letter of SP/Crime has been interpreted by a mischievous and perverted mind and the attempt to tarnish the image of Sikkim Police as well as Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association.

Sikkim Hotel and Restaurant Association hereby declares full support to Sikkim Police and extends all help and assistance possible for making the All India Championship, a grand success.

Ashwin Oberoi
Vice President
Sikkim Hotel &
Restaurant Association

INBOX

s i k k i m . m i d w e e k @ g m a i l . c o m

HELP SAVE LIVES

It is encouraging to see that somebody has shown real concern about a fragile subject of suicide. Yes! I am taking about an article "Contemplating Suicide" in Midweek dated 27 Sept-03 Oct 06, by the editor of Now! Mr. Pema Wangchuk.

It is true that in the recent times, the rate of suicide has really gone up in our tiny state. It is time that all of us start giving this issue a serious thought. Sources and statistics unveils that 100 persons commit suicide in Sikkim every year. And this is only the officially reported and recorded figure. If the unreported cases are also taken into account, the figures could be horrifying.

Kudos to Mr. Wangchuk for his viewpoints and suggestions in the said article. He honestly deserves a pat on his back for writing about such a serious and sensitive issue.

If truth be told, awareness drives against suicides in various schools is not sufficient to prevent this ailment. As the subject being very delicate and holistic, a detail action plan is required. Further, a one man show is not enough to remove such taboo and stains from the society.

It is rightly stated that decision to commit suicide is not of a stable mind. Such is the proverb which says "empty mind is a devil's workshop". Hence we can draw a hypothesis that an empty mind leads to depression and the person becomes self-destructive. I am sure that medical science will not agree with my statement but there is truth in what I said. [I am not trying to contradict any individual's views; I'm just presenting a simple approach to make the subject of suicide more understandable].

Suicide is a topic of very sensitive and complicated nature. Thus, to resolve this calamity, participation of people from all walks of life is very important, regardless of their caste, creed, profession and religion.

In this regard, CARE [Concerned for Complete Life], an NGO, has come forward to curb this disease and fight [up to some extent] against it. CARE has already organised several awareness programmes in various schools of Sikkim with a theme

"Cheerful and Complete Living". We are determined to continue such awareness programmes in various institutions and localities of Sikkim, duly considering different age groups and levels of people. No doubt, it is hard to bring the involvement of people together in one platform but the efforts are on.

It is also true that we cannot eliminate suicide completely from the society, but if efforts can be made to discourage it by various means of awareness camp, then certainly the present suicide rate can be brought down.

Starting from providing free tuition to underprivileged students of the society, CARE is involved in holding interactions among students and individuals with elite group of scholars, replying to the queries made by depressed people. Our counselors are also making house visit to offer counseling to depressed person [on request, duly maintaining anonymity] and of course, providing hotline counseling numbers.

Therefore, I take this opportunity and platform to appeal all those likeminded scholars/ healthy sponsors to come forward and extend their support to this noble cause. Meanwhile, I extend my gratitude to Mr. Wangchuk for his inspiring and suggestive article.

The following numbers - 99326-46646, 98323-04261, 98320-90058 and 97330-91092 of CARE - are always obliged to respond and welcome those willing to join hands.

Ongdup Lepcha,
Secretary, CARE

HOTELIERS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TOO

Kudos" for having launched Midweek, which is refreshingly wholesome. With all those pages to read, it really does justice to the capacity of the team behind it. I must confess it was also great to read Jigme N Kazi and hope to see more of his articles in future.

The high point of your paper was obviously the coverage on the Police "DUGDI". This was one of the strongest initiatives from the Fourth estate to highlight one of the most unreported but frequently committed harassment to the people. I

hope the civil society also reacts to these kinds of harassment in the state. But I also feel you should do a write up on the contribution that hoteliers need to make towards society. Getting tourists to the state is a collective effort and they also need to give back something in return.

Finally, in the process of exposing the dugdis, hope u r not getting the brunt of the exposure, if that happens the society has the right to know it and I feel it will. Only natural for Midweek to publish the same.

Yap Yum
Rec'd on email

SENSATIONALISM SUCKS

Stories like 'Dugdi' may help you sell the paper as people like to read this kind of article but it does not make for good responsible journalism. There is no place for such sensationalism in this small peaceful town

SK Rai

RICOCHET

I must say that those who live in glass houses must be careful that the bricks they throw at others do not rebound on them. This relates to the critique of the government site. There too many spelling and grammatical mistakes in your own copy that criticises the government site on the same grounds.

Karma Sonam

BE YOUTH ORIENTED

I have been following your paper since its first edition and I must say they are better than anything the state has seen in the past few years. The look is clean, the images finely used.

By the way, can you give the paper an overt YOUTH push? It can be a general paper, of course, but with a definite bias in favour of the youth. There is a great need for a youth-based paper. Doesn't mean you go funky all over the place, but address all the needs and problems of the youth, especially Sikkimese youth today. Even today, they need perspective, they need to look outwards, understand the national scenario, if possible without getting mired in the national corruption [financial and cultural].

Sujit Chakraborty
Received over email

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LANGUAGE BARRIER

A friend conducting a linguistic survey in Sikkim shared an interesting finding the other day. The respondents, mostly students, use one language for communication [with friends, elders and parents], record a second language as their mother tongue and write letters [or for that matter, prepare shopping lists] in a third language. It would have been wonderful if the respondents were proficient in all three languages. Unfortunately, most have only a working knowledge of the three. While Nepali serves well as the lingua franca, the command over it in most cases is only colloquial. Ask students to write an essay in Nepali and only in the very rare cases will something impressive be tabled. The mother tongue for most is only of sentimental value and proficiency levels are limited to understanding smatterings of it and the ability to offer the right greetings. English, the third language mentioned above, is used as a handy tool to write Roman Nepali while preparing lists.

Admittedly, a very wide generalisation is being made here, but the generalisation holds. It is a weird situation in most classrooms - while Nepali texts have to be explained in pidgin, English stories have to be explained in Nepali, Mathematics is explained in Nepali, but solved in English and for Science, most opt for the rote route! And, all schools in Sikkim are English Medium! People watch Hindi movies and TV serials, but read English newspapers. Groups rue the assaults on their identity in an alien tongue and write their graffiti in another....

Languages are in a very incoherent stage in Sikkim at present. While there are many efforts underway to revive

FRINGE BENEFIT

PEMA WANGCHUK

and cultivate ethnic languages, these gestures have not been able to rise beyond, well, being gestures. This could be because the intended audience is not receptive enough, or because the gestures are too token in nature. Either way, there is more than just the language at stake here.

We often hear about the Sikkimese way of life being under threat. Before we even begin trying to salvage what remains of our respective cultures, we should first agree that no culture can survive once its language is lost. Since most 'mother tongues' here are essentially dialectal in nature and have no great reserves of literature, once a generation stops using it, it is lost. Earlier, indigenous communities could rely on traditional educational systems to ensure their cultural survival, this support system does not exist anymore. Modern education has put paid to that. Earlier, the language would get passed down around kitchen fires and along with it would slip through the essence of ethnic cultures and traditions. As Sikkim grows more cosmopolitan, outside influences have edged out this form of education also. The formal education system, which, even though it includes many indigenous languages in its curriculum does not, however, include the subtlety with which cultures were earlier fostered. At best, the schools can equip the students with the language, which they should then utilise to further their learning.

Unlike the present trend where the learning curve ends

with the schooling years, when it comes to conserving cultures and identities through language, the learning should in fact begin once the language is mastered. This becomes necessary because indigenous languages are finding fewer and fewer people using them and the few who have mastered the tongue need to record whatever it is they can cull from the older generation so that some element of their identity survives the march of time.

In fact, this is one aspect of the cultural revivalism afoot all over the Hills that needs special attention. While it is all too easy to play the role of the victimised and collect sympathy, it is in substantiating these voices of concern with real action that the Hill communities are failing. This applies not just to the minority Lepchas and Bhutias of the Hills but also to the Nepalis, who in the national context are in minority. All three are as much at risk of being swamped out of their individuality. This, not because the majority is Evil, but because the minority is not honing its survival skills well enough.

It needs no reiteration that language is the link to identity. It is language that keeps cultures alive. For example, the differences in the way Nepali is spoken in the Hills and in Nepal where it was born, elucidate the differences in the identity of Indian Nepalis and the Nepalese from Nepal. The nuances of each language highlight the influence of the past which shapes the present of individual communities. Languages are more than just tools for communication and it is not enough to just be able to speak and understand them. To sustain cultures, they need to be written and read. Do we have enough of that happening around us?

The writer is Editor, NOW!

It's my right to crib!

Thanks for being out on the stands coz reading in Gangtok can get real boring especially with all the ministerial and bureaucratic blues that are featured all the time!

A nice space to share concerns and here I go!

1. Agree with "Pseudo Name" when he says that VIPS & Cops can park everywhere they feel like. It's a shame that they make the rules and they twist it all the time to suit themselves. Another thing that no ordinary citizen can understand is that, why do people with red VIP lights feel that they have a license to drive fast and almost bulldoze everything along the way!! At the rate that these people change new vehicles and speed/trip them...I'm sure a lot of us would gladly love the memorial holiday we would get in their memory in the event of a crash!

2. Dugdi! Well nothing new. Police all around the world are the same...Gangtok is no exception! An honest observation...Policing in Gangtok is fine minus the foul language and the alcohol breaths of the policemen after dark!

3. The other day I happened to go to the hospital because one of my friends was very ill and was admitted to the emergency ward. Being a rather healthy person that I am [ahem] I had never had the opportunity of visiting the emergency ward and also its much famed toilets! Well, I never knew I was in for a real surprise and utter disgust.

The patients in the said ward need the most care and I honestly felt the hospital was almost 40 years behind. Where does all the money go? I mean we just have 2 major hospitals in Sikkim and that too in such a sad state of affairs. It stinks, man! Swear it stinks!

Friends say that I crib a lot, maybe so, maybe not...who knows...but here I write...to crib and crib...but I think I am a citizen of this land and it is our duty to crib as unequals.

Lastly, please do keep us updated on the Public hearings on the hydel projects. Its a blot on our democracy that simple people who do not want such projects to ruin the land are marginalized and fooled in the hope that a big structure, a tunnel, turbines and herds of technicians from all over the company flock together, make colonies and change the face of the area forever. Benefits, economically, it sounds good but everybody knows that it is official Indian Govt Policy to make dams all over the North East and feed power hungry India and in the process...the corruption and the money. Well all of us have seen things here. People don't know there are more than 24 dams being constructed all over Sikkim and being done so by little known companies which have been registered just a little while ago and no credentials at all, mind you! 24 dams include the 6 major ones all over Teesta and also around DZONGU, the only place in the

continued on page 15

Concept good, not implementation



A section of the newly constructed 'foot' path (literally) near the Nirman Bhawan. a Midweek photo.

you maintain yourself. Actually, I am not here to congratulate you but for a cause which has been in my mind for some time. I read the column "Just a couple of Questions" in your last issue. Even I have many questions for the Government but this time I'll pose just a few of them which I hope will be printed and thus reach the always deaf ears.

I want to draw the attention of the Government to the construction of the footpath from Ranipool to Gangtok. It's indeed a noble work done which should have been done long before. But the implementing agency which has undertaken the construction of the footpath has not only done the construction work very badly but even before the completion of the work it seems to badly need a good repair job. The tiles which have been used are very slippery during rains and you know the weather of Gangtok.

Secondly, I believe a total of 54 feet has to be left for the road reserve. It is understandable that at some places it was impossible to leave 54 feet for the road but at certain places where this could have been possible, it has been ignored on the request of the building owner, thereby regularizing the encroachment of the road.

If you happen to walk through the

continued on page 15



Irom Sharmila, a one-woman army

Thirty-four year old human rights activist Irom Sharmila Chanu is a one-woman army who has not taken any food or water for the past six years in protest against the Armed Forces [Special Powers] Act. Sharmila has been trying to revoke the Act in Manipur after security forces in Malom in Manipur gunned down 10 innocent bystanders near the Imphal Airport on 2 November, 2000. The Armed Forces [Special Powers] Act only applies in Kashmir and insurgency-affected North East, which gives soldiers sweeping powers to kill suspected rebels, with virtual immunity from prosecution.

While the rest of the country is just catching on to the mantra of 'Gandhigiri', a new term for Gandhian non-violent mode of protest made famous by a Bollywood blockbuster, a Manipuri woman has been carrying on her lone 'satyagraha till death' for six years now, though without much fanfare.

Human rights groups say it has given the Army the license to kill, torture and rape with impunity.

Even as Ms. Sharmila's her battle enters the sixth year, there seems to be no positive response from the powers that be. Her struggle has been called by many as the longest political struggle of its kind.

Shortly after beginning her fast in Imphal, Sharmila was arrested and charged with attempted suicide. Since then

authorities have been force-feeding her through a nasal tube in the government-run hospital in Imphal. Sharmila had been kept in a dimly lit and damp hospital room, guarded around the clock by security women in civilian clothes and barred from meeting her family members, supporters or friends.

The maximum term for her offence is one year and police have been in the habit of releasing her every year, only to rearrest her the following day.

After her release from judicial custody in Manipur on 3 October a small group of supporters and human rights activists took advantage of her day of freedom to smuggle her through Imphal's high security airport and onto a plane to New Delhi. Soon after arriving, Sharmila made for Rajghat, the

memorial to India's independence hero Mahatma Gandhi who made fasting a potent political weapon against British colonial rule.

Sitting cross-legged on the lawn beside the memorial with a white shawl over her curly black hair, she said the government had betrayed Gandhi's memory in its reaction to her peaceful protest and its treatment of the people of Manipur.

"I would like to follow his tradition, his ideology," she said. "Maybe you call it a sacrifice but to me it is simply a bounden duty."

After offering floral tributes at Gandhi Samadhi, Sharmila continued her fast at Jantar Mantar before being arrested again in a late night swoop by the Delhi police on 6 October

and taken to the All-India Institute for Medical Sciences for urgent medical treatment. At the time of her arrest, her pulse was 47 - compared to the normal range of 60-80 - and she was running a temperature.

While there has been no response from the government, Manipuri students and general public have shown their solidarity to Sharmila's cause. Even as more than 100 police personnel arrested her, Manipuri students and other supporters sang 'We shall overcome'. Protest sessions were also held at different parts of Manipur on 6 October protesting against the alleged negligence of the Government of Manipur toward deteriorating health condition of Sharmila. Students and general public who participated in the protest session held in their respective localities from 10 am to 4 pm held placard and festoons with slogans like 'Remove AFSPA from Manipur' and 'Save Sharmila'.

Delhi dengue toll rises to 23, 40 fresh cases reported

NEW DELHI: With 40 fresh cases of dengue in the national capital, the number of patients suffering from the viral disease today rose to 997.

One person succumbed to the disease at the AIIMS last evening, taking the total number of deaths in Delhi to 23.

"Forty new cases of dengue were reported in the capital since yesterday," Delhi Health Secretary D S Negi said.

Of the 40 fresh cases, 34 were admitted to the AIIMS, where 173 people undergoing treatment for the viral.

Thirtyfour people, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's son-in-law Vijay Tankha, have been discharged in the past 24 hours ending 8:00 a.m., officials said.

This year, the number of dengue cases have registered a nearly a three-fold increase compared to the corresponding period last year when it had affected nearly 300.

Sprucing up its dengue-control measures, the NCT government yesterday issued instructions for closing down all water fountains, including those at Rajpath and in residential premises.

"We have asked the authorities to ensure that water is drained out from all the fountains," Negi said adding MCD's Zonal Deputy Commissioners were asked to coordinate the activities of sanitation and malaria control to ensure cleanliness in the city.

AIIMS, which has the maximum number of patients afflicted by the disease, has also augmented its facilities by drafting additional doctors and creating a new emergency ward for dengue.

Delhi accounted for 71 fresh cases yesterday while 61 patients were admitted on Sunday and 81 on Saturday.

VIP premises will be raided first

PENALISING THEM WILL SEND A STRONG MESSAGE, SAYS LABOUR MINISTRY OFFICIAL

NEW DELHI: Boosted by a dictate from the Prime Minister to stop employing children as workers, states have been asked to raid the premises of the VIPs first. Hence, Tuesday onwards, houses of top politicians, ministers, bureaucrats and police officials will be under the scanner as the inspectors go knocking.

"Penalising VIPs would send a strong message in the society and would act as a deterrent for others," said an official from union labour ministry.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, prohibits employment of children up to the age of 14 years as domestic

servants or servants in dhabas (roadside eateries), restaurants, hotels, motels, teashops, resorts, spas and recreational centres.

Violators face a prison term of up to two years and/or a fine of up to 30,000 rupees. Employing children in glass, carpet, zari factories and slaughter houses have already been banned in the country.

According to census data, about 12 lakh children are employed in India in various hazardous jobs while 1.2 lakh work in households and 71,000 slog in eateries etc.

However, activists say the figures are higher. They fear that the law could result in under-age workers getting

pushed into hidden and more dangerous jobs.

While a centralised toll-free helpline number - 1098 - has been set up in 70 cities where the distressed children can call for help, the states have made transit homes to shelter the rescued children.

Arrangements has been made by state governments to accommodate freed children in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and National Child Labour Project. According to labour ministry officials, the rescued children will be escorted by police back to their home states, where NGOs will be in charge of their rehabilitation.



Every once in a while, when we least expect it, someone, somewhere ends up striking a deep chord within us – be it through a casual remark, a well thought out essay, an unusual music composition or even a blog post. During our recent 'blog surfing', we came across Illusionaire's blog post on racism that eloquently spoke about how, despite being Indians, some of us are yet to find acceptance in the mainstream, thanks to stereotyping. And we just had to share it with you. What follows are excerpts from the article. To read the entire article, visit his blog at...

www.mizohican.blogspot.com

*Abey saala chinky
Oye chinky*

*Ching chong bhen ch*d chinky*

These are just some of the few racial slurs people hurl at you everyday when you walk the streets of Delhi or other metros here in India if you happen to have a mongoloid facial character. You'll get that treatment everywhere for committing just one simple sin: Being born with "slit eyes". Ah! What a crime! Completely unforgivable! Society must never accept such a heinous violation of our Indian Constitution. Burn every slit eyed male and female you see so that they don't dilute the proud Aryan and Dravidian bloodline.

I, for one, am the last person to be insulted by the word "chinky". I guess one reason why the word doesn't mean anything to me is because of my upbringing. I've always been in a really diverse multi-cultural gang of friends where we used to utter racial slurs, expletives and other profanities freely at each other and none of us were the least bit offended by any of those "insults" as we were the closest of all friends [which doesn't mean that we utter racial slurs at other people we don't know. This was strictly only-within-our-gang thingie].

Yet as my small World started getting bigger and bigger, I soon came to realize that people, a hell lot of other people, people I haven't even met before, would cuss at me using that racial slur. The difference between my closest friends calling me a chinky and these strangers calling me a chinky is HUGE. The latter does it so in a very derogative, demeaning and offensive manner, all because of my race. Even when you don't mean to offend anybody, identifying other races with a racial slur meant for that particular race is indeed a racist action.

In my three years as a blogger, I have politely requested many bloggers who would generalize and identify us [Northeast people] as "chinkies" on their blog not to do so since the word is a derogatory slur. There are many Indian blogs out there where people would say stuff like "there were many chinky people there", "he's a stupid chinky", "it sounded like a chinky language", "we decided to eat chinky food", "the waiter was a chinky guy", "we watched a chinky movie", "there were two chinkies playing for the opposite team", "the pub was filled with chinkies, like a bloody invasion", etc [These are all actual entries made by people on their blogs]. I never protest to such statements but rather try to tell them gently that chinky is an offensive slur. Some of them even replied that

RACISM: CHINKY WHAT ME INSULT?

they didn't intend to offend anybody. I don't think "having no intention to offend anybody" gives that person the right to use racial slurs meant for other races. And if they really did not intend to offend anybody, then why use a racial slur in the first place anyway? I find that strange.

I used to wonder why other Indians would call us by that name just to have some strange satisfaction. Because "chinky" is actually derived from the racial slur "chink" which was solely in reference to the Chinese [not that I'm saying that's okay]. I guess to a narrow minded ego-centric "stereotyper", every mongoloid person comes from China, and still holds a valid Chinese passport, just because "we all look the same".

The Racial Slur Database even defines "Chink" as: Asian equivalent of "Nigger" for blacks. Two possible origins: the dictionary definition is "A narrow opening or slit", meaning a reference to their eyes. Or could also refer to the sound of someone working on a railroad, which Chinese immigrants helped build in 1800's America. Technically should only refer to Chinese, but used for all Asians.

Yet somewhere down the line, the word "chinky" suddenly transformed into a word meant to insult other Indians from India's North-east. As if to show us that we are not welcome to the rest of India, or to remind us everyday that we have a "non-Indian" face and that anybody not having a picture-perfect "typical Indian" facial feature is not accepted as an Indian.

Some people from the Northeast found that popular Aamir Khan's Coca cola Ad "thande ke tadka" offensive because of the way he imitated the Mongoloid Race, especially after Northeast students all over India immediately became the butt of crude comments such as "chinky ke phadka" thanks to Coke and Aamir Khan. I personally don't find anything wrong in that Ad but there's this other Ad



by a dog food company called Pedigree, where the dog featured in that Ad is ostentatiously called "chinky". And the people in that Ad would throw a bone or a ball and proudly say "chinky, go fetch" and laugh their hearts out. And that Ad appeared like a hundred times on National Television [even till now]. I'm sure members of the Censor Board too must have had a hearty laugh at the dog being called "chinky".

India still has a long way to go in terms of educating its masses that there are also people of mongoloid lineaments included in what constitutes an Indian. But until that is done, India's so called "chinkies" will continue to be stared at, goggled at and even jeered at by the vast majority that simply do not understand us.

The only solution to this gross stereotyping [misunderstanding] is Education. School children should be made more aware of India's Northeast at an early stage. One paragraph mentioning briefly about the Northeast in our geography text books will not do. So many people don't even know the seven sister States of India [eight including Sikkim], and some of those who do know a bit about the existence of these States, think people from these places are all cannibals, a hilly jungle occupied by tribals ready to bite off your knockers anytime. Some people even think that every mongoloid person walking around in India is a Nepali. Yes, I know learning about Rana Pratap Singh or Rani of Jhansi is important in our Indian history syllabus. But I feel learning about India's North east is also equally important, if not more. Because these children, the future of tomorrow's World, are going to grow up where they will never meet Rana Pratap Singh again but most definitely will meet a person from India's North East.

Illusionaire is a prolific writer from Mizoram, currently pursuing his MBA in Mumbai.

WEB DESIGN

email: self@arthurpazo.com

WEB DESIGN

CHINK

NEDFi offers more incentives

GANGTOK: There is good news for the first generation entrepreneurs from the North East region. North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. [NEDFi] has modified and reduced the interest rates of its four existing schemes under the North East Equity Fund Scheme [NEEF] to provide credit access to the first generation entrepreneurs.

Under the modified interest rate, the new rate for the North East Entrepreneurs Development Scheme is 8.76 per cent per annum. The maximum project cost for this scheme is Rs. 25 lakh. Similarly, the interest rates for schemes like Women Enterprises

Development, Jute Enterprises Development and North East Handloom and Handicraft have now been fixed at 7.35 per cent per annum. The maximum project costs for these schemes are Rs. 5 lakh, Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 20 lakh respectively. The new interest rates will be eligible for projects sanctioned after 1 October, 2006.

In keeping its commitment to provide credit to industrial units in the North Eastern region, the corporation has further announced new reduced interest rate to these industrial units from the existing 13 per cent per annum to 12 per cent annum from 1 October.

India less corrupt than before

Believe it or not, but corruption in India has dropped - slightly

In the Global Corruption Index, a survey of 133 nations conducted by Transparency International [an anti-graft watchdog], India stood 83rd in the world, alongside Malawi and Romania.

India recorded a score of 2.8 out of 10. Last year, India's score was 2.7 out of 10, but it stood 71st in a list of 102 nations, unlike 133 this time.

Finland with a score of 9.7 has been ranked first, making it the least corrupt nation on earth. A score of 10 means a country is seen as being 'highly clean', and a score of zero means 'highly corrupt.'

Bangladesh had the dubious distinction of being the world's most corrupt nation with a score of 1.3, worse even than

Nigeria and Haiti, which had scores of 1.4 and 1.5, respectively to stand 132nd and 133rd. However, Asia as a whole fared badly in the report on corruption, with many nations in the region being counted amongst the worst in the world for graft among public officials and politicians.

Thailand stood 70th with a score of 3, while China and Sri Lanka were both on the 66th position with a score of 3.4, followed by South Korea with 4.3 on the 50th position and Malaysia with a score of 5.2 was at 37th.

The Berlin-based Transparency International said the survey did not include all the nations in the world for want of data.

Finland, Iceland, Denmark

and New Zealand topped the world rankings. Hong Kong was equal 14th with Austria on a score of 8, while Japan was equal 21st with a score of 7.

Meanwhile, Peter Eigen, head of based Transparency International, said that rich nations need to do much more to help developing countries tackle endemic corruption.

"Nations starting with a high degree of corruption should not be penalised since they are in the most urgent need of support," he said.

He urged the leaders of developing nations to put in place anti-corruption measures, "but they also urgently require practical help tailored to the needs of their national strategies".

3 Lakh passengers get to fly at Rs. 6 each

BANGALORE: Low-cost airline Air Deccan announced on Saturday that it would offer 3 lakh tickets at Rs 6 (plus taxes) each for travel between October 30, 2006, and March 25, 2007. The bookings for the same will open from tomorrow. The scheme was in addition to its plans to offer the same number of tickets at three rupees each to mark its third anniversary. "The scheme would encourage and enable many more people especially

first time fliers and rail passengers to take-off to skies," the airline Managing Director Capt G R Gopinath said. In the past, during peak seasons as well as holidays, Air Deccan had boldly offered popular offers such as air tickets at Rs 1 and Rs 3 and even a fly-for-free offer, he added. He pointed out, "As part of 'Destination Number 1' campaign, which is on till November 30, in case a flight is delayed by more than three hours or cancelled on the

day of travel, we are offering free tickets to our passengers. We are confident that our dynamic pricing of tickets will give us an edge over our competitors and bring us closer to our vision of making air travel commonplace in India."

Since its inception in August 2003, Air Deccan had carried over 6.6 million passengers. The airline has recorded an on-time performance (within 1 hour) of 98.33 per cent for August 2006 the release said.

Just click to get your house soon

NEW DELHI: Selling property over the Internet, or electronic auction, is slowly emerging as a trend on the real-estate market. Sources say the Income Tax Department might consider using it to reach a larger audience and attract a larger number of bids. But the department might face a problem on the issue. Section 4 (E) of the IT Act, 2000 prohibits electronic transfer of property. But it does not prohibit auctioning of property. Sources say the Government plans to make the best use of this loophole. HSBC Bank was the first to e-auction its properties last year. It was soon followed by the TVS group. Earlier this year IDBI Bank also tried, but had to cancel the e-auction, because of an inadequate response. All the three companies used real-estate consultancy CB Richard Ellis to conduct e-auctions. Now the Government has approached the firm and the proposal awaits Finance Ministry's approval.



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RbK

LIFESTYLE

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Court denies bail to 'masked gang'

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The District and Sessions Court here has denied bail to the alleged members of the masked gang who had attempted to rig the lottery results in their favour last month. The bail was denied by the court on 29 September.

The group of accused had filed an application for bail earlier on 18 September. Though the court had scheduled its hearing on 23 September, the hearing was adjourned to 26 September as the hearing could not take place due to lack of time. The hearing had to be rescheduled again to 27 September as the

regular public prosecutor could not present himself in court and the replacement prosecutor had sought an adjournment.

The hearing finally took place on 27 September. Besides the Investigating Officer who submitted a one page written objection, the public prosecutor also raised strong objection against the grant of bail. Though the court, after lengthy deliberations, stated it would pronounce its

judgement the next day, on 28 September the court stated the judgement was not ready and would require one more day.

On 29 September, the court in its judgement denied bail to the alleged members of the masked gang.

The group had been arrested by the police for entering the Lotteries Department last month, on 11 September, and attempting to coerce the judges there to sign their numbers as the winning ticket.

Conman Debashish back in police remand

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: After cooling his heels in the state jail for a few days, Debashish Mukherjee, chief production manager of Vishal Telefilms, has been brought back into police remand following another fresh complaint of fraud lodged against him by TN Pradhan.

The complainant has mentioned that Debashish had defrauded him of a considerable amount of money. After Debashish was charged under 490/420 and 409 of the IPC, he was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate and a police remand against him obtained.

The accused had been arrested earlier on 13 September on charges of conning a large numbering people into loaning him large amounts of money.

Tadong SSS students excel at national level

a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: The mood is jubilant at Tadong Senior Secondary School. And there is more than one reason for the school to be jubilant about. Two of its class X students, Bimla Limboo and Choden Bhutia, have secured first position in the North Eastern Region Level Quiz competition held at Guwahati on 28 September. The quiz on 'Renewable Sources of Energy', hosted by famous Bollywood actor Anupam Kher, was organised jointly by Zee News and a central government agency and aired by the channel on 9 October.

The two students, who defeated contestants from St. Nicholas High School and Falter High School of Guwahati and Marweai Hindi High School of Dibrugarh, will now represent the region at the national level competition at Mumbai to be held next month.

Earlier on 6 October, Repandi Lepcha, a class X student of the same school, had bagged second position in the national level science seminar held at Visvesvarya Industrial and Technology Museum in Bangalore. Altogether 34 schools from all over India had participated in the seminar which had 'Conservation of Bio-Diversity - Prospects and Concerns' as its theme. Repandi will now receive a monthly scholarship of Rs. 500 for the next two years.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

continued from page 11

It's my right to crib!

world for the Lepchas and also a very hot biodiversity spot! Streams from sacred Tholung Chu to just about every small stream is being *dammed*, big and small. Add Sikkim's 24 Dams and the others in the North East. It's over 100! Sadly, voices in Dzongu are silenced officially and we don't have influential families, a strong lobby, a change in govt and personalities like Danny Denzongpa helping the cause of Dzongu and other places today.... like the concerns shared about Rathong Chu 10-12 years back.

N. Pradhan
Rec'd over email

Concept good, not implementation

stretch from MP Golai to Manipal Gate you will find out the irregularities. I was once walking through the stretch and to my surprise found out that the road just below the college ground is not even sufficient for free flow of two vehicles at a time. This could have been avoided had the implementing agency been a little cautious about the job which they are doing. This will now remain for many years to come and pose a permanent problem. These types of irregularities should be avoided while constructing permanent structures.

I do hope that this letter of mine sees the light of the day.
bhannaiparcha@yahoo.com



SPECIAL BOOK EXHIBITION

Visitors browse through a wide range of books on art, culture and history during a Special Book Exhibition held at White Memorial Hall, Gangtok. The exhibition, held from 6 to 8 October, was organised by the Publication Division of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in collaboration with the State Information and Public Relations Department. The exhibition cum sale also had on display Gandhian literature, children's literature, reference books and multimedia CDs.

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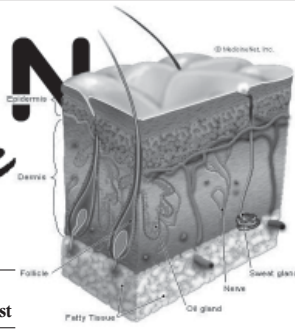
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The skin is the largest organ of the human body and covers it completely except at the orifices. It is multi-functional, the prime function being the protection of the body from external influences. It is basically composed of three layers-epidermis, dermis and subcutaneous tissue [fat]. The thickness of the skin varies from one area of the body to the other. The thickest skin is found on the palms and soles and the thinnest skin is on the eyelids and the scrotum - thus the palms and soles are the toughest portions of the skin and can tolerate higher degrees of external onslaught than any other skin area. The skin contains different cells serving different purposes including immunity and colour. It also houses the appendages of the skin - meaning the hair follicles, the sweat glands, the sebaceous glands and the nails.

The skin itself is prone to various diseases, some of which can be diagnosed at a glance and treated accordingly and some of which may require laboratory examinations including a biopsy. Different individuals, under different conditions may show variations in the same disease so it is important to avoid over-the-counter or self medication as this may obscure the appearance of the basic lesions and also yield complications. At this point, it would be appropriate to refer to the inadvertent and rampant use of topical [locally applied] steroids like Betnovate, Dipivate, Dipsalic, etc., in our state. Medications like these, when used under prescription, are indispensable and curative but can create many unwanted effects if misused.

Healthy skin can be maintained by very simple procedures like washing/ bathing frequently, always keeping the skin moisturized, using sunscreen. A good sunscreen will not only prevent your skin from aging prematurely but, when used properly, will give you almost cent per cent protection against sun-induced skin cancers.



POTBELLY = BACKACHE

If you're suffering from backache, your potbelly may be to blame. The weight of a bulging tummy increases the curvature of the back, which places greater strain on the vertebra and lower back muscles, according to the Rabin Medical Center in Israel. It's also difficult for the weakened, distended abdominal muscles to support the spine.

So, if there is no medical explanation for your aching back, try eating less and exercising more. Swimming, especially backstroke, is an excellent way to exercise and strengthen your abs.



What to Do for Colds and Flu

IF YOU ARE suffering from a stuffy nose, sore throat and body ache, you are just another in a long list of people doing so, here in Gangtok. According to doctors, cases of cold and flu are on the rise and quite common at this time of the year. Although symptoms may seem similar, there is a difference between cold and flu and both require different kinds of treatment.

IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU? KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

A cold and the flu (also called influenza) are alike in many ways. But the flu can sometimes lead to more serious problems, such as pneumonia.

A stuffy nose, sore throat, and sneezing are usually signs of a cold. Tiredness, fever, headache, and major aches and pains probably mean you have the flu.

Coughing can be a sign of either a cold or the flu. But a bad cough usually points to the flu.

KNOW WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

You usually do not have to call your doctor right away if you have signs of a cold or flu. But you should call your doctor in these situations:

- Your symptoms get worse.
- Your symptoms last a long time.
- After feeling a little better,

you show signs of a more serious problem. Some of these signs are a sick-to-your-stomach feeling, vomiting, high fever, shaking, chills, chest pain, or coughing with thick, yellow-green mucus.

TRY TO AVOID GETTING A COLD

- Wash your hands often. You can pick up cold germs easily, even when shaking someone's hand or touching doorknobs or handrails.
- Avoid people with colds when possible.

- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and then throw the tissue away.
- Clean surfaces you touch with a germ-killing disinfectant.
- Don't touch your nose, eyes, or mouth. Germs can enter your body easily by these paths.

TRY TO AVOID GETTING THE FLU

A flu shot can greatly lower your chance of getting the flu. The best time to get the shot is from the middle of October to the middle of November, because most people get the flu in the winter. The shot can't cause the flu. But you may feel sore or weak or have a fever for a few days.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE CAN PREVENT FLU, TOO

If you are one of those who should not get the flu shot, ask your doctor about prescription medicine to help prevent flu.

And if you get the flu, taking

this medicine within the first 48 hours can make your illness less serious.

BUT DO NOT TAKE ANTIBIOTICS FOR A COLD OR FLU

Antibiotics won't work against cold and flu germs.

And, you should take antibiotics only when really needed.

HELP YOURSELF FEEL BETTER WHILE YOU ARE SICK

A cold usually lasts only a few days to a week. Tiredness from the flu may continue for several weeks.

TO FEEL BETTER WHILE YOU ARE SICK:

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Use a humidifier - an electric device that puts water into the air.
- Take a cough and cold medicine you buy without a prescription. It may help.

PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM 'SALICYLATES' IN COLD MEDICINES

Do not give aspirin or other salicylates to children or teenagers with symptoms of a cold or flu.

If you aren't sure if a product has salicylates, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Young people can get sick or die from a rare condition called Reye syndrome if they take these medicines while they have these symptoms.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT MEDICINES FOR YOUR SYMPTOMS MAKE SURE THE LABEL STATES THAT IT TREATS YOUR SYMPTOMS.

IF YOU WANT TO:

- Unclog a stuffy nose
- Quiet a cough
- Loosen mucus so that you can cough it up
- Stop runny nose and sneezing
- Ease fever, headaches, minor aches and pains

CHOOSE MEDICINE WITH:

- Nasal decongestant
- Cough suppressant
- Expectorant
- Antihistamine
- Pain reliever (Analgesic)

midweek mail: sikkim.midweek@gmail.com

I just got back from a great holiday. It was all the more special because I finally took some time out for myself. A confirmed cleanliness freak, I finally learnt to let go and relax this holiday.

For starters, I deliberately left my travel iron at home. Also my considerable array of cleaning fluids. No iron, no cleaning fluids, no extra work. For once I was ready to put up my feet and enjoy my holiday.

I did not like what I had become over the years. I continually obsessed over the safety of my kids, about dirt and germs and a clean house. Any spare time I had, I'd land up tidying up the place, only to see two tornados tear it apart a little while later. It was an endless cycle, a vicious circle in fact. My cousins and friends joke that the clothes in my wardrobe are precision folded and lined using a ruler! A friend recently confessed she actually quickly dusted the office before I landed up!

I guess in trying hard to be the superwoman I'm not, I'd tried too



hard and lost touch with the normal woman I am, with her own needs and desires. When was the last time I'd allowed myself to enjoy a good read, or take a quick nap on a hot afternoon? I realized a clean house was no compensation for a perpetually uptight obsessive wife and mother, it couldn't possibly have been fun for my family especially since I'm the DIY types.

This holiday, I was determined to set the equation straight. So I took time out for myself. I did not cringe when the bedsheets were rumpled, or the floor a trail of crumbs. I let the kids go out and romp around happily in the park

without hanging around them like an overanxious drip. I gave in again to the decadent pleasures of a long read followed by a quick snooze on the sofa.

Had I had the iron or the cleaning fluids, I know what would have happened to my lazy afternoons. Yes, I'd have ironed and scrubbed my whole holiday away. Yeah, and the freshly ironed clothes would've become rumpled in five seconds flat and my clean floors splotted all over in no time.

It sets you thinking how you allow yourself to get so caught up in day to day chores that you plain forget how to relax. It gets so bad after some time that you actually feel guilty

about taking a little time off for yourself. There's the weight of expectations, yes, but most of the expectations are unrealistic and self created.

Many of my old school friends show the same tendency to neglect their own needs as they struggle with the multiple demands of home, work and kids. Something's gotta give. The first thing that goes out of the window is your good humour. The stress levels are palpably higher, and yes, we tend to be irritable and snap at the menfolk and the kids as well. We are constantly busy mentally ticking off in our heads the list of chores yet to be done that we only half heartedly listen

to the childish prattle going on. But kids grow fast and there's more to life than just work, work and more work, whether in the office or at home.

So ladies, take time out to indulge yourselves without feeling guilty. That guilt is your own creation. Relax, take time out just for yourself, indulge yourself and your family will only thank you. For you will be relaxed and a much more indulgent person after some time recharging your batteries doing what you enjoy. We're only human and we need time out for ourselves.

This week we bring you a feature on overprotective parents which we think is mighty relevant to many local parents who struggle to bring up their children in a Sikkim which is a far cry from the sedate place they themselves grew up in. The trick is to care but not to obsess, for in trying too hard to protect our children, we actually impede their spirits and development.

Have a good week!

- TINA

overprotective parents



CHECK OUT THESE THREE WOMEN

Shivani, 28, is a bright an exuberant young lady who once worked for a private bank but decided to be a homemaker once her son was born. Though the baby is two years old, Shivani prefers to hold his hand everywhere because she's afraid he will stumble and fall.

Alisha, 32, a teacher at a school in Mumbai, will not send her 5-year-old for swimming lessons. The reason: She fears he will drown.

30-year-old homemaker Priya got married soon after college and never worked. She carries her 6-year-old's tiffin box to every restaurant they visit because she fears that her daughter will get sick eating outside food.

All these women come from different backgrounds, are of different ages and have children of varied age groups. Yet they have one thing in common: all are overprotective parents.

Being an OP (that's what we'll name it henceforth) comes naturally to many a parent.

While it is good to be protective, one should know where to draw the line so as to not step into your child's individual space. In the long run, it could stifle your child's growth.

Child psychologist Jinisha Chedda, who manages her own counselling centre Sol's ARC in Kandivali, Mumbai, cautions against this behaviour. "Constant interference from parents deprives the child of the opportunity to explore the world emotionally and physically. This is a must if children are to become confident, responsible and independent adults," she says.

You may be genuinely concerned but the more hyper you are about your child, the more stressed out you are going to get. And, the more finicky, extra-delicate and cranky your child is likely to become.

"Being a hyper-concerned parent takes the fun out of parenting and increases stress levels amongst parents as one gets more and

more obsessed with their child," says consultant counsellor Mukta Rege. Working at Sinara Education & Career Consultant Pvt Ltd, Mumbai, where she conducts career guidance courses and counsels students, she has had a fair amount of experience in dealing with them.

ARE YOU BEING OVERPROTECTIVE?

Answer these questions. You will know you are crossing the line when you have responded positively to at least four of them.

1. You rule out activities that involve being away from your child like overnight camps.
2. You rule out physical activities that could result in an accident like rock climbing or horse riding.
3. You constantly worry about the well being of your child to the extent it makes you anxious. For instance, even if your child is eating well, you wonder if the food is right, well cooked, overcooked, if it is easily digestible, and so on and so forth..
4. You feel secure ONLY when your child is under your watchful eye.
5. You are always helping your child in projects, homework or assignments because you don't want your child getting upset over mistakes or getting stressed out.
6. While it is normal for a child to fall sick, an OP gets obsessed with getting the right medicines and running helter-skelter for a doctor's appointment making the child feel sicker than s/he actually is.
7. You always think of the worst that could happen to your child, be it when walking, talking, playing, going to school, eating outside food etc.
8. When your child has got into an argument or fight with another child, you intervene and try to solve it for them.

GET A GRIP ON YOURSELF

It is important to identify and tackle your fears as early as possible. You probably need more help than your child! Such behaviour can lead to constant bickering, and in turn create a rift between you and your child as s/he grows older.

- If you are finding it too tough to mend your ways, seek counselling to nip the habit in the bud.
- Reading books on how to handle and talk to your child can also be helpful.
- THINK before you act or, rather, react. Be it an unfinished meal or a messed up living room.
- Remember, no kid has escaped scraped knees, fractured hands and mosquito bites. It's all a part of growing up. You can also tackle your fear by watching how other parents handle their kids.
- Be assertive, not hyper, while talking to your child. For instance, if a 5-year-old has a knife in her hand, do not get all worked up and scream: "You'll cut yourself and bleed". Instead gently but firmly say, "When you become as old as mummy you can use that, now you can use a plastic one."

PARENTING PLAN FOR OPS

Age of child: 1-2

AIM: ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Encourage your child to walk and prevent carrying him/her around. Remember unless your child falls, s/he will never know how to get up. "Constant carrying around will hamper your child's physical growth; then parents become paranoid about finding the right psychiatrist or physiotherapist to resolve the matter," says Jinisha.

Age of child: 2-3

AIM: HELP YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND THINGS

Instead of issuing orders, try tapping into your child's growing intelligence to help her/him be more cautious. For instance, if your child wants to put her fingers in a hot cup of coffee, a straight "No" would block her natural curiosity. Instead say things like, "Oh! It is very hot. Hot things can hurt you my love."

After that make her touch the mug briefly or show her how candles, the stove etc are lit to demonstrate the concept of heat. She will remember what you mean by "hot" the next time.

Age of child: 3-5

AIM: TEACH PERSONAL SAFETY

Sometimes children can be over-friendly and it could be a cause of concern for parents especially in today's world.

When your child is old enough to be alone with people, teach your child basic rules about personal safety such as, "No talking to strangers" or "Don't accept food or chocolates from people you don't know".

Basically, try and equip your child to take care of himself.



THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME

What's wrong with me? I've got this strange and bizarre love for old soul ballads.

I went to Hotstuff KARMA today and bought 1000 BUCKS worth of old soul cd's just to listen to ballads. I think I need to join some sort of REHAB program designed to wean people off of old romantic soul songs.

I listen to these records, and I have visions of slow dancing in an almost empty bar somewhere in Goa and the people drinking cheap feni out of fancy glasses and big monstrous BULLETS parked outside. ...SIGH. ... Right now I'm listening to this one CD right now that is nothing but obscure soul love songs from the early '70's. Strings and Piano and really quiet drums, how nice.

Many years ago Kailash and I WOULD have these slow dance/make out parties and they were so much fun. 'Get it On', 'If you don't know me by now', 'Purple rain', etc. I miss those slow dance parties. SIGH, again.

You got to excuse me if this sounds infantile, but...you know what's nice? Reminding yourself of things that you like. Just think of things that you love and it tends to make you happy. Playing the guitar. Sunlight coming through my window in the morning. Swimming in the TNA pool. George BUSH and Saddam Hussain being lovers in 'South Park'. Watching Gibbon monkeys playing on Discovery. Warm MONSOON rain etc.

I know it sounds very, very silly, but it works. Try it if you're feeling bad.



Guns 'confirm' Chinese Democracy

The new Guns N' Roses album will be released next month, it has been claimed. *Chinese Democracy* has been mooted for around a decade by Axl Rose, the only surviving member of the band since their days of rock 'n' roll world domination.

However, with the group recently completing a relatively successful and trouble-free European tour and scheduling more dates in the US, new recordings also seem imminent.

According to claims in *Rolling Stone*, *Chinese Democracy* has officially been scheduled for an American release date of 21 November.

Earlier in the month, a cryptic statement from the group backed up such speculation, insisting "there are 13 Tuesdays left between now and the end of the year". There has so far been no official confirmation on these reports.

Current line-up: Axl Rose [lead vocals], Robin Finck [lead guitar], Ron 'Bumblefoot' Thal [lead guitar], Richard Fortus [rhythm guitar], Tommy Stinson [bass guitar], Bryan 'Brain' Mantia [drums], Dizzy Reed [keyboards], Chris Pitman [keyboards]

NOW PLAYING

Beck brings back his hip-hop flavour, Ruben Studdard discovers his inner R Kelly, and the Springsteen-obsessed Killers are prepping to hit their fans with the wild, the innocent, the Sam's Town shuffle. That's not to mention new albums from Brooke Hogan, Lloyd Banks, Lady Sovereign, Diddy, and My Chemical Romance. With all these artists/bands releasing their new material this month, we suggest you fix yourself a nice big bowl of popcorn, switch on VH1 and catch the new videos. And just to whet your appetite, we've got for you the latest lowdown on their new sounds.

BECK - THE INFORMATION

The sound: Beck goes back to his Odelay vibe, dropping beats, old school electro, folk, random samples, and funk-ed-up grooves - yup, a well-focused swirl of elements.

What to expect: Beck has worked on this new 17 track disc for three years. These songs should be a nice addition to tunes like *Nausea*, which features sung-rapped lyrics over acoustic guitar and 12 different layers of plinking percussion. Think Grandmaster Flash meets the Go! Team in Jim Morrison's bedroom.

EVANESCENCE - THE OPEN DOOR

The sound: Big, bad multi-layered goth rock with lots of drama.

What to expect: This is singer Amy Lee's time to shine. Following the departure of songwriting partner and band co-founder Ben Moody, she's in charge of the whole deal. The full-throated roar of *Call Me When You're Sober* sets the tone. Lee says the dark, aggressive disc is the first to

feature lyrics addressing some intensely personal issues - something she felt she couldn't do in the past.

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE - THE BLACK PARADE

The sound: Explosive goth rock with a seriously proggy edge.

What to expect: These Jersey boys have left their emo roots behind on an ambitious concept album that tells the story of a teen named *The Patient* who examines



on the Black Parade name as their alter ego. The music



as: *Dead!, This Is How I Disappear, I Don't Love You Like I Did, Cancer and Famous Last Words.*

DIDDY - PRESS PLAY

The sound: Diddy on the dancefloor.

What to expect: Though it's not the buzzed-about dance album Diddy's been working on for several years, this new joint does find him mixing a more club-friendly sound with his pop-tinged raps on songs like the electro-style *Come to Me*, which features Pussycat



features an unlikely collaboration with Liza Minnelli and such heart-warming song titles

Dolls singer Nicole Scherzinger. His first solo album since 2001's poorly received *The Saga Continues* also boasts collabos with Outkast's Big Boi, Nas, Fergie, Christina Aguilera, Mary J Blige, Jamie Foxx, Brandy, Keyshia Cole and Ciara. And though he's known for production, Diddy also let some others - including Kanye West, Pharrell and Will.I.A. - twiddle knobs this time around.

JOHN LEGEND - ONCE AGAIN

The sound: Heartfelt vibe, smooth soul - what else were you looking for?

What to expect: After his Grammy-grabbing debut, the dapper R&B crooner returns with another collection of bedroom tales and romantic laments. Pal Kanye West pitches in on production, as does the suddenly ubiquitous Will.I.Am.

THE KILLERS - SAM'S TOWN

The story: These Vegas rockers channel the ghosts of Bruce Springsteen and U2 on a set of songs that aim for the rafters with a big, fat arena-ready sound. The boys smear spaghetti western guitars, swooning strings, and some of their patented new wave magic into a set that singer Brandon Flowers says is one of the best albums of the past 20 years.

LADY SOVEREIGN - PUBLIC WARNING

The story: It's hard enough being a white rapper. But a white female rapper... from England? She may look like a pint-sized Sporty Spice, but 20-year-old Sovereign ripped these snotty, electro hip-hop rhymes hard enough to convince label boss Jay-Z to sign her. An ass-kicker, no doubt.

CMK



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a MIDWEEK Report

GANGTOK: Two young scholars from Sikkim, Ningku Lachungpa and her sister Norma, have got admissions into the Oxford Business College in Oxford, United Kingdom, two of the very few from Sikkim.

Prior to getting admitted into the university, the two appeared for the International English Language Testing System [IELTS] conducted by the British Council, Kolkata, and scored very high on the band scores. While Ningku scored 7.5 out of 9, her sister Norma scored 7 out of 9. The scores are based on band scores, the highest point being 9.

Both the sisters will be pursuing the Master of Business Administration [MBA] programme in the business college. They will be studying finance, marketing and human resource management as a part of their courses in the college.

Ningku, who studied economics for her graduation, said that the chance to pursue

MBA in this prestigious institute would give her more exposure and added she wanted to join the corporate world once she completes her course.

"I hope to understand international business and strategies better and gain exposure so that I can try my luck and work hard to join the corporate world," she told MIDWEEK.

Pursuing to get admissions into the business college, the two took help from Everest International Study Abroad [EISA], a consultancy service who have recently opened up a centre here in Gangtok.

"Both of them were very bright and scored surprisingly very high in the IELTS and admissions for them in the business college came very easily," Yash Gurung of EISA said.

The MBA programme at the college also comes at a cost of 6000 pounds for a student. Ten per cent of the fee, however, has been borne by the British Council as scholarship.

Congressman Thukchuk Lachungpa, who is the proud father of the two, beaming with

Off to Oxford



Eyeing Oxford: Norma & Ningku Lachungpa. a Midweek photo

joy said that it was natural for him to be very happy that they got a chance to study in this prestigious institute renowned the world over.

"Initially, I did not expect

they would score very high in the open category tests but when the results were out, I was taken aback and I have encouraged them to go for the courses," Lachungpa said.

"I wish more and more Sikkimese students come out with merit and pursue higher studies in such institutions. It is purely hard work that leads to merit," he said.

QUIZ

Naming the Months

Days of the week and months of the year have been named for everything from leaders and gods to celebrations that took place during those months. If you know your history and mythology, you should do well... and if not, give it your best guess!

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1: What month was named for the god of war?
A: July
B: March
C: September
D: April | 6: What month, despite its placement in the year, has a name meaning "seven"?
A: September
B: October
C: November
D: December |
| 2: What month was named for the god of beginnings and doors?
A: December
B: August
C: June
D: January | 7: Similarly, what month's name means "nine"?
A: September
B: October
C: November
D: December |
| 3: What month was formerly called "Sextilis" and later renamed to honor a Roman emperor?
A: August
B: November
C: February
D: June | 8: What month takes its name from the Roman festival of purification?
A: January
B: February
C: April
D: May |
| 4: What month may take its name either from the Latin word for "to open," or the name of the goddess of love?
A: March
B: October
C: May
D: April | 9: What month was renamed for a famous Roman emperor in the year of his assassination [44 BC]?
A: January
B: June
C: July
D: August |
| Question 5: What month might be named either for the goddess of honor or the mother of Mercury?
A: May
B: December
C: February
D: June | 10: Which month is named for the head Roman goddess?
A: February
B: March
C: May
D: June |

ANSWERS: 1.B, 2.D, 3.A, 4.D, 5.A, 6.A, 7.C, 8.B, 9.C, 10.D

IIT makes it to Top 100

a MIDWEEK Report

The Indian Institute of Technology has made it to the league of best universities in the world while Oxbridge claimed second and third place in a survey of top 100 universities in the world published on Wednesday.

Both Cambridge and Oxford were beaten by the American 'Ivy League' rival Harvard while two British universities leapfrogged over US rivals - Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale and Stanford - to claim prized positions.

India's IIT is ranked 57th; Imperial College, London, graduated to No. 9 while London School of Economics and University College London and Edinburgh made it among the top 30 in the latest Times Higher Education Supplement - QS World University Rankings.

The University of California at Berkeley is placed eighth and Princeton University is ranked 10th.

As many as 39 European universities appear in the top 100, with UK's share alone being a record 29 (last year it was 23). Among the top 200, Europe's share has gone up to 86.

The rankings were based on the results of a survey of 3,703 academics from across the world, spanning various disciplines.

The latest THES - QS World University Rankings underline the fierce competition between leading universities across the world. Although Harvard is still at the top, the gap between it and its nearest rivals has closed markedly and there are a lot of changes further down the table.

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to smell fishy, *The Departed* becomes a game of chess between two skilled fakers who only need to know the identity of their opponent to win. The body count rises and facades crumble as each rat attempts to smoke the other out.

This sort of spy-versus-spy job is an easy thing to mangle, but Scorsese's shooting and storytelling is in top form. *The Departed*'s narrative glides, and flashbacks seem not only seamless but necessary - vital to telling a complicated story at a measured pace that nonetheless bursts with vivid urgency. Scorsese stages the tense scenes with his usual visual flair and deftly matches the rhythm of the editing to the brutality of the violence on screen.

And all the while, he keeps the message-ball bouncing - when push comes to shove, what kind of choices can we make about who we are, and what do they cost us? *The Departed* may not offer any answers, just that honest men and liars share the same graveyards, but it dares you to think about the question. While this may not be Scorsese's finest film, it is without a doubt his most entertaining. *The Departed* is here to stay.

Are we really who we pretend to be? That's the question posed by Martin Scorsese's grandly twisted new cops-and-robbers epic *The Departed*, a remake of a Hong Kong film [*Infernal Affairs*] about moles on opposite sides of the law. As potboiler thrillers go, *Infernal Affairs* is no slouch; in Scorsese's hands, though, the riveting drama of the original is elevated to the level of Shakespearian tragedy.

To be fair, he has a dream cast - Jack Nicholson! Leonardo DiCaprio! Matt Damon! Uh, Mark Wahlberg - and a crackling script that turns even throwaway watercooler scenes into pinballing conflicts.

William Monahan's script transposes the action to Boston, where a joint FBI-Massachusetts task force is hunting an Irish mobster [Nicholson, a Bostonian apparently by way of Neptune] with the help of a hot-tempered cop so deep undercover nobody knows he's not a crook [DiCaprio]. The mobster, meanwhile, has an inside man in Matt Damon, working as a golden-boy detective with some decidedly dark allegiances. When things start



THE BIG REVIEW

STARRING:

Jack Nicholson, Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, Mark Wahlberg, Martin Sheen, Martin Scorsese, Brad Grey, Jennifer Aniston, Brad Pitt, Graham King
DIRECTED BY:
 Martin Scorsese

SHOWING FROM FRIDAY

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

आमाको कारवा

FROM FRIDAY

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



Brangelina tour Pune in autorickshaw

Trust Mr and Mrs Smith to decoy the waiting media. Celebrated Hollywood couple Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, here to shoot for the film *A Mighty Heart*, gave the slip to mediamen and took a round of the city in an auto-rickshaw last week.

The couple and their three children, who arrived at Pune on 5 October from Mumbai by a chartered flight for the month-long shoot schedule of the film based on the murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, are staying at the Le Meridien.

Angelina and Brad boarded the auto-rickshaw from a basement parking lot while a car deliberately drove out of the main exit to divert the attention of the large number of journalists who had gathered at the hotel. Reporters and photographers, including those from the international media, have been scouring the city for any information on the stars.

A cameraman of a TV news channel was able to get a fleeting glimpse of the star couple, which meant partial success for the mediamen as many got to share the "photo feed". The film is based on a book of the same name by Pearl's wife Marianne about his abduction and killing by militants in Karachi in 2002. Angelina plays Marianne in the film being co-produced by Pitt's company.

BOLLYWOOD snippets

VIDHU TO SEND 'LAGE RAHO...' TO THE OSCARS

Inducted with letters of praise from fans and audiences across the globe, producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra has decided to send *Lage Raho Munnabhai* to the 2007 Academy Awards as an independent entry. Ken Naz of Eros International, USA, will be preparing the applications to seek entry for the film at the Oscars.

Apart from this, *Lage Raho...* has added another feather to its cap. It's been invited for a special screening at the University of Southern California. Chopra will soon be visiting Los Angeles for the screening of the film.

What's more, now Munnabhai and Circuit will soon be seen as part of a comic book series. Rajkumar Hirani & Co. has drawn some sketches for Munna and Circuit, which will hopefully serve as the illustrations in a series of adventures. Vinod Chopra Productions will market the comic books and the proposed animation films.

BACHCHAN TO WIELD A SCORPION STICK

Amitabh Bachchan will not brandish a belt made of bullets [famously used by the original Gabbar during the 'Kitne aadmi' sequence] in Ram Gopal Varma's *Sholay* but will carry a specially crafted stick with a scorpion head, a customized piece made of brown leather.

"Gabbar is the most important character in *Sholay* and his look has to be minutely taken into account. Although the look is still under various stages of consideration, they have finalized on the scorpion-headed stick, which will play a prominent part in Bachchan's character. We need to give him a prop that will have the same impact as Gabbar's leather belt. Amitji is happy at the prospect of using this as his prop," informs a source from the production unit.

THE MIDWEEK HOTLINE
 320169

Just incase you are wondering what is that absurdity standing in for this piece's headline, you've probably not joined the chat race. And if you think we are going to discuss earthenware and Immoral Traffic [Prevention] Act here this week, I'm willing to bet my entire month's salary that you're seriously losing it.

For the uninitiated, that headline, especially the acronyms, holds the power to save your neck. Imagine a scenario where you're chatting online with your buddies, bragging about your day's exploits and/ or making plans to skip school/ college tomorrow and go watch the latest flick at Vajra Cinema. Just then the Good Lord decides to play spoilsport and in walks your dad/ mom, their eagle-eyes fixed on your computer screen and their verbal talons ready to pounce on you at the slightest provocation. You know that but

YOU ARE CURRENTLY SIGNED IN AS BLAH BLAH BLAH

POTS!

It's such a PITA!

DOUBLE CLICK HERE TO GO PRIVATE

your friend doesn't, and chances are his/ her next message may get you grounded for the rest of your life. So what do you do? You simply type POTS [short for Parents Over The Shoulder, which means my parents are watching, I can't really talk] or POS [Parents are looking Over my Shoulder] or P911 [P = Parents and 911 = Emergency; in other words, either drop the subject or watch the language].

That, my darlings, is the magic of chat lingo/ acronyms. Not only has acronyms taken over our chat rooms and applets and given the Queen's language a run for its 'standard' vocabulary, it has also proved

its health benefits. Besides negating the need for typing out entire words and sentences and preventing 'chat wrist' [if tennis players can have tennis elbow, chatters can have chat wrists too!], the 'code words' also keep out parents from eavesdropping, thus saving the chatters' hide.

Gone are the days when the word 'avatar' was restricted to religious ideas. In today's virtual world, an avatar or AV is a graphical representation often used in chat rooms to depict a person who's in the room and chatting. And BIBLE? Well, it stands for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth. But hey, your

parents don't need to know that, right? And if they're under the impression that you've suddenly found god and decide to hike your allowance, there's nothing like it.

During a chat session with a sexy siren [who in all probability is a fat, hairy, married guy with a fake AV], you are forced to be AFK [Away From the Keyboard] for a while to take a leak. Upon your return, you see your brother has not only taken hold of the computer but also exchanged email IDs with that 'girl', you mentally - and also verbally if your brother is less muscular than you - label him a PITA [Pain In The ASS]!

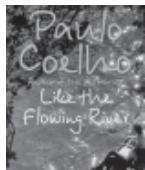
And what do you say when a virtual stranger tries chatting you up? DIKU [Do I Know You?]. From its humble beginnings, the word 'beg' has today also taken the form of an acronym standing for a Big Evil Grin, which you flash after saying UYA [Up Your you-know-where] to an irritating chatter. Wicked, huh?

If you receive an online message that reads GAL, it doesn't mean other chatters are enquiring about your gender. They are simply offering you an unsolicited advice - Get A Life. Ouch! And if they say FU and you can't figure this one out, you shouldn't be online.

And when you read an entire article Oding on acronyms and chat jargons, fail to make head or tails of it and realise a little too late that you could have better utilised the time spent reading that useless article, that, my friends, is a clear indication that you should GAL.

JK [Just Kidding]!

- SERAH BASNET



LIKE THE FLOWING RIVER by Paulo Coelho

Like the Flowing River is an intimate collection of Paulo Coelho's reflections and short stories. These are powerful tales of living and dying, of destiny and choice,

of love lost and found. Sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, but always profound, this book, like all of Coelho's work, explores what it means to be truly alive. An old woman explains to her grandson how a mere pencil can show him the path to happiness... instructions on how to climb a mountain reveal the secret to making your dreams a reality... the author learns three important lessons when he goes to the rescue of

a man in the street. Paulo shows us how life has lessons for us in the greatest, smallest and most unusual of experiences.

Like the Flowing River includes jewel-like fables, packed with meaning and retold in Coelho's inimitable style. Sharing his thoughts on spirituality, life and ethics, Paulo touches you with his philosophy and invites you to go on an exciting journey of your own.

THE 8TH HABIT: FROM EFFECTIVENESS TO GREATNESS by Stephen R Covey

In the 7 Habits series, international bestselling author Stephen R Covey showed us how to become as effective as it is possible to be. In the eighth installment of this series, *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, he opens up an entirely new dimension of human potential, and shows us how to achieve greatness in any position and any venue.

All of us, Covey says, have within us the means for greatness. To tap into it is a matter of finding the right balance of four human attributes: talent, need, conscience and passion. At the nexus of these four attributes is what Covey calls voice - the unique, personal significance we each possess. Covey exhorts us all to move beyond effectiveness into the realm of greatness - and he shows us how to do so, by engaging our strengths and locating our

powerful, individual voices.

Why do we need this new habit? Because we have entered a new era in human history. The world is a profoundly different place than when *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People* was originally published in 1989.

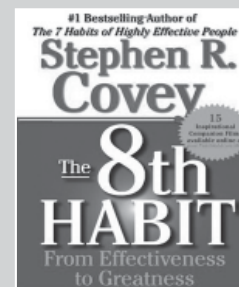
The challenges and complexity we face today are of a different order of magnitude. We enjoy far greater autonomy in all areas of our lives, and along with this

freedom comes the expectation that we will manage ourselves, instead of being managed by others. At the same time, we struggle to feel engaged, fulfilled and passionate.

Tapping into the higher reaches of human genius and motivation to find our voice requires a new mindset, a new skill-set, a new tool-set - in short, a whole new habit.

THE BOOKSHELF

TOP 5 ARRIVALS At GOOD BOOKS



1. Like The Flowing River - Paulo Coelho; Rs. 295
2. The 8th Habit : From Effectiveness to Greatness - Stephen R Covey; Rs. 575
3. Tea, Legend, Life and Livelihood - GP Baroowah; Rs. 2000
4. Many Lives Many Masters - Dr. Brian Weiss; Rs. 350
5. The Buddha Cries! Karmapa Conundrum - Anil Maheshwari; Rs. 200

ZIGGY

INFOMEDIA

ADVERTISING / PRINTING / PUBLISHING / DESIGN / EVENT MANAGEMENT

CONTACT: 98320 31929 EMAIL: pelsh23@gmail.com

WHODUNNIT?

Who wrote the 'Dugdi' story? And which hotels complained? That seems to be the latest investigation launched by the police. Is that important? And isn't that another form of 'dugdi'. After all, what will the police do once they find out the real 'culprits'? Give us another lead, perhaps! Just for the record, we really have no personal enmity with the cops here and believe they are a fine lot. But some people will say anything. The other day, a useless sort of fellow was shooting his mouth off about the police not doing anything for the people. I was so angry and reminded him about traffic management and heading all those sports bodies, but he was so not impressed. Is it their fault that we live in such a peaceful and crime free State that we can even afford to ask the centre to give us a 'Peace Bonus'. Football anyone?



Buzz

a press release. For one, they obviously don't represent all the hotels, for it was not one but very many hoteliers who had complained to us and if these guys too support the SHRA press release, what can we say. But, according to buzz, the SHRA is 'defunct' and many in the trade are upset with the gentleman who drafted the letter. One is left to wonder whether he got the 'request' letter too and whether he has offered rooms in his hotel, if he has one.

as well as personal 'dugdi' stories. But, c'mon guys, we cannot serialize this, y'know, police hai panga nahin lene ka, ok? Darna Zaroori Hai. But, I HAVE to relate just one story that was told to us. Apparently, the police recently won a volleyball tournament, after which they placed the trophy somewhere along the highway. Every vehicle that passed that way was told to give Rs. 100 as 'celebration' money. Some drivers have called this 'dugdi', but me, I think it was just a 'simple request'.

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY

Police officers had varied reactions to the story. While some were 'hurt and angry', others were merely amused. But, one officer took us by surprise. He was upset only about one thing. The cost calculation we had done. How could we, he asked, even suggest that senior police officers would stay in Rs. 2000 a night rooms. The rooms would be atleast Rs. 4000 and we had got the figures totally wrong!

Now, that's something we will be happy to apologize for.

THANKS SHRA

The Sikkim Hotels & Restaurant Association has displayed rather strange behaviour by coming out against the Midweek story with

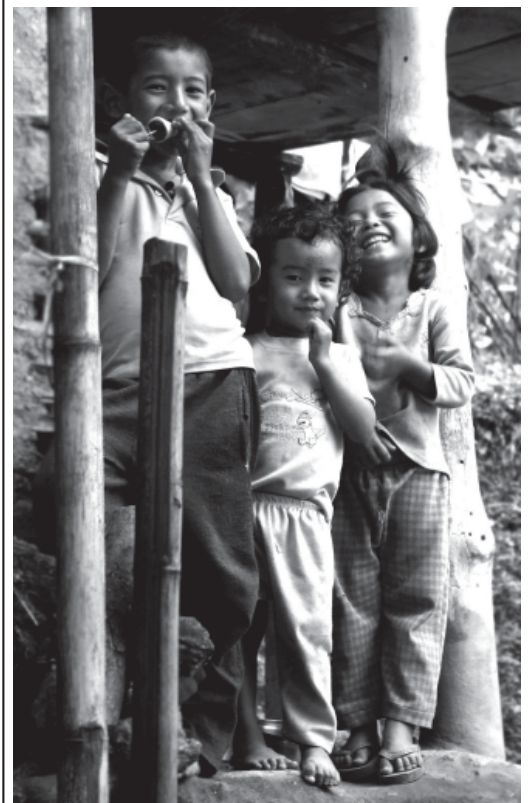
FEAR FACTOR

People are getting so very carried away by our last issue and are inundating us with letters and calls of support

THE SHUTTERSPEED CHRONICLES

by KARCHOONG DIYALI

www.shutterspeedchronicles.blogspot.com



The Dasain celebrations are limited to their balcony for these three siblings at Namli village

Firm offers celebrity toupees for babies

SANTA BARBARA, Calif.: A new California company, BabyToupee.com, is selling a series of wigs based on infamous celebrity hairstyles and designed entirely for babies to wear.

The New York Post said that the Santa Barbara business will offer parents the chance to purchase wigs for their infants styled after celebrities such as singers Bob Marley and Lil' Kim, and even one based on real estate mogul Donald Trump's famed mane.

"To see a baby with a little Rasta hat and dreadlocks is really funny," BabyToupee.com co-founder Graham Farrar said.

The paper said that to date the company, which also offers a style based on "Snakes on a Plane" actor Samuel L Jackson, has received thousands of orders for the \$30 wigs.

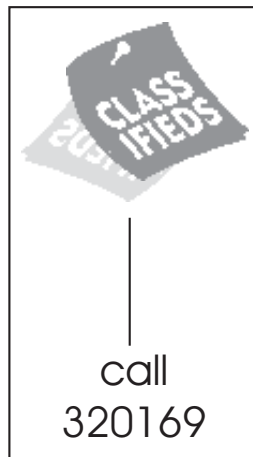
SLIGHTLY-OFF-CENTRE/SLIGHTLY-OFF-CENTRE

Policeman crowned Mr. Gay UK

LONDON: A 23-year-old British policeman from the West Yorkshire force has been crowned Mr. Gay UK. Mark Carter said he was "over the moon" after winning the title, which is the male equivalent of Miss Great Britain, reports the Daily Mail.

The report said Carter, who will have a year of personal appearances and photo shoots, defeated 25 other contestants for the title.

"Two years ago I used to cry myself to sleep at night, I was so daunted by the prospect of coming out, but when I did, it was the best thing ever," he said. "I was so happy I could finally be myself. I thought telling people I was gay would mean no one would want to know me, but at the Mr. Gay UK final, I had more people together, supporting me, in one place than I've ever had in my life."



Author selling literary immortality

BELFAST: Northern Irish author Jason Johnson is set to sell the right to appear as a literary character in his third book to the highest online bidder. Johnson, who wrote the novels *Windlicker* and *Alina*, decided to put the character's identity up for auction in order to help pay his bills, but his offer to publish an individual's identity alongside characters including a psychiatric patient and a former flasher could

draw some significant interest, said the Sunday Observer.

"My motives are purely financial, because I need to pay the bills while I write and I'll do pretty much whatever I can for that," the 37-year-old author said of his unusual sale. "Sitting around all day and making things up is just about all I want to do with my days. I don't care what people's motives for bidding are,

that's up to them. But a selling point is that it is the offer of a kind of ticket to immortality and that it will give them something to say at parties, or maybe just into the mirror."

Johnson told the paper that he came up with the idea for the online auction from a documentary's website contest that focused on an individual buying their way into a Hollywood production.

DALLAS: A high school music teacher cooled her heels in a Texas jail for three days for a seatbelt law violation while officials tried to find her paperwork. WFAA-TV in Dallas reported that Theresa Dobbs was held for three days in the Lew Sterrett Jail for showing up late for a hearing on a \$50 seatbelt violation.

It was after the court hearing slipped her mind that the City of Dallas decided to show her

who was boss. But City Hall officials say they're not responsible for the clerical error. They insist the problem is with Dallas County. A mortified Dobbs, who has no criminal record, was taken to jail by sheriff's deputies in handcuffs from her school. She was one of 28 women in a cell designed for eight.

"You had to find a patch of concrete on the floor to sleep," said Dobbs, whose only crime was not buckling her seatbelt.

THE WEEK AHEAD



You are moving and thinking fast this week. It may be a little too fast. Use caution when driving, with tools, and also with fire. Your reflexes are almost too quick to manage small tasks at your best. On the positive side, your body will appreciate heavy activities that require use of large muscles.



You are likely to encounter someone you 'should' meet this week. This person happens into your everyday, normal life. He/she is a teacher for you and will offer help or knowledge that can assist. It is even possible that a lasting bond will develop between you. Health issues improve.



This is a supremely busy week for the traveling, talkative Twins. You are sorting and organizing data or things as quickly as possible and still cannot accomplish it all. It appears you are focused and intense, yet fatigued. New things are happening in work/career.



Whether you are traveling or at home, your frame of mind is happy and romantic. Good news comes concerning a family member. Any matters related to property should work out favorably. You have increased interest in art, beauty and things pleasing to the eye.



This is an excellent time for short distance travel and/or study and practice of language arts. Social activities are particularly pleasant. You likely will feel a special kinship to significant other[s] now. Your efforts in any educational arena gain applause and appreciation.



Avoid allowing your mind to obsess over fears or things that have not yet happened. You do not have to flow with wherever your imagination wants to go. Take control and you will be much happier. Relationship[s] with significant other[s] in your life are flowing smoothly now.



Energies of the week favour romance, the arts, music, and all the things we use for escape from the humdrum. Give special attention to whomever enters your life this week. This person is likely to bring a message of hope and encouragement - maybe even love.



Mercury remains in your sign for two months because it will be turning retrograde on 29 Oct. through 17 Nov. Be very cautious about making significant decisions throughout this period. The probability is strong that important factors may alter or you will change your mind later. Love life is favoured now.



This is a highly favourable time to reflect, meditate, and think deeply about where you are in life. Focus your attention with whatever tools you have on hand: self-hypnosis, dreamwork, journaling, or psychotherapy. Your unconscious is wanting to make contact. Encourage it.



A project begun this week will require approximately 10 days to complete and may not really be worth the effort. Think about it before you start. The available energies are best used to concentrate attention on something mental. Romance is unexciting, but this is temporary.



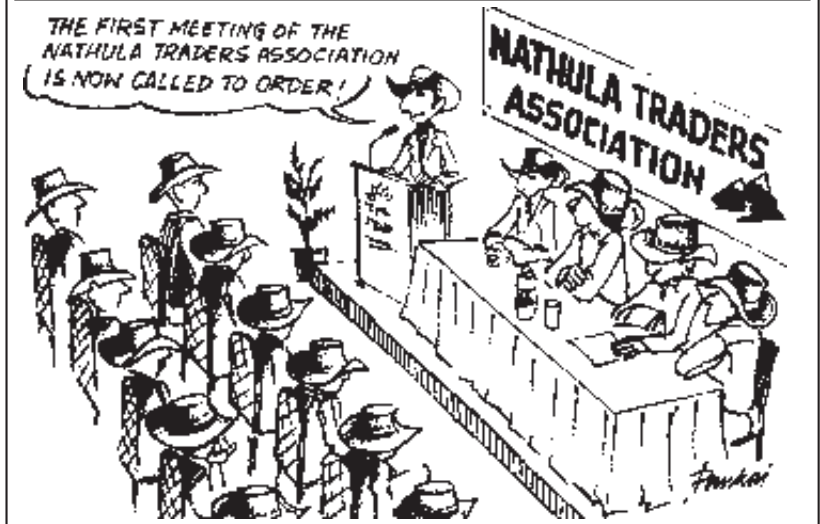
You may be mildly disturbed by news concerning your career, an authority figure, or place of business. Mobility may be a temporary problem. However, activities related to the law, education, and dealing with those from a distance are given a 'go' signal.



You could be the recipient of small gifts and/or favours. Small debts owed to you are paid and you may benefit from partner's resources. Activities involving travel, the law, the internet, education, and persons from a distance are favoured. All in all, a fine week for the Fish.

JEST LIKE THAT

BY PANKAJ THAPA



Bad Timing

Have you ever wondered how the Big Man up there decides to deal you cards when you never wanted to play in the first place? And the cards he deals you are typical of a rummy ["crummy"?] round - the joker you so desperately need is always below or above the card you draw - it's just a question of timing, *bad* timing. Take another instance - your out-of-town friends decide to give you a weekend visit. They enter your house at about the same time your gas cylinder and all the taps decide to sputter and blob. Of course you won't know about it. Not yet. You'll know about it at the precise moment when you've got your guests spellbound with your cliffhanger of an anecdote about mushroom hunting... and the gods send their messenger in the angelic form of the better half wearing a non-angelic look of exasperation. The fascinating details of the mushroom hunt can wait. Changing the gas cylinder cannot.

Then there's man's Best Friend, the Television [dogs went out with World War II, y'know]. Any event that has you glued to it will patiently wait till all the soap/ biscuit/ toilet cleaner ads are over and then, just as Dravid hits a six or Beckham bends it, the powers that be decide the power will not be. The power eventually returns when the remote is no longer in your power. Amen.

Another recent fun toy for the Big Man to try our wits is the cell phone. This little gadget is single-handedly responsible for making male hairstyles resemble *jhum*



by PANKAJ THAPA

fields of the northeast - bald patches in a dense forest. BSNL no longer enjoys the dubious distinction of being the worst mobile network service in town. Lately, Reliance is working [or not working] overtime to try and snatch that distinction from BSNL. But if you're stuck with a lonely evening, dial any number on either a BSNL or a Reliance phone and 9 times out of 10 you'll get a sweet lady with a singsong accent telling you how congested the line is, or why the number is unavailable. Who cares about the number when you can listen to this husky voice? Keep talking, honey. [She probably looks like Sharon Stone anyway - white dress, black couch - you get the picture.]

These little mobile devils also possess an exquisite sense of timing - *bad* timing that is. You never seem to get through but your 5-year old will happily dial a

Cochin number and get through on first attempt. Or you would get a sore thumb trying to call your wife to tell her you'll be home late. When you do reach home in the wee hours and try to explain why you could not get through, *do not* demonstrate by dialing her number on your cell. Yup. First attempt and her phone goes "brrr..brrr..brrr".

More cases of Bad Timing - the traffic cop in Siliguri flags you down when your insurance papers have lapsed last month, and while fumbling with the papers and your pathetic four-word-max Bengali, you discover your pollution papers are also three months overdue. Standing there in High Noon heat, with Mr. Clint-Siliguri-Eastwood glaring through his "Roy-Bans", you think it couldn't get any worse. Well, they can, and they *do*. Mr. Eastwood turns out to be an *honest* cop who almost chokes with indignation when you suggest he surreptitiously "settle" the matter. [Rare, I know, but they do exist.] His way involves trudging to the Bank, paying the fine, locating a pollution control unit and trudging back to get your papers finally released from Mr. Serpico. By which time, it's time you headed back for the hills anyway; poorer by a few hundreds and minus that delicious *maach-bhaath* you'd been contemplating on your way down. Dalda-based veg momos anyone? *Eeeyuck!!!*

'Monster' fossil found in Jurassic graveyard

OSLO: Scientists have found a fossil of a 'Monster' fish-like reptile in a 150 million-year-old Jurassic graveyard on an Arctic island off Norway. The Norwegian researchers discovered remains of a total of 28 plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs - top marine predators when dinosaurs dominated on land - at a site on the island of Spitsbergen, about 1,300 km from the North Pole.

"One of them was this gigantic monster, with vertebrae the size of dinner plates and teeth the size of cucumbers," Joern Hurum, an assistant professor at the University of Oslo, told Reuters on 5 October.

"We believe the skeleton is intact and that it's about 10 meters [33 feet] long," he told Reuters of the plesiosaur, a type of plesiosaur with a short neck

and massive skull. The team dubbed the specimen 'The Monster'.

Such plesiosaurs are known from remains in countries including Britain and Argentina but no complete skeleton has been found, he said. The skull of the plesiosaur - perhaps a distant relative to Scotland's mythical Loch Ness monster - was among the biggest on record.

Scientists would return next year to try to excavate the entire fossil, buried on a hillside.

Plesiosaurs, which swam with two sets of flippers, often preyed on smaller dolphin-like ichthyosaurs. All went extinct when the dinosaurs vanished 65 million years ago.

The scientists rated the fossil graveyard "one of the most important new sites for marine reptiles to have been discovered in

the last several decades".

"It is rare to find so many fossils in the same place - carcasses are food for other animals and usually get torn apart," Hurum said. Hurum reckoned the reptiles had not all died at the same time in some Jurassic-era cataclysm but had died over thousands of years in the same area, then become preserved in what was apparently a deep layer of black mud on the seabed. At that time, the area of Spitsbergen under water several hundred km further south, around the latitude of Anchorage or Oslo.

Hurum said the presence of fossils was also an interesting pointer for geologists hunting for oil and gas deposits in the Barents Sea to the east. "A skull we found even smells of petrol," he said. [Reuters]



An artist's impression of a 'Monster' fish-like reptile, whose fossil was found on the Arctic island of Spitsbergen, off Norway, catching a smaller plesiosaur, in this image from the Natural History Museum, University of Oslo.

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