

# NOW!

First With The News

## Gangtok-Centric Pitfalls

Too many things have been too Gangtok-centric for far too long in Sikkim. There have been enough signs of this reinforcing that Sikkim is not Gangtok alone, but few seem to have understood those, rather blatant hints. Gangtokians continue living in a world that limits their idea of Sikkim to the capital. Of course, Gangtok is important, it is after all the capital, but as far as Sikkim is concerned, the capital never could never read the pulse. Look at politics, Gangtok kept getting convinced by bazaar rumours of a wave for change and consistently voted contrary to how the real Sikkim decided its ballot. Politicians still think that press releases issued in Gangtok and mostly published and read here are enough to keep them relevant and then receive a shock when the votes are cast. Why only politics, even newspapers have been similarly misled in the past. Periodicals and journalists believed themselves to be strong and widely read when they were read extensively in Gangtok, only to realise later that they had no impact in Sikkim. Journalism grew in strength in Sikkim only after newspapers made the effort and opened markets in the districts. It was only then that the State started responding to news and reacting to events and making journalism more vibrant here. Unfortunately there are still many who remain satisfied with the bubble that Gangtok has become good at floating. Elections for a body that claims to represent Sikkim's employees but arranges for voting only in Gangtok is only the latest example. While this practise has escaped comment in the past, it has been greeted with a protest this time. A welcome sign that the districts are no longer to suffer in silence, a sign that they have found a voice and can engage Gangtok in a debate. And one does not speak only of the SGEA elections here, these signs find expression in many other fields. Time that Gangtok started paying heed.

## Districts protest Gangtok-centric...

Contd from pg1

the welfare of the state employees. This is why they are trying to suppress the employees of other districts."

Other employees also presented their views on the issue.

Also during the meeting a discussion was held on a report sent by the C and D employees of Mangan in which they alleged that when they went to the SGEA office in Gangtok to submit membership forms, the office-bearers there refused to accept the forms stating that these would be accepted only after the formation of the new executive body.

Lastly, in today's meeting an adhoc body was formed for correspondence with the SGEA and the contestants and it was decided to send a letter to the three contesting groups of Gangtok, election

commissioner, employees of North and West District and the President of Ad-hoc body of SGEA, Gangtok, raising the demand to cancel the 03 November elections.

They also demanded for the inclusion of members from all districts to contest in the election for the Central Executive Body. The letter also stated that if the demands were not met then a new association would be formed with employees of the three districts.

"We also have voting rights but they are violating them by keeping polling booths only in Gangtok," the letter states.

It was also decided at the meeting to raise the demand for contestants from all districts for the upcoming elections, who had the proper knowledge of service rules and be properly qualified.

## Now it's the turn...

Contd from pg1

Solomon Lepcha. Her teammate, Pema, who plays as a left wing striker, however, cut not make the grade today.

Anuradha, who also hails from Namthang, will play as a striker in the team.

The Chief Coach today informed that after playing at National U-19 women tournament at Dipu, Assam, the two players were selected for a national football coaching camp in 2001 but due to some problem that camp was cancelled.

"Last year, in the School National Games, Sikkim Girls team bagged a silver medal and both these players

did very well," he added.

The two have been undergoing training with Mr. Lepcha since the year 2000.

The Chief Coach also expressed hope that two other players from Sikkim, Nim Lhamu Bhutia of Mangalbaria and Sujana Rai of Dentam, will also get to play for India in the near future.

He also expressed his gratitude to the Sports Minister, PS Tamang, and his Department and Sikkim Football Association, and said that without their support, these players would not have been able to reach this level.

The 22-member Indian team will leave for Malaysia on 04 November.

## SPCC observes Indira Gandhi's...

Contd from pg1

life was a dedication to the nation and that everyone should try to follow her and work for the national cause.

While addressing the gathering, Mr. Bardewa informed that the Union Government has re-introduced the 20 point program for the nation and especially the SC/ST youth and women for economic development which had been started earlier by Mrs. Gandhi.

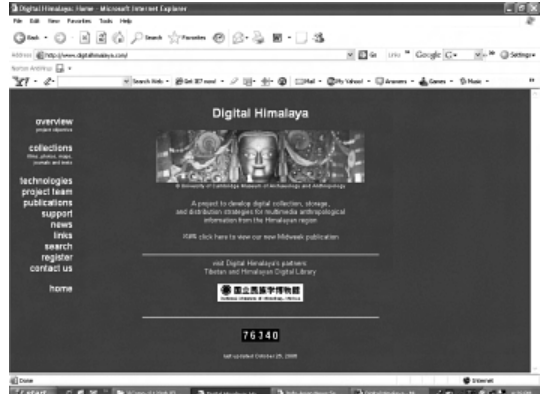
He appreciated the points of the program and recalled that during Mr. Bhandari's tenure as CM, he had been responsible for granting sanc-

tions through the staff members and he claimed that he did not have the time then to hold junta melas. He also declared that like Mrs. Gandhi, Mr. Bhandari too was "ethical" and that he "did not believe in fooling people through junta melas".

The SPCC members also offered khadas to the portrait of Mrs. Gandhi and lit candles. The entire program was conducted by DB Basnett. JM Maley also spoke on the occasion and offered encouragement to the gathering to strengthen the party which he said "would be true offerings to Mrs. Gandhi".

# DIGITAL HIMALAYA: A REGIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE IN THE MODERN AGE

Dr. MARK TURIN introduces a project that envisages to preserve and share archival and contemporary anthropological research works on the Himalayan region for both, the scholars and the Himalayan people.



**DIGITAL HIMALAYA** <www.digitalhimalaya.com> is a project to develop digital collection, archiving, and distribution strategies for multimedia anthropological information from the Himalayan region. Based jointly at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, USA, the project commenced in December 2000. In the first phase, we digitised a set of existing ethnographic archives comprised of photographs, films, sound recordings, field notes, and texts collected by anthropologists and travellers in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Indian Himalayas (including Sikkim) from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present.

The project has three long-term objectives. The first is to preserve, in a digital medium, valuable ethnographic materials that are degenerating in their current forms. The second is to make these resources available in a searchable digital format to scholars and to the Himalayan communities from which the materials were collected. Lastly, we are developing a template for collaborative digital cataloguing that will allow users to contribute documentation to existing collections and eventually link their own collections to the system, creating a dynamic tool for comparative research.

The five collections that were involved in the first phase of the project were selected for their historical value and for their coverage of diverse geographical areas and ethnic peoples of the Himalayan region. This region we have broadly defined to reach from Ladakh and Kashmir in the west to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in the east, and from the Tibetan plateau in the north to the Himalayan foothills in the south. The collections use a wide range of original recording media including: nitrate photographic film, 35mm monochrome and colour film, 8mm, Super8, and 16mm moving film, U-Matic, VHS, Hi-8, and 1-inch videotape, and a number of digital formats including DVMini and DVCam digital video, and TIFF and JPEG still images.

Of the five original collections, three are finite, historical resources, while the latter two are ongoing collections that continue to grow. The five collections are:

- a. the Williamson Photographic Archive: 1,700 photographs taken between 1930 and 1935 by

the British Political Officer Sir Frederick Williamson in Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan. Williamson's collection is now held in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and includes a number of rare historic images.

- b. the Furer-Haimendorf Film Collection: over 100 hours of 16mm film from various parts of the central and eastern Himalayas shot between 1936 and 1980 by Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, Professor of Anthropology at SOAS. The films are supplemented by Haimendorf's detailed field diaries.

- c. the Naga Videodisc: part of Haimendorf's film archive overlaps with a large ethnographic collection relating to the Naga peoples of Northeast India and parts of Burma, principally collected by five different anthropologists and travellers. These materials were compiled as

an analogue videodisc in the 1980s, and included some 10,000 photographs, a large number of film and sound clips, and original fieldwork diaries and notes in an associated database. This system is now technologically obsolete, and we hope to re-release it in a digital format.

- d. the Thak Archive: materials from a study of the Gurung village of Thak, central Nepal, including over 100 hours of film, more than 3,000 photographs, and continuous censuses and field notes covering the period 1968 to the present, collected by Alan Macfarlane and Sarah Harrison.

- e. the Thangmi Archive, comprised of digital video, photographs, and ethnographic data from the Thangmi communities of Dolakha and Sindhupalok districts in northeast Nepal collected by Mark Turin and Sara Schneiderman between 1996 and the present.

There are three aspects to the project, each of which re-

quires a different set of technologies. Digitisation is the first step: scanning photographic prints, negatives, and slides, creating digital master copies of film and video through telecine projection and other analogue-to-digital conversion processes, and storing these masters in high resolution digital formats. The second step is data management and interface design, to which I will return shortly. The third step concerns questions of storage and distribution: should all of the materials be available over the Internet? Should we opt to use DVD? How will different users respond to each format? Furthermore, we must think ahead to assure that the digital format in which we archive films and photographs can be easily migrated to new platforms as technology develops, so as to avoid the problems of obsolescence that have plagued previous ethnographic archiving projects such as the Naga Videodisc.

Broadband Internet offers ways of making an archive available to a geographically diverse audience. Both, the individuals who appear in the images (or their descendants), as well as scholars around the world, could view the materials at any time if the archive were located at a digital address rather than a physical one. But in large parts of the West, and certainly in the Himalayan region, the bandwidth necessary to transfer large digital files is currently unavailable. Even if the appropriate hardware and software were soon put in place, many of those who might like to view images of their own communities are not literate in English or familiar with the basic computing concepts needed to search an online database. Although Digital

Himalaya is investigating the use of Unicode fonts for Devanagari and Tibetan, it remains difficult to construct a multilingual search engine. One option which bypasses some of the pitfalls inherent in the Internet would be a DVD-based archive. A DVD can store many times more information than a CD-ROM: approximately two hours of film at cinema quality, or up to fifteen hours of film if compressed at a lower resolution. As a physical object, a DVD is a self-contained portable resource which requires neither high speed Internet access nor a computer. With the advent of small battery-operated DVD-Video players, it is now possible to play DVDs in areas with no infrastructure or electricity supply. Instead of complicated keyboard and mouse controls, DVD players are controlled with simple TV-style buttons. A DVD-based archive could provide better access to non-literate and less advanced users by offering limited interactivity, but more high quality playable content which makes use of voiceovers in local languages instead of text. Local groups might attend demonstrations where they could watch film footage and listen to voiceovers on a simple battery-operated DVD player. However, as a physical object (unlike the Internet), the widespread distribution of a single DVD is limited. In addition, the pace of technological development suggests that DVD in its current form has a limited life-span, making it impossible to rely upon as a long-term archival medium.

## INFORMED LITERATURE SHOULD SERVICE HEIGHTENED INTEREST

**YISHEY D** sifts through a recent travel guide book to rip through the travesties that get committed often in the name of tourism information...

Sikkim has a full page picture which almost doesn't say anything on the ethnicity of Sikkim. For someone new to the place, it becomes difficult to differentiate with the Tibetan opera.

Sample some of the spellings used in the book: Tetong Tek, Kecheperi, Latsum Chemo, Latsun, Lastun, Pemyanste, Fambong La Wildlife Sanctuary, Pajhor stadium, Purba Chorten, prey wheel, Thomba, Lahchung, Dickhu...

The chapter on Rabongla has plenty of mistakes. To begin with, it has given two spellings in big bold letters - Ravangla and Ravongla. The author has tried to explain what the word Ravongla meant. Read this: "Ravongla translates into a pass where sheep's are reared according to Bhutanese language." Bhutanese language?! The author is obviously confused. He is confusing the Bhutanese with the Bhutia or the Lhopo language. Sometimes he also says Sikkimis (as spelled in the book) language. I don't know what Sikkimise language is. In the same paragraph, one would be awed to know the English translation of Bhaley Dunga. An unpardonable error surfaces again in the same section when the 12th Gyalsab's Rinpoche's Palchen Choling Gonpa is introduced as a Nyingmapa monastery.

Meanwhile, a chapter on Samdrupse has few unique lines written about the highest statue of Guru Padmasambhava.

But I guess the writer of the piece still awaits a chocolate that Mr. Kaushik Acharya had promised.

This guide book is actually the brain child of Mr Acharya while the compilation and editing was done by Partha Pratim Roy.

Though the book is published by the Retreat Publications, a tourism development organization based in Kolkata, it does not offer anything new. The approach is rather narrow. It is merely a re-hash of existing information and does not provide a fresh perspective.

The only new aspect is its size and the glossy get up. The section of pictures of hotels and their info can make you suffocate. No place to breathe. The book is not worth the Rs 100 that it is priced at.

## SAVING LIVES

Every time a suicide case is reported, the feeling that "CARE" fell short begins to hover in the air and the area. The news is exchanged very excitedly and swiftly.

More sensation was created when four people committed suicide within a day and more recently on 29

October when a **VIEWPOINT** School took the same road.

How devastated, confused, guilty and ashamed all the families are, when such fatal incidents take place.

We felt helpless because we are powerless and nobody knows where and when tragedy is going to strike again.

We know that we can not control it. CARE [Concerned for Complete Life] also agrees that we cannot stop this menace. The only thing we can do is, create awareness about depression and subsequently suicide at least among the school children to begin with.

We need your cooperation, we need your support and we need your involvement.

Let us hope that this effort will be of some help to desperate minds who are contemplating suicide. "CARE" is always ready to help.

Engdip Lepcha, Gen. Secy, CARE

**NOW! SUDOKU**

3		5		6	8			
	6		1					
5	2		4			7	3	
					7			
6			7	3	4			9
	7							
3	8			5		9	6	
				1		2		
9	6		4					1

**YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION**

The aim of Sudoku is to enter a number from 1 through 9 in each cell of a 9x9 grid made up of 3x3 sub-grids, starting with various digits already given in some cells; each row, column, and sub-grid can contain only one instance of each number.