

NOW!

First With The News

The Cut & Paste Syndrome

Babudon keeps expressing itself in the weirdest of ways and while their penchant for criteria and requirements over merit and skills remains unobtrusive enough when they keep it to their clique, the mindlessness of some of their 'minimum requirements' gets amplified when those behind the tables start setting selection standards for sporting activities. Sample the recent trials called by the Sports Authority of India for its sports hostel in Namchi. The minimum requirements set for the under-16 and under-18 prospective sporting talents from Sikkim require physical measurements that even most men in India will be stretched to meet. The organisers in Sikkim clarify that they will not be very particular about these 'measurements' and that these have been included because that is how the national trials are conducted. These pre-requisites have obviously been drafted by non-sporting persons in decision-making positions and have to be 'officially' announced in Sikkim even if not 'practically' followed, it's the cut & paste syndrome that every national policy, no matter how mind-numbing, has to be spread out across the country. The call for selection trials for sporting talent in football, archery and boxing requires the candidates to reach at least 175 cm in height if they are under-16; 182 cms if they are under-18. Even though the talent scouts in Sikkim reassure that height, or rather the lack of it, will not be taken into consideration when the selections are made, fact remains that the condition has been officially specified. What the sports persons at SAI should have done by now is convince the babus wherever they sit that this clause is senseless. Because it is official, even though it is ignored, chances are that one day they will be strictly abide by. In such a scenario, Pole would never have been a SAI sponsored footballer since, even when fully grown, he reached only 169cms high. Ditto fate would have awaited Maradona with his 168 cm height. Balchung, SAI's most celebrated soccer discovery, too, would have found a SAI scholarship denied him when he was an Under-14. Who has ever heard of height being a criteria for aptitude in either soccer, archery or boxing? Well, we have our answer now, the policy makers at SAI.

DIGITAL HIMALAYA: A REGIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE IN THE MODERN AGE-II ALWAYS LEARNING, ALWAYS A WORK IN PROGRESS

In the concluding part of his introduction to the Digital Himalaya project, Dr. MARK TURIN, shares the logistic problems and ethical debates that continue to shape how the idea develops and evolves...

Recently, new converging strategies integrating the best of both Internet and DVD have emerged. With the advent of low-cost consumer DVD burners and authoring software, searchable databases could be available online along with low resolution film clips and photos, which users could then select to order a custom DVD that would come complete with relevant voice-overs. The film clips on the DVD would have embedded URLs, which when viewed on a computer would become active, enabling the user to link back to the relevant database information available online. An online annotation feature would allow members of the communities from which the material originated and/or scholars to add new or corrected information about individuals, rituals, or historical events, which could then be incorporated into the database documentation for that item. In areas where Internet access is unavailable, DVD-only versions of the archive could be compiled and installed, and comments sent by mail.

Technology is now developing and changing at an unprecedented rate, and choosing the design which will afford the widest range of people the most efficient and inexpensive access to these resources over time is not a simple proposition. We must consider the needs and priorities of each target audience, and create a flexible and adaptable system with multiple layers and entry points. If more than a few token members of the Himalayan communities from which the material originated are to have access to this visual documentation of their history, the multiple obstacles of illiteracy, unwritten languages and poor tech-



The Digital Himalaya Project is digitizing archival collections of ethnographic information from 150 major anthropological collections were selected for digitization in the first phase of the project. Archived media such as audio recordings of conversations and other recordings have been added. Archived text, audio and video recordings, have been digitized an extensive set of back issues journals and have been loaded to the Digital Himalaya website.

nical infrastructure must be overcome. At the same time, in order for researchers to find the archive useful as a comparative resource, effective search and retrieval techniques, detailed documentation and high resolution images must be incorporated. The challenge here is not so much in bridging the gap between Asia and Europe, but rather that between educated, English-speaking computer users in urban centres like Kathmandu or London, and their rural counterparts, who often do not have the education or facilities to make use of new technologies. Bridging this divide has been a central problem for ethnographic studies published in other mediums; books published only in English often remain inaccessible to the non-English speaking community which they describe. Digital technologies such as broadband Internet, with its high data transfer rates, and DVD, with its large storage capacity, now provide unprecedented capabilities for transporting and displaying large amounts of visual ethnographic material. If we can begin to dismantle the existing 'digital divide', there is some hope that the use of new technologies may help surmount the communication barriers which often frustrate the ethnographic endeavour.

Whether online or on DVD, issues of confidentiality and consent remain central to the construction of the archive. Although copyright clearance has been received for most of the materials in the initial collections, privacy and protection for

the individuals appearing in the photographs and films are a more serious concern. The potential problems are acute due to the immediacy and lack of anonymity inherent in visual representation, and the fact that many of the images originated in generations past when mass distribution of visual information was inconceivable. Although anthropologists may have been certain at the time that the people they filmed or photographed consented to these activities, the advent of the digital age threatens the basis of that 'informed consent'. When Furer-Haimendorf first travelled to Nepal in the 1950's, the country had just opened to the outside world. How could his informants have consented to having their images broadcast over the Internet fifty years later? How could they have anticipated that the words they uttered (gossip about their neighbours' political criticism of the monarchy?) might be available to millions of faceless viewers around the world? Although many of the individuals who appear in Haimendorf's films may now have passed away, what happens when their descendants view the digital archive and come across images of their grandparents taking part in some politically compromising activity or making statements still embarrassing to the family today?

Even at present, how can those we work with make an informed decision regarding the use of their image in a digital archive? Many of them are on the other side of the 'digital divide', with little experience of the new technologies that make a project like Digital Himalaya possible, and people remain

wary of their images being used to adverse purpose. And they are right to be concerned: how can any of us know how these images will be manipulated over the next hundred - or thousand - years? An old film doesn't die, it just gets clipped into ever smaller pieces, further removed from its original context, and used for evermore egregious purposes (an example being the images of bare-breasted Masai women placed on the web as part of an ethnographic archive that were later spotted on a pornography site).

All of these considerations will shape the way Digital Himalaya develops over the coming years. Salvaging ethnographic films and photographs by ensuring that they are properly digitised, catalogued, and kept in context is a priority. Another central objective is making them available to a broader audience, from scholars around the world to members of Himalayan communities who have no access to the libraries where these materials were previously stored. Involving those whose images are archived in the documentation process is a further avenue for exploration. If we can accomplish all of these objectives, we will be on the way to creating an appropriate ethnographic archive for the digital age. We need to build an open, non-linear archival structure that offers a range of access points and different paths through the archival materials. Each step requires a careful analysis of the central questions raised here, a process which we hope will make Digital Himalaya a dynamic ethnographic archive that accurately remembers the past yet remains a culturally responsive resource for the future.

CONTACT
The Digital Himalaya Project is still under development and we welcome ideas and comments. Please visit our website at <www.digitalhimalaya.com> for further information and regular updates as the project progresses. Comments may be sent to info@digitalhimalaya.com [concluded]
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SOCCER COMMENTS ON POLICE CHAMPIONSHIP

I would like to congratulate the Director General of Police, Sikkim, and his entire team for hosting the 55th BN Mullick Memorial All India Police Football Championship 2006 in Sikkim.

Being a football enthusiast and a member of the apex body of football in the state, I would like to focus on the areas where Sikkim Police has set good precedents which I am confident will be improved upon.

VIEWPOINT
I was written with golden letters in days to come in the history of the All India Police Sports Control Board. a) To convince the All India Police Sports Control Board for preparation of the fixture in the World Cup pattern where all the participants have to start their first match from the pre-qualifying stage.

b) To conduct all the matches from the day one with 32 (thirty two) qualified National and FIFA graded referees and 4 Match Commissioners deputed by All India Football Federation. With such A-class supervision, undoubtedly the grading of the quality of the matches will go up and accordingly, the quality of the

game will also improve. These decisions of the host state is not only creditable and appreciable for the development of football in the country but technically a landmark decision and would set a milestone for the conduct of future All India Police Football Championships. This also shows that how deep rooted football is in the minds of our people for the improvement of its quality.

Hats off to the persons concerned. Lastly, I would also like to put forward some suggestions to the All India Police Sports Control Board through two of their representatives who are present at Gangtok to kindly impress upon their Board to continue the above pattern adopted by Sikkim Police in future championships and to give minimum 15 days time to complete the championship as conducting 4 matches a day in a particular venue will neither improve the standard of football in our country nor is it good for a grassy ground like Paljor Stadium. Yours Sportingly,
Menla Ethenpa

NOW! SUDOKU

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

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.

Another survey begins...

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was in light of the allegations made by the local people of the area that the tunnel construction underneath had damaged their houses for which they should have to be paid commensurate compensation. In the wake of the belligerent and aggressive stance taken by the locals, the district administration consented to the conduction of another survey to ascertain whether the damages to the houses had been caused by the tunnel construction work. Mediating between the two parties, the DC [East] R Telang commenced the survey on 30 October and the survey will be restricted to 50 metres on either side of the 18 km long tunnel. As things stand, the NHPC as well as the district administration firmly believe that most of the damages have not been caused by the tunnelling work. In fact, a survey conducted last year had reported that there was no direct link between the tunnelling work and the damages suffered by houses in the area. The report had highlighted that some of the houses which had claimed damages were up to 2 kms away from the tunnel and could not have suffered damages due to the tunnelling

work. In other areas, the tunnel is a few hundred metres below the surface which, the report states, was too deep to cause any damages. There was another report, however, by the Mines & Geology Department, which had stated that the damages were due to the tunnelling; this report seems to have been conveniently sidestepped. However, just a survey might not placate the people of the area as the quantum and kind of compensation could lead to another controversy. As the DC [East] informs, the NHPC has offered to repair the damages that the houses in the region have suffered without conceding that the damages have been caused by the tunnelling work. The repairs, they are offering not as 'compensation', but on humanitarian grounds. The NHPC has declared that it is ready to conduct repair works on the damaged houses once the survey is completed and the quantum of damage has been established. The protesting locals, however, are not accepting the offer to repair the damages and are demanding monetary compensation instead. This could lead to another stalemate and nullify the surveying exercise which is supposed to be complete by the end of this month.

SAVE DZONGU TO SAVE LEPCHAS

Oflate, much has been heard and written about the erstwhile isolated place called Dzongu which is the only homeland of an indigenous tribe of Sikkim, the Lepchas. Everybody is now aware about a prevailing circumstance hovering over Dzongu. Implementation of the 300 MW Panan Hydel Hydro-electric power project has so far drawn lots of concern from all the corners of society. This concern is divided into two factions; one is supporting the project and the other half is resenting it. These dissidents are supported by the ACT (Affected Citizens of Teesta). Obviously, the planners of the project and the concerned authorities of the state government failed to adopt an approach known as "Indigenous Knowledge" before drawing a blueprint. Indigenous Knowledge means consideration of opinions, views, grievances and plights of local people before initiating any schemes/projects in that area where it is to be

implemented. In the case of Dzongu, administration and project personnel failed to collect such parameters of concern; that was to be collected from the local people, while preparing the Panan Hydel project. If this is not the case, then we can conclude that the voices raised were certainly overlooked. As a consequence, a hindrance in work implementation has developed. Now, to talk about Dzongu, the real concern is that the local people i.e. the Lepchas, who are certainly a vanishing tribe. Somebody has rightly quoted that a public hearing is not for public to listen to speeches from the authorities, but it is an opportunity for the public to express their opinions. It was sad to note that the public hearing in Dzongu, particularly for the Hydel project went the other way. This was a misnomer for the people of Dzongu. This was also true that despite living in the greatest democratic country of the world the dissidents (Against this Hydel Project) were quelled and bul-

lied by the armed personnel. Isn't it a very pathetic situation to be mentioned about? The already suppressed people are once again left with no ally whom we can count on in our difficult times. Anyways, at the outset, the Lepcha community is very obliged with our present govt. for declaring the Lepchas as a primitive tribe and subsequently sending the bill to parliament for approval to include schemes, activities and other measures that may be undertaken by the state govt in respect of all the matters concerning the Lepcha community. Aren't these people to be blamed for the present travails of Dzongu then? Didn't they advise the govt about the feelings of minority Lepchas while formulating the blue prints for this project? Dzongu is the only place where the Lepchas reside in maximum numbers, therefore a great truth that we have to accept without any exaggeration is; these are the people who are responsible for pre-

serving a rich culture, tradition and heritage of a vanishing tribe. But, if this project somehow gains foot holding then who will be a loser? Obviously, the Lepchas. And the people who are supporting this project will be the ones who shall be responsible for situation which will emerge in Dzongu later on. Certainly we will have no more good days. The matter which overly confuses me these days is, where the so called "Sikkim Lepcha Association" is? Aren't they responsible for carrying the true voice of Lepchas? Being an elected member of the Lepcha community, don't they care for the existence of Lepchas? Where are the local associations of Dzongu i.e. Lum Aal Shezum? Don't they have a right to mediate a true voice? Remember, if there is no survival or existence of people, then who is going to preserve the rich culture heritage of Lepchas? Once very active, even the Lepcha Youth Association also doesn't seem very interested in helping the budding youths of

Vanya scripts an engaging...

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flip back to the cover to remember that it is written by a 16-year old. The writer does not delve merely into the commonly used ideas of environment conservation but also addresses the complexities involved behind the actual implementation of such ideas. The first story in the book, "Turtles Rescued", aims to "recognize the danger of silly and sentimental approach that many environmentalists harbour", when the honest intentions of an enthusiastic group of children to save some turtles almost end up causing more harm than good. Another story, 'Let us help the Baby Birds' follows the same example when good intent without caution and thorough understanding can be as sinful as intentional exploitation of the environment. Similarly, 'Strange Sickness', as Michele Luxon of Lancaster University puts it in the foreword, questions the very definition of growth and development and that civilization growth could

very well be just a cancerous growth if it does not include the simultaneous development of the nature around us. The book also contains light stories which do not just educate, but also introduce readers to newer approaches and ideas to help save the environment. From bio-diversity preservation and afforestation to water conservation, the book has everything that is essential to make the young minds aware of the growing ill-effects of globalization. The book also uses and defines comparatively new terms related to the environment sciences which will prove to be highly useful for school children. Given that the fact that the book is written by a school girl and is aimed at school-going children, the schools would do well to introduce it into the curriculum of environment science, which will certainly make learning about nature far more interesting for the students. Published by the Mendelian Society of India, the book boasts a foreword by Michele Luxon, Head of Overseas Programmes, Lancaster University, UK.