



the MEGHALAYACHRONICLE

A Publication of the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Meghalaya



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Editor's Note

In our continuing efforts to inform you of the latest happenings in the Government, the year's first edition of the Meghalaya Chronicle is ready for your read through. Covering activities carried out by various government departments, we hope that this volume will meet with your interest.

Publishing a magazine of this nature is a difficult task. Therefore, as we aim to better our efforts from time to time, we solicit the kind cooperation of all the government departments by way of providing us with write up of schemes, articles, success stories or any other relevant information that can be incorporated in this magazine

P.S. Dkhar, MCS
Director of Information and Public Relations

From the Desk of the

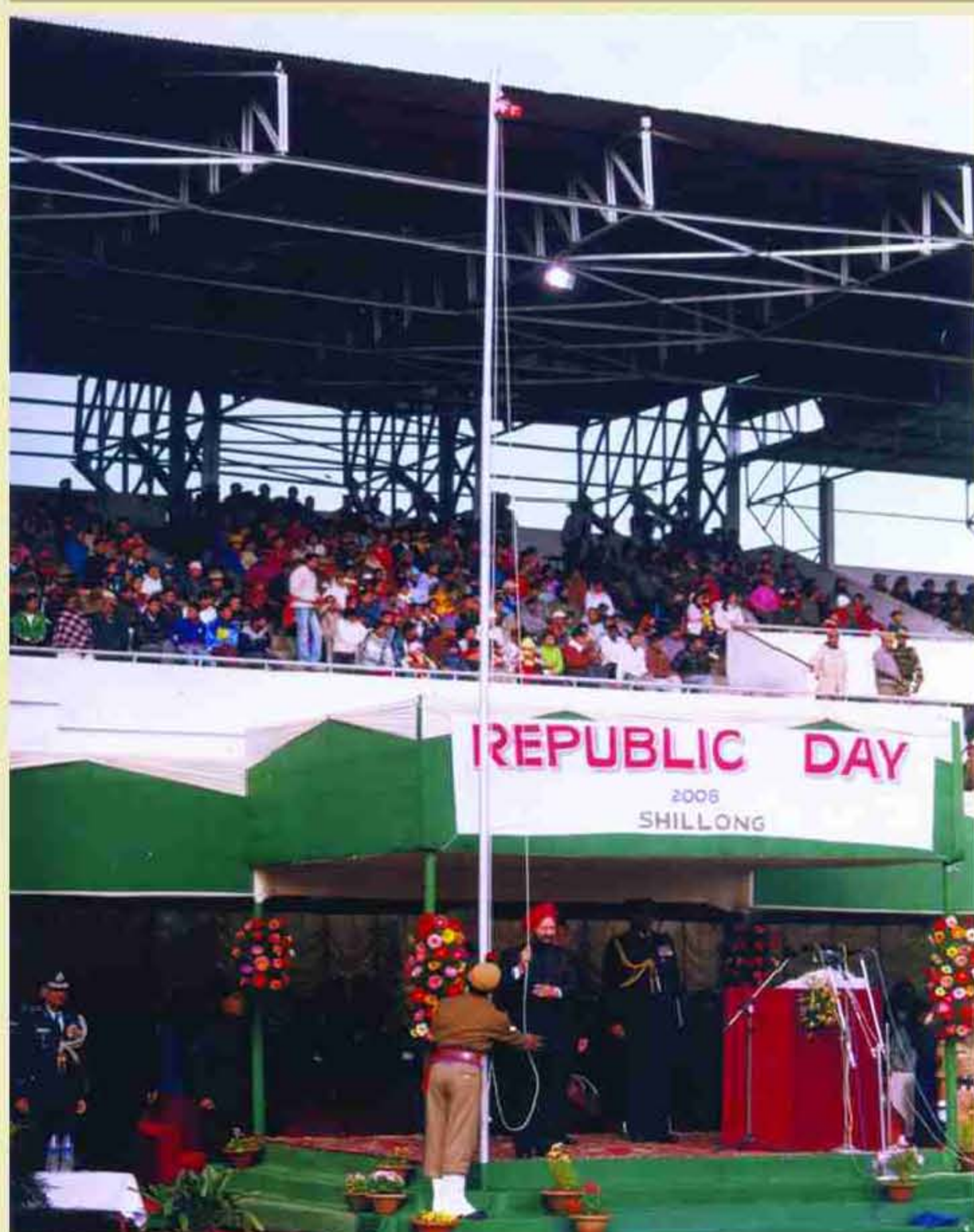
COMMISSIONER AND SECRETARY
INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

It is my pleasure to bring to you the first edition of this year's Meghalay Chronicle. With the hope that the articles, news and views presented here will make for interesting reading, I place this issue before you, our dear readers. As we work towards improving the magazine with every new edition, I look forward to your suggestions and contribution in terms of articles, write ups, poems etc.

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MEGHALAYA

CELEBRATES REPUBLIC DAY



The 59th Republic Day was celebrated in a befitting manner throughout Meghalaya on January 26, 2008. In the State capital, Shillong, Acting Governor Dr. S. S. Sidhu unfurled the National Flag and took the Rashtriya Salute of the marching contingents at the Jawaharlal Nehru Sports Complex, Polo. Besides military personnel and senior government officials, a large number of people also turned out to witness the celebration.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sidhu said Meghalaya needed to strengthen its infrastructure and harness its power potential for the development of the State, adding that the State's power potential is yet to be fully tapped, Dr. Sidhu informed that the construction of the Leshka Hydel Project in Jaintia Hills was going on well and the project once completed, would significantly reduce the energy deficit of the State, he however pointed out that peace and stability was necessary for economic development.

Dr. Sidhu lauded the initiatives taken to promote community based tourism in Meghalaya, adding that self-help groups, cooperatives and entre-

preneurs will be encouraged to take part in such areas of the tourism sector as transport, accommodation and others. He also encouraged people's support to the government in implementing all development programmes.

As part of the celebration, tableau were also presented by different government departments. Cultural presentations added to the grandeur of the occasion. The State TB Cell and District TB Centre, Shillong bagged the first prize in the tableau competition, while DRDA and Agriculture department came in at 2nd and 3rd place respectively.

On the day, the acting Governor Dr. Sidhu also handed over the Meghalaya Day Awards to Kalseng Ch Sangma who was honored with the U Tirot Sing Award for his contribution to arts and literature, Beningstar Lyngkhoi with the U Kiang Nangbah Award, for his outstanding achievement in the field of sports and the Pa Togan Sangma Award to Bosco Reach Out, an NGO for selfless social service.

It may be mentioned that the awards have been instituted to commemorate the Meghalaya Day, every year. All winners received cash award, citations and certificates.

The Governor also gave away the State Excellence Awards to the State Government employees in recognition of their excellent services.

The day was also celebrated in all the district headquarters and subdivisions of the State.

At South Garo Hills, the celebration was held in the premises of the Baghmara Boys Higher Secondary School where the Deputy Commis-

sioner, South Garo Hills, Mrs. M. H. K. Marak unfurled the National Flag and took the Rashtriya salute of the parade contingents. Besides colourful cultural programme presented by school students from various schools, other events like sporting competitions were also organized to mark the occasion.

At Ri Bhoi District, the celebration was held at Pahamsyiem Mini Stadium, Nongpoh where the Deputy Commissioner Ri Bhoi district, Mr. S. F. Khongwir unfurled the National Flag and took the Rashtriya Salute of ten parade contingents including police and school students. The highlights of the day included songs and dances presented by students of different schools and tableaux presentation by different Government Departments.

At Nongstoin, the Deputy Commissioner West Khasi Hills District, Mr. F Kharlyngdoh, unfurled the Tri-Colour to the tune of the National Anthem and took the Rashtriya Salute of the 13 parade contingents consisting of police contingents, NCC and students, in a function held at St. Peter's Higher Secondary School playground, Nongstoin, West Khasi Hills District. Besides the ceremonial parade, tableaux of different departments were also presented.

At Mairang Civil Sub Division, the day was celebrated at Madan Tirot in a befitting manner where the



Additional Deputy Commissioner and Sub Divisional Officer (Civil), Mairang Sub-Division, Mr. B S Sohliya, unfurled the Tricolor and took the Rashtriya Salute of the 4 marching contingents comprising of the Meghalaya Police and three schools.

The other highlights of the day included the cultural programmes presented by various artistes of the area. Games were also organized for children under 14 years of age and food packets distributed to patients in hospitals by the Chief Guest.

At Sohra Civil Sub-Division, the

celebration was held at Pynshad-khurai playground Saitsohpen, Sohra, where the Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Mr. E. Kharmalki unfurled the National Flag.

At Patharkhmah, the Republic Day was celebrated at Patharkhmah playground where Mrs. A L Mawlong, incharge Administrative Unit unfurled the National Flag and took the salute of the impressive marching contingents comprising of the Police and students.

Other highlights of the day

included cultural programmes presented by students of different schools, tug of war and volley ball played between Patharkhmah youth and Government employees. The day ended with the prize distribution to the winners by the Chief Guest.

At Mawshynrut Administrative Unit, the Extra Assistant Commissioner in-charge Mawshynrut Administrative Unit, Mr. D M Wahlang hoisted the National Flag and took the salute of the parade contingents of Police and students at the Riango Sports Complex.

Meghalay Day Awardees



Kalseng Ch Sangma
U Tirot Sing Awardee



Beningstar Lyngkhoi
U Kiang Nangbah Awardee



Bosco Reach Out
Pa Togan Sangma Awardee

Development Initiatives in West Garo Hills



The District of West Garo Hills, in the recent times, is witnessing palpable changes and marked improvement in the development scenario thanks to the approach and strategies being followed by the district authorities. Emphasis is being laid upon Social Mobilization Process by organising the stakeholders, building partnerships between government organisations, non-governmental organisations and the community in the development programmes. Besides, developmental strategies like community ownership, convergence and social audit has helped in bridging the gaps and bringing about desired results.

The development perspectives in the district can be categorised as follows: 1. Human Development; 2. Natural Resource Management and 3. Infrastructure Development.

As human development is measured by three indicators, namely Education, Health and Per Capita Income, the district has placed greater importance to these sectors of development. Under Education sector, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Secondary Education and Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) programmes have played an important role in providing access to education and improving the literacy rate in the district.

In the Health sector, convergence of schemes like National Rural Health Mission, ICDS, TPDS, Safe drinking water (ARWS) and Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) has helped in improving the general well-being of the people. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), SGSY, District Credit Plan and other line department schemes have helped in generating income among the rural households, thereby alleviating poverty and improving the standard of living.

National Resource Management: Natural Resource management projects under IFAD and Agriculture, Horticulture, Irrigation, Fisheries and Forest department projects have helped in creating assets for the rural people and brought about sustainable development, while at the same time helping the people manage their natural resources.

Infrastructure development through PWD and PHE departments, IAY, RSVY/BRGF, NREGS and Irrigation schemes has also been taken up.

The District is also building a sensitive support system through convergence approach to facilitate community partnership:

- Building a dedicated team for developmental work through sensitisation trainings including Training of Trainers (TOT) on Participatory Learning Approach (PLA) for both GO-NGO functionaries.
- Mobilisation and involvement of people's organisations at the village level, such as village employment councils (VECs), Natural Resource Management Groups (NaRM-G) and SHGs.
- Social Agreement with the village organisations seeking their commitment to participate and own up all the developmental activities.
- Convergence of schemes, functionaries and resources at District, Block and village level.

CONVERGENCE INITIATIVES:

1. Convergence of SGRY with SSA to build Block Resource Centres. Establishment of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), a residential school for girl dropouts at Jengjal—a government-NGO initiative—is a fine example of such convergence.
2. VECs under NREGS are involved in implementation of Mid Day Meal, observing Village Health Day under NRHM, TSC, Enrolment drive and Social Audit of all programmes including Education, Health and PDS.
3. Convergence of SSA and TSC for construction of school toilets and drinking water supply to schools.
4. Convergence of TSC and SGRY for construction of individual sanitary latrines.
5. Infrastructure works being carried out at the village level

- are entrusted to village organisations. There is no contractual system. Actual cost has been reduced by 2 times of schedule rates. Maintenance of assets are entrusted to the community.
6. Tea farmers organised into 'Tea Farmers' Federation to provide better market for their produce. The rate of tea leaves has been enhanced from Rs. 4.00 per kg to Rs.8.00 per kg.
 7. Education Festivals organised by involving all the stakeholders to enhance the access, enrolment, retention and learning under SSA. Till date, 1534 primary schools and 444 upper primary schools have been brought under SSA. Altogether 124781 children in the age group of 6-11 and 51913 in the age group of 11-14 have been enrolled in schools.
 8. Convergence of ASHAs under NRHM and Anganwadi workers with Village Health & Sanitation Committees to ensure full immunisation coverage in the district.
 9. "MEGHA MILK" launched in 2006 in convergence with Integrated Dairy Development Project (IDDP), SGSY and RSVY. Now under this banner dairy plant produces 1500 litres of milk everyday.
 10. Introduction of Bar-coded Food Coupon system in Tura to streamline PDS to ensure food security (an e-governance initiative.)
 11. 'Fight Against Malaria'—a special project for prevention and control of malaria has been initiated to address the issue effectively. Under this trainings and awareness campaigns have been organised for all sections of the people.

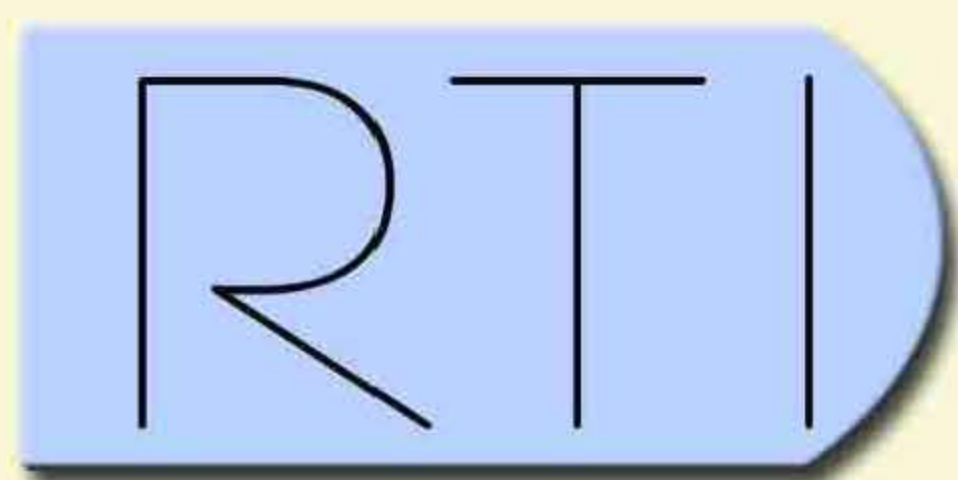
ACHIEVEMENTS:

- West Garo Hills is among one of the few districts in the country to have done Social Audit and this has become an excellent learning process for all the people involved and has brought about tremendous accountability in developmental processes.
- The only district to have a number of villages declared as 100 % literate under TLC.
- IAS Study Circle at Don Bosco College has been established in partnership with voluntary faculty from various colleges and NEHU. Four students have cleared Prelims this year.
- Some villages in the district will be declared as 100% Mid Day Meal implementing village on September 8, 2007.
- West Garo Hills has been found to be one of the best performing district in Revised National TB Control Programme in the State. Under the supervision of DTO Dr. M K Sangma, the district has achieved the highest cure rate of 92 % in the 2nd quarter of 2006 which is above WHO target of 85 %; 81 % in 1st quarter, 2007 and 88% in 2nd quarter 2007.

- Very soon some villages in district will be declared 100% totally sanitised village in convergence of TSC and SGRY scheme. Altogether 4000 individual toilets constructed under TSC in eight blocks of the district.
- NREGS: Within 2 months of implementation 97 % of the rural households have participated in the programme. Rs. 35 crore alone have gone into the rural households' income.
- West Garo Hills is the only district where there has been no disruption of ICDS schemes. There are altogether 795 ICDS centres in the district.
- The district has achieved 90% immunisation coverage under NRHM. It has been made mandatory for every to receive all four vaccinations.
- In Agriculture sector, SRI method of rice cultivation has given the farmers 67.25% higher yield; 20-50% saving in irrigation water and 45 kg of seeds are saved.



Effective people are not problem - minded; they're opportunity minded. They feed opportunities and starve problems - Stephen R. Convey.



AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

To familiarize Public Information Officers (PIOs) and Assistant Public Information Officers (APIOs) on the effective implementation of the Right To Information Act 2005, the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Meghalaya, Shillong, organized a Two Day District Level Workshop on the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 at TRYSEM Hall, Nongstoin.

The workshop was attended by PIOs and APIOs from various departments, representatives from NGOs and school teachers from across West Khasi Hills District. The objective of the workshop was not only to create awareness about the RTI Act but also to deliberate on a number of issues relating to the implementation of the Act.

The workshop was addressed by a galaxy of eminent persons which included the State Information Commissioner, Mr. G P Wahlang, the Deputy Commissioner of West Khasi Hills District, Mr. F Kharlyngdoh, the Director of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya, Mr. P S Dkhar and the Programme Coordinator of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) New Delhi, Mr. Venkatesh Nayak.

The Director of Information and Public Relations, while welcoming the gathering emphasized on the objective and importance of the RTI Act as an instrument and it needs to be effectively implemented.

The interactive sessions held during the workshop provided a platform for representative of NGO's to give an account of their activities relating to RTI and also to interact on the

effective implementation of RTI Act so that the culture of secrecy will be replaced by a culture of transparency. Views were also expressed on the need to create awareness about the Act particularly in the rural areas.

A similar workshop for the PIOs, APIOs and NGO representatives was also held at Tura, West Garo Hills District. The District level workshop organized by the office of the Assistant Director of Information and Public Relations, Tura, in collaboration with the Meghalaya Information Commission, Shillong was held at the Tura District Auditorium on December 3, 2007. Deputy Commissioner, Mr. E P Kharbhih inaugurated the workshop.

On the first day of the workshop, the resource person, Mr. Venkatesh Nayak, Project Coordinator, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, New Delhi, gave an in-depth deliberation on the RTI Act through power-point presentation and also explained the role and responsibilities of APIOs and PIOs. He also answered to the questions sought by the officers during the interaction.

At Pynursla, the office of the Assistant Director of Information and Public Relations, East Khasi Hills District in collaboration with the Meghalaya Information Commission, the office of the Block Development Officer and Pynursla Community and Rural Development Block, Pynursla organized a one Day Awareness Campaign on the Right to Information Act 2005 on November 1, 2007 at the USAI Memorial Hall, St. Anthony's Higher Secondary

School's premises, Pynursla about 48. Kms from Shillong. The State Chief Information Commissioner Mr. G. P. Wahlang, inaugurated the workshop in the presence of the Director of Information and Public Relations, Mr. P. S. Dkhar.

The workshop was ably conducted by the resource person Angela Rangad of the Meghalaya Right to Information Movement. During the interactive session, a number of people including students sought advices and clarifications which were satisfactory dealt with by the resource person.

It may be mentioned that the campaign which covered all the villages under the Pynursla C&RD Block saw a large number of prominent people, NGOs and students participating actively in the campaign.

Amongst those who were present on the occasion include Mr. P. Tynsong, BDO, Pynursla C&RD Block, Mr. R. Nongkhlaw, ADIPR, EKHD, Rev. Fr. R. Majaw Parish Priest, Pynursla Parish and Mr. M. Khongthaw Rangbah Shnong Pynursla.

At Sohra, the awareness campaign on the Right to Information Act, 2005 was organized by the office of the Sub Divisional Public Relations Officer, Sohra at the Community Hall, Seng Samla Laitkynsew, Sohra on November 12, 2007. Mr. C Kharhujon, Headman Mawkisiem attended the function was the Chief Guest.



The main resource person in the campaign, Mr. E R Sawian, Vice Principal of St. John Bosco Boys School, Sohra and also the member of the People's Movement Sohra explained in details about the rules and guidelines in connection with the implementation of the Act and stressed on the importance of people being aware of the facts and the usefulness of the RTI Act. Mr. R Synrem, Executive Member, Laitryngew, explained about the format of filing applications to get the information needed through the RTI Act.

The campaign was presided over by Smti. A Rynjah, Sub Divisional Public Relations Officer, Sohra who also gave the welcome address while Shri. M Basaiawmoit, Acting Sordar Laitkynsew offered the vote of thanks.

At Mawkyrwat, West Khasi Hills District the awareness campaign was held November 26, 2007 wherein the local MLA, Mr. B B Nongsiej was the Chief Guest. Organized by the office of the Sub Divisional Public Relations Officer, Mawkyrwat in collaboration with the Meghalaya Information Commission and the office of the SDO (Civil), Mawkyrwat, the campaign was attended by the people of the Mawkyrwat and Ranikor area and member of the NGOs and school students of the area.

Ms. Angela Rngad, who attended the campaign as the resource person deliberated at length on the RTI Act, 2005 which was followed by an interaction session on various aspects of RTI.

Others who spoke on the occasion included Mr. D Vijay Kumar, SDO (C), Mawkyrwat, Mr. R Nongkhlaw, Assistant Director, Information and Public Relations, East Khasi Hills,

Mr. R Susngi, SDPRO, Mawkyrwat and Mr. H Lyngkhoi, Myntri Mawkyrwat.

At Nongtoin the office of the District Public Relations Officer, Nongstoin in collaboration with the Meghalaya Right to Information organized a one day awareness campaign on the Right to Information Act on the theme "Your Right to be Informed" on December 5, 2007 at St. John Don Bosco School, Rambrai, West Khasi Hills District. The campaign was inaugurated by the Extra Assistant Commissioner, West Khasi Hills District, Nongstoin, Mrs. D M Suja.

Among others who spoke on the occasion included the Field Publicity Officer, I & B Ministry, Government of India, Mr. B Khongwar who highlighted on the objectives of the campaign and the District Public Relations Officer, Nongstoin, Mr. P S Lyngdoh who proposed a vote of thanks.

Later in the day, the campaign was conducted by the Resource Person, Ms. Angela Rngad from the Meghalaya Right to Information Movement where she dealt with all the queries sought by the participants during the question and answer session.



The Splendours of Garo Hills

Hundred drums Wangala festival:

The annual Hundred Drums Wangala Festival of the Garos was celebrated at Asananggre, West Garo Hills on November 9 and 10, 2007.

Besides the usual rituals associated with the Wangala Festival like the Rugala, Chachat So'a and Ani Doka, competitions were held among the ten participating Wangala troupes from the three Districts of Garo Hills culminating with the main Hundred Drums Wangala dance. The highlight of this year's festival is the crowning of the Wangala Queen, Wangala King and the Matgrik (warrior) of the Year.

It may be mentioned that the Wangala is the most significant post-harvest festival of the Garos which is generally celebrated in the month of October and November. It is a thanksgiving ceremony to the Misi Saljong, also known as Pattigipa-Ra.rongipa (the great river or the God of Wealth) for having blessed mankind with the rich harvest of the season.

The Wangala has been practiced by the Songsareks or non-Christian Garos from time immemorial in all the villages of Garo Hills, the time and mode of celebration varies from village to village. However, due to impact of modern civilization and foreign culture, the Wangala, which is the cultural identity of the Garos, could be seen fast disappearing. So, in order to protect, preserve and promote this cultural identity, a group of Garo thinkers and leaders came together in a meeting and after a lot of discussion, they decided to organize the Wangala festival on modern lines, a group of 15-30 dancers with ten drums would form a contingent and ten such contingents with 300 dancers would make up the "Hundred Drums Wangala Dance Festival".

Thus, the first ever Hundred Drums Wangala Festival was successfully organized on December 6 and 7, 1976 at Asananggre, the headquarters of Rongram Development Block. Since then, the Festival is being celebrated in the second week of November every year and over the years it has grown under the patronage of the Government of Meghalaya and nurtured by the Hundred Drums Wangala Festival Organisation.

Autumn Festival of Traditional Dances:

In another attempt to promote the culture and tradition of different tribes inhabiting Garo Hills and also to develop their economic status, the first-ever "Autumn Festival of Traditional Dances", was organized by the Betasing Cultural & Economic Development Committee under Ampati Civil Sub-Division, West Garo Hills District on October 24, 2007. Altogether 69 cultural troupes from Garo, Koch and Hajong tribes of the region performed their traditional dances in front of over 10,000 strong crowd at the Betasing Block headquarters during the two-day festival.

Ethnic Rhythms – Tura Winter Festival:

The 'Ethnic Rhythms' Tura Winter Festival which kicked start on November 10, 2007 during the 100 Drums Wangala Festival at Asanang continued till January 2008 with various events and programmes to attract visitors to Garo Hills. The Festival organized by the Tourism Department in collaboration with the Administration, other Government line departments, SHGs and NGOs aims at showcasing the different aspects of Garo culture and tradition, eco-tourism potential, etc, of the region.

The programmes of the festival included angling competition and picnic by riverside at Rombagre on December 1, 2007, photography exhibition at the District Auditorium, Tura on December 7, 2007, exhibition, food festival, rock concert, display of Garo traditional dresses and ornaments at the MP Stadium, Dakopgre, Tura on December 8, 2007, adventure trekking on December 12-14, 2007 from Chinabat, Mandalgre, Rongkinggre, Bandigra, Ampanggre, Rongchikgre, Rongsak and Marathon and indigenous games on December 15, 2007 at Chandmary playground.



Women's Day Celebrated

Shillong, March 8, 2008: In observance of the International Women's Day, the Social Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya in collaboration with the Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW), today organized a Training cum Workshop on the theme "Survival to Success Celebrate Her Life" at the Don Bosco Youth Centre. The Chairman of the MSCW, Mrs. Biloris Lyndem attended the inaugural function as the Chairman of the MSCW, Mrs. Biloris Lyndem attended the inaugural function as the Chief Guest. Besides officers of the Social welfare Department, members of SHGs, NGO, anganwadi workers of East Khasi Hills District, teachers, students of Shillong Law College as well as advocates attended the function.

Speaking on the occasion Mrs. Biloris Lyndem delved at length on the Human Development Index (HDI) which is an indicator of a society's overall development. As women are equal contributors to society, their participation in economic life, social life, health, environment and food security have a direct bearing on the HDI. While pointing out that women have excelled in many of these indexes, improving literacy is still a core requirement that needs to be addressed. Informing that under the 11th Plan, a 20% increase has been allotted to education, Mrs. Lyndem urged upon parents to send their children to school. Referring to the role of SHGs in boosting economic development, Mrs. Lyndem reiterated the need to create markets for the products made by SHGs.

Highlight about the Meghalaya State Commission for Women, which was founded in October 2004, Mrs. Lyndem said one of the area of focus of the Commission has been in implementing the Domestic Violence Act in 26 October 2006. As per the provision of the Act, Protection Offices have been appointed in all districts of the State. This fact bear great significance as Meghalaya ranks second to New Delhi in occurrences of domestic violence cases.

The resources persons for the training session included the Chairman of the MSCW, Mrs. Biloris Lyndem who spoke on the subject *Rights of WOMEN AND* Mrs. F. Lyndoh Nonglait, Advocate/Lecturer, Shillong Law College who spoke on the issue of *Crime Against Women and Free Legal Aid Services*.

It maybe mentioned that as part of the programme, the participants also undertook a rally from the venue to Malki Point and back.

Unveiling West Khasi Hills

The first ever three day Tourism Festival of West Khasi Hills on the theme "Unveiling West Khasi Hills", organized by the District Administration, got underway on December 6, 2007 at Madan Nongstoin wherein the Director of Tourism, Mr. T Dkhar was the Chief Guest. The inaugural function was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, West Khasi Hills District, Mr. F Kharlyngdoh.

Mr. T Dkhar, in his inaugural address, said that the Government has introduced the bed and breakfast scheme which the villagers, self help groups can avail the prospect for uplifting the economy of the people. Later the Chief Guest lit the lamp to mark the inauguration of the festival.

Mr. F Kharlyngdoh, in his introductory speech, briefly underlined the untapped tourism potential in the District and said that many beautiful tourist spots in the District were not known to the tourists. However, he added that Nongkhnum Island which was explored a few years back has become popular now and has attracted a lot of tourists, both domestic and international. Mr. Kharlyngdoh also informed the meeting that the Government was preparing a detailed project report on the tourism where West Khasi Hills District is also one of the circles where roadside amenities will be set up for the tourists.

On the first day of the Festival, an industrial exhibition was conducted by the District Industries Centre Nongstoin and cultural show was also presented by Cultural troupes from Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur and Pariong which enticed the rich ethnicity of the North Eastern States. Song and dance competition was also organized on the day.

News REEL REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION '08

CELEBRATIONS AT THE JAWAHARLAL NEHRU SPORTS COMPLEX, POLO



1st Prize Winner in the Tableau Presentation
State TB Cell & District TB Centre, Shillong.



2nd Prize Winner in the Tableau Presentation
Ia Treilang S.H.G - III Mawrah Sohra Syiemship



3rd Prize Winner in the Tableau Presentation
Department of Agriculture

GOVERNOR'S 'AT HOME'



At Raj Bhavan, Shillong.



Meghalaya Pavillion



Cultural Show



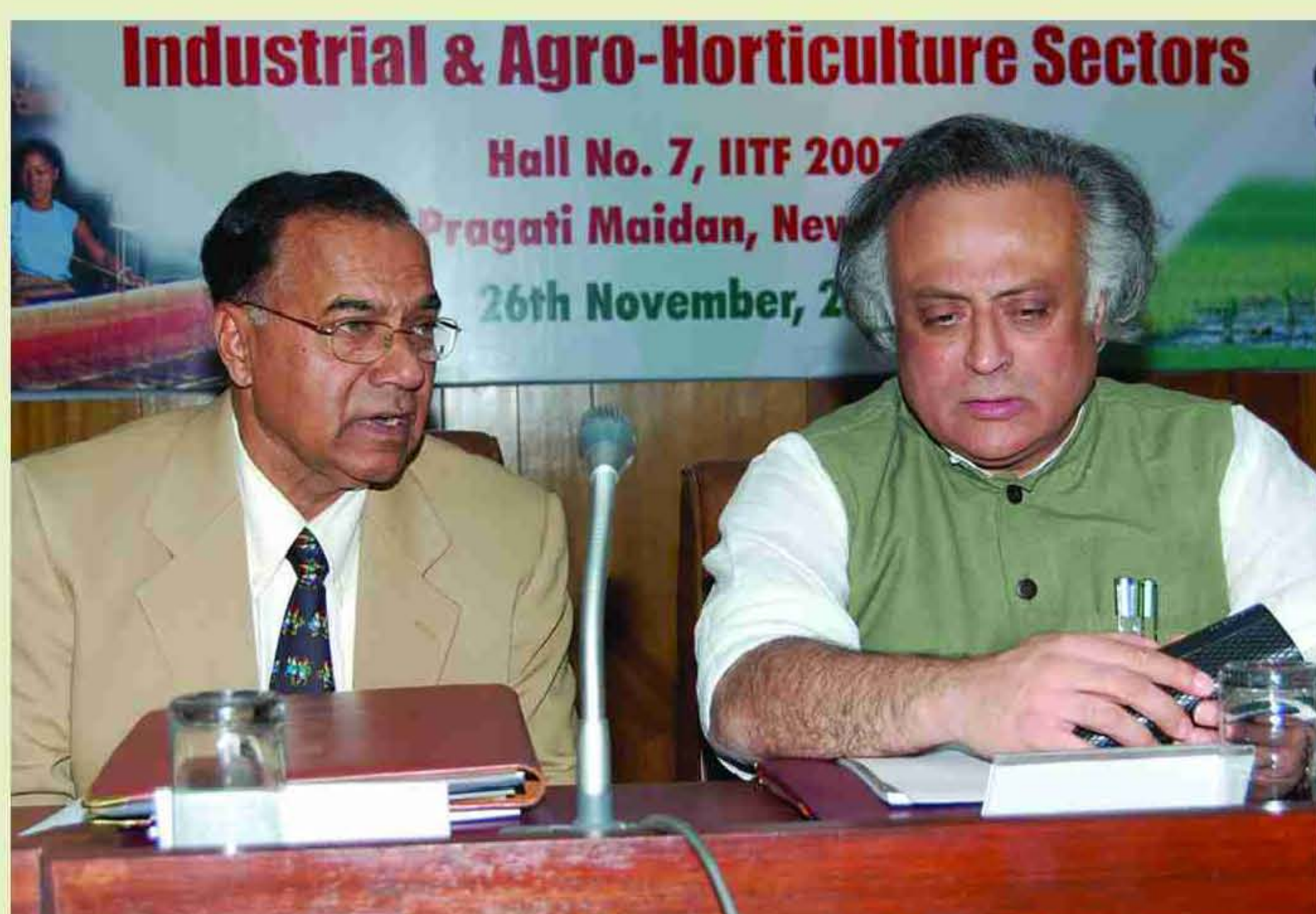
Rock Show



Seminar on Investment Opportunities in Industrial & Agro-Horticulture Sector



Seminar On Tourism & Information Technology, November 16, 2007



Tawang Speaks in Hindi

We're Indian

As clouds slowly lift from above the northern horizon, a pointed, rocky mountain rises sharply into the blue sky. “That’s Shivling,” exclaims Bikram Singh, intently gazing at the snowy peak from behind a boulder at Bumla, a 15,500 ft high mountain pass on the McMahon Line.

To his left, stone chips lie in a heap replicating the phallic –shaped mountain that towers over the Tibetan plateau. “People drop stone chips here to offer their obeisance to Shivling and wish for friendly ties with China,” the soft spoken Sikh soldier explains as roaring winds violently shake multi-hued Buddhist flags above his head.

A tin board hung over the place aptly reads, “Heap of stones for Sino-Indian friendship”. Another signpost nearby hails India and China as “two old neighbouring civilizations”.

“Here, we can stand right on the McMahon Line”, remarks an Indian Army major as he gazes into a long and narrow valley that merges into Tibet. A People’s Liberation Army camp is seen at the base of a mountain slope, about a km away from the McMahon Line that Beijing has always refused to accept as a legitimate boundary. The 47 km descent from Bumla to Tawang town, about 10,000 ft above the sea, is steep and dangerous. And, enchanting as well. Bare rocky mountains, deep gorges and exotic lakes add more to the splendour and beauty of its landscape. Huge boulders hang on

mountain slopes threatening to crash on passing vehicles any time. Indian Army camps and bunkers dot the rough and winding road, named after Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji. Otherwise, there is virtually no habitation till the route ends at Tawang, whose quick fall to the Chinese had created so much anguish and panic across the country in 1962.

“Once it captured Tawang, the PLA took no time to reach the outskirts of Tezpur in Assam, overrunning Indian defence at Bomdilla, Dirang and Sela,” recollects an Arunachal Pradesh bureaucrat who belongs to the majority Monpa tribe. It is the same route that the Dalai Lama had followed to escape from the Chinese in 1959.

CHINESE CRADLE: For decades, Beijing has been projecting itself as the “Motherland” of Himalayan provinces that were either under Tibetan rule or influence in the past. The Chinese basically claim Tawang on grounds that it was a part of Tibet before it went to British India and that it was the birthplace of the Sixth Dalai, a Monpa.

Sitting in the verandah of this mist-hidden wooden quarters after morning prayers, Sanjay Jampu, Secretary of the Tawang monastery, remarks, “There is no taker for China’s call for the return of Tawang on grounds that it was a part of Tibet to the so called Motherland”. The famed 400-year old shrine known as Galden

Namgyal Lhatse Gonpha wields tremendous influence on the lives of the people of Tawang.

“Considering Chinese atrocities in Tibet, we can never associate ourselves with them. We belong to India that respects religious and individual rights”, the 35 year old, monk adds. “What worries us is the absence of quick reactions from New Delhi to Beijing claims,” adds Additional District Commissioner Lobsang Phunchu.

MARK OF BUDDHA: Life in Tawang is based on religion. It is not possible to find a Monpa home without a Buddhist prayer flag on top of its roof. Monasteries and monks in ochre robes are seen almost everywhere. Colourful prayer wheels and streamers dot the entire landscape. Every home and shop has an altar with portraits of the Buddha and the Dalai Lama.

“Monpas can never forgive the Chinese for what they have done to the Dalai Lama and Buddhist religion,” remarks Rinchen Tsetin Khom, a leader of the Mon Autonomous Region Demand Committee.

Unlike in Tibet, the Chinese were soft on the people of Tawang during the Sino-India conflict. When the border skirmish broke out, Tshering Drema was helping her parents in the field at the village-Zemithang-north neorh-eastern Bhutan.

Standing at the gate of the Tawang Market monastery, a smaller version

of the one uphill of the sexagenarian Monpa reminisces, “the Chinese were very nice and helpful. They used to teach our people how to rear animals and grow crops”.

Quoting his parents, Tashi Wangchu, a young engineer, adds, “The Chinese would often ask us not to be afraid....They would say we are same people...We’ve no similarity with Indians—Get them out of our land.” Old timers tell frightening stories about how the Chinese put the bodies of India soldiers on display to impress the locals.

WINDS OF CHANGE: China’s image as an enemy of Buddhism and democracy has moved Monpas, who are acknowledged as an offshoot of the Tibetan race, far more closer to India than expected. Tawang, a bustling town of about 10,000 people, looks more well-integrated into the Indian mainstream than most other eastern Himalayan towns like Darjeeling Gangtok and Shillong. Hindi which faces resistance in most of the eastern hills, has become the lingua franca of this frontier region, “we have adopted Hindi because it is our national language and because tribal groups here do not have a common language,” explains Tashi Wangchu.

As the melodious tune of Ya Ali from Hindi movie Gangster wafts across Old market Street, Dicky Dolmas, a teenaged shopkeeper comments “We find ourselves close to India, the birthplace of Buddhism. We get everything from food to education, from there.” Looking at the signboard of a nearby eating joint, she adds, “here, the word Chinese is only associated with a

particular cuisine”.

Some of the key locations in Tawang town are named after Gandhi and Nehru. At the eastern end of Nehru Market, there is a monastery named after India’s first Prime Minister. “This monastery was built as a tribute to Nehru on his death in 1964,” recollects a doctor, who lives near the shrine.

Most business establishments in tawang district are run by people of North India, Assamese and Nepalese descent. “There is no discrimination against the plains people”. Says Phunchu. “The locals mostly trade in vegetable and foreign goods”, Rameshwar Sharma, a cloth merchant from Rajasthan, Many shops have their shelves filled with goods smuggled from China and Bangladesh through Bhutan and Myanmar.

At some shops, Bollywood heart-throbs like Shah Rukh Khan, Hritik Roshan, Akshay Kumar, Aishwarya Rai and Sushmita Sen vie for space with the Dalai Lama. “Here, India pop attracts more listeners than western numbers”. Says Khom.

QUEST FOR SELF -RULE: Life in this mountainous region is tough. Children trudge at least 15 kms to and from school. “There are only eight doctors for a district spread over 2,085 sq km.” says a senior doctor.

The recent elevation of Dorjee Khandu, a Monpa, as chief minister has come as a morale booster for Tawang. “This is the first time a Monpa has become the CM,” says Khom. “Now, we are waiting for the Centre to clear the bill sent by the State Government to grant autonomy

to the people of Tawang and West Kameng district under the Sixth Schedule of the India Constitution. This is the only way we can make life easy for our people”.

Courtesy – The Times of India

On Life

In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: it goes on.

Robert Frost

We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill

Life is a grindstone. Whether it grinds us down or polished us up depends on us.

Thomas L. Holdcroft

All of the animals except for man know that the principle business of life is to enjoy it.

Samuel Butler

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It’s the transition that’s troublesome.

Isaac Asimov



WEIGHT TRAINING

CAN HELP ELDERLY

Pumping a little iron can help elderly nursing home residents and heart failure patients gain strength for everyday life, the American Heart Association says, expanding on earlier advice.

“Those folks are capable of exercise training benefits and certainly resistance training is part of that,” said Mark Williams, who wrote the new guidance in the journal *Circulation*. Williams said resistance training should be used as a complement to aerobic exercise.

“A lot of people after having a heart attack or heart failure think they need to take it easy,” said Dr. Amit Khera, of the University of Texas South Western Medical Centre. He said broader guidance should help reassure doctors and patients that it’s probably OK for most people to start exercising after heart troubles.

The Heart Association statement cited one study of a 10 weeks period of resistance training among nursing home residents with an average age of 87 that resulted in improvements in strength and stair climbing power. The statement also notes that elderly people and women who suffer from coronary heart diseases can benefit from workouts including resistance training because they build muscles strength.

Resistance weight training included using one’s body for weight resistances by doing things like abdominal crunches to using dumbbells, wrist weights or weight machines.

It’s been known for sometime that resistance training is good for everyone, from those with chronic diseases to healthy people. Resistance training for heart patients has been gaining momentum for the last two decades or so, said Williams.

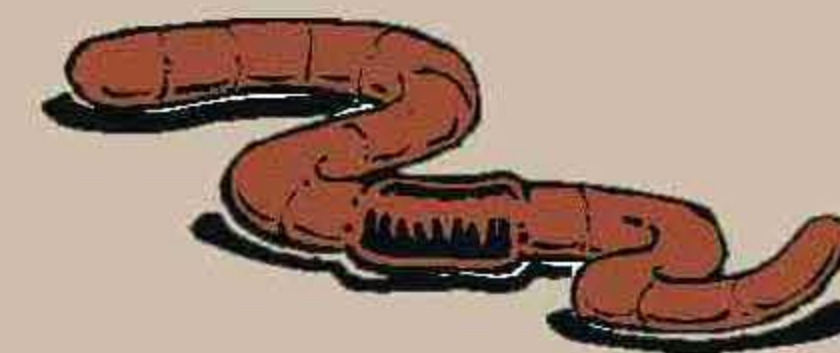
Tom Simerly, 57, of suburban DeSoto, who had a procedure to open a clogged artery, started rehabilitation a week after he got out of the hospital. Though lackadaisical about exercise before, Simerly said that he’s noticed improved strength as he goes to rehab three days a week. He works out on a treadmill, stationary bicycle and has graduated from free weights to weight machines.

Dr. Art Labovitz, cardiology director at St. Louis University School of Medicine said that despite the increasing knowledge about the benefits of resistance training, the public perception is likely that it’s largely off limits for heart patients. “I think probably the conventional wisdom is that if you have a heart condition, you can’t lift weights,” Labovitz said. He added that there may be some circumstances where a heart patient shouldn’t do such training.

The Statement recommends that those who do resistance training start out slow, setting the resistance or weight load at a moderate level to achieve the prescribed repetition range without straining. Elderly people should start with a low level of resistance. As progress is made they should first increase the number of repetitions before adding weight or resistance.

Courtesy – The Times of India

HOW COMPOST WORMS ARE KILLING THE PLANET



Worm composting could be doing more harm than good to the environment, according to research in Germany. “Worms produce a significant amount of greenhouse gases. Recent research done by German scientists has found that worms produce a third of nitrous oxide gases when used for composting, an expert said.

In an interview, Jim Fredrickson of Britain’s Open Universities faculty of technology, said the German research showed that worm composting has deleterious effects on the environment that should be considered more seriously. Worms naturally produce nitrous oxide gases when they are put into the process of composting. Worms are used to recycle food scraps and other organic material into valuable soil worm compost, otherwise known as vermicomposting. This compost can then be used to grow plants.

“We have concentrated on getting waste out of landfill and into worm composting systems but they can actually produce more greenhouse gases than landfill sites produce,” Frederickson told Materials Recycling Week. In Germany and other environmentally aware countries, governments have supported the composting of waste in efforts to reduce the land filling of biodegradable waste. This includes encouraging householders to invest in home composting systems.

Although Frederickson says that worm composting is a positive thing, he claims that not enough research has been done on worms releasing polluting gases.

Speaking of worms, Frederickson told the magazine: “everybody loves them because they think they can do no harm but they contribute to global warming. People are looking into alternative waste treatments but we have to make sure that we are not jumping from the frying pan into the fire. “The emissions that come from these worms can actually be 290 times more potent than carbon dioxide and 20 times more potent than methane”.

This is because worms used in composting emit nitrous oxide- a greenhouse gas 296 times more powerful, molecule for molecule than carbon dioxide.

Landfill sites produce methane, which is 23 times more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Red worms appear naturally in country compost heaps but over the past decade or so a thriving trade has grown up in domestic wormeries which enable people with space as limited as a balcony to compost their kitchen waste.

The worms are laid out on lime and vegetable peeling. When they have digested this material they move to another level in search of more food. The lower trays of compost can be used and a tap allows the liquid collected to be drained off as fertilizer.

The red worms used in composting are extremely efficient at breaking down decomposing material such as kitchen scraps and other organic materials but they emit nitrous oxide in the process of digestion in the gut.

Frederickson told Materials Recycling Week: “The amount of worm composting is very, very small and the amount of landfill is huge. But landfill sites are quite well run these days and it is possible to extract about half the gas they generate and use it for electricity generation.

“So the amount of nitrous oxide emitted by large scale worm composting is something we should be looking at before we go further down that route”.

Frederickson said that the research he and his colleagues had done was on a very large commercial worm composting “beds” which build up large amounts of nitrogen that is then emitted by the worms as gas.

Courtesy – The Times of India

MEGHALAYA

AT THE 27TH INDIA INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR 2007



The President of India, Smti. Pratibha Devisingh Patil inaugurated the 27th India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2007 at the Hamsadhwani Theatre, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi on November 14, 2007, amidst the presence of the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri. Kamal Nath, Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr. D D Lapang, officers of the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) and representatives from participating States and foreign Countries.

Dr. Lapang was accompanied by Mrs. D C Marak, Minister of Health, etc, Mr. Manas Choudhury, MLA, Mr. K K Dkhar, MLA. Mr. S S Gupta, Principal Resident Commissioner, Meghalaya House, New Delhi, Mr. A Som, Commissioner and Secretary, Information and Public Relations, Mr. P S Dkhar, Director of Information and Public Relations and Mr. H M Shangpliang, OSD, Information and Public Relations were also present on the occasion.

The participants in this year's Fair include Tourism, Forest, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Soil and Water Conservation, Agriculture and Horticulture, Sericulture and Weaving, Industries and 15 entrepreneurs. On display are cane and bamboo works, processed foods, aromatic spices, traditional

attires and musical instruments, agricultural and horticultural products.

It may be mentioned that over 7500 companies and 44 foreign countries are participating in this year's IITF organized by the India Trade Promotion Organisation

which is under the Ministry of Commerce. While Himachal Pradesh is the partner State, Meghalaya has been given the honour of being the "Focus State" of the Fair which lasted upto November 27, 2007.

In its two week participation, Meghalaya showcased its resources in the field of cane and bamboo works, processed foods, aromatic species, traditional attires and musical instruments, agricultural and horticultural products. For its well presented Pavilion, Meghalaya bagged the 1st prize for excellent display in the North East Category.

Being the Focus State of this year's Fair, Meghalaya also organized four seminars focusing in Information Technology, Tourism, Industries, and Agriculture/Horticulture. The aim of such seminars was to give potential investors an overview of what the State has to offer in terms of resources and in turn woo them to invest in the State.

Seminars on "Investment Opportunities – Information Technology Sector" and "Investment Opportunities – Tourism Sector" were held on November 16, 2007. Meghalaya Chief Minister, Dr. D D Lapang graced both the seminars as the Chief Guest. The seminars on

"Investment in Industries for a Progressive Meghalaya" and "Horticulture in Meghalaya – The Road Ahead" were held on November 26, 2007. Mrs. Sushma Singh, Secretary DoNER and Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of State, Commerce attended the Seminars as the Chief Guest respectively.

In addition to drawing attention to the vast resources of the State, the Fair also provided a platform for Meghalaya to display its rich traditional heritage in the cultural programmes. In the first cultural show held on November 23, 2007 at the Shrinagar Theatre, the Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Mr. P R Kyndiah was the Chief Guest. A number of people turned out to witness the gala event.

The Union Minister of DoNER, Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar attended the Meghalaya Day Celebration on November 27, 2007 as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by Mr. S S Gupta, Resident Commissioner, Meghalaya House, New Delhi, Mr. V S Oberoi, Principal Secretary, Government of Meghalaya, Mr. A Som, Commissioner & Secretary, Industries Department, Mr. J Lyngdoh, Secretary Finance amongst others.

Cultural troupes of the State enthralled the audience with their graceful and rhythmic presentation of the dances of Meghalaya as well as display of rich traditional attires of the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos.



The Meghalaya Tableau representing Butterflies of Meghalaya
at the Republic Day Celebration on January 26, 2008
at New Delhi.