

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES

LADAKH STUDIES
_ 17, September 2002

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EDITORIAL

This issue of *Ladakh Studies* was delayed repeatedly due to a variety of circumstances, including my own absence from Denmark during the summer. I am happy that number 17 is now finally ready and am optimistic that the following issue will not be delayed.

Perhaps the biggest departure from established *LS* practice is the absence of Bray's bibliography update for the first time since no. 15 (March 1992). The reason is as momentous as it is simple: Hon. Sec. John Bray and Miyoko Kobayashi were married on July 13th, and John has been busy packing up and moving to Japan. He has assured me that there will be a bumper update to the bibliography in the next issue.

The present issue contains a full membership directory, the first to be published since 1994. Hon. Membership Secretary Francesca Merritt has provided the information contained in it, and should there be errors, kindly send her your corrections. Although our membership numbers remain healthy, we would like to remind everyone that our organisation survives exclusively on membership contributions, so do please pay your dues when encouraged to do so by Francesca. An excellent occasion to renew your membership will be the next colloquium, which we are very pleased to be able to announce will be held at Leh and Kargil from 21-27 July 2003. A call for papers and pre-registration form are included in this issue.

In the "issues for debate" section, Fernanda Pirie offers a reflection on village decision making inspired by Richard Lee's thought-provoking piece in the previous issue of *LS*. Taking up a new topic, Rebecca Norman raises questions about the rendition of Ladakhi words in academic publications. Reactions to these pieces will be very welcome for consideration for the next issue. A brief note by Amie Woods, Regan Marsh, and Richard V. Lee reports on medical research carried out in Zangskar in 2001, while Nicky Grist reviews David Pinault's important book on Muslim ritual.

As usual, we would like to appeal to you to consider contributing to *LS*. Please remember that brief notes on ongoing research, descriptions of research projects, or reflections on contemporary developments in Ladakh are as welcome as more "serious" academic contributions. As to news reports, do send links to stories, or cut-and-paste stories and send them to me by e-mail or regular mail. I only monitor a limited selection of Indian papers and am dependent on others to provide other materials. This time, Yoginder Sikand was kind enough to supply some interesting stories I would otherwise have missed, and Tashi Morup once again sent a few unpublished reports.

FROM THE HONORARY SECRETARY

Elswhere in this edition of Ladakh Studies, you will see the call for papers for the next IALS colloquium which is to be held jointly in Leh and Kargil in July 2003. We are very grateful to the J&K Academy for generously agreeing to host this event, and hope that it will attract a large number of contributions from Ladakh, other parts of India, and abroad. We look forward to our third IALS event in Leh, and the first in Kargil.

The last few months have been particularly eventful for me personally. In July, I married Miyoko Kobayashi at St Andrews' church in Colyton, Devon. Miyoko has been teaching at Warwick University for several years, but is about to take up a new post at the Kanda University for International Studies on the outskirts of Tokyo. We are therefore in the process of moving to Japan, and I shall be based in Tokyo full-time from November. Among other challenges, this will require me to adapt to living at high altitude, on the 11th floor of a 34-storey block of flats - a rather different lifestyle from either London or Ladakh.

These and other distractions have prevented me from compiling the usual bibliographic update, but normal service will be resumed in the next Ladakh Studies. By then, I hope also to be able to announce firm plans for the publications of the proceedings of the 9th and 10th IALS conferences.

LADAKH: ART, CULTURE AND LANGUAGES
11th IALS Colloquium at LEH and KARGIL,
21-27 July 2003
CALL FOR CONFERENCE PAPERS

We are happy to announce the details of the 11th Colloquium of the International Association for Ladakh studies. The conference will be hosted by Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages from 21st to 27th of July 2003 in Leh. The theme of the colloquium will be Art, Culture and Languages of Ladakh, and we encourage abstracts of papers and proposals for panels on these topics, although other themes are welcome, too.

IALS Colloquia have been held regularly, usually every other year, since 1981. The proceeding of the first eight conferences have been published and those of the 9th and 10th are in preparation. Past conferences have provided a valuable forum both for formal and informal discussions and debates. In order to promote broad participation from all over Ladakh, the colloquium will consist of two consecutive sessions with one each to be held at Leh and at Kargil. The first three days of the colloquium i.e. from 21st to 23rd of July, 2003 will take place in Leh. On the 24th, participants will move to Kargil, where the second part of the colloquium will take place on 25th and 26th of July.

The normal registration/participation fee will be US \$50, but reduced to Rs. 250 for participants from SAARC (South Asian) countries. Participants are asked to register their interest in attending the colloquium by filling and returning the enclosed application form by *January 31, 2003*. Those who wish to present papers are required to submit an *abstract* of their proposed papers to the Academy *and to Hon.Sec. John Bray by 31st of March, 2003* (See Bray's contact details on the inside cover of this issue). Papers should be based on original research. All participants should be paid up members of the IALS. You are welcome to join or renew at the conference itself. Only those who are pre-registered can be sure to receive future communication regarding the conference. Limited support is available to subsidize participants' travel expenses. Subsidies will be awarded on the basis of need and presentation of a substantial paper at the conference is a precondition for such support. Free local transportation will be provided by the hosts.

VISA REQUIREMENT

Please note that it is the responsibility of all the delegates to ensure that they have the appropriate visa. Letter of invitation will be provided as required. Please send all communications by post, e-mail or fax to the convenors:-

Balwant Thakur, Secretary
Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art,
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Canal Road
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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LADAKH STUDIES
11TH COLLOQUIUM

Leh and Kargil, 21-27 July 2003

Pre-registration form

Name:..... Title..... (Mrs/Dr etc)
Address:
.....
City:
Postcode:..... Country:
Tel..... Fax:
E-mail:

I hope to attend the colloquium; please send me further details

I offer a paper on the subject of.....
.....
and I enclose/will send a 250 word abstract*

I propose to organize a panel* on

I am not able to pay for my travel to Leh and would like to be considered for support (South Asian participants only can apply).....
.....
(please include a statement explaining your situation)*

Date:..... Signature.....

* N.B. Please send your paper abstract, panel proposals, and/or application for travel subsidies to Nawang Tsering Shakspo, Balwant Thakur, and Hon. Sec. John Bray, who can be reached at: jnbray@aol.com

Participants of the 10th Colloquium at Mansfield College, Oxford

NEWS FROM LADAKH

LEH RADIO STATION GUTTED IN DEVASTATING FIRE

From Tashi Morup

LEH, Jan 22: The All India Radio (AIR) Leh was completely gutted in a devastating fire that broke out this afternoon reducing the entire studio complex, announcement booth programme and engineering machinery and archival value material to ashes. The incident occurred around 1 pm when the fire was seen emanating from the News room which later engulfed the entire wooden building complex, causing extensive damage to the machines, the multi-purpose studio and the library that houses important programme material of archival values, traditional musical tapes and other recorded cultural items.

The fire brigade personnel which were pressed into service, tried their best to put off the flames so as to save the studio building, but they couldn't succeed as the fire spread so fast due to the wooden structure of the complex, that within minutes Leh Radio Station ceased to exist. Informed sources told EXCELSIOR that the men of SSB, CRPF and J&K Police who reached at the site, however, managed to save some of the important documents from the Administrative Block which had not caught fire. The service books and other related documents were, however, saved by the police and para-military personnel, the sources said.

They said that at the time of the fire, some artists were busy in rehearsal and entire staff had to rush away in panic. Army and Air Force fire tenders were also pressed into service, but due to the freezing of the water in the chilly cold, it took them some time to put off the flames. The sources said that the firemen who exhibited extra-ordinary bravery, managed to save the nearby diesel tank in the vicinity of the complex, and helped in controlling the fire. Otherwise, there would have been chances of Radio Colony quarters also getting destroyed in this devastating fire. The Leh Station went out of air for some time while the fire was being controlled. It took at least three hours for the fireman to check the flames. Meanwhile, an alternate short wave relay station at Choglamsar has been put into use and listeners this evening again listened to some of the music from this Station. [. . .]

This correspondent saw service books and other documents piled up outside at a safe place but in the most haphazard manner. Some recording machines and type-writers were also seen undamaged. The entire Leh was seen shocked over the incident as Leh Station of All India Radio was catering to the needs of the public at MW 1053 KiloHertz and Short Wave 60 meters since 1971. It was the greatest loss to the culture and heritage of Ladakh as this Station now existed no more, said an artist. Another artist in grief said that with the gutting of this Station, the entire archival record housed in this Station since 1971 has also vanished. [. . .]

LADAKH 2020: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

Special report by Tashi Morup

Leh, January 3; Ladakh 2020, a one-day seminar on a 20 year vision for Development and Education in Ladakh at in Leh Auditorium Hall on the new year day was first of its kind, at least in Ladakh. Thanks to SECMOL. Sole 260-seater chilled auditorium had over 300 people retorting high-and-quick to the burning issues at stake.

After all it was a moment for various elected Sarpanches, Panches, Councilors and even students to debate a wide range of topics and thereby passing judgements. They said, it is time to explore rich indigenous resources such as pashmina, fruits, vegetables and other traditional and new agricultural products. It is time to utilize the Indus to the maximum. It is time to provide skills to the youth and to see to the sanitation of Leh. To improve upon the work culture in Ladakh, the epidemic

corruption must be checked before it becomes irreversible. And the newly formed Panchayat system should have a vigilance committee to monitor the work of panchayats. To ensure transparency all government departments, NGOs, and panchayats should carry out a yearly social audit in the presence of public representatives, as is being done in states like Rajasthan and also in Kargil.

Education, the next theme of the seminar, was focused on teachers' training, transfers and the Degree College. Pre-service training for teachers should be provided through the much strengthened District Institute of Education and Training (DIET); school vacations should be changed from 75 days in winter and 10 days in summer to one month each in winter, spring and autumn so as to fit better with the agricultural season. Serious efforts should be made at the LAHDC level to affiliate the Degree College in Leh to Jammu University until normalcy returns to the valley so that timely examinations can be conducted. Some other issues that appeared in Block level resolutions were untimely transfers and short transfer tenures of two years, which cause serious disruptions and damage the teaching and learning environment in the schools.

The afternoon session was attended by several opinion leaders, including LAHDC Chairman Thupstan Chhewang, Executive Councilor Education Rigzin Spalbar, eminent scholar Tashi Rabgais and LBA President Tsering Samphel. Councilors for Turtuk, Nubra and Temisgam were also present. The discussion mainly focussed on developmental schemes being applied and proposed by LAHDC. In two years time Leh will have a Pashmina Processing Unit. Handicraft Training-cum-Production Centers will come up in every Block. Ten lakh rupees are being spent on teachings aids, and DIET has reservations for private teachers interested in getting training. However, the Chairman of the LAHDC said, there are complications and obstacles at the government level in getting many of the proposals approved. A student from Moravian Mission school while asserting that Ladakh will have UT status by 2020 raised the question as to what administration is doing to mend the dismal situation of sports and what are the future plans in this regard. To this Chairman Thupstan Chhewang told about the already completed Indoor Stadium and the plans for an outdoor one.

SINNERS REPENT: IMPROVED POWER SITUATION IN LEH

Special report by Tashi Morup

Leh, December 30: Ovation for the year 2001 in Leh goes to Power Development Department (PDD) for helping to provide a respite from the erratic power supply, thanks to their innovative Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (VDS) and some other ideas. A brainchild of Executive Engineer Sonam Gialson, the VDS was launched on November 19. This scheme gave a chance especially for numerous illegal consumers to become legal by paying fees for the power they have been consuming. Hearing about the scheme, people thronged the PDD office in large numbers, and an amount of 13 lakh rupees were collected over ten days. "In fact many of them (illegal consumers) did not even wait for the day VDS was actually launched," said Gialson.

Before launching the scheme a meeting of all important organizations including Buddhist and Muslim associations agreed to co-operate with the PDD in their proposed house-to-house raids against the use of heavy electrical gadgets such as heaters and boilers. During the raids carried out by teams comprising more than ten staff members each, many such gadgets were confiscated and fines imposed. They found hotels and other commercial set-ups allegedly consuming power exorbitantly. Also tenants, police personnel and some monastic residents were found to be indulging in power misuse, a staff member said. However, it was alleged that at times just two or three men turn up for checking. A resident of Skara said that the checking team should be complete with an engineer supervising them to ensure genuineness.

Another good thing to happen in this drive has been the increasing use of Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL) of 30 and 20 watts replacing the existing conventional incandescent lamps of 100 and

60 watts. The decision to use CFL was taken in a meeting of LAHDC on February 12 this year but the payoff so far has not reached at a satisfactory level, as felt by the PDD. There are several reasons why CFL use is important in Leh: in addition to large scale power theft, the long gestation period of hydel power house Stakna and financial constraints have resulted in a lack of capacity, while demand is ever increasing. Consequently, both men and machines are forced to work under tremendous strain due to the ever-increasing gap between supply and demand.

The co-operative efforts have brought considerable improvement in the power situation. Now there is a 'certain' six-hour-supply daily with no day off as before. For 35 villages from Nyemo to Himya including Leh town, Stakna Hydel and diesel generators at Choglamsar and Leh together supply a maximum of six megawatt power. After restricting the consumers to minimal use of power nearly two megawatt surplus capacity remains, said an official source.

NORTHERN AREAS IN POK SEEK RIGHTS

NEW DELHI, Jan 27: A newly-formed alliance of 14 political parties and groups in the northern areas of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) has threatened to launch a movement to get back political and democratic rights before its occupation by Pakistan. The alliance, called the Gilgit-Baltistan National Alliance (GBNA), has two primary demands—firstly, the people of the Northern Areas be included in any negotiations on the settlement of Kashmir and secondly, the Northern Areas be given a separate status like occupied-Kashmir has or be merged with it.

Pakistan has divided occupied-Kashmir in two parts—the first is what it calls 'Azad' Kashmir while the second comprises the Northern Areas. The former has a separate Prime Minister and President but is totally controlled by Pakistan. On the other hand, the Northern Areas have no political identity. These areas are practically ruled by a bureaucrat of Pakistan without any constitutional and civil rights. Pakistan justifies its control over Northern Areas by quoting a 1951 agreement signed between Muslim Conference leaders in 'Azad' Kashmir and a Pakistani Minister without portfolio.

English-language daily *The Dawn* quotes the President of GBNA Inayatullah Shumali as telling reporters in Islamabad that the people of the Northern Areas remained silent in the interest of Pakistan's integrity but Pakistan had denied them constitutional and democratic rights for the last over 50 years. He said the alliance rejected the present system and would launch a movement for regaining peoples rights usurped by Pakistan. (UNI)

LEH CITIZENS DISCUSS STEPS TO ERADICATE SOCIAL EVILS

Leh, Jan 29: In order to remove social evils like alcoholism, gambling, smoking and to keep Leh town clean and culture worthy, a meeting of prominent citizens, councilors and district officers was held at Conference Hall here today.

The Chief Executive Councilor, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Mr Thupstan Chhewang chaired the meeting. Besides Deputy Commissioner Leh, Mr Dheeraj Gupta, SSP Mr S D Jamwal, Executive Councilors Rigzin Spalbar and Tsultim Phuntsog, the meeting was also attended by former Union Minister Mr P Namgyal, Chairman Citizens Council Kalon Rigzin Namgyal, President Anjuman Imamiya Haj Ghulam Rasool, president Ladakh Buddhist Association Mr Tsering Samphel, heads of different political, social and religious organisations.

Regarding alcoholism the meeting held that enough quantity of alcohol was being consumed in Leh district which besides aged people have brought younger generation also in its ambit and was likely to affect the society especially the students community in the long run. It was decided that a constant check be maintained on running of unauthorised drinking outlets in Leh town and on National Highway specially in Upshi. Restrain should also be imposed on opening up of new wine

shops, bars and sale of wine. The meeting felt that an awareness campaign should be carried out detailing the consequences of the menace of alcoholism and its effect on a family.

The meeting also discussed the issue of gambling which is in vogue in Leh in the shape of snooker, cards, Chholo, carrom board, pug etc. In order to check these the meeting urged the District Administration to open new amenities like early commissioning of indoor stadium, construction of ice hockey rink and other indoor games so that the young generation which remains idle during winter due to severe cold and becomes prone to gambling could be diverted to sports activities. The meeting also held that license holder of snooker should not allow the commuters to play these games on stakes. The meeting urged the SSP Leh to make surprise check and inspections on the gambling dens.

In a bid to have clean and accountable administration for speedy development in Leh district the meeting also devised various ways and means to check the menace of corruption in the district and decided to open a separate mail box for receiving complaints against corrupt persons.

Mr Thupstan Chhewang stressed on the District Administration, Councilors, prominent citizens and other heads of social, political and religious organisations to help eradicate evils like alcoholism, gambling and corruption from the society. He urged upon the masses not to give support in flourishing of such evils, which in the long run will leave Ladakh in a bad shape. [...]

DRUKCHEN RINPOCHE GIVES TEACHINGS IN LEH

Special report by Tashi Morup

Leh, January 27: Devotees in their thousands thronged the Leh Chokhang today on the occasion of initiation of 11th 'Banzar-guru' mantra recitation of Buddhist tradition by Gyalwang Drukpa, the religious head of Drukpa Kargyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, who arrived this morning specially to give the sermon. As per the promise he made during his last visit to inaugurate Pema Karpo institute in September, Gyalwang Drukpa has come to impart the Banzar-guru mantra and sermon this time. He regretted his tight schedule meant that he had to limit his presence here to just five days.

In biting cold, jammed in the congregation hall and outside and beyond the entrance gate to the main market street, devotees patiently listened to Gyalwang Drukpa who reiterated the essential value of good attitude. The mantra (Om A Hum Banzar Guru Padma Siddhi Hum) recitation and discourse will continue for five days after which Gyalwang Drukpa, known popularly in Ladakh as Drukchen Rinpoche, would leave Leh. Organized by Chem-sak Thundrel Tsogspa the 11th Banzar-guru is Gyalwang Drukpa's second session, first being in 1999. Staglung Tsetul rinpoche, a lama of the Nyingma sect, was the first to begin this initiation in 1992. Other lamas who have given this annual initiation were Chogon Rinpoche, Tokdan Rinpoche and Stakna Rinpoche at different periods.

DD ALL SET TO COMMISSION ITS STATION AT LEH

LEH, Feb 3: Defying the sub-zero temperatures of Ladakh, Doordarshan is all set to commission its station at Leh, arguably the world's highest TV station. This experimental transmission will be managed with the help of a lone engineer alongwith some Leh-based locals who acquired their training at AAFT in Noida, near Delhi. Besides the Director, a programme executive and an Assistant Engineer would be posted there, according to a DD release here.

With the starting of Leh transmission, a long standing demand of the people of the region would be fulfilled. Intellectuals and people across the spectrum have welcomed the establishment of the station which will beam its programme from 1800 hrs to 1900 hrs on weekly basis, the release stated. Ladakh is known for its rich culture, unique landscape, colourful festivals and fun-loving people and all these aspects of their culture would be highlighted in the programmes, the release added. (UNI)

GOVT LAUNCHES RS 9 CR PROJECT FOR SOLAR ELECTRIFICATION OF KARGIL

JAMMU, Feb 4: The un-electrified areas of Kargil district would be brought under solar energy system involving a cost of Rs 9 crore. With this, all the left over 27 habitations in the district would be electrified. This was stated at the review meeting of District Development Board for Kargil held here today. The Minister for Industries and Commerce, Dr Mustafa Kamal, who is also the chairman of the Development Board presided. The Minister of State for Power and Works, Mr Qamar Ali Akhoo, Mr Ghulam Hassan Khan, M P, Qari Aziz Mohammad and Haji Mohammad Abbas, Legislators, District Development Commissioner, Kargil, Dr Mohammad Din, Director, Area Planning, Mr G N Lone, Superintending Engineer, Kargil and other senior officers were also present.

The meeting was informed that 2000 energy saving lamps have been provided this year to the people to ease overloading on Iqbal Mini Hydle Project. It was informed that Government have successfully introduced field trial of tea cultivation in Kargil district which has received tremendous response from the local populace. Efforts are underway to exploit optimally tea cultivation potential on commercial lines.

Giving details about the major achievements registered during the current year, the District Development Commissioner said that out of total plan allocation of Rs 47 crore, including additionality of Rs 7 crore, over Rs 30.55 crore have been expended upto ending January of the current financial year. He said 180 highly qualified teachers have been appointed in the district during the current year so far leaving no school without a science teacher. He said the prestigious 5-Km long Kargil bye-pass road with 50 metre span bridge over river Suru has been completed at a cost of Rs 4.93 crore. This road will ease traffic pressure in the town. In addition, he said 1.6 Kms Zamistang bye-pass road with 170 metres Bailey bridge at a cost of Rs 2.31 crore, motorable bridge at Dachay Samrah costing Rs 37 lacs and suspension bridge at Abran Zanskar costing Rs 53 lacs have also been completed this year.

About achievements made in agriculture and allied sectors, it was informed that 2000 polygreen houses were established in the district during the current fiscal as this experiment has proved successful in increasing vegetable productivity in the Ladakh region. In addition, 600 quintals of high yielding variety seeds of different crops and 4 lakh vegetable seedlings have been provided to the farmers upto ending December this year. It was stated that 5000 high density apple plants were distributed and planted in the district so far during the current fiscal. About 1396 kanals of waste land has been developed for cultivation and vegetables worth Rs 26.58 lacs have been distributed among the drought affected areas of Sot and Your-baltak on 50% subsidy and 2710 poultry birds sold to public on cost price. Frozen artificial insemination technology has been extended to 9 villages of the district.

Regarding achievements made in irrigation and PHE sectors, it was told that Khangralthang Canal for a command area of 270 acres in Chiktan block has been completed at a cost of Rs. 1.99 crore whileas Rs. 25 lakhs were incurred to complete Lakhang Canal for a command area of 250 acres in Drass block. The ambitious Rs. 8.25 crore Rong Wakha Irrigation Canal under NABARD loan assistance would be completed during the next financial year. The water supply scheme for Kargil town and Baroo colony has also been completed at a cost of Rs 4.87 crore.

It was revealed at the meeting that 9 school buildings including Rs. 1.70 crore higher secondary school building at Chutuk and Rs. 97.25 lakh higher secondary school building Sankoo have been completed. In addition, 24 school buildings under Rural Development Sector have also been completed by the end of December during current financial year. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Kamal said that Kargil district being the remote and backward area deserves special dispensation for its equitable development. He said Sher-i-Kashmir too was very much concerned about the prosperity of this region and called for a perspective, need based and balanced planning for development of this cut-off region of the State. He asked the concerned authorities to send local

youth for advanced training in tea cultivation and processing on commercial lines as this activity could prove turning point in the economic upliftment of Kargil area.

Dr Kamal also called for exploring possibilities to introduce energy saving power lamps in the region on subsidized rates. He said an integrated water supply scheme to cater to the requirements of people during winter months also needed to be formulated.

LADAKH MP BACKS FAROOQ'S DEMAND ON CONVERTING LoC INTO IB

JAMMU, Feb 7: Agreeing to the proposal of his party president and Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, the National Conference Member Parliament from Ladakh, Mr Ghulam Hassan Khan says that converting Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir into International Border (IB) is the only solution to the vexed problem the State has been facing or years together. Conversion of LoC into IB is the most appropriate and ideal proposal since it suits the people of the State, especially those living in the border areas, Mr Khan said while taking to EXCELSIOR.

"It is the people of the State who have been facing the brunt of cross-border firing. Wars of 1965, 1971 and Kargil intrusion have been witnessed only by the people who have suffered mostly. There will be an end to all such misadventures once a solution is found and in the present contest what Chief Minister maintains on the conversion of LoC into IB is the appropriate arrangement", the National Conference MP from Ladakh said, adding that those who disagree to the proposal seem to ignore the fact that since Independence, the people of the State have only suffered in absence of a concrete policy to end the issue once for all.

Advocating his party's agenda on the issue of autonomy, Mr Khan said that it was unfortunate that the Centre rejected the autonomy draft is toto. The issue could have been discussed to find out a via-media. Outrightly rejecting the same was no solution, Mr Khan said. He regretted that Centre was desperate in talking to the Hurriyat Conference leaders who do not even recognize the Constitution. Despite that, interlocutors like Mr K C Pant and former Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Wajahat Habibullah are being directed to talk to Hurriyat leadership. "But when National Conference forwarded the autonomy draft, the same was rejected without even making a single effort to go through it", he asserted. The Ladakh MP, however, appreciated the recent statement of Home Minister Mr L K Advani wherein he said that Centre was thinking of giving more powers to the State.

While maintaining that grant of autonomy was necessary to the State of Jammu and Kashmir in view of its distinct history and circumstances whereunder it became the part of the Indian Union, the NC MP said that the demand was not against any region. Even the problems of all the three regions could be addressed to and everybody either from Kashmir, Jammu or Ladakh could be benefited.

To a question, Mr Khan had all praise for the system under which Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) came into existence. Whosoever is at the helm of affairs, the system is excellent as there is an involvement of the people at the grass-root level and local problems and aspirations are addressed to properly and effectively.

Mr Khan who hails from the Kargil district of Ladakh, said that despite area predominantly inhabited by local Muslims, there had been not a single instance of militant activities since the eruption of militancy in the State. Instead, people have been helping the security forces in maintaining law and order, he said.

As the Member Parliament of the vast area of his constituency, Mr Khan, the former State Police Officer, who after his retirement contested Lok Sabha elections of 1999 on NC ticket, said that Ladakh needs more attention and special funds in terms of the development. "My constituency remains cut off from the rest of the world for over six months every year. Even the air service to Leh is erratic that further adds to the woes of the people of the region", he said. The communication

and linking Ladakh by air has been my top priority and the issue has been raised many a times , the local MP said . Despite Kargil having the airport, no flights operate in this district headquarters, Mr Khan said, while recalling that prior to 1960, even Kargil airport was operational and catering to the needs of the people of the region.

The NC MP opined that his constituency is full of rivers and streams on which Hydel Projects could be set up. "Even we can supply the power to the entire Northern region provided the natural resources are tapped. For this special funds and initiative from the Centre is required", he maintained. Mr Khan regretted that Ladakh division has been neglected in many spheres of development. " My effort has been to bring this region at par with two others regions of Kashmir and Jammu", he said. "Look, Ladakh has a high potential in terms of tourism and same is to be tapped. It is an ideal region for promoting winter sports like skiing and ice hockey and foreigners can show keen interest in these sports. But steps were not being taken in this direction", he maintained.

Demanding opening of more educational and professional institutions in the region, the Member Parliament regretted that there is not a single full-fledged Degree College in the Region. "We don't have a College at Kargil and Leh College is just for the namesake as no Science Subjects are taught there, while's in other regions of the same State, there are scores of Colleges and institutions", he asserted. Drawing the attention towards the strategic importance of the region, Mr Khan said that Ladakh is bordering Pakistan and China. Keeping that aspect into consideration, the people of the region need special economic packages so that unemployed youth could especially be benefited.

SOIL IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP HELD AT LEH

Special Report by Tashi Morup

Leh, February 26: In a bid to increase crop production District Agriculture Department held a one-day workshop at its office in which a visiting three-member team of agronomist from USA demonstrated the use of a soil testing kit the team brought along to the field workers of the department on Monday. The team led by Dr. David Livingstone has donated five such kits containing solutions of Nitrogen, Potassium, Phosphorus and pH indicator besides other items and informative manuals to the department.

According to Tashi Tsetan, Distt. Agriculture Officer, the test kit will enable us to know exactly the soil combination status, which in an earlier test carried out found to be very imbalance. Dr. Livingstone in his visit in June last year carried out a successful soil test in Hemishukpachan. The test showed that the soil had very low nitrogen, medium amount of phosphorus and potassium and high pH. Now with the arrival of test kits further tests will be carried out by the field workers in five different zones in Leh district, said Tashi. He said, "On the basis of the test results we can exactly recommend the use of different fertilizers to the farmers for optimum production." Till now the soil testing was randomly done due to poor laboratory facility. And on the basis of a random evaluation in Srinagar the fertilizers including Urea, DAP and MOP arrive through Co-operative Marketing Society. Thus farmers then use these fertilizers in a hit-or-miss fashion seriously affecting the soil status. However, the department also emphasizes the use of local manure, which covers 18 elements required for crop production.

Last year's production figures of Leh were 3950 metric tonnes of wheat, 6950 of grains and 8900 of vegetables including potato. According to Mohd. Hussain, Subject Matter Specialist, Agriculture Department, vegetables grown in Leh so far are more European types as introduced by the early missionaries. Agriculture department now is introducing other vegetables such as bringal, chillies, beans and so on in lower belts of Ladakh, he said.

Others present in the meeting were the Chief Agriculture Officer, officials of SKUAST, Assistant Soil Chemist G M Bardi besides the field workers from different areas of Leh. Dr. Livingstone first came to Ladakh as a tourist in 1976 and during his second visit last year he (now a

professor in a University of North Carolina State) met the District Agriculture Officer, Tashi Tsetan, at his office in Leh.

LEH SARPANCHES INTERACT WITH CM

Farooq exhorts panchayats to prepare for specific role in development

JAMMU, Mar 5 - Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah today said the devolution of powers to panchayats from the next month will enable people's involvement at grass roots level in decision making and fixing developmental priorities.

In an interaction with a group of sarpanches from Leh district, who arrived here from a four-week tour of various states of the country, the Chief Minister said necessary amendments are being made in the Panchayat Act to make the basic democratic institutions more effective. He said the panchayats will monitor functioning of various government agencies at the lower level and carry out developmental programmes in respective areas. This will give impetus to development effort undertaken by the government for the welfare of the masses.

Referring to 33 per cent reservation to women in panchayats, the Chief Minister said that though their nomination would be made initially but they must prepare themselves for contesting the future elections. He said the panches and sarpanches have a specific role in the development of rural areas and hoped the representatives of the people will work in cohesion for the betterment of their areas.

The Chief Minister enquired from the participants about the places they visited and experience they gained while witnessing the functioning of panchayats in various states. He said their suggestions will help in improving working of panchayats in the state that came into being after over two decades. He said that an orientation course has been set in motion for acquainting the panches and sarpanches about their new responsibilities. He said he along with senior ministers and officers will be visiting various areas of the state to have exhaustive interaction with them.

The tour had been organised by Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SEMCOL) a non-governmental organization. The group comprising 30 panches and sarpanches visited several states including Kerala and Madhya Pradesh and watched the performance of grass root level democratic institutions. The President of the group Mr Sonam Angchuk gave a detailed account of their tour, saying that this was an exposure visit of the group from various areas of Leh district to see and learn from the functioning of panchayats in other states of the country. Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development, Kushak Todun Rimpoche, Minister of State for Agriculture, Mr Tsetan Namgyal and Minister of State for Works and Power, Mr Qamar Ali Akhoo were also present on the occasion.

PREMIERE OF DOCUMENTARY FILM BY LADAKHI

From Tashi Morup

Leh, Mar 10: There is a magnetism in your land, quipped J P Dutta the maker of film 'Border' referring to manifold film stars altogether-in-Leh during a premiere of a documentary film by Phunchok Ladakhi on 14 Corps' Operation Sadbhavna at Trishul Lecture Hall in Leh on Saturday.

One by one J P Dutta asked Sunil Shetty, Abishek Bacchan, Rakesh Bedi, Manoj Vajpai, Ashutosh Rana, Nagarjuna among hordes of other stars to speak before the jammed hall comprising civilians and army soldiers. Prominent leaders from both Kargil and Leh and army officials were also present during this colorful evening of cultural shows besides the premiere show of the film 'Sadbhavna'. Addressing the gathering Lt. General Arjun Ray, GOC 14 Corps, while describing 21-months-old Operation Sadbhavna a success announced his two-year early retirement ending his 48-years of service. General Ray said, though he is leaving Ladakh after 21 days yet he will return as a civilian to see for proper functioning of the education programs he has set up in the forms of

Sadbhavna schools and Vocational Training Centers (VTC) under the post Kargil-episode 'Operation Sadbhavna', a goodwill campaign especially in border areas principally to forestall militancy in this strategically sensitive border area of Ladakh between Pakistan and China. Meanwhile, streets and corridors of Leh town are abuzz with the talk that General Ray will return as the Governor of the State.

Praising General Ray's efforts in Ladakh J P Dutta recalled Asoka the king who shed arms to serve humanity. Dutta who is in Leh to shoot his star-studded film LOC based on Kargil War is also accompanied by his father O P Dutta. He expressed his gratitude to General Ray for constantly encouraging him to shoot in Ladakh, which, he said, is otherwise a difficult place for a filmmaker. The shooting will take place in two shifts, next being due sometime in June, said a source, adding that Army is widely assisting in making the film.

TRANS-HIMALAYAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SOON

SHIMLA, Mar 24: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today announced that a trans-Himalayan development authority would be set up soon to protect the ecology of the Himalayan areas and ensure their speedy and sustainable development.

Addressing a rally to mark completion of four years of BJP-HVC Government in Himachal Pradesh, he said the authority would formulate plans for protection and development of Himalayan states. He said there was urgent need to ensure that green cover over the Himalayas was retained and these areas were developed from both environmental and tourism point of view. He said the Government had not been able to provide adequate funds for development of tourism in the Himalayan region and the new authority would ensure safety, protection and faster development of the Himalayas.

The Prime Minister announced that the Rs 800 crore Rohtang tunnel project providing all-weather road to Lahaul-Spiti and Ladakh had been approved and decks had been cleared for starting the execution of the project in April 2002. He said the tunnel was important not only for development of tribal areas but also from defence point of view.

TIBETAN SCRIPT MAKES A COMEBACK IN PAK

Siddharth Varadarajan

Skardu: In what must be one of the most improbable attempts at linguistic revival anywhere in the world, the Tibetan script is slowly making a comeback in this corner of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir—fighting not just the cursive dominance of Urdu but also the suspicions of mullahs and officials who feel both Islam and Pakistan might be undermined.

The Baltistan region—centred around Skardu—is home to some 300,000 people whose mother tongue is Balti, a language of the Tibetan-Ladakhi family. "We are the only people in this region to have had our own script since the 6th century AD," says Syed Abbas Kazmi of the Baltistan Cultural Foundation (BCF), "but due to the narrow-mindedness of the mullah class people were told to stop using Tibetan". The result is that over the years, the linguistic and literary development of Balti has suffered. "Persian alphabets were not suitable. Many Balti words could not be written and hence our language became like a stray animal, our prose and poetry withered," says Kazmi, a scholar who has written a monograph on the Balti version of the old Tibetan Epic of King Gesar.

Together with the Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan and the London-based Tibet Foundation, Kazmi has been working since 1999 to reintroduce the Tibetan script. The BCF has published an elementary textbook and helps shops in Skardu put up signboards in Tibetan. These

signs are the first thing an outsider notices when he comes in to town. "We are getting a very good response", says Kazmi. "Of course, there is a big pressure group of mullahs who feel this is 'unIslamic'. And then there are some who feel this will encourage a feeling of separatism from Pakistan. But our aim is purely cultural. Eventually, we want to promote cultural tourism in Baltistan." Apart from the script, the BCF is working to revive Balti festivals, music and dance and renovate historic buildings.

When the BCF began its advocacy of Tibetan, anonymous leaflets were pasted on the doors of some masjids. "I was accused of trying to revive what the prophets had buried", says Kazmi. "What I do now is that before I start a new project, I first go to the mullahs and explain to them, educate them." In Skardu, the BCF is respected and indulged, even if many are skeptical about the practicality of its main project. "You can't undo hundreds of years of history," one bookseller said, adding, however, that the Tibetan school primer was selling well. Though Kazmi is aware of the political implications of what he is doing, he insists Islamabad has nothing to fear. "We are for Baltistan but this does not mean we are against Pakistan. Even if we don't have constitutional rights, Pakistan has given us many economic benefits - telephones, roads, schools. But they have not loved us as much as we have loved them." The 1988 killing of Shias in Gilgit still rankles people here, he says. "And Pakistan is certainly not helping to find a solution to the Kashmir problem."

PEAKS CLIMBED

Members of an international expedition (Indian, British, American) led by Harish Kapadia and Chris Bonington climbed several previously unclimbed 6000m peaks from a base camp at the foot of the Phunangama Glacier near the Nubra valley in 2002. The steep north face of Yamandaka (6218m) provided most challenging climb of the year in the Himalaya, and a descent no less hazardous: a gentle glacier leading deceptively to a terrifyingly steep narrow granite gorge with high waterfalls which had to be escaped by a very dangerous route up the side, after 7 nights out on 5 days food.

An expedition from the 8th Mountain Division of the Indian Army visited the Pangong Range in Aug-Sept 2001, climbed Kangju Kangri (6726m) and three other 6000m peaks, and made the first recorded crossing of the range by the Shimdi La, northwards to the Pangong Tso.

GOVT MAY STALL LAHDC'S PROPOSED PASHMINA SPINNING

LEH, May 14: Even as Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) is getting a machine for dehairing and spinning of pashm, the raw material for Kashmir's shawl industry, an expert committee set-up recently by the state government has suggested imposing a ban on the use of such machines due to certain alleged disadvantages.

In a letter from the Directorate of Handicrafts J&K to the Chief Executive Councillor (LAHDC), it is stated that the state government framed the committee to look into the matter of concerned traders demanding the imposition of a ban on using such machines. The committee found five-kinds of deficiencies in case of machine dehaired and machine spun Pashmina. These include shortening of fibre, chances of adulteration, dyeing defects, shrinkage in the fabric and naps on the yarn.

The letter also said that in a meeting held with the Minister for Industries and Commerce, Mustafa Kamal, it was decided that before the government takes a final view on the issue, the Director Handicrafts and representatives of Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry may discuss the whole issue with LAHDC. Accordingly, G H Khan, Director Handicrafts, has urged for a meeting with LAHDC in this regard.

Meanwhile, Executive Councillor, N Rigzin Jora wrote a blunt response to the ministry protesting and objecting against imposing a ban on mechanised dehairing and spinning of pashmina calling this move as biased against the producers of Ladakh and in favour of the pashmina industry in Kashmir. He has further said that it is a deliberate and well thought-out plan to prevent value addition of pashmina by the producers to serve the raw material requirements of the pashmina industry as desired and demanded by the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce. Rigzin Jora is holding the CEC in-charge in the absence of Thupstan Chhewang, who is on a month's leave. Ladakh is not the first one to take up value addition of pashmina through mechanised means. It is happening the Rigzin said, adding that in case the Government chooses to ignore LAHDC's objection and goes ahead with the ban, it could snowball into a major political controversy with regional overtones.

Pashm, the soft warm undercoat grown in the bitter cold of the trans-Himalayan winter by a particular breed of domestic goat, forms a large portion of the revenue of Kashmir government but also the livelihood of a vast number of craftspeople in Kashmir. And nomadic Changpas on the bleak upland plateaux of eastern Ladakh have been the traditional producers of this pashm.

However, in the recent years these herdsmen suffered enormous financial loss in the wake of cheap pashm, allegedly smuggled in from China through the borders of Nepal and Ladakh. The Chanpas in eastern Ladakh had to sell their pashm at half of the original rate and the local administration had to compensate the loss. This also led LAHDC and local producers go for value addition of pashm. The Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, agreed to send a complete package comprising both hardware and software equipment to set up a processing unit in Leh. Not only this, GOI sponsored a weeklong training recently in processing pashm to a team from Ladakh including SDM Nyoma, Councillor (LAHDC) Korzok and others some of the locals at IRMA (Institute of Rural Management at Anand in Gujarat).

But meanwhile, attention of the pashmina traders from the valley reverted back to the backyard producers in eastern Ladakh probably due to the losing value of their products. But their decision to revive original trade links came in the form of proposing to impose a ban on value addition efforts by the producers.

AMBITIOUS ROAD CONSTRUCTION PLANS ANNOUNCED

On May 25, the Kashmir Times reported that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at the end of his three-days visit to the state, announced an economic package instead of a political one. Envisaging a sum of Rs. 6165 Cr., two of the projects forming part of the package are already in progress. The motive behind the project is to create new employment opportunities and help the ailing economic sector that lies in shambles for over a decade now. [. . .]

For the development of roads in Ladakh region, Prime Minister said all weather 474-km Leh-Manali road including construction of Rohtang tunnel will be completed before 2010 at a cost of Rs 1,335 Cr. He said he will flag off the start of construction on this project on May 26 during his visit to Manali. He further noted that Nimu Zangal-Padam-Darcha road linking to Manali-Sarchau road will be completed within four years at a cost of Rs 195 crore. The Himachal - Ladakh road is jointly being funded by the Ministries of Defence and Surface Transport. This is of utmost strategic importance because apart from connecting it to Himachal, it will reduce the burden on the fair-weather Srinagar-Kargil road for supplies to the region including Siachin Glacier. Though the road exists and was used for over a month by the armed forces during the Kargil war, it needs massive investment to make it better and worth use.

SNM HOSPITAL LEH BEING CONNECTED WITH AIIMS

LEH, May 23: Sonam Norboo Memorial Hospital, Leh will shortly be connected with All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi through Remote Sensing Satellite for Tele-Medical facility.

This information was given at a meeting held at Leh yesterday. The Chief Executive Councillor, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Mr Thupstan Chhewang presided. Joint Secretary, Department of Space, Bangalore, Mr V V Bhat, Deputy Commissioner/ CEO LAHDC Leh, Mr Tashi Dorje, Executive Councillors Rigzin Zora and Tsultim Phuntsog, CMO and other senior doctors attended.

The meeting was told that under this Tele-Medical facility, a video conferencing system would be installed in SNM Hospital Leh and would be connected through Satellite Remote Sensing with AIIMS, New Delhi for super specialist services, consultations and advises about the serious patients of SNM Hospital. Under this scheme a doctor of SNM Hospital can have the expert views of doctors of AIIMS, New Delhi about the surgery and other serious ailments. The meeting was told that necessary gadgets are being provided by the Department of Space, Bangalore at a cost of Rs 50 lakh. [. . .]

NATRANG HONOURS OTSAL

JAMMU, May 28: Natrang today honoured Mipham Otsal for his outstanding contribution in the field of theatre. The honour was conferred on him by Balwant Thakur, Director of Natrang at a function held here. Otsal has graduated from National School of Drama in 1982 and he is the first person from Ladakh who initiated the modern contemporary theatre movement in that region.

An approved drama artist and vocalist of AIR, Mipham Otsal has directed 20 plays and has acted in over 50 plays. He has the credit of having worked with the prominent theatre directors like B V Karanth, B M Shah, Fritz Benwitz, Leon Augusta, Joy Michael, Hohn Clark, K V Subbana, Rudra Prasad Sengupt and Astab Devu, founder of Ladakh Theatre Organisation. He conducted various theatre workshops and training programmes in Leh, Kargil, Srinagar and Jammu. As playwright, he won the State Academy Award as best playwright for Nas Masam in 1998. He also visited France, Switzerland, Sweden, North Korea, Mangolia, Beijing, Hong Kong and Bangkok as leader of the Ladakhi performing artists group.

First theatre director, who took the Ladakhi theatre to National level with the participation of his play "Nangsa Otbun" (Hundred-thousand brilliant lights) in the 3rd National Theatre festival 2001 organised by National School of Drama, New Delhi. For Natrang, he directed "Fandi" and designed lights for the plays "Bawa Jitto", "Ghumayee", "Mera Hisse Ki Dhoop Kahan Hai" and presently working as senior drama instructor in J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Jammu.

CM VISITS KARGIL

JAMMU, May 28: Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah today visited Kargil and took stock of the situation caused due to heavy shelling in Drass sector and other areas of Kargil from across the border. The District Development Commissioner, Kargil Mr Ashok Parmar briefed the Chief Minister about the contingency plan drawn for evacuating and providing shelter to the people residing in the border villages and to meet any eventuality in the wake of border escalation. At Kargil, the Chief Minister also visited the house of veteran leader and former Minister Munshi Habibullah and enquired about his health condition who is ailing for the last few years.

In the meanwhile, Chief Minister interacted with several delegations and exhorted to stand united at this crucial stage and face challenge of enemy with full might. He said Pakistan will not be allowed to succeed in its nefarious designs to grab even an inch of Indian territory and added that a befitting reply will be given to her.

The Chief Minister visited village Pashkum to express his condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families of former Minister late Kachoo Mohammad Ali who expired a week ago after a

prolonged illness. Recalling the services of late Kachoo, he described him as a true secular leader who always dedicated his life to upgrade the socio-economic life of the downtrodden people of Ladakh. [. . .]

BORDER LAKE ATTRACTS BIRD WATCHERS

by Xiong Lei

Since May 10, two yachts have catered to some 300 tourists on Banggong Co, a lake on the border between China's Tibet Autonomous Region and Indian-controlled Kashmir.

According to Lu Ruiqing, head of Rutog County of Tibet, the two yachts have been purchased by the county government and transported all the way from Tianjin in the east to the westernmost county of Tibet. "We want to boost tourism to this special lake with the two yachts," says Lu. The yachts are a new attraction on the lake which is 4,300 metres above sea level. "Previously tourists to this part of the country could only stand on the shore and sigh at the beauty of the lake," Lu says. "This was especially disappointing for bird watchers."

Thousands of birds migrate from South Asia to spend the summer on a tiny island in the lake. They live in peace with local Tibetans and their flight is quite a scene to enjoy. Now the yachts bring bird watchers to the island in 15 minutes. "To save the birds from being disturbed by the presence of humans, we do not allow people to go ashore," says Wang Jun, who is in charge of the yachts. "The yachts circle the island at a safe distance."

Two-thirds of Banggong Co, which is 150 kilometres long, is in China. The bird island is 13 kilometres from the dock, which is half an hour car ride from the county seat. In fact, the border town of Rutog is still not open to overseas tourists as yet, although they may visit the town with a special pass. Chinese tourists also have to obtain a special pass to go there. But, says Lu Ruiqing, Rutog has already listed tourism as an economic sector the county is going to develop. "What we need now is a better understanding of the lake," he says. "For one thing, we don't even know how many fish species there are in the lake." As the county does not have the expertise to conduct the study, Lu and the county government are planning to bring in scientists to help them with the research.

NC MAY FACE SETBACK IN KARGIL

Clergy refuse to support ruling party

SRINAGAR, Aug 5: The ruling National Conference may face a set-back in the twin assembly constituencies in Kargil district, considered traditional bastions of party, as the front-ranking religious organisations, whose support played a pivotal role in its success last time, are considering not to extend their support this time.

In the hilly district of the state, the clergy enjoy a profound influence on the people and any contender has to seek their support in ensuring victory in the elections. During last elections in 1996, the clergymen extended whole-hearted support to NC and its candidates Qamar Ali Akhoun and Mohammad Abbas won a landslide victory in Kargil and Zaskar constituencies.

Asghar Karbalai, the youthful leader of Imam Khomeni Memorial Trust, the largest religious organisation in Kargil, said they are dismayed by the "bad performance" of the ruling party. "Given the performance of this party, we may not extend our support, this time", he said. Most of the promises made by the ruling party during the last elections, he said, proved to be hollow. We were promised with the creation of three new blocks at Drass, Sankoo and Zaskar but it was not done. Work on three power projects at Marpochan, Haftal and Sanjuk was stopped due to reported paucity of funds. As against the sanctioned staff strength of 200 employees at Iqbal power project, the employees number just 35", he said. Management of the Islamia School, another religious organisation with a profound influence in Kargil, thinks on the same lines. Its media-shy leadership

do not want to be quoted. "But, everything is evident before our eyes and the pace of development has been very low during last six years", said an office-bearer.

The Kargilites also air their grievances against the central government and regret that the district is often being discriminated. "Only this year Rs 40 crore were sanctioned by centre for Leh under Border Roads Development Fund besides Rs five crore for Urban Development. But, share of Kargil is zero", regretted an official.

Qamar Ali Akhoo, minister of state for Works, who represents Kargil constituency, however, said the achievements of the party have been remarkable. "We have achieved 99 percent of what we had assured the people here", he said. Listing the developmental works, he said, Kargil is getting an uninterrupted power supply. "Work of three mini-power projects, which was stopped earlier, has been re-started and two of them would be commissioned soon. Also, we have provided drinking water facilities to a number of new villages, connected them with roads and the pace of development has been maintained despite three years of war and drought", he said.

LADAKH DIVIDED OVER RSS DEMAND FOR TRIFURCATION

From Zahoor Malik

SRINAGAR, Aug 13: Public opinion is divided in the border region of Ladakh over Rashtriya Sawamsevak Sangh (RSS's) demand of trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir. The demand has created a wave of optimism in the ranks of Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) which is spearheading the campaign for a union territory status for Leh district. However, opposition for any such move is gaining ground among the Muslim organisations in Kargil district. The RSS demand has created resentment among the Kargilites, who were already upset with LBA for advocating union territory status for Leh.

"An all-party meeting was recently held which unanimously opposed any division of the state," said Mr Asghar Karbalai, Vice President Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust, the largest religious organisation in Kargil. Mr Karbalai said all the parties are in favour that Kargil should continue to remain part of undivided Jammu and Kashmir. "We strongly condemned the RSS and VHP move and whatsoever is the solution of Kashmir we will always go with the majority in state. In fact we want the unification of Gilgit, Baltistan (under Pakistan occupation) and other part of the Kashmir with the state as they are parts of our state," he said.

Mr Sheikh Ahmad Mohammadi, general secretary Islamia School, another prominent religious group, said trifurcation is no issue for Kargilites. "We have never supported LBA's demand and we would not allow trifurcation. Anything claimed by LBA should not be attributed to us," he said.

Mr Qamar Ali Akhoo, the minister of state for Works and the National Conference MLA from Kargil, is equally vocal against such demands. "The RSS statement has generated a lot of heat we strongly condemn it's theory," he said. Mr Akhoo regretted that Ladakh province is being projected as a Buddhist majority state. "I was recently watching a television programme where it was said that Muslims comprise one seventh of the population in twin districts of Ladakh. This is totally wrong. Let them consult the census and they will find that Muslims comprise 52 per cent population of Ladakh," he said.

It is worth mentioning that when the agitation for a hill council for Ladakh was at it's peak in Leh, Kargilites disassociated themselves from the agitation. But, more people now feel that a separate hill council for Kargil would better serve their interest. "When the hill council status was granted to Leh we opposed it and one of the reason was that there was no popular government in the state then. As of now, we feel we should be granted the status," said Mr Shiekh Ahmad of Islamia School. He said such a voice was also raised in the recent all-party meet. "You see the level of development in Leh and Kargil. We are far less developed," said Mr Karbalai and accused the state government and Centre for neglecting his district. Citing a recent example, he said, Leh was provided Rs 40 crore by the Centre under Border Area Development Programme and another Rs 5

crore under urban development programme. "All the departments are in Leh and the employment there is much higher than in Kargil," he added.

LBA alleges discrimination by the "Kashmiri-dominated state government." According to its leaders the union territory status for Leh is a solution of all problems as it would end the "Kashmiri rule based on injustice."

MINISTER RESIGNS, JOINS LUTF

JAMMU, Aug 26: Jammu and Kashmir Minister of State for Agriculture and Horticulture Tsetan Namgyal today resigned from his post and joined the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF), the Ladakh Buddhist Association said.

Tsering Samphal, president of the LBA, which is instrumental in forming the LUTF campaigning for UT status to Ladakh, told UNI on telephone from Leh that Mr Namgyal faxed his resignation letter to Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah at 1330 hrs and thereafter met NC chief Omar Abdullah in Leh and conveyed to him his decision of joining the LUTF. "There is no question of Mr Namgyal resigning from the primary membership of the NC as we have disbanded all political outfits here," Mr Samphal said. Mr Samphal said the Congress and other members of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) had also resigned en masse from their posts and joined the LUTF to unitedly fight for ensuring the Union Territory status to Ladakh.

However, none of the NC leaders were available for comment in Jammu. However, the official word on his announcement is yet to be made. Mr Samphal alleged that the region had been suffering due to the apathetic attitude of the NC Government and time had come when Ladakh should be given the Union Territory status to ensure its development and earn parity with Jammu and Kashmir in all spheres of life.

On the necessity of forming the LUTF, the LBA chief said there was lack of concern among all political outfits towards Ladakh and so the LBA spearheaded a move to unite various political activists and form a common front to concentrate on ensuring the Union Territory status to Ladakh which could only be achieved if everybody pitched in their efforts. "The successive Governments in the State have frustrated us and we should ensure that UT status is given to Ladakh," he said.

Mr Namgyal was elected from the Nubra Assembly constituency in Ladakh in the 1996 Assembly elections on the National Conference (NC) ticket by defeating his nearest Congress rival Satnzin Tundup by a margin of 83 votes. (UNI) (DE, 27/8/02)

LMA SUPPORTS JOINT FRONT FOR UT STATUS

SRINAGAR, Aug 29: The Leh based Ladakh Muslim Coordination Committee has supported the majority opinion of offering support to the joint front with the motive of preventing "unnecessary divide of Ladakhis". However, it has reserved its opinion on the demand of the UT status for Ladakh. The decision of not fielding any candidate against the candidature of the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF) was taken after the Committee leaders Shafi Lasoo and Ghulam Hassan interacted with the leaders of the community. Muslims during the interactions have told their leaders that the LUTF must be representative of a united front of all Ladakhis and not of any particular community. The Committee leaders were taken into confidence by the LUTF a day after it had decided to field candidates after coming out of their respective parties. While the Committee later agreed to the first demand of not fielding a candidate, the demand of UT status would need a thorough debate, it said. Since the Committee decision is having far-reaching consequences, the entire statement is being reproduced here:

"On August 25, 2002 the members of the local National Conference party, the Congress party and the BJP all announced that they had disbanded and merged into a single party and called it the Ladakh UT Front. The Buddhist members of this new party invited the two of us, and several other

Muslims of Ladakh, to a discussion and interaction meeting on the 26 of August. We were briefed on the details of the new formation and asked to respond as to our support. As the co-Chairman of the Ladakh Muslim Coordination Committee of Leh district, we have had an opportunity to consult our constituency in the last two days and are now in a position to respond on the question of support to the newly formed party.

During the August 26 meeting, the members of the UT front repeatedly emphasized the need for a show of unity amongst all Ladakhis, including in Leh and Kargil districts in the upcoming elections for the J&K state assembly. This is a position that all the Muslims of Ladakh fully endorse and whole heartedly support. The UT front has also announced its candidates in the last two days, and we wait the announcement of the full political platforms of the candidates, apart from their obvious demand for UT status. We also anticipate that it will be representative of a united front for all Ladakhis, as we hope will be the platforms of any other candidates who may contest for the assembly seats. As for the Muslims of Leh district, in the interests of unity for all Ladakh, we have decided not to support any candidate to oppose those of the UT Front party. Given the speed with which things have happened in the last three days, we feel such a step could be counterproductive and unnecessarily divisive of Ladakh.

The UT Front also sought Muslim opinion on UT status for Ladakh during our August 26 meeting. Our consultations have shown that amongst the Muslims of Leh district, there is no categorical opinion on this issue. Rather, there are questions as to the details of what such a political dispensation would mean in terms of governance and some doubts as to its practicability in the face of the open rejection of it by the ruling BJP-led government at the centre, the opposition at the centre and, of course, the present state government. These factors make it a contentious issue and one that will surely take some time to resolve. Therefore on the issue of UT status we advocate, in the best traditions of democracy, consultation, discussion and debate amongst all Ladakhis, in Leh, and in Kargil, both during and after the elections. We believe it is the transparency, sincerity and logic of this debate that should and will determine whether Ladakh will realise UT status or not".

The statement bears the signatures of Committee Chairman Shafi Lasoo and Ghulam Hassan. The press release was faced to Srinagar by the Committee.

LUTF WINS BOTH SEATS IN LEH

LEH, Aug 31: Newly-floated Ladakh Union Territory Front bagged both seats from Leh district in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls even before a single vote could be cast, with its nominee Nawang Rigzin remaining the only candidate in the fray from Leh constituency after two of his rivals withdrew from the contest today.

Earlier, the Front's Sonam Wanchuke Narboo virtually won the Nobra seat in the district as no other candidate filed papers till the expiry of the last date for filing nomination on August 29. Two independents Ahmadullah Azad and Tsering Dorje announced their withdrawal from the contest in favour of Rigzin today, the sources said. However, Narboo and Rigzin would be declared elected only after the deadline for withdrawals expire on September two, they added.

NC BEING PUT TO ROUT IN LADAKH

LEH, Sept 4: Call it a political maneuvering or an expertise of creating a dent, the Congress has been able to keep National Conference at bay, atleast this time in Ladakh division, wherefrom even the results have come up for the next State Assembly that have definitely gone against the expectations of the ruling Party. With the candidates having already elected unopposed from both the Buddhist dominated constituencies of Leh district, the chances of ruling Party candidates to get

through from the Shia dominated Kargil district appears bleak. This, according to the political analysts, was possible with the political maturity exhibited by Congress Party, that appears to have shun the lethargy this time to provide a stiff contest to the National Conference in 2002 State Assembly elections.

The analysts opine that National Conference had to pay heavy price with the creation of newly formed Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF) in the region, as its otherwise prospective candidates couldn't even compete in the elections. It, has, however, turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Pradesh Congress, as both the elected members from Leh and Nobra constituencies have had a good relations with Congress in past. Mr Nawang Rigzin (elected from Leh) is a Councilor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) and has been elected to the Council as a Congressman. Similarly, Sonam Wangchuk Norboo (elected from Nobra) has also nourished good ties with Congress.

Similarly in Shia-dominated Kargil district, the fate of National Conference also appears to hang in balance, as its both candidates from Kargil and Zaskar constituencies have remotest chances to taste the fruit of victory. The sources told EXCELSIOR that recently a meeting of Shia leaders, having a considerable political say in the area, was held separately with PCC-I chief Ghulam Nabi Azad and NC patriarch Omar Abdullah on their visit to Kargil. The Shia leaders of two factions had told both these party leaders that they would like to have an independent candidate of their choice from Kargil, and would help that party candidate from Zaskar that supports the group in Kargil. The sources, however, said that this condition was not acceptable to National Conference, as they wanted to field their own candidates on both the seats. The Congress Party, on the other hand, accepted the proposal of the Shia community leaders. It may be mentioned here that in Kargil there are two prominent Shia group leaders—one owing allegiance to Khumaini group and other running over 500 schools and colleges in the area.

With only a straight contest to witness in Kargil between National Conference nominee Qamar Ali Akhooon and Haji Nissar Ali, an independent candidate supported by the Shia group and Congress, the analysts predict defeat for NC's sitting MLA, who is also Minister of State for Power. Similarly, in Zaskar Assembly constituency, four candidates have remained in the fray. While Haji Mohammed Abbas is NC's candidate, Mr Akhooon Mohammed Hassan is a nominee of Congress Party. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Ahsan Ali and an independent Tsering Chosphail are also in the fray, but there will be basically a straight contest between NC and Congress, as both BJP and an independent candidate are lesser known in the region. The analysts again predict victory of Congress candidate Mr Akhooon Mohd Hassan, a son of former MP, popularly known as Commander Hassan. The younger Hassan has also the support of Shia group leaders whose candidate is being supported by Congress in Kargil segment.

Considering these permutations and combinations and if predictions come true, it will be a dooms day for National Conference as it will be virtually routed from Ladakh division, atleast in 2002 State Assembly polls!

11 ALL-WOMEN POLLING STATIONS IN KARGIL

KARGIL, Sept 11: Women voters, who outnumber their male counterparts in this border district of Jammu and Kashmir, will have 11 exclusive polling stations to exercise their franchise in the first phase of elections to the State Assembly on September 16. The exclusive facility will be available in both the constituencies of the district - Kargil and Zaskar, District Election Officer (DEO) Ashok Parmar told UNI here. He said this has been done to ensure that women voters come out in large numbers to cast their vote. "Society in the Kargil district is very conservative... Women strictly follow the purdah system and mixing of opposite sexes is almost impossible. The system of exclusive women polling stations had been started in the district in 1980s."

Another senior Government official said women voters had made the demand for separate polling stations in the district as they were averse to standing in the same line along with the men folk, which had been a major factor in their staying away from polling earlier.

A total of 219 polling stations have been set up for over 86,000 electorates in two segments of the district, where women voters outnumber their male counterparts. There are more than 45,000 female voters as compared to slightly more than 40,000 male voters in the district.(UNI)

OTHER NEWS

- A report on restoration work going on at Basgo can be found at:
<http://www.mines.u-nancy.fr/~verdel//colis/basgoreport.html>
- Mr Tashi Dorje, Director, Command Area Development, Kashmir has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Leh.
- Mr Ashok Kumar Pannar, Special Secretary to Government, Health and Medical Education Department has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Kargil.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

- Hon. Sec. John Bray and Miyoko Kobayashi were married on 13 July at St Andrew's church, Colyton, Devon, U.K. The IALS was represented by president Henry Osmaston, Thierry Dodin, Dalha Tsering, and Louise Fournier.
- Dr. Mohammad Deen Darokhan, Deputy Commissioner, Kargil has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Agriculture Department.
- Kim Gutschow has been appointed as Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, USA. She is also a Research Affiliate at the Department of Anthropology at Yale University.

ISSUES FOR DEBATE

DOING GOOD BADLY, OR AT ALL?

Fernanda Pirie

In his thoughtful article on medical development work in Lingshed, Richard Lee describes how he was, “struck by the lack of factual knowledge of local circumstances among the NGOs and their staffs working in Ladakh” (*Ladakh Studies* 16). He refers to “vital statistics”, the information provided by birth and death certificates, diagnostic codes and elicited by household surveys. While such information is arguably crucial for medical development work, any NGO that seeks to introduce permanent “improvements” into a Ladakhi village, in the form of a programme that can be managed by the people themselves after the NGOs have left, must also take into account the social and political structures of the village in question. In particular, development workers need to be aware of the decision-making processes and relations between the villagers and outsiders. Most Ladakhi villages are strongly bounded units, enjoying considerable autonomy from each other and from the central authorities. This autonomy can be fiercely guarded and development workers need to be particularly wary of the image of “humbleness” that is portrayed in the literature, as cited by Lee, and the Ladakhis’ apparent willingness to accede to the recommendations of outsiders.

I will give, here, a brief example of my own experiences in promoting a development project in Photoksar, a relatively remote village of 200 people in the Lingshed area, two days’ walk from the nearest road. It is not entirely typical of Ladakhi villages but not, for reasons I will explain, entirely untypical, either. I spent 15 months there undertaking anthropological fieldwork, studying conflict avoidance, dispute resolution and the nature of order within the community. This involved investigating the village’s internal political structures and patterns of power and authority.

As I came to the end of my fieldwork I decided to do something for the villagers, who had been overwhelmingly hospitable to me throughout the year. I enlisted the support of Health Inc, a local development organisation run by an American who has many years’ experience of development work in Ladakh. She came out to the village accompanied by two Ladakhi assistants, themselves training to be medical officers. We called a meeting and asked for the villagers’ own ideas on development. The provision of a road (obviously beyond our resources) was their priority, but education was high on their list, so we made some proposals to improve the (government) primary school. The idea was to help the villagers to be self-reliant in managing their school. They, therefore, needed to be able to lobby the education department over such issues as teacher absenteeism, which is a serious problem in remote villages like Photoksar which has no local teacher, and also to apply for grants for school improvements. We promised teaching aids and money for the materials to build a “greenhouse” extension to the school, which would allow its use in the winter. We also proposed to pay a local man who had just passed his class 12 exams to provide some additional tuition during the long winter vacation. In return, we said, the villagers needed to come with us to Leh to lobby the relevant departments, to carry out the work on the school building itself and to support the local teacher. They signalled their agreement and we went over the plans in some detail. Over the next few weeks, however, we became more and more frustrated at the villagers’ apparent unwillingness to follow through these plans. They did not turn up as promised in Leh. They did not buy the building materials. It required another meeting, with help from a SECMOL teacher, to get them to draw up building plans for the school greenhouse. They then bought some wood, but months later the greenhouse had still not been built. Even worse, when the village man began teaching he became the subject of a complaint to the education authorities by another villager on some entirely spurious grounds. We were hard pressed to understand this. The only hope that remote villages have for consistent teaching lies in the appointment of a resident

teacher who knows the community and its children and will remain in the village. The Health worker was beside herself with annoyance and her Ladakhi assistants called the villagers “donkeys”.

It was only later, as I began writing up my thesis and analysing the social and political structures of the village, that I came to make some sense of the villagers’ refusal to cooperate with our development plans. Leadership in the village is exercised by the headman and his four assistants. None of these is, however, elected and the posts rotate every year between all the households. This type of practice emerged widely in Ladakh in the early 20th century, as the power of the king and aristocracy waned and the villages no longer needed a strong and more permanent headman to deal with the tax collector’s demands. Under this system no individual or household is able to acquire undue power or influence in the village. In the 1990s the Ladakh Buddhist Association tried to set up political committees in many villages and proposed a system of elections for the post of headman (which might also promote individuals sympathetic to their political cause). However, these efforts largely failed and people from several villages told me of their reluctance to elect a headman to a long term of office because of the difficulty of finding a “good man” for the job. They are suspicious of allowing individuals to acquire too much power. In Photoksar political decisions are made at village meetings attended by “all the men” and there is a rhetoric of unity and agreement which smothers any divisions between them. Subtle systems ensure that individuals do not acquire other forms of political influence in the village. The seating arrangements, for example, rank individuals according to age, only the astrologer and amchi being accorded higher status, along with outsiders and monks. Yet even this limited social ranking does not translate into political status. Age is always respected but the villagers deny that any individual has more influence than others (although the opinions of some are patently more respected than others). When the Health worker asked for a small gathering of “influential” men, for example, which was translated as “good men” by her Ladakhi translators, the villagers merely sent the headman and his assistants. Thus, any individual with potential leadership qualities is denied the opportunity to take on a steering role in village politics. This is one of the reasons the Photoksar villagers were so slow to organise themselves to implement our project. There was no-one capable of galvanising the villagers into new forms of action.

The ideology of unity and agreement found in the village meeting also helps to maintain the autonomy of the village from the centre. When the upper classes still had dominant political power the Photoksar villagers almost certainly resisted the interference of the local aristocrat (the Lonpo) in their affairs. They acknowledged his high social status and paid him their taxes, but kept their internal affairs, including the resolution of disputes, away from his attention. Political decisions were and are made by ‘us’, the villagers. Even today, where this is possible in the remoter villages like Photoksar and Lingshed, major conflicts are kept away from the notice of the police. In Photoksar visiting officials and development workers are treated with the greatest of social respect and seated at the top of the social line but their demands are largely ignored, unless they offer ready cash or improvements. “We”, the villagers, have to decide unanimously on any changes to the host of internal rules and customs that govern village affairs and the recommendations of outsiders have no more weight than those of a single villager. Exactly the same went for the Health workers and the anthropologist, integrated as she was by then into the village social life.

In some of the villages closer to the centre the political structures are changing and the system of rotation has been replaced by the selection of a more permanent headman. An educated individual who has acquired money and influence in the new economy is seen, rightly, as someone who can secure beneficial developments for the village. Village structures have also been influenced by the NGOs, which set up “democratic” committee systems to handle their projects. Some NGOs have had considerable influence in these villages but their “improvements” have sometimes been obtained at a price. The NGOs, for good reasons, prefer to have a small number of individuals to deal with in a village and look for leaders who can put their plans into action. By

setting up an elected committee structure they intend to ensure that these individuals are accountable to the whole village. However, the committee structure allows individuals, often those who already have money or access to centrally-provided resources, to obtain increased influence by managing the NGOs' funds. Development organisations have told me of factions and conflicts that have developed out of these projects. The problem is that the Ladakhis are not used to controlling their leaders through the ballot box. Elections require the selection and deselection of individuals and the passing of judgment on them, but most Ladakhis will only publically criticise their fellow villagers in extreme circumstances. Their traditional methods for controlling their power holders, involving rotation and selection by games of chance, methods found widely throughout the Tibetan region, are not readily adaptable to committee structures and election processes. But neither, of course, do they result in the selection of innovative leaders.

On the one hand, therefore, in places like Photoksar the villagers say they "want" improvements and development programmes. On the other, their historic leadership structures do not facilitate innovation and they remain, to varying degrees, resistant to proposals that might allow individuals to obtain power and influence. This probably explains the complaints made of the young teacher by one of his fellow villagers. If his position had become permanent this would have given him new status in the village and made him a threat to the overall political equality that is actively maintained between the individuals and their households.

Of course, each village, being a relatively autonomous unit as they mostly are, has a slightly different internal dynamic. The presence of monks, aristocratic families, educated and wealthy individuals, especially active and charismatic leaders like Lingshed's Geshe Changchub, changes things. Nevertheless, anecdotal evidence from a development organisation working in Lingshed indicates similar problems there with unfulfilled promises by the villagers to contribute to a new project. Almost every village that I enquired about had established a system of rotation at some point during the 20th century. The principles of equality and the desire for autonomy from the centre are widely spread throughout Ladakh. Outsiders should not be fooled by displays of social humbleness into thinking that the Ladakhis are ready to accept all the advice proffered by those to whom they pay general respect. Nor should they assume that the qualities of leadership that their projects demand can be promoted without disturbing established social structures. Power is distributed and manipulated in very particular ways in Ladakh and the complexity of the resulting social and political relations must not be ignored by any of those who seek to "do good".

In the end, in Photoksar, we decided to take a long-term view of the school project. Our offers of assistance are still there, but it is up to the villagers to fulfil their side of the project before we take it any further. Whether or not they do so remains to be seen.

ISSUES FOR DEBATE

MEANINGLESS EXOTIC MASALA

Rebecca Norman

I would like to request my esteemed friends in Ladakh studies to be more careful with their renditions of Ladakhi words. I frequently see, in all the Ladakh studies books as well as other publications, a jumble of pronunciation and Tibetan spelling transliteration. A typical example in a recent book by an IALS member is the phrase Kangyur and 'Bum. The first word helpfully gives the pronunciation, far from the Tibetan spelling bka'-'gyur; while the second word adds a spelled apostrophe irrelevant to pronunciation, only to intimidate the casual reader. The same essay gives most words in pronunciation only, like sku-tags, but then suddenly translates 'short stories' as sgrung-bdus (spelling, not pronunciation), right after giving 'poems' as tshoms, which is neither spelling nor pronunciation (both of which would involve rtsom). Could one not first decide on one's purpose in giving Ladakhi words at all, and then on which type of transliteration would serve that purpose?

If a Ladakhi word doesn't add any special meaning not conveyed by the English, and is not going to be used throughout the piece of writing, consider leaving it out. Does sheep need (luk) or (lug) in brackets after it? A sheep is a luk is a sheep. What does it add to the scholarship or to the reader's understanding?

This is harmless if only pretentious, but what is the point of putting into a Ladakhi mouth Tibetan words like tsampa? Roasted barley flour is a case where the Ladakhi word (ranging from nganphe to rngampe depending on region) covers a meaning not conveyed by any single English word, but surely there's no reason to write tsampa in an article set in Ladakh, except as the best-known word in English, in which case it is deceptive to present it as a Ladakhi word, italicised or exoticised with odd spaces or punctuation as in tsam.pa.

So my plea to you is, spend a few minutes clarifying to yourself why you want to use Ladakhi words in your paper and what they add to it, and then decide whether Tibetan spelling or Ladakhi pronunciation is relevant. In most cases, the few readers interested in Tibetan spelling would be able to find the word in a dictionary if only pronunciation is given, and pronunciation would satisfy all the majority of readers, who have no interest in Tibetan spelling. If you are writing about a social context, say, or food, what does Tibetan spelling have to do with it, really? On the other hand, if writing about things that mainly come from written sources, perhaps Wylie transliteration alone is more relevant than any rendition of pronunciation.

We could do with less italicised words merely sprinkled in as exotic masala without rhyme, reason, or foundation, and to see more used where they actually convey something necessary to the paper.

RESEARCH NOTE

SCREENING FOR GROUP A STREPTOCOCCI IN ZANSKAR, 2001

Rheumatic fever has been reported to be common in Ladakh, a remote mountainous region in the Northwestern Himalaya. The Ladakh Heart Foundation, established in 1997, has been instrumental in education and treatment programs for streptococcal sore throat and for patients with established rheumatic heart disease. Microbiologic documentation for the presence of group A streptococci is difficult because of limited resources even in the hospitals and clinics of the larger towns, impossible in villages and hamlets remote from health care facilities. Simple immunochromatographic technology for detecting the presence of group A streptococcal antigens could be utilized by trained village health workers in remote settings to establish criteria for treatment and to collect data for studying the epidemiology of group A streptococcal disease.

In the summer of 2001 we brought 100 OSOM tests, manufactured by Wyntek Diagnostics, into the Zanskar region of Ladakh. The tests were performed by the authors on all school children at the Lingshed School and on patients, children and adults, who came to the clinics with pharyngeal, nasal, or skin complaints suggestive of group A streptococcal infection. Fifty-seven school children between the ages of 3 and 12 were examined. An additional 12 older children or adults were tested when they came to the clinic for complaints suggesting impetigo or purulent nasopharyngitis. There were 17 cases of purulent nasopharyngitis or impetigo. Fifty-three percent tested positive for group A *Streptococcus* by the OSOM immunochromatographic test. Fifty-two children had negative nasopharyngeal or skin cultures. All individuals with positive group A streptococcal screening tests and clinical findings consistent with streptococcal infection were treated with oral penicillin. Among the school children the following health problems were identified: dental caries (26%), human papillomavirus with multiple warts (7%), impetigo (11%), head lice (9%), otitis media (3%), purulent pharyngitis (4%), purulent rhinitis (16%), scabies (5%), and the presence of a systolic ejection murmur (11%). No instances of edema and hematuria, indicative of post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis, were found.

This small, preliminary field study indicates that group A streptococci circulate in remote villages at both oropharyngeal and cutaneous sites. The risk for post-streptococcal complications-glomerulonephritis and acute rheumatic fever-is present, probably continuously. Control of group A streptococcal infections and post-streptococcal complications will require systemic antibiotic treatment for both impetigo and purulent streptococcal pharyngitis.

Similar screening of school children in communities close to the motor vehicular roads may reveal different patterns of streptococcal epidemiology. Crowding, increased contact with travelers and village nonresidents, better facilities for bathing, hand washing, and laundry, and increased access to health care might alter the pattern of colonization and transmission of group A streptococci. Streptococcal pharyngitis and acute rheumatic fever would be expected to be more common in the communities of the Indus River Valley.

Further study is needed to determine how prevalent post-streptococcal complications are in the study population. Rheumatic heart disease is reported to be a common problem in the population of the larger towns in the Indus River Valley which are close to roadways and motorized traffic. Further studies may help determine if the paucity of post-streptococcal complications that we detected in the Lingshed/Zanskar region of Ladakh is related to isolation from roads, trucks, and crowding; or if other factors predispose this population to a different outcome than that demonstrated by children in the less-isolated towns of the Indus Valley in the Northwestern Himalaya.

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BOOK REVIEWS

***Horse of Karbala: Muslim Devotional Life in India*, by David Pinault, New York and London: Palgrave, 2001. Pp. 288. ISBN 0-312-21637-8. USD 45 (hb only).**

David Pinault's latest book is both an extremely erudite discussion of the symbolism and meaning of Shia Muharram observances and beliefs, but also contains many first hand accounts of Pinault's own experience of Shia ritual in contemporary India. It will be of particular interest to readers of this journal since it contains several essays on aspects of Shia practice in Ladakh, and thus contributes to filling a rather large gap in the scholarly understanding of the area. For those unfamiliar with Ladakh, roughly half of the population are Shia Muslims, the majority of whom live in Kargil *tehsil*, although there is a sizeable minority in the Leh area and Nubra valley. However, Shia, and more generally Muslim religious practice is rather poorly represented in the literature on the area.

Shias revere twelve Imams, who are believed to be the direct descendants from the Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Fatima, and his cousin, Imam Ali, who was the first Imam. Their descendants are known as *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Family of the Prophet) and there were Twelve Imams or leaders who are recognised by Shias. The line of descent was nearly destroyed in the 7th century AD, at the Battle of Karbala in Iraq, in which Husain, the son of Fatima and Ali, was killed along with most of his male relatives. Those events and their commemoration are at the heart of the major Shia religious observances, the climax of which is the month of Muharram, when Shi'ahs mourn and commemorate the martyrdoms at Karbala. Most Shias do this by holding processions and gatherings in which some of the participants perform *matam* - the beating of chests, either with hands or flails (*zanjiri-matam*).

Pinault's book is about the religious and sociological significance of these rituals to the participants and the surrounding society.

The book consists of ten chapters, each of which is a self-contained essay. In the majority of these Pinault's style of exposition is to blend scholarly accounts and interpretations of Muslim and Shia textual sources with first-hand descriptions of Muharram rituals that he has attended in India, in which he tries to convey their significance both to an understanding of Shiism and to the participants themselves. Another of his themes is to try to reveal points of congruence between his own Catholic beliefs and those of Shias. Hence the concluding chapter is an account of his own experience of teaching about Islam and Shi'ism to Muslim students in the United States.

Appropriately the volume opens with a description of Pinault's own first steps in his fieldwork among Shias in India, called: "Initiation: Hyderabad, 1989", in which he describes his growing excitement as he starts his first research on Muharram in Hyderabad. The next essay, entitled: "An Introduction to the Shia Tradition in Islam", provides just that. It starts with very useful synopses of the historical origins of Shi'ism as a religion and its establishment in India. The author then goes on to discuss the central role of the commemoration of Husain's martyrdom at Karbala in the meaning of being a Shia. It ends with Pinault's account of his first attendance at a Muharram ceremony in Hyderabad.

The third chapter, entitled: “Blood, Rationality, and Ritual in the Shia Tradition”, takes up the very contentious subject of the symbolism of blood and bloodletting in Muharram ritual. He points out that some Shias, see this as being both bad for the image of Shias and a sign of loss of control, which is frowned on by many schools of Islam. However, the shows that although blood is normally regarded by Muslims as being impure, has been seen as purifying by some Shias and can have the same meaning for Shias. Thus he offers an explanation of the enduring importance to Shias of the blood of martyrdom that was shed at Karbala by Husain and his followers. The essay is beautifully illustrated by many quotes from Muharram sermons, poetry and *nauhas* - mournful dirges that are chanted to accompany *matam* rituals. To his credit, Pinault does not shy away from describing his initial uneasiness at observing Muharram rituals in which some participants cut and flailed themselves, causing profuse bleeding. However, I appreciated the fact that, rather than pandering to his own negative reaction, he uses it as an entry point to take the reader with him on a journey to a better understanding of these rituals as experienced by Shias themselves. That journey is exceptionally enlightening as it is backed up by Pinault’s remarkable scholarship on Islam and illuminated by numerous references to original Islamic texts and literature on Shia ritual in contemporary contexts.

Following this there is an essay on women’s roles in Shia devotional literature. In this article he discusses the symbolism and importance of Hazrat Fatima and Hazrat Zenab, the daughter and granddaughter of the Prophet Muhammad. In particular, he looks at how they are presented in the accounts of the Karbala story in Iranian and Indian literature, poetry and *nauhas*. Pinault shows that Fatima and Zenab play rather different roles in both a religious and social sense, but that their roles and symbolism are also constantly open to re-interpretation and transformation. In addition, by emphasising the importance and inclusion of women both in Shia mythology and contemporary rituals, he makes a contribution to a burgeoning body of literature that contradicts the view of Shia women as being largely excluded in public and religious contexts.

The rest of the book contains six chapters, four of which are predominantly about Muharram in Leh and Kargil areas, which I will concentrate on. Chapter Six, “Horse of Karbala: Ladakh, Shia Ritual, and Devotional Literature Relating to Zuljenah”, explores the history and significance of the use of a horse representing Zuljenah, Husain’s horse at Karbala. As Pinault describes, the horse plays an important role in the Muharram processions in both Leh and Kargil *tehsils* and he provides a fascinating account of the meaning of Zuljenah to the participants. This is followed by an essay called, “Muslim-Buddhist Relations in a Ritual Context: An Analysis of the Muharram Procession in Leh Township, Ladakh.” Pinault describes the difficult political context in Ladakh in the late 1990s in the wake of the recent boycott of Muslims by Buddhists in Leh *tehsil* and the existence of issues of religious and political differences between Shias and Sunnis in Leh. He shows how the commemoration of Muharram involves all the three of the main religious groups in Leh, but there is a disjuncture between the public displays and private sentiments expressed by participants and some onlookers. As such it provides a very useful contribution to an appreciation of the complexities of inter and intra religious relations in Ladakh at the present.

The eighth chapter: “Shia Lamentation Rituals and Reinterpretations of the Doctrine of Intercession: Two Cases from Modern India” is a discussion of how the doctrines of Shiism, just as with any other religion, are constantly being questioned and reinterpreted by Shias themselves. In particular, he focuses on current debates among Shias (and to a lesser extent Sunnis) in Ladakh about whether the performance of what he terms “bloody *matam*” (*zanjiri-matam*) is doctrinally or socially appropriate. In 1994, Ayatollah Khamanei, the leading Shia cleric in Iran, issued a *fatwa* suggesting that it was no longer appropriate as he said that it gave Shias a bad image, but he also appears to have done so in response to a desire to seek closer relations with the Sunnis in the Middle East who generally disapprove of it on religious grounds. However, as Pinault shows, this *fatwa* was followed, or not, in Ladakh, in response to a complex set of local politics and understanding of the rituals. The only thing that I did not like about this essay was that the author falls into a common trap

of appearing to equate Kargil town with Kargil, thus giving rather a narrow and possibly less sympathetic view of the area. Whereas in Leh he provides a much more even picture of the area by talking of both the town and villages and their ceremonies.

The final essay that I shall discuss concerns the practice in the Ladakh and Kashmir region of commemorating the battle of Karbala in the summer when Muharram falls in the winter. The ceremonies take place in the month of Leo called *Yawn-e Asad* or “The Day of the Lion”, which falls in the summer and therefore take place when it is hot and participants can experience the terrible thirst suffered by the martyrs and their families at Karbala. These ceremonies are not widely known about by visitors to Ladakh, including myself, so I found this particularly interesting.

In conclusion, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and it is one that I know I will return to many times as it contains a wealth of information and interpretation. If I could make one criticism it would be of the essay format, since occasionally descriptions or explanations are repeated from one chapter to another, as most of them cover complementary topics. However, that is a very small matter and I would encourage anyone who is interested in Shiism or Ladakh to read this book.

NEW BOOK

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Fernanda Pirie has just completed a doctorate at Oxford University on conflict avoidance and dispute resolution in Ladakh, and has taken up a post-doctoral research position at the Max Planck Institute in Halle, Germany, from where she will be carrying out comparative research on conflict in Amdo, Eastern Tibet.