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HIGHLIGHTS

Historical Pick: Jagabandhu Dham Temple

News Pick: Khariff Crops of Mekhliganj

Festival Recipe: Ruti Noodles

Special Feature: Struggling Film Maker of Falakata

Travelogue: Trip to Suntalekhola



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timesofnorth.IN is the first online news magazine from North Bengal plains which is dedicated for news and reviews. timesofnorth.IN was created with an objective to highlight North Bengal, North East India, Sikkim, North Bihar and many more. Updated news reviews with an analytical perspective are going to be the main feature of TIMES OF NORTH. It is not only going to depict reviews of North Bengal but also is going to feature news analysis from around the country and the globe with National and International importance.

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350 year Old Jagabandhu Dham's Jagabandhu Puja is Still Highly Prevalent

Dipankar Dey



The 350-year-old Jagabandhu Dham puja is still very much prevalent at Islampur's Sardarvita. This year the puja was celebrated its 127th year. This puja is being organized by the people of Sardarvita, Kuilabari, Beirbari, Kanuburi, Bethbari, Maraltola and 5 other villages nearby. The Jagabandhu Dham puja is something different from the normal pujas because it is celebrated in every 3 years. The women from Matikunda arrange for the Puja with much devotion. The puja takes place just after Ambabuchi. Interestingly, all the 33 crores of Gods and Goddesses are being worshiped in this Jagabandhu Dham. All families residing in the 11 villages organizing this puja cook only vegetarian food for 8 days. Non-Veg are not allowed during these days. A mela is also organized during the puja and many outsiders along with the villagers take part in it. The septuagenarian locals cannot remember from exactly when this puja started in this place.

According to them, they have seen the puja organized from their childhood days. Though all the 33 crore Gods and Goddesses are worshiped, in the main mandir Goddess Jagadhattri and Jagabandhu are being kept. On both the sides, Shiv and Kali Pratima are kept. The Sad part is that many pigeons and goats are sacrificed during the puja. As the secretary of the puja committee, Mr. Dipak Kumar Singh says “We keep no stone unturned for organizing the puja and will continue to do that”.

Kharif Crops in Downward Production, Due to Uneven Monsoon This Season in North Bengal

Swapan Roy Bir



Due to the uneven monsoon in the Northern Bengal, in this crucial agricultural time, the entire Kharif crops are in shatters. The farmers here are now spending sleepless nights for this. On one hand, some agricultural areas are experiencing drought like situation. Paddy saplings could not be sowed in the fields due to lack of water in the soil. In entire North Eastern and North Bengal, the rains are caused due to the monsoon which enters land through Eastern sea shore i.e. the Sundarbans areas, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha etc. The Bangladesh also comes under its purview. However, this time the situation has changed. The monsoon has entered late and with less of rain clouds. At least this is being claimed by the weather officials in India. This has led to the less of rainfall creating problems to the farmers due to drought like situation. The farmers have started planting paddy in the month of August but it is expected that the productivity will be less

because of late sowing of the crops. This kind of worse situation in Paddy farming is seen in Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar districts. The affected areas in Coochbehar districts are Nijtaraf, Bhotbari, Uchchalpukuri, and Jamaldaha. The farmers have tried to sow paddy with the help of automatic planting machines this time. However, in Mekhliganj Block most of the Farmers have kept their land dry due to the uneven nature of Monsoon this year. While interacting with a farmer from Jamaldaha, named Kanhaiyalal Barman, I found that he had only planted in only 1 bigha of his land, the rest of the land has been kept idle by him. The agricultural department from Coochbehar also expressed discomfort in the seasonal shift this year. Interestingly and expectedly, the farmers have started to include their agricultural land under Central Government's Agricultural Land insurance scheme for getting the insurance returns.

The Struggling Film Maker, Yet the Fighter: Banti Mondal of Falakata

Arunangshu Maitra



This is a story of a Rural Bengal's Film Director and his continuous struggle for a stepping stone into the Filmdom. This is a story of a young boy who hails from a rural set up of Falakata and is still in his struggling days of the so-called film world. This is a reflection of many young minds aspiration to go to the top from this infrastructure less North Bengal's Film set up to Bollywood but the aspiration stops in a midway. However, Banti Mondal continues his journey with enthusiasm and no complaints. Yes, this is Banti Mondal the very rural Bengal guy from Falakata whose struggle is continuing that started from a local cable TV channel of Falakata in the year 2004. After that, he made many and produced many Films, Music Video, TV Shows, TV Commercials etc. He is not only a Cinematographer but also a talented music composer, script writer, and a professional lyricist. Banti Mondal is a self-made man, who lost his father in his early childhood. From then family economics and career planning was his motto. He is one of

the few talented people from North Bengal, who is trying to hold the stakes high for North Bengal Cinema without making this profession, a secondary venture.



Banti knows problems of North Bengal Films industry, its technical and financial backwardness, its zero-branding capabilities, its celebrity less outlook etc. Yet he stays here and is ready to face the challenges. Currently, Banti Mondol is busy in his next venture, a New Bengali feature film featuring all North Bengal star cast and North Bengal locales. Let's hope for the best . . .

RJ Den, The Stephen Hawking from Kolkata

Kaushik Chatterjee



R. J. Den is not an unknown person to the FM Radio Listeners. Especially, if he/she stays in Kolkata and suburban places. RJ Den's original name is Sayamdeb Mukherjee. He is also popularly called as the Stephen Hawking from Kolkata. He was a child when the symptoms of one of the rare genetic disease called Dopa Responsive Dystonia were diagnosed. From that time his companion was his wheelchair. However, there was another person beside the little RJ Den, his father Mr. Pabitradeb Mukherjee. Mr. Pabitradeb Mukherjee provided little RJ Den the mental support and enthusiasm that made RJ Den strong enough to fight his disease and proved the world that nothing is impossible once again. He is now associated with a famous FM Radio house as an RJ, from where he got his name RJ Den. RJ Den never made his life story bounded in his mind rather he jotted it down in his book called 'Memoirs of Time' that released in 2016 and now is being published in at least 150 countries. He has brought many specially-abled

children into the mainstream by his counseling and enthusiasm. He also has made a group theater called 'Katha Kolom'. Such is the story of a man of this generation when most of the elders call this generation as the 'generation going nowhere'.

Shoulmari Village Observes Gram Pujan (Village Worship) Every Year

Arunangshu Maitra



A unique Gram Pujan was organized today at Shoulmari Village under Mathabhanga No. 2 Block. This ritual is of the Adivasi culture. Basically, in this puja Lord Shiva and Parvati are worshiped. The puja is performed to keep all the villagers healthy and happy as well as to keep the fields filled with crops throughout the year. Women generally, bring in water from the nearby streams by maintaining all the ritualistic features in Urn (Kolshi). After bringing the water from the stream the deity i.e. Shiv and Parvati is bathed by the water. After that, the main puja is being performed. After the puja, the Prasad is being distributed to the people. The puja continues throughout the day. According to the villagers, the Gram Pujan (Village Worship) is being performed by their ancestors for many centuries for the betterment of the villages.

A Short Green Trip to Suntalekhola

Dr. Subrata Ray



One of the unique green surround tourist spot is Suntalekhola located in Darjeeling District. It is a small village with an altitude of 650 to 950 m. In traditional language the word ‘Suntaley’ means orange and khola means a small river. This place is also known as the gateway to the dense forest of Neora Valley. It is advisable for a tourist to stay in WBFDC guest house if he/she wants to have a night out. As told before the place is surrounded by Neora Valley forest but also there are many tea gardens which make the place more interesting. If one enters the place he/she can enjoy the nonstop music of mountain streams throughout the day and night. Apart from this there would be sunlight falling in the greenery making it a heavenly experience.

For us from Siliguri we went to New Mal Junction via Intercity Express from NJP in the morning. We then got our pre-hired a car that was waiting in the station that dropped us at Suntalekhola. We felt it safe to stay in a WBFDC guest at Suntalekhola. However, there are

other local home stays in the place. After unpacking the luggage in the rooms we were about to take bath in the local mountain streams. However, the local guide stopped us by warning us about the giant leeches in the riverside. We were convinced because we saw some of them through the window on an herb next to our guest house room. The lunch was just awesome with local fish and pure Bengali dishes. After the lunch we went for photo session. Believe, it was just a brilliant experience. Away from the hassle bustle of Siliguri we were experiencing an enchanting splash of Mother Nature's greenery.



The next morning we started our pre planned small trek towards Rocky Island. This is another stunning place in Samsing with normal trek route. For the new trekker in this route it can be said that there are many Tracker and other cabs available towards Rocky Island. We returned the same day to our place of stay at the WBFDC guest house at Suntalekhola. To our surprise, we got the special fish curry of Mahashol. Mahashol is the local fish of the hills. We are just mesmerized by the delicious treat of the cook of the guest house.

The last day was our return day from Suntalekhola. However, we decided to return via Murti tourist spot. One of our attendants in the guest house managed a cab to drop us at Chalsa. From Chalsa we again hired a cab towards Murti. The entire time spent by us at Murti with its mesmerizing locales was really a breath taking experience. We then took a cab towards Chalsa and had our lunch there. Our train was from New Mal at 6:30 pm back to Siliguri.

Ruti Noodles: The Indian Jugaad

Prasun Dey

In today's world it becomes highly problematic when we tend to depend upon regular junk food especially when we stay alone in city for professional reasons. However, it also cannot be avoided neither we like to stay away from their taste. However, cereals are highly needed for our system. As an Indian we also depend upon some 'Jugads'. One of the Jugads which I depend upon is Ruti Noodles. Let's see how we can prepare it.

INGREDIENTS

- Ruti - 4
- Vegetable oil - 2 tablespoons
- Onion - 1 big, sliced
- Green Chili - 1, slit
- Carrot - ¼ cup, cut into thin stripes
- Capsicum - ¼ cup, cut into thin stripes
- Cabbage - ¼ cup, cut into thin stripes
- Garlic - 1 teaspoon, finely chopped
- Soya sauce - ½ teaspoon
- Red chili powder - 1 teaspoon
- Sugar - ¼ teaspoon
- Salt - to taste
- Spring onion - ¼ cup, finely chopped
- Pepper powder - ½ teaspoon
- Coriander leaves - 2 tablespoon, finely chopped



Firstly, stack the rutis in a top down manner. Then with the help of a sharp slicer cut the rutis into thin strips. After then keep aside the ruti strips. Then put a pan on the oven and heat it up and then pour oil and heat it up. Add the finely chopped garlic and sauté. Fry the garlic in high flame till the raw smell is vanished from the garlic and sauté it for a minute. While sauteing and add vegetables and saute again for a few minutes in a high flame. Keep sauteing to avoid sticking to the bottom of the pan. After then add soya sauce, chili sauce, pepper powder, salt, and sugar. Then add ruti strips and mix well. Toss well so that the masala gets coated well on the ruti stripes. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes on a low flame. Then add finely chopped spring onion, coriander leaves, mix well. Turn off the flame. Ruti noodles are ready to serve.



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