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HIGHLIGHTS

Thinley in Japan

Prime Minister, Jigmi Y. Thinley, left Bhutan for a week-long visit to Japan on August 25. He was seen off by cabinet ministers and senior government officials.



While in Japan, the Prime Minister was scheduled to deliver a key note address on Gross National Happiness at Fukuoka and hold high level meetings with the Japanese captains of industry and commerce.

He was also to meet the President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Sadaka Ogata, and attend functions organized by the Japan-Bhutan Friendship Association.

A press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote the visit was expected to open up new business opportunities and further strengthen the existing close ties of friendship and cooperation.

Indian HM visit Bhutan

Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram paid three days visit to Bhutan starting from August 21. During his visit Chidambaram discussed border issues with the Bhutanese government.



During his visit, Chidambaram met the King, Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley, the fourth King Jigme Singye and Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, Minjur Dorji.

Indian media reported that the purpose of the visit was to further strengthen bilateral relations between India and Bhutan.

His three-day official visit to Bhutan was his first foreign tour after taking over the portfolio on December 1 last year.

Woman hit by a car in Chicago

By T.N. Mishra, California

Radhika Kharel, 58, resettled in Chicago met an accident while crossing a busy street at 7:30 p.m. local time on August 20.

According to her brother, Khara Nanda Kharel, she was hit by a car leaving her left leg fractured.

The family source informed this reporter that the hearing-impaired victim is undergoing treatment in a hospital and her detail medical reports are not yet furnished.

They have moved to Chicago under resettlement program from Beldangi-II, sector F-1.

DNC, BNDP leaders meet Nepali home minister

Kathmandu, August 15, 2009: Dr. DNS Dhakal, Acting President of Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) and Karma Duptho, Secretary of Druk National Congress (DNC) submitted the application to Nepalese Home Minister Bhim Rawal at latter's office in Kathmandu drawing attention of minister to expedite the process of issuance of Bhutanese refugee identity card.

According to Duptho, Minister Rawal promised to look into the matter seriously.

The Government of Nepal and UNHCR jointly conducted census of exiled Bhutanese in 2006-2007 following which the identity cards were issued. Some several hundreds of them haven't received their identity card until now.

In addition, they, along with S. B. Subba, Harka Jung Subba, Radha Adhikari and Nirula Rai, attended the SAAPE conference in which Bhutanese political and refugee issues was appraised to the members of civil societies from EU and India to pressurize their respective governments for the repatriation of exiled Bhutanese and early resolution to political crisis.

Camps Inundate During Teej

By TBR Correspondent
August, Damak

A rescue team of water induced disasters finally punctured the flood-deposited soil mass creating outlet for inundated water in the Sunduwa River and prevented three Beldangi camps from submerging. The rescue team led by Hirananda Jha from Kathmandu took hours to create an outlet for water. The authority earlier warned the Bhutanese citizens in Beldangi camps and the locals of riparian areas about the probable flood risks. According to Beldangi-I camp Secretary T.B. Gurung, the camp management committee and Armed Police Force jointly announced the community people appealing them not to go to the flooded area.

Just a few days before the start of women festival Teej, majority of the huts witnessed flood that made the plastic sheds unfit for shelter.

The continued torrent for several hours completely inundated Goldhap camp and swift away the bridge connecting the main entrance to camp, reports from the camp say. According to the residents, overflow of river Deuniya and a rivulet Baiterni led to inundation of the camp from both the sides. Since the water did not have force, no houses were reported

Camp Secy play resettlement drama, CPB (MLM) threaten them

Camp secretaries of all seven camps appealed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) seeking arrangement for their trip to resettling countries.

In a letter sent to UNHCR and IOM on August 18, they have stated that they wanted to study situations of the resettled Bhutanese themselves expressing their interest to support resettlement of all those in camps. "Give us an opportunity to visit the resettlement countries to know the facts, and convince the refugees till the last number of the refugee gets resettled from Nepal," they said in their appeal.

Meanwhile, Communist Party of Bhutan (MLM) made a circular against the appeal of secretaries after a week. The exile coordination committee of the party urged them to either withdraw such biased decision or be responsible for anything that would evolve due to such intention of having trip to resettling countries.

Following the high voltage resistance form CPB (MLM) and the camp residents, they finally decided to withdraw their decision on August 26.

In another circular to the agencies, they regretted their previous move and vowed to work for repatriation of the exiled Bhutanese.

Responding to Saranathi Sarokar, the radio program of Bhutan News Service, Champa Singh Rai, camp secretary of Sanischare camp even expressed his willingness to resign from the post if their move was taken to tarnish sentiments of the camp residents. "I am ready to submit my resignation if I hurt my people", Rai said.

APPEAL

Bhutan Media Society appeals all the esteemed readers of *The Bhutan Reporter* to support it by subscribing a copy. The contributions from subscription of the paper will support the upcoming issues of *The Bhutan Reporter*.



File photo: In search of shelter during flood



Nature's Gift: Food-deposited soil mass in the Sunduwa River

to be washed away. However, several shifted their belongings to a safe zone to avoid the probable risks.

"People have rushed to safer side leaving few members at hut to look after the properties," said the camp secretary. In Goldhap, the river started pouring into the camp at midnight and water level continually went rising for several

hours.

Similarly, reports from Beldangi II extension said that a Dhan Maya Magar from sector B4 died when she was washed away by the Mau River. She was returning home after collecting firewood. Her body was recovered some 200 m down the river crossing area, police said.

Youth held with counterfeit notes

By Arjun Pradhan
Damak, August 26

Police arrested Prem Bista of Beldangi-I camp, Sector A-1/82 along with a local resident, Bibek Limbu, of Damak-3 for counterfeiting Nepali 1000 rupee note.

Damak police in Jhapa district made the duo public yesterday with a pistol, bullets, knife and some counterfeit notes.

Police arrested them from a hotel at Damak after following information provided by a local of Butabari in Jhapa where they were able to use some forged notes.

The police also apprehended a local car owned by Chandra Thapa. They used the car for their counterfeit business, according to police Inspector Nabin Karki.

Karki also informed that the masterminds of counterfeit business, Ashok Rai and Buddhi Kerong, have been at large. Both Bista and Limbu admitted that such fake notes are printed at Siliguri. They purchase such notes from there and spread to various places in Nepal, according to Inspector Karki.

Armed Police Force deployed in camps has cautioned exiled



Bibek Limbu (left) and Prem Bista being made public by Damak police
Photo: titomithapiro.com

Bhutanese regarding note counterfeiting during the upcoming Dashara and Tihar festivals.

Talking About Democracy And Media

■ BM Dhakal, America

Media is considered as the fourth organ of any state. Media in Bhutan is infant and therefore at a precarious ground. Unbiased and independent reporting by the media help public to make well informed decisions and avoid inconsistency in governance. Bhutanese media is now not in a position to accomplish the task of disseminating information effectively. The DPT government has often taken to the course of hair-plucking of media.

Bhutan Times is under the financial pressure to exist in the market. Bhutan Today, the only private daily, strives to compete with state owned kuensel which recently launched daily paper. The development of media in a span of a decade is, however, welcoming.

It is painful for the independent Bhutanese media persons to report news fairly enough as many sources of information deny access to them. There has been always a skewed coverage of the information region wise, content wise, source wise and even by gravity of the information. Newspapers and their news portals are not available to interior parts or remote hinterlands owing to the transportation and technological deficiency.

The hard copies are not published in the mother tongue of Lhotshampas and Sarchhops, who speak Tsangla. So, a section of the population who do not understand English or Dzongkha remain uninformed by this gap of information. Broadcasting media are too limited in information flow and are susceptible to censorship.

In the light of above discussions democracy in Bhutan need

Bhutan



Have Words, No Freedom

Camps



Have Freedom, No words

Citizen's right to expression

to be understood in a preliminary phase with all contradictory elements and reactionary forces occupying the ground. As always seen in the history, there are forces around palace who wish to take extraordinary advantage of their kinship ties with royal family, if any chance.

Exclusion and elimination of opposing force is a long tradition in Bhutan; democrats can be intimidated or virtually eliminated because of high-handedness of reactionary forces. Transparency and accountability are buzz words but hard to realize. Bhutanese people have already lost about 10,000 square meters of their country's north-west part changing the map of country, just when there was the king to protect the cessation. Have the people of Bhutan been well informed about this?

Editorial

Freedom for Mass Gathering

Mass gathering in moral sense seems to be a challenge for Bhutanese rulers. Political gathering is most dangerous. Things have not changed much though mere announcements and procedures show the country has changed from absolute monarchy to a parliamentary democracy. Opposition voices are merely digested..

Liberties have been extended, little by little. When ministers or royal family members engaged, that becomes a mission for a cause but when others organize similar events, it is hardly digested.

The latest incident is visualized by the solidarity walk by Thimphu residents who marched in mass from memorial Chorten to to parliament to submit memo to Prime Minister. The civil disobedience was against the government's dire ignorance towards death of seven school children, who were drowned in Wangchu, when the flooded river swept away a bridge.

There are so many questions and concerns on the minds of Bhutanese people on how the boys could not be rescued. We hope that the petition letter will stimulate the government into launching a high-level investigation on what actually happened in Tsimalakha, said one of the organizers, Kunga T Dorji.

Police and the home ministry were notified of the event. Journalists took good interests to participate and write and public participation was enthusiastic. Prime minister boycotted. Cabinet Secretary Tashi Phuntsho, Home Secretary Penden Wangchuk, Education Secretary Sangey Zam were irritated.

The fear inherent seems interesting. Will there be any negative consequences of a solidarity walk by locals reminding government of its seer ignorance towards death of innocent children? Is the call for government to get better prepared for natural calamities, a harm to civil harmony?

The walk turned bitter for Bhutan Electricity Authority chief K. B. Wakley. Royal civil Service Commission interrogated him for participating in what was termed an 'immoral activities'. Had it been organized by Lhotsampas, without doubt, more Nepali speakers would get the stamp of ngolops. He is only person to be interrogated for joining the group today. The motive is clear; the Nepali speakers are still in target of Bhutanese rulers.

The fear of a small walk spread like wild fire in Thimphu and efforts are ahead to avoid another. Who wins the race in democracy is matter of time but things are now clear, civil disobedience against government's inability has begun to pour into this tiny kingdom.

Transition, Transformation and Vision for the Diaspora

A highly placed source at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said that altogether 16,000 Bhutanese citizens have been resettled in various developed countries so far. The statistics update from the UNHCR showed that until April 11, 2009 some 10,934 individuals have resettled in the United States of America under the third country resettlement program. Likewise, 675 Bhutanese refugees have resettled in Australia, 220 in New Zealand, 161 in Denmark, 159 in Norway, 148 in Canada and 91 in the Netherlands. A total of 66,747 Bhutanese refugees have reportedly declared their interest for re-settlement.

Re-settlement no doubt, offers a great excitement to the Bhutanese refugees. The number of refugees declaring interest for resettlement speaks of this reality. The UNHCR and other agencies involved in the process are trying to capitalize on their initial success, to encourage more refugees to opt for the resettlement program. The resettlement process will continue and during the ensuing months and years, most of the refugees living in the camps will journey into different directions and make new homes in different parts of the developed world.

When we say 'Bhutanese refugees', we understand a 'community' that now spreads into a vast Diaspora across different lands. Here is a 'community' that is changing roots. 'Transition' refers to the adjustment they are undergoing and 'transformation' speaks of the need on their part to accept some vital changes during and after this transition. 'Vision' refers to a collective need, which will map the direction this 'community' will grow. The 'community' no doubt is going through a rapid 'transition', one which requires 'transformation' and a proper 'vision' for the future.

Community

People primarily identify themselves through communities. The natural grouping is inevitable, powerful, durable, desirable and more effective. It is possible to grow, rebuild and preserve common values when people live in communities. Commonly shared characteristics such as religious belief, ethnic origin, language, past history and social values have always been the basis of social cohesion among us. These values foster 'we' feelings in 'us' and makes us part of the same 'community'. A community is not a human but must be humane.

The moral test of any community lies in how it helps for the development of its future generations. A good community enables and encourages its members to do their best.

The Bhutanese refugee community has lost its political roots today. After resettlement in different continents, they have to root themselves new. Going forward is not easy, but we have come absolutely prepared for the journey. The good thing is that we already have a vibrant 'community' in place. We just have to rediscover ourselves in this new setting and move on. The key is to understand the value of social networking and display that inter-connectedness as much as possible.

Social networking unlocks our potentials and drives us to growth collectively. Collectivity creates synergy, strength, power and possibility in addition to individual efforts. Our social leaders, rights activists, intellectuals, journalists, writers, poets, artists, singers and community elders should realize that the concerns, hopes and aspirations of this community to grow - socially, politically and economically - are larger than the physical separation that divide us. They should understand the situation that brought us here, is not just an inventory of personal tragedies; it is a collection of hopes and aspiration for our future. They should act accordingly and leave some of their creations for the future generations to simulate.

Transition/Transformation

Life is basically designed to be transformational in nature. It is desirable that a community in a rapid state of transition like our's should be strongly transformative. We 'transcend' from one reality to another in the process of transformation. Transformation is a leap forward; it is changing into new, going 'beyond'. Literally, currently we are going through this experience, we are experiencing a new existence, a new way of living. Resettlement has made that transformation almost mandatory. It has also fundamentally altered the rules of engagement in our community. The role of the village head man, the priest and the temple in our lives, perhaps will never be the same.

Resettlement thousands of miles across, in countries with various political make and models and in societies; complex and hitherto unknown, could be full of new realities and challenges. Our own life experiences and norms of life sharply contradict with the norms of the technologically driven societies we are resettled in. In America, life revolves round

Parliament's Diminishing Marginal Efficiency

As in the past, the parliamentary debates in the third session of the first elected parliament ended without any substance in hand in terms of making contribution to strengthening democracy.

The king addressing the closing ceremony (July 30) said the Houses made good progress towards democracy and fulfilled their prescribed responsibilities well. The parliament this time passed few bills, the most important of them being the police act. The act has squeezed even administrative power of the police authority within the Home Ministry claiming that allowing an independent administration would invite political interferences.

Most importantly, the parliament failed to find conclusion on key bills such as the local government bill and civil service bill. With this failure it is obvious that the government would fail to conduct local elections proposed for sometime in August-September this year.

The local government has remained defunct when its extended term, as directed by the King, ended which has directly affected execution of the local development activities. The government had earlier proposed local elections early this year but Election Commission rejected to go ahead without any clear legal provisions.

Other important bill failed to get through was the civil

the clock and the hours you make working, but we come from a culture that values social norm, traditions and rituals more than work. Our festivals come every month and we celebrate some of them for weeks. We know manual work not mechanization. We know the plough and the field, the crops, orchards, cattle, the villages, the rivers and rivulets, temples, monasteries, dzongs, foot trails, extended families, the ritualistic life, traditions, festivals and celebrations - none of these will be part of our social life any more. It can put a test on our families, faith and culture.

The west works, learns and communicates through technology. The centrally heated houses, bath showers, the western toilet system, air filters, smoke alarms, vacuums, dish washers, micro waves, barbecue grills, washing machines, dryers, home computers, online payment systems, traffic rules, riding a public bus system and trains, paying by credit

A vision paper should provide a proper vision rationale, but need not be too radical. For the first time, we cannot blame it on Jigme Singye, if things did not go right. We are on our own and the responsibility to do something is inescapable, excuses or no excuses.

cards, lifts and escalators, drug bottles with child lock systems, assembling ready-made (packed) furniture, child seats, seat belts, pumping gas, school admissions, tax filing, vending machines, cell phones or registers at work - for the Bhutanese people everything is an absolutely new experience. From food habits to work habits, from customs to culture, from ways of life to personal habits and etiquette - the need for change is absolutely pervasive and ubiquitous.

The westerner, whose life centers around these basic, routine experiences, is often shocked to discover that for many of us these devices are a first time experience. Some have expressed wonders knowing that some of our people had not known soda in their lives before. What seems so obvious to them is very complex to us. Often at times, they may be perturbed by our simple questions. Often, they have failed to understand this background of the refugees with any sympathy. It seems so obvious, that lack of technological know-how is a great impediment in this transition.

Many have not figured out how to use the shower for many months, and many have not used a vending machine. For a population whose roots are deeply embedded in an agrarian life and village traditions; and in whose lives a routine set of cultural values have always played a dominant role - this transition is not as seamless as it has been generally thought of.

It is important to learn how America works. It is important to learn the mainstream culture and the English language. Even for those of us who speak English, American spellings, pronunciation and usage could be a problem. For instance, gastroenteritis is heart burn, petroleum is gas. Soft drinks are sodas. Half pants are shorts. Weight is measured in pounds, liquids in gallon; distance is measured in miles etc. The cultural gap is staggering.

Though, all Bhutanese resettling abroad are equally new to the west, those who are English educated and have an urban life experience will enjoy a higher leverage. For the elderly people with a rural background, the technological and cultural adjustment will be more challenging. They have to put a little more effort at learning new things and creating new interests.

The problem is that we cannot 'transform' you. We can only inform you. This is a bottleneck in this transformation. We can disseminate information that helps in your transformation. But information is only a tool; you are the actual role player. This transition may look arduous but it is

just trivial and temporary. The real challenge is to root us deep into this society and start growing. The adjustment is going to be hard and dynamic. If you have transformed well during this transition, your integration into the American society is easy. At the end, it is all about choice - we can choose to do well or we can deteriorate. Choose to transform in the ways you think, feel, idealize and perceive - as individuals and as a community and achieve a bigger milestone or choose to ignore it and lament. Choice itself is a challenge. Studies have shown that people who have transformed quickly and integrated well have achieved more than those who chose not to.

Developing a vision

A vision should be written only in a few words or sentences. How can a vision be seven pages long? A vision may not even need to be written, a vision needs to be visualized. I am just trying to set up a broad parameter for that vision development and explaining the need and urgency of having one.

How can we shape our 'tomorrow' by making rational decisions today? What positive assumptions and expectations do we share for writing that vision? Are we in control of our future as a community? Visualizing what our community would look like in fifty years and beyond has been my fantasy. Developing an image of our own future is a motivating factor and could be in the interest of our community. From the vision we lay down today, our future generations can gain inspiration and draw a frame of reference of the times we are living. Above all, visioning stimulates the notion of change, which in turn will determine how a community may sustain its future or shape the direction to which it will progress. On the contrary, an absence of a proper vision could give birth to the emergence of some toxic cultures, which can infect the whole community. Developing a vision for our community seems to be the right thing to do.

Where does vision come from? A vision comes from 'us' and all of us. Remember, 'none of us is as smart as all of us'. We alone are the best and the most reliable

reference of that vision. A vision is thinking about the next level, so it must be adopted only after understanding the new realities and its associated environments more intimately. It needs to be developed in tandem with the shared experiences, expectations and aspiration held by all community members. It should be intelligible and inclusive of the significant views and aspirations held by the community for their future. And lastly, it needs to be generated, articulated, owned and supported by members of the community who design it.

A vision paper should provide a proper vision rationale, but need not be too radical. For the first time, we cannot blame it on Jigme Singye, if things did not go right. We are on our own and the responsibility to do something is inescapable, excuses or no excuses. Above all, we cannot let the future happen to us. The purpose of this paper is to begin that discourse and facilitate a discussion to that end. It wants the community members to think what possibilities and challenges exist in this adjustment and how can we make the best out of it. It wants to explore what is an acceptable model of growing our community and how can we achieve it?

That said; let's welcome you to the future! Imagine the Bhutanese Diaspora in the next fifty years and beyond. The 60,000 Bhutanese refugees who will resettle in the US will expand demographically. A whole generation of Non-Resident Bhutanese (NRBs) is in the making. The picture looks very good and welcoming.

Will the younger generations continue to relate and acquaint with other Bhutanese people in the Diaspora? Will they retain and protect their Bhutanese identity, heritage and history or be proud of their past origin? Will they read or even know the history we have gone through? Will they epitomize the lessons learned from the Jewish community, and not shed off their moral responsibility towards Bhutan? Will they survive the 'melting pot'? Will they be threaded like one community, will communication flow among them?

The answers to these queries are definitely not simple. Time alone is the greatest tool which will test, how this community will move forward. It is hard to predict that future with any authority now. And we cannot simply hope, it will be better. Hope is not a strategy. We must try and do things worth doing to move our community in the direction we desire.

(This is a part of the paper Subba presented at the convention of the Association of Bhutanese in America on July 4, 2009.)

people who expected drastic changes in the system of governance after the introduction of democracy in the country.

Special session of the parliament means less time for the members of parliament to travel to their constituencies as in the past to inform people of what are they doing in Thimphu. Only a few of the MPs had gone to their areas last time, and it comes to be certain this number would go down due to consumption of time by debates in the special sessions.

Very important issues like deteriorating security environment in southern districts, creation of human rights bodies or strengthening of media failed to get place in the agenda. The country has no human rights organizations or the government has any such agencies to implement the provision of human rights incorporated in the constitution.

The summer sessions of the parliaments in South Asian countries general indulge in budget debates and Bhutan of obvious to adopt the culture prevailing around. However, as a new entrant to democratic world, Bhutanese parliament has additional duties to

By I.P. Adhikari, jouno.indra@gmail.com

Non-Resident Bhutanese Network gives us identity : Dr. DNS Dhakal

Association for Press Freedom Activists Bhutan and Bhutan News Service started the online discussion on the formation of Non-Resident Bhutanese Network four months ago. To continue deliberation on consolidating the idea of Non-Resident Bhutanese (NRB), we have asked executive chief of Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP), Dr D. N. S. Dhakal to explain more on rationale of this mission and his role.

You are just back from visiting various states of America. How are the resettled Bhutanese doing?

Dhakal: I could not visit all the places where Bhutanese are resettled but I contacted my friends over the phone. I met some resettled Bhutanese in Maryland, North Carolina, Atlanta, Jacksonville (Florida) and Minnesota. They miss being together, they miss our culture, our society and they miss their country, Bhutan. The younger lots are trying hard in the schools, and that is the only consolation for the refugees since the school systems are good in the US, and success in education would be the only way to graduate from the sweat shops for the upcoming generations. There is a need to create interconnectivity among our people; there is a need to rekindle the hope of re-establishing our connection with Bhutan.

What is the mechanism to make the scattered Bhutanese together?

Dhakal: Our people are scattered in North America, Europe and Australasia. Among the recipient countries US would be by far the largest host of Bhutanese. Even the remotest state like Alaska has resettled Bhutanese. It is a real challenge for us to reach out to these people. Fortunately, our people have started organizing themselves into community based organizations. There is lots of cooperation to help each other, and that itself is a good beginning.

Why do you think NRB is important for Diaspora?

Dhakal: Identity is important for our people. They are being resettled as Bhutanese. The word Bhutan would be attached in every document. The social security number, the green card, travel document, citizenship certificate or passport. Also, every immigrant has a country of origin. Our people's belongings are in Bhutan. The resettling countries will not deny the rights of these people to return to Bhutan, and they would encourage the effort to bring inclusive democratic changes in that country. Bhutan National Democratic Party has always maintained that the third country resettlement is an interim solution, and it will continue to fight for the rights of the resettled Bhutanese to return to Bhutan. In that sense, BNDP believes that the resettled Bhutanese should declare themselves as non-resident Bhutanese, and the formation of non-resident Bhutanese (NRB) platform is a necessity. The NRB platform will enable them to participate in their own way in the struggle that they had been with for the last 18 years to reclaim their rightful place in Bhutan; the NRB will continue to provide them with Bhutanese identity; and the NRB could form as an important resource base for Bhutanese Diaspora in the years to come. NRB could do a lot in the long-run.

Who else will be under NRB according to you?

Dhakal: We should think in long-term basis. We should not create a difference between the people who have directly gone from Bhutan, or would go from Bhutan, and those people who are resettled under the third country resettlement program. Our meeting point is the country of origin. All those people whose country of origin is Bhutan should be given an opportunity to be part of the NRB platform.

What mechanism should you suggest to go ahead for forming this platform?

Dhakal: It is heartening to know that our people have not remained silent. Bhutanese community based organizations are formed wherever they are being resettled. There is a need to introduce the idea of NRB in such community based organizations. In addition, there is a need to form a "Consultation Group" to do ground work for launching the NRB with proper consultation with our friends and sympathizers in Bhutan, Nepal, India and elsewhere.

What about its legitimacy in Nepal, Bhutan and India?

Dhakal: The legitimacy of NRB remains unchallenged from the fact that we are being resettled as Bhutanese with full protection of our rights to return to Bhutan by the recipient countries. Nepal as a host country for the last 18 years there is no question for it not supporting the effort of Bhutanese people to strengthen their identity. India knows well that we are Bhutanese and it would be morally wrong for it to object to the idea of creating a platform for our long-term identity. Bhutan might ignore this concept for some time, but it is bound to reach at NRB in future. For a country like Bhutan, having a powerful Diaspora in developed countries will always be an advantage.

It's likely that some of the resettled Bhutanese will be driven towards NRN or NRI in future. What are your comments?

Dhakal: We strongly advise our people against such



ideas. First, it is morally wrong to give up the identity based on which we are being resettled in overseas countries. Our history of struggle for 18 years should not go as waste to the forgotten pages of history. Second, our loyalty towards our country Bhutan should not be diminished because a regime at particular period of time in history felt bad about us and expelled from the country on ethnic grounds. The situation would change over time, particularly when there would be a change of regime in Thimphu. Third, exiled Bhutanese will not qualify for NRN or NRI unless they had taken citizenship of those countries when they were in the camps. Even if some had obtained the citizenship certificate, they will face legal problem when they apply for NRN or NRI since all their documentation in recipient countries will have the word "people of Bhutanese origin".

APFA/BNS started the discussions among the Bhutanese three months ago. Several have commented well regarding the formation of network. What should be the next step that we take?

Dhakal: I appreciate the effort of APFA/BNS to reach this idea to our people. I have been reading the comments and I could see plurality in the opinions. It is heartening to know that our people have started challenging the idea before accepting it. The democratic process should be encouraged. However, we have to move on with the work, and the NRB platform will have to get materialized sooner than later. The next step would be networking, and the networking base should be established in Kathmandu until NRB is allowed to operate from Bhutan. I would think that we should start contacting Bhutanese organizations and individuals and get their ideas on how we should go about the modus operandi and on how we work about the logistic and increasing the connectivity. The role of APFA/BNS is important since you are based in Kathmandu.

Only BNDP and DNC supported the concept. Rest parties and organizations in exile are silent. What do you say?

Dhakal: Probably, other organizations are examining the development and would support the idea at their convenient time. I believe that there is no alternative to this idea, and we should all support it. It is a question of our collective identity, salvaging the suffering and struggle of our people for more than 18 years in the camps, and intrinsic value of this platform for our country in the long-run. We should make it a win-win situation for the resettled Bhutanese, the country and those who supported us in difficult times. That is the sole reason why BNDP and DNC felt the need of NRB so strongly.



I recall the days back in Nepal when I used to prepare news reports stating 'x died due to no referral to better hospitals', 'Y died due to delay in ambulance facilities and so on. This is still a reality inside the camps in Nepal. Even those diagnosed as having bitten by a poisonous snake are deferred from urgent medication. My senior sister, who is with me, is not physically well for the last few weeks.

In a couple of week's time, I have been keeping myself busy in following up appointments for her treatment. This short-term experience has taught me lessons about the hospital systems in New York City though I am unknown about the systems in other States; of course should be more or less the same, I think. One day I was

DNC has even hinted that you are one of the capable leaders for leading the network. Are you ready?

Dhakal: I appreciate the proposal of the DNC President R.K. Dorji. It is natural for him to think in this line since I have some flexibility to travel around the world. As executive chief of BNDP I do not qualify for non-resident Bhutanese. I am a Bhutanese political activist; officially my party's headquarter is in Thimphu. I am willing to provide the necessary support whenever needed, and I have been doing that during my visits abroad, during my meetings with concerned people in Nepal and India. As executive chief of BNDP I am going to do more for recognition of NRB in Bhutan when we are allowed to participate in the democratic process. We will have to create its leadership through democratic process. The formation of NRB will have to have wider consultation and democratic process, for that the need of an hour is formation of "Consultation Group" with establishment of the networking base in Kathmandu.

Your message to the Bhutanese citizens

Dhakal: The third county resettlement is a painful decision. This is for the first time in the history of South Asia people had been moved en-masse in overseas countries for political reason. We have become the victims of geo-politics and we cannot do anything about it at least for time being. Those of us who have chosen the option for third county resettlement let us focus our effort on children's education. Children are our hope; we have to do what we can to give them the best education, appreciation to our cultural heritage and inculcate in them the spirit of being Bhutanese.

Our identity should not be lost at any cost and there are lessons to learn from the Jews, Armenians, and from many other communities who have suffered in the process of history. We will continue to work for dignified repatriation of Bhutanese people who have been unjustly expelled at different period of time for political reasons. The struggle to give justice should continue from one generation to another until it is given to everyone. The immediate task at the moment is to create a space for our collective identity. Let us create NRB, which is our legitimate right, and continue to nurture it. If NRB becomes strong, our identity would consolidate, our sufferings and pains of the refugee camps will not be lost in the forgotten pages of history, and we will have an opportunity to contribute towards growth and development of our beloved country, Bhutan. Let us start the process, and the process will take us to the logical end.



compelled to use the Ambulance facility by calling on the emergency number to take my sister to an emergency hospital.

Here, for emergency cases, you will have different emergency hospitals to take care of. The ambulance arrived shortly, within 5 minutes when I dialed the emergency helpline. I was very much impressed and happy from the way the emergency medical assistants, who were in the ambulance, treated my sister in the preliminary phase. Yet in the hospital, the way medical assistants treated to a patient here, I mean in a most-caring and friendly way, cannot be compared to those hospitals the Bhutanese receive treatment near the UNHCR-administered camps in Nepal ever.

Our definition of emergency cases will often be wrong here. Sometimes the emergency patients will have to wait for hours even to receive emergency services in the hospital, sometimes you need to return empty handed, without any drugs prescription. The positive aspect of all this is, hospitals in America normally do not prescribe medication until the patient's case is medically diagnosed.

I will continue to completing blogging about the medical system in the USA sometimes in the future but I feel resettled Bhutanese need not have to take 'paracetamol' for all kinds of diseases, in most of the contexts like inside camps, here in the USA, thanks to resettlement program.

■ T.P.Mishra
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Memoirs

Reporter



ICHHA POU DYEL, Australia
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It was nearly two years ago my family was chosen by Australian Government to settle in its land. Two years of crazy wait in camp has taught me enough patience that I needed most to assimilate easily in Australia. Eventually, we are in the land of our dream. It's the greatness of the people and the government of Australia that opened door for my bright future.

Australia is a great country to live in. This is a safe haven for entire mankind. There are playing rooms for children, prayer rooms for people following different religions and walking aid for disabled and senior citizens in most of the offices, hospitals, universities and business houses. Virgin nature brings spring blossom and Australians welcome refugees every year to share its fragrance and to rejoice.

Wild birds are not scared when you go past them. A caravan of deer let you a way through the road like cattle when you go for a trip to the village. People move freely until late night. The Torrens River passing through Adelaide city is clean and calm. At the beaches both man and water birds swim and fish together. The environment is least encroached by human activities. Almost all products we use are made in Australia that makes every Australian a proud resident of this great land.

Government access

In Australia what I like most is the government access to the citizens and migrants. There is a government employee to cut grass at your yard. Drinking water is supplied for free. Postal service is so simplified that one would receive letters in a box at the compound of his house, unexpectedly in a very short time.

All financial activities of a humanitarian entrant are done by Centrelink. It also records of all transactions we make including our earning from a job, expenses and saving. The Australian government encourages resettled refugees to work for self reliance while it also provides income supports while working depending on their income and expenditure. Here, one has to enroll in Adult Migrant English Program within three months of arrival. However, if his language skill is of higher standard to the course taught, he doesn't need to enroll for it.

There is Technical and Further Education which provides technical and job oriented education for certain hours in a week free of cost and some of the world's best universities.

For now, there is a government house to live in on lease for six months, first month being exempted from housing expenses like electricity, gas and rent. After six months we are expected to vacate this house for a new arrival. However, government assists to look for new one and settle in.

Charm of Adelaide

Although major part of Australia is desert, there is greenery all around ensuring healthy air in Adelaide. There are parks and soccer playgrounds at close vicinity. There are public busses and trains connecting cities to its suburbs while trams and some busses ply free of charge within the city. In all transports, there is discount on fare for refugees and humanitarian entrants.

Most of the vehicles are equipped with special seats for elderly, children and physically challenged ones. There are also shops, departmental stores and markets at different parts of the suburbs. The price varies from place to place and from time to time like in other places.

All health related services are provided by Medicare Australia at great discount for us. It is illegal to buy or sell medicine- even a pain killer without doctor's prescription. Hospitals provide homely care for the patients. If you are sick, all you should do is to call ambulance and get admitted in the hospital and clear the bill. Keeping attendant is discouraged.

Unemployment at 4 percent

The unemployment rate in Bhutan has jumped to 4 percent in 2009 from 3.7 percent in 2007, according to the labour ministry's Labour Force Survey, 2009.

The jump translates to 13,000 unemployed people, of which around 10,500 are youth between the ages of 15 and 24. The rate of youth unemployment is now almost 13 percent, up from 9.9 percent two years ago. The worst hit is the 15 to 19 age group, consisting mainly of school dropouts, suffering a 20.1 percent unemployment rate.

The unemployment group shows that people dropping out of school at the high and higher secondary level are the most unemployed, with around 5,000 in total, more than the illiterate, who number around 3,900. There are also 500 unemployed graduates.

The Bhutan insurgencies

By Don Duncan — Special to GlobalPost

THIMPHU, Bhutan — The impressive necklace of cliff-perched fortresses that dot this Himalayan nation's mountainous perimeter are a testimony to Bhutan's long-standing effort to keep out foreigners.

In the 1980s, however, the tiny Buddhist nation of just 600,000 sandwiched between the People's Republic of China and India found itself with what it considered to be a foreigner problem.

Bhutan's minority population of ethnic Nepalese had mushroomed to represent one-third of the population, causing then-King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to start a "one nation, one people" policy to deport and strip many of their Bhutanese citizenship. The campaign ended with the expulsion of about 105,000 Nepalese through beatings, torture and murder committed by the Royal Bhutan Army that lasted until the early 1990s, human rights groups and deportees say.

"We left because we were scared that they would imprison us, that they would beat us, that I would be raped," said Matimya Moktan, 41, who arrived in Nepal in 1991 and now lives in a small mud stick hut with her three children and husband in one of seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal.

Locked in political limbo, these camps have become breeding grounds for a fledgling militancy that seeks to overthrow Bhutan's monarchy just two years after the king abdicated in favor of his son, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who heads a constitutional monarchy that permitted the nation's first democratic elections last year.

Born a Traveller, always a Traveller "We are preparing a protracted people's war," said Comrade Umesh, a 27-year-old leader of the Communist Party of Bhutan, one of a handful of Maoist militant groups that have developed in the camps. The groups now have little more than handmade explosives, pistols and ragged Communist literature with which to wage their insurgency but Indian intelligence sources say they may soon acquire much more capacity through recent alliances with two Indian separatist groups: the National Democratic Front of Bodoland and the United Liberation Front of Assam operating in the restive Indian states of Sikkim and Assam located between Nepal and Bhutan.

"Through these alliances, the Bhutanese refugee militants can learn how to make more powerful bombs, acquire superior weaponry and fight more effectively," said the Indian intelligence source.

So far, the insurgency has been limited to occasional bombings that have damaged bridges, fuel depots and electrical transformers in southern Bhutan and the capital of Thimphu. To date, there have been no deaths and just one injury, a woman who suffered a minor shrapnel wound, according to Bhutan's national newspaper,

Kunesel.

Bill Frelick, refugee policy director for Human Rights Watch, says the insurgents, who are believed to number between 600 and 1,000, are still too weak to launch an effective revolution. But other analysts say the alliance with militant Indians, the continuing relocation of refugees and recruiting forays into Bhutan are worrisome signs.

In 2006, the United States and a handful of other Western countries offered to resettle more than 70,000 Nepalese refugees. About 7,000 have already left the camps and the rest will be gone within four years, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

Frelick said the insurgents could take advantage of the resettlement program by using future remittances to buy weapons and exercising more and more radical influence rendering camps devoid of more restrained voices. "You could end up with all the more moderate people leaving the camps," he said.

For the moment, the militants regularly cross into Bhutan through thick jungles that straddle the porous border to lecture and train ethnic Nepalese residents who remain in Bhutan, refugees say.

"If all we had to show were our weapons, we wouldn't get very far," said Umesh. "So we teach our ideology and train cadres in making explosives and in guerrilla fighting. We are laying the groundwork in Bhutan both ideologically and militarily."

While the government hopes the nation's fledgling democracy will keep the estimated 100,000 ethnic Nepalese in Bhutan from insurrection, the rebels predict their ranks will increase, citing a lack of state services, special travel permits required to leave the south and a ban on Nepalese from becoming citizens.

Perhaps with that in mind, the government plans to reopen 15 schools and build more health centers in Nepalese areas by the end of the year.

"The best way a country like Bhutan can defend itself and prevent security problems has to be through the people," said Prime Minister Jigme Thinley.

"By the end of five years, there will be absolute parity in terms of the provision of services and infrastructure. This is how we can prevent conditions for discontent and disaffection from growing in our country."

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LWF Nepal celebrate its 25th anniversary

By Arjun Pradhan

Damak, August 31: Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal celebrated its 25th anniversary amidst a program organized here.

The chief of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Jhapa-based office, Rianawati Rianawati, handed over letters of appreciation to various service providers on behalf of LWF.

Those felicitated included the LWF service providers who have worked for general cause for more than 10 years.

Considering the LWF Nepal as an implementing partner of the UNHCR, she said that the UNHCR has appreciated the efforts of LWF in rendering various services to people.

T.B.Gurung, camp secretary of Beldangi-I camp, urged the concerned authority to expedite the registration process of those exiled Bhutanese who were absent during 2007 official census.

Meanwhile, Indra Timshina, the coordinator of Children Forum submitted a written plea to the LWF for continuously supporting children-targeted programs in camps.

Representatives of AMDA-Nepal, Caritas Nepal, camp management committee and Refugee Coordination Unit among others attended the program chaired by the chief of LWF, Jhapa.



Participants in the anniversary program

Established in 1994, LWF Nepal is a country program of World Lutheran Federation and has been assisting the exiled Bhutanese in camps with their shelter materials.

LEADERS VS SECRETARIES



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It was just two weeks ago that some political leaders in exile rushed to the Ministry of Home Affairs seeking political asylum and personal security. Their main concerns were they are not free to operate political activities in Nepal and are highly unsecured.

Personal security is important for all individuals to survive. But, their demands were pushed to the ministry when an underground outfit, Liberation Army of Bhutan, dispersed pamphlets throughout the camps on July 15. Those wide-spread pamphlets threatened political parties to initiate necessary steps towards repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees or face physical actions.

Logically, it is not a bad deal to warn them to energize and activate the exiled leaders, most of them standing against resettlement package but aiming to keep refugees in camps for some more years. When, initiatives towards repatriation are very rare, such warning become fruitful. However, warn of physical actions against them is a matter of questions in a fragile host country like Nepal since refugees in Nepal are abided by the Nepali laws.

Rajan Bhattarai, who is a foreign affairs advisor to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, has an opinion that such demands from the Bhutanese leaders are to be seriously discussed. They have asked political asylum and security for them only after 18 years of their stay in Nepal, he commented. If Nepali bureaucrats have same say as Bhattarai, the political parties certainly created confusion.

On the other side, camp secretaries from all the seven camps requested United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to arrange their trips to countries resettling their fellow-countrymen. In a letter addressed to UNHCR and IOM on August 18, the secretaries mentioned, "Give us an opportunity to visit the resettlement countries to know the facts, and convince the refugees till the last number of the refugee gets resettled from Nepal."

They trumpeted themselves that vast number of refugee in camps who voted them for the post of camp secretary

approached them seeking assurance and guaranty for opting resettlement. According to them, the third country resettlement program is a historic contribution to the Bhutanese refugees. However, they forgot to mention that there are also refugees in camps who can never accept resettlement at any cost but choose to remain in camps until doors for getting back home are open.

The interesting thing to mention here is that Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist Leninist Maoist) was not happy with the decision of camp secretaries. The party's exile coordination committee on August 25 made a circular to the local media asking camp secretaries to withdraw their decision of visiting resettling countries. According to the party's statement, the resettlement program is targeted to tarnish democratic struggle in Bhutan, and is rather a temporary relief for refugees in camps.

Certainly, that statement created some mind-set on the camp secretaries. The next day, they wrote both the UNHCR and IOM that they made such decision in a hurry and don't want to repeat it again. They even lamented that they would continue to look after the management in camp administration, as well as, continue to fight for their right to return home. This time, they did not tell the UNHCR to arrange for their trips to America or other countries, but requested to initiate other options – local integration and repatriation, which according to them are as per the demands of refugees.

Political parties and other organisations formed and operated in exile must respect the sentiments of all the Bhutanese citizens, be inside Bhutan or in Diaspora community. There were several past instances where such so-called refugee-leaders remained mum when the whole community in camps wanted them to speak. Hundreds of refugees left their ramshackle huts for resettlement without knowing pros and cons of third country resettlement program since their leaders did not say what was right to opt – to stay in Nepal until repatriation takes place or go for resettlement. Instead, the laymen in camps heard their leaders opposing the resettlement program but sending their family members and relatives in a third country.

Camp secretaries elected by refugees also did not supply information well when resettlement was just announced. They always tried to make themselves safe citing that individual refugee needed to make the independent decision. Indeed, it is sad to know that camp secretaries want to make luxurious trips to study the real situations abroad, where the resettled refugees are having hard times for survival due to lack of jobs and problems of adjustment in a new community. What rights do these secretaries have to make all the Bhutanese in camps to go for resettlement? Let all three options be kept open so that each refugee makes his own decision.

LIVING MEMORY

By Jeetan Muskan

Whenever I hear good-bye, tears trickle down my cheeks, which make me silent. I try to speak out but I can't, instead feel like crying. I often see that simply tears wet my gloomy face.

My stay at Damak is getting harder each day. I just look at the IOM bus and start thinking several things, keeping myself lost in vain. With much pain inside my heart, I blame the Bhutanese government, as well as, the resettlement process which compelled my friends to go far apart forever. It may not sound wise to blame others but I am compelled by situation to do so. It is indeed, something that I am forced to follow up since two decades.

Most of my friends and relatives are resettled already. I bid farewell to my teachers, friends and fellow-countrymen in a large number. And this is my regular routine now-a-days. I still remember the twinkling eyes of Gangaram Lamitare, touchy words of CN Timsina, motivating thoughts of Ichha Poudel and journalistic character of TP Mishra.

During these moments, I promise to write in e-mails whenever I meet them at the last hour. Similarly, those departing Nepal have same reservation from abroad. As a poor journalist in exile, like several others of my camps, I am unable to maintain email contact with those who are physically far apart from me. For this I must be sorry always.

It has been over a year that the Bhutanese citizens from camps in Nepal are resettled in various third countries. Whenever I hear good news on them, I am always happy. I am really proud that those who are doing good have quite better life than in camps.

For my resettled friends and relatives, I am sharing them news from camps. The recent ones were on inundation of camps during heavy monsoons the eastern Nepal experienced. For those who have hard time to pass time in the USA or other countries, these updates are like leisure-killing capsules, which keep themselves alert. My prayers are always with them that they get good times to keep themselves mentally, physically and emotionally sound in a new land.

Those who are waiting for making a well-advised decision for resettlement are waiting informed experience sharing. Such deals will assist people like me and those fighting with dilemma. Everyone is not willing to be relocated. Hundreds of camp residents want to be repatriated from Nepali soil, not America or Australia.

Those who have left for resettlement would form a strong Bhutanese Diaspora in near future. It can be hoped that they will start writing emails to friends and relatives in Nepal, India and Bhutan. We must acknowledge that it is time for global linkage to exchange our thoughts through e-mails. Everyone in camp expects that he receives regular updates on new life in various countries. So, let us get ourselves encouraged to write on regular basis.