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ECHO concerns exiled issue

■ Bhutan News Service
Kathmandu, May

Head of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) for Asia, Central and South America Esko Kentrschynskyj has asked all concerned to take initiative for finding a comprehensive solution of the prolonged issue of the exiled Bhutanese.

Talking to reporters in Nepalese capital Kathmandu on April 18 after returning from his visit to two exiled Bhutanese camps, Kentrschynskyj stressed the urgent need to find



Take us home: Refugees longing for repatriation.

comprehensive and lasting solution of the crisis since the donors have gradually become fatigued of providing assistance.

He, however, denied that EC would stop assistance to exiled Bhutanese before the solution of the problem is found out.

TBR Journo mistreated

The vice-president of Students Union of Bhutan (SUB), Mukti Gurung has reportedly mistreated Dadi ram Antim, Beldangi correspondent of TBR.

According to Antim, Gurung scolded him with harsh words while trying to take interview. "I was accused of being a Maoist militant. He also alleged journalists in exile to be incapable of reporting", Antim said.

Meanwhile, Gurung in a response to a query of T P Mishra, Editor of TBR admitted few mistakes he committed during the discussion, which later turned to hot debates at Tashi Wangmo Stadium in Beldangi-II, with Antim. "The issues would have taken normal shape had Antim reminded that he was from press. I was not intentionally acting that way. I still have a full sense of respect to journalists", Gurung said, adding- "Antim also acted in a rude way."

Gurung further said that he was assuming Antim being a Maoist militant considering his past dealings with him. "I had never known that he was also working in press", he said. *BNS*

HIGHLIGHTS

BEA chairmanship revitalized

Bhutan Engineers Association (BEA) has revitalized its chairmanship recently. According to a press statement, Santi Ram Poudel has taken responsibility of new Chairmanship of the association. Poudel, also advisor of TBR and Helping Hand - Bhutan completed his master's degree in Engineering from Tribhuvan University.

The BEA formed in 1992 under the chairmanship of Bhim Subba, the then director general of hydropower department at Royal Government of Bhutan, was passive since Subba fled overseas.

Bomb planted in Phuentsholing

A Royal Bhutan Police official said the explosive was found near a bridge in Phuentsholing, about 180 km from the capital Thimphu.

A handwritten note kept near the bomb that mentioned the two organisations (BTF and BRY) has claimed responsibility for setting up the device. Security has been intensified and RBA is trying to find the people responsible for it.

Refugees to fly to US

■ TBR Correspondent
Kathmandu, May

The resettlement of exiled Bhutanese refugees in the United States would begin by early next year.

The two US officials, Deputy Director at the US foreign ministry Lawrence Wartlet and registration assistant Janice S. Belz, visiting the exiled Bhutanese camps recently said that the resettlement process would begin from January 2008.

Addressing a function organized in Beldangi II camp, Belz said offices to begin the resettlement process would be set up in Jhapa and Kathmandu within the next three months. Earlier, the US government said such office will start functioning from July this year.

The US officials also visited Goldhap camp to inform the exiled Bhutanese about the resettlement process.

According to her, the exiled Bhutanese will be given language training and vocational skills once the offices are established. The officials also informed that the process will end by 2011.

"Those willing to resettle in the US will be taken there in phases," Belz said where they will be provided with jobs as per their qualifications and skills. Those, who resettle in the US, will be able to apply for permanent residency



Lawrence Bartlett talking to journalists during a press meet at American Centre in Kathmandu

after three years and will also be allowed to go to other countries if they so desire.

Bartlett said that the number of exiled Bhutanese wishing for third country resettlement is higher than expected. The officials however disagreed that US would resettle exactly 60,000. The official said the number would be smaller or bigger as well.

In the mean time, the Nepalese Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan said Nepal government would work for resettlement and repatriation of the exiled Bhutanese simultaneously.

Talking to media person in Kathmandu she said that the government has already permitted for third country settlement of the exiled Bhutanese. "We shall work for repatriation of those who could not resettle in the US and other countries," she said.

Pradhan said Denmark and Australia have expressed willingness to resettle some exile Bhutanese. Denmark has stated is willingness to take around 200 but the Australian government has not mentioned the numer.

The official also informed that after five years of resettlement in the US, the exiled Bhutanese can either receive US citizenship and live a life like Americans or return to their own country if amicable environment is created then.

However, many exiled Bhutanese on the occasion urged the US officials to help them get back to Bhutan.

Dear valued readers,
Kindly comment or suggest us so that we deliver you the best.
Quality is our promise.
Editor

Press freedom movement to Continue

□ APFA releases media report

The Association of Press Freedom Activists (APFA-Bhutan) has published a report on Status of Press Freedom in Bhutan 'Silenced and Controlled' coinciding World Press Day 2007.

According to the report, media environment in Bhutan has not improved in the year 2006/07. The legislations adopted in 2006 have further curbed the freedom of press and freedom of speech and expression of the people.

"The draft constitution does not adequately incorporate the principles of press freedom and freedom of speech and expression of the citizens and residents. Sub Article (2) of Article 7 states, 'A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech, opinion and expression and Sub Article (3) reads, 'A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. No person shall be compelled to belong to another faith by means of coercion or inducement'.

There are various other provisions that restrict the press freedom and freedom of expression. The draft constitution has objectionable provisions under Emergency section. Article 33/6 delivers greater power to the government to the extent that it can provide any kind of orders to local government", the report reads. The report has further said

that the act does not guarantee the security of the working journalists and also does not speak about the perks and other facilities that journalists must get from media organization in return to the services provided. "Government still restricts the transmission of some foreign TV channels. The government cites the eroding effect on Bhutanese culture as the reason to bar the transmission of such TV channels. Few news channels like

□ TWMN demand Acharya's release

Aajtak, CNN-IBN, fashion TV, MTV and few other Indian channels have been censored".

In a press release issued on World Press Freedom Day, APFA - Bhutan has demanded that all vague provisions be revised in the draft constitution and media act and that all powers given to the ministry or the government to cancel the licenses or stop the

publication or transmission or telecast of the newspapers, radios and TV be removed to guarantee that once registered, media houses are allowed to work unhindered.

Meanwhile, the Bhutan Chapter of Third World Media Network in a press statement has said that Bhutanese People have been deprived of their fundamental right to information since centuries. TWMN - Bhutan Chapter has declared the continuous struggle for press

freedom until Bhutan government guarantees media freedom, freedom of speech and expression inside the country. "We also urge for unification in Bhutanese journalists both in exile and inside the country to center their voice for media freedom inside the country", the release reads.

"TWMN - Bhutan Chapter believes that the forthcoming general election in Bhutan in 2008 will not be fair until the government allows independent and private media houses and human rights organizations to freely operate and scrutinize. We also believe that peoples' democracy will never foster until the government of Bhutan guarantees media freedom", the release further reads.

TWMN - Bhutan Chapter has also called international human rights bodies and the International Federation of Journalists to investigate the arrest of Shantiram Acharya by Bhutanese army who, it's claimed, has been working as a reporter in exile.

World Press Freedom Day Special

Editorial....

Resettlement

Finally, the US offer of third country resettlement has been at priority debates. Despite refugees' several attempt to oppose it, the US including some western countries seems committed towards expediting the process of resettlement latest by early 2008.

It has become a matter of essence for exiled Bhutanese to raise their voice for detailed information of any options. No matter, whatsoever options are there on the table, people should have their access to adequate information.

Since from the time when third country resettlement package is brought-up, it provoked faction within people—individual's opinion can be distinctly seen divided into different forms.

The literate youths' circle is running behind third country resettlement. The other elderly, illiterate groups are still willing to get repatriated as they say they have sweated a lot to bring Bhutan into present state. There are even people inside camps who have sentiments to get locally assimilated. Thus, it is equally necessary to note only one option, whatsoever it is, shouldn't be made as 'compulsory option' for refugees.

The obvious question at this hour is why are those countries, which are wishing to resettle exiled Bhutanese, not generalizing all conditions and other necessary procedures (formally & officially) prior to the resettlement process begins?

Not only third country resettlement, authorities concerned should work towards unlocking all possible options including dignified return to original homeland, Bhutan. The long-standing issue will get safe landed only when all options are opened.

Column & Opinion

Financial Hardship for Exiled Media

“If international press bodies were to open their doors to Bhutan's exiled media groups and embraced and supported them in their aims, that would, at least, be a start.”

AN estimated one sixth of the total Bhutanese population was forcibly evicted during the early 1990s and more than 100,000 are still languishing as refugees in UNHCR-run camps in Nepal and in various Indian states.

In order to keep the refugees informed about events in the camps and back in Bhutan, several media operations have been set up over the years, but most have failed through lack of money.

The problem is that those producing newspapers in the refugee camps, whether they are weekly, fortnightly or monthly, are barred from selling them in the local market. Nepalese law prohibits foreigners from running media organizations in the country. As a result, the local authorities continually put pressure on the refugee journalists to close their media operations down. This means that any newspapers that are published must be distributed 'for private circulation only'. Even if the refugee journalists could sell their newspapers, those living in the camps could not afford the two Nepalese rupees because they lack any source of income.

The majority Nepali-speaking refugee community has been central to the efforts to establish private media in the camps; traditionally, they have been the driving force behind the print media in Bhutan.

The newspaper, Mukti, was set up in the early 1990s by the Bhutan People's Party under the editorship of Hari Adhikari. Manav Adhikarko Chirharan was published by the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan in 1991

and The Bhutan Focus was published by the Students Union of Bhutan in 1990. However, these newspapers simply served as the mouthpieces of the organizations concerned.

The Sandesh, a weekly professional paper had a short life span. It was edited by B P Kasyap and began publishing in December 2000 but closed due to lack of funds in 2004.

The monthly, Shangrila Sandesh, was sponsored by The Rose Class with support from the London-based Photo Voice, and began its publication in 2001, however the print run ended when the sponsors quit without giving a reason in May 2003. Journalists on the paper have been unable to resume publication due to the lack of financial assistance.

Many of the sponsoring organizations, who vowed to promote independent media in the area, cite the refugee status of those producing the newspapers as the main reason for ending their support. However, some simply ended their funding without giving reasons.

The Bhutan Times, a weekly, edited by Sagar Rai, started its hardcopy publication from July 2000 but only survived for six months due to lack of funds. A paper with the same name was launched inside Bhutan on April 30, 2006.

A number of newspapers inside the Bhutanese refugee camps are waiting and eager to

publish but they lack the funds to make publication a reality. These include The Bhutan Jagaran, Vidhyarthi Pratirodh, The Bhutan Reporter and few others.

Another obstacle to the growth of media in the refugee camps is the lack of training for the volunteer journalists.

Kazi Gautam, Editor-In-Chief of The Bhutan Reporter says Bhutan's exiled media situation is dying because of the lack of investment in resources and growth.

“International organizations who are committed to the promotion of the media should extend their support to Bhutan's exiled media because the press situation inside Bhutan is strictly under the government control.”

Bhutan doesn't allow any independent media organizations to operate inside the country. Organizations such as the Association of Press Freedom Activists (APFA) – Bhutan, Bhutan Press Union (BPU) and Third World Media Network (TWMN) – Bhutan Chapter have been established in exile in order to campaign and work towards media freedom and freedom of expression in Bhutan.

Each of these organizations works to support and promote the exiled media as part of a drive to achieve complete press freedom and freedom of expression in the country. None



T P MISHRA

is able to meet the needs of journalists in exile, such as offering training and helping with financial support. This is mainly because these press freedom organizations, which operate in the refugee camps, are also unable to raise adequate funds.

APFA News, a news portal launched by APFA – Bhutan last year, has been trying to cover all issues related to Bhutan and refugees. However, the editor-in-chief of the portal, I P Adhikari, says continuing to operate online is a real challenge because of rising Internet costs.

Despite these challenges, young volunteer journalists in exile are committed to their task of helping the refugees achieve their basic human right of access to information. They also want to play their part in the establishment of complete media freedom in Bhutan and serve the Bhutanese community both inside and outside the country.

Until the international community supports these efforts the prospects look bleak. It wouldn't take much to make a big difference, boost morale and give the volunteer journalists in the refugee camps a sense of hope.

If international press bodies were to open their doors to Bhutan's exiled media groups and embraced and supported them in their aims, that would, at least, be a start.

(This piece has been a leading story at the online version of Media Helping Media, United Kingdom-based platform for journalists, since two weeks. The author, T P Mishra, is its Correspondent)

Bitter Reality

DEO MAYA GIRI



Many Lhotshampa women, whose husbands fled the country, were kept as sex slaves in the army and police barracks.

The silent suffering of Bhutanese women

IN actuality, women are wonderful creatures of this world who help man from household works to nurturing a child. The existence of the world would have been impossible had there been no women. They are the goddess of tolerance, embodiment of love & passion and inevitable co-partner of man.

Despite these facts women are treated cruelly, inhumanly and immorally in most parts of the world. And, Bhutan too is not its exception. Bhutanese women have always come across ups and downs on their lives. The other remarkable thing is that the Royal Government of Bhutan has long stood as an enemy before woman.

They are discriminated at every stage in terms of poverty and illiteracy, both in eastern and southern belt of the country. Women, especially at eastern belt work at home without having known that they too can exercise different rights like that of a man. The other reason is that as they do not own paddy land they try to migrate to the urban areas for greener pastures to opt for better

opportunities for their survival. Despite their innocence the ruling elite has always restrained and harassed them.

In practicality, Bhutan is male dominated country where in many ways women suffer from various kinds of discrimination. There are ample instances in highlands a man gets married to three women officially and seven unofficially. Even the first king had two queens, followed by the second, the third king with two queens. While the fourth king with four queens have proved mass suppression and domination over women in Bhutan.

In Bhutan, women comprise about 5% of the country's social economic employment. As per the regional survey there has been distortion low percentage of women holding high authority in Bhutan: 0.30% of women are employed in the service, 0.27% in business and 0.18% in other areas of works. Women form 18% of the civil service.

In the process of implementation of 1958 citizenship act, the government of Bhutan went

on arbitrarily depriving citizenship rights to tens and thousands of southern Bhutanese men, women and children.

Many Lhotshampa women, whose husbands fled the country, were kept as sex slaves in the army and police barracks. The security forces and other government officials have raped hundreds of Lhotshamps school girls in the barracks.

Daughters who went to appeal for the release of their fathers from detention were raped by them. When such crimes were reported to the king the culprits were promoted and victims were expelled from the country branding them as anti-nationals. The whereabouts of some dozens of innocent women detained by security forces during 1990 movement is still unknown.

There is an essence for international human rights organizations to probe into facts behind government suppression over women in Bhutan. International organizations working on behalf of suppressed women have greater role on this.

Interview of the Month

Time is not yet ripen: Dr. DNS



Dr. D. N. S. Dhakal has been the prominent personality in the democratic struggle of Bhutan soon he took up the responsibility as the general secretary of the Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP). Since his involvement, Dhakal has been leading most demonstrations and peaceful protests that have been organized by political parties and apolitical groups in exile to put pressure on Bhutan government for repatriation of its citizens and drawing attention of the international community to look into the matter so as to find its solution at the earliest. With democratic changes initiated in Bhutan, Dhakal as one of the first political activists, talked with **Bhutan News Service** about contemporary Bhutanese politics and credibility that democratic changes in Bhutan would own.

Excerpts:

Who won in the democratic struggle of Bhutan?

The results have not come and the time has not matured for that. There have been no changes seen that we demanded. Bhutan is yet to enter the era of democracy where every ethnic group and every citizen get their rights guaranteed. All the citizens should be treated equally. Unless, these are met, the pretence of the regime of establishing democratic system would become a ploy. Establishment of true democracy is not possible in short struggle; it takes decades and continued efforts from community leaders. When democracy is finally established in Bhutan, this will be the victory for both sides: those ruling now and the people struggling for equality.

The issue of third country settlement is at the climax of debate. Do you think this is beneficial for the democratic struggle in Bhutan?

Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) welcomes the move. The major obstruction in our democratic movement was the financial crisis. Resettlement would help us raise our financial

status. This in turn will help the movement. At the same time, it is the right of every Bhutanese in exile to choose their future. I am not one to determine their future and neither Bhutan or Nepal, India or America. The initiators of the country settlement must respect the right of the individual exiled Bhutanese. BNDP believes, let individual decide what they want to do.

Will that not derail the movement?

Never, never. You can see the examples from nearby country. People of Indian origin but citizens of Nepal and living abroad never mixed up with NRI and people of Nepali origin but citizens of India and living abroad never intended to call themselves as NRN. The same would be the case with Bhutanese. Feeling for nationality becomes stronger when people become economically strong. If people are resettled in the west, they might take a decade or so to settle. The real movement would start after that.

If it would be the case as you said, people would have forgotten Bhutan after 17 years of life in exile. However, the sense of nationality has become stronger. They sought to accept the proposal of third country settlement to avoid any uncertainty that may arise because the donors have been reducing their support. The life in the camp is become harder, day by day. People wish, they end such a life.

The king has already initiated democratic changes in Bhutan and signs have started coming out. What would you do then?

Democracy comes through struggle. I don't hope people living inside Bhutan, especially in the north, have become ready for democratization. Democracy means delivering justice to people at the bottom level and it cannot be achieved in a short period. People from all groups and communities must feel their voices are heard.

Of course, the king announced for democratic changes by 2008. It is not doubt the result of our struggle for the last 17 years. If we had not begun the movement, the changes would have been impossible. People in Bhutan would be living in dark for next few decades. Now, the democratization process has begun, as the king claims. But I

don't hope, the international community would accept the result of 'mockery' elections by excluding parties like BNDP, BPP who first raised the issue of democracy and human rights in Bhutan. The election in Bhutan would not be recognized as legitimate.

Will you be able to participate in the election?

Time is yet to mature for a legitimate democratic force to participate in such election conducted under strict surveillance of the government security force. We would not.

Why don't you tell your cadres inside the country to register the party?

That is not a good reason, but not impossible. We think, we may pursue registration of the party for democratic election if environment becomes conducive. First let us see that there is guarantee of establishment of lasting democracy.

What do you think is the cause of adjournment of the repatriation of the exiled Bhutanese? What would be the solution?

The major cause is the stand that Nepal has been taking till now. Nepal agreed for verification and categorization which would never be completed. Bhutan never wishes let the process completes. There should be the involvement of India and the international community which will exert more pressure on Bhutan to take rapid decisions. Nepal should withdraw from the bilateral process and let the international community settle the issue.

What do you think the role of India and cause of armed rebellion in Bhutanese context?

There should be drastic changes in the thought of the people and government of India to help our struggle. No Indian would support the struggle until we are few. India would be compelled to support the struggle after the whole Bhutanese society becomes ready for changes. And the whole Bhutanese would support the initiative taken by southern Bhutan because changes are not only for southern Bhutanese.

Armed struggle is not feasible at this situation. It our brothers and sisters who would help us get shelter during the struggle. This would increase the possibility that Bhutan would expel these people as well creating another group of refugees. India may provide support to do that.

When I met some communist friends, I told them to try motivating the northerners. Lhotsampa community is ready to help us but they have not been able to do that due to fear. The prime target is to make the non-Lhotsampas involved the democratic movement.

EXILE VOICE

NFD opposes Mock Poll

The National Front for Democracy (NFD) – Bhutan has strongly opposed Bhutan's 2008 mock election.

Coinciding with Bhutan's 'mock poll' on April 22, thousands of exiled Bhutanese under the banner of the NFD has demonstrated at the Mechi Bridge demanding their early repatriation.

Thousands of Sasastra Suraksha Bal (SSB) is reported to have been deployed at the Mechi bridge to bar exiled Bhutanese

from entering Bhutan. Addressing the mass meet, Chairman of the NFD, Thinley Penjore demanded for the involvement of government of India for resolution of the crisis.

Meanwhile, in a separate press meet at Birtamode, Tek Nath Rizal has urged international support and solidarity for early repatriation. "The 2008 election in Bhutan is a means to fool the international community", he added. *BNS*

UNHCR discusses with individuals

The UNHCR officials have arrived Beldangi camps to hold discussion with the exiled Bhutan on issue of third country settlement that is expected to start in the next few months.

One official on resettlement and security and another on durable solution section of the refugee agency in Geneva have started consultation with the exiled Bhutanese on May 1.

The officials said they can neither force or encourage the exiled Bhutanese to adopt any options. They said, as the possibility of repatriation has become uncertain, western countries offered to help find durable solution of the crisis.

The UNHCR officers said the exiled Bhutanese have the right to choose any of the options: repatriation, resettlement or assimilation. They also assured that UNHCR would remain with the exiled Bhutanese until every one finds home.

FROM REGIME

Junior Jigme attends mock election

King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk personally attended the mock elections held in Dungkhar in Lhuentse district on April 22 to encourage the people participate in the voting process.

King talked to them in person. He reached the polling station early morning. The people were hesitant to vote and the king called on them to participate in the process.

Economic growth goes down

■ Bhutan News Service Kathmandu, May

The economic growth of Bhutan came down drastically in 2005 compared to 2001 and 2004. Thus, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has been dropped to 6.5 percent in 2005 from 6.8 in the previous year.

The annual report of the Royal Monetary Authority states that this was because of decline in activities in construction sector.

The implication is observed in transport, storage and communications sectors as well. But tourism, power and financial sectors managed growth. The growth is power is due to commissioning of the Basochhu project.

Service sector like wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels, transport, storage and communications, finance, insurance and real estate, community, social and personal services and private social, personal and recreational services have become the major components to the growth accounting 41.8 percent of the total GDP.

Manufacturing, electricity and construction contributed 34.4 percent and agriculture produce, livestock production, forestry and logging and mining and quarrying contributed 23.8 percent.

Service sector grew at 13 percent, primary and secondary sectors at 1.2 and 2.6 percent in 2005 compared with 1.6 and 4.5 in 2004.

Former PM passes away

The former prime minister of Bhutan, Lhendup Dorji was cremated on April 28, 2007 in Gyazam, Thimphu. He passed away on April 15, 2007 at his residence in Lungtenphug surrounded by his family.

King Jigme Khesar, the royal family, the prime minister, ministers and government officials, representatives from the international community, relatives and friends attended the purging ceremony.



A memorial service at the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, India, was held last week in honour of Lhendup Dorji and the UK based Racing Post also carried an article informing the European racing community of his passing.

When I met some communist friends, I told them to try motivating the northerners. Lhotsampa community is ready to help us but they have not been able to do that due to fear.

International Coverage

Monarchy in Mock Poll

PARO, Bhutan (Reuters) - The people of Bhutan cast their vote for tradition and the monarchy, officials said, as results came in from a mock election designed as a dress rehearsal for the country's first truly democratic polls next year.

The poll was a big step towards ending a century of royal rule and ushering in a new era of parliamentary democracy in the conservative, mainly Buddhist nation, a prospect which many Bhutanese view with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation.

People were asked to choose between four dummy parties with imaginary manifestos, each represented by a different colour, and emphasizing fairness and accountability, the environment, industrial development and traditional values.

Quite how seriously people took the non-binding vote is difficult to say, with some saying they had simply voted for their favourite colour.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming winner, with around 44 percent of the vote, was the Druk (Thunder Dragon) Yellow Party, which called for the preservation of Bhutan's traditions, cultures and values.

Yellow is also the colour of the ceremonial scarf worn by the king and by the Je Khenpo, the country's religious head.

"It shows people's respect for the king's colour," said Chencho Tsering, managing director of the majority state-owned newspaper Kuensel.

Nearly 125,000 people turned out to vote, around 51 percent of registered voters, not as many as the election commission had hoped for but a higher turnout than some people had expected.

Queues formed early outside

many polling stations visited by Reuters.

With results from just four out of nearly 500 polling stations still to come in, the Druk Red party which advocated industrial development, was in second place with just over 20 percent of the vote. It was just 128 votes ahead of the Blue party, whose platform called for a fair society free of corruption.

The Druk Green party, whose manifesto was based on ecologically sustainable development, came fourth with around 15 percent of votes. The Bhutanese call their country Druk Yul, the Land of the Thunder Dragon.

The two parties polling the highest number of votes qualify for the second round of the mock election to be held on May 28.

They will be invited to field dummy candidates, likely to be high school students, in each of the country's 47 constituencies, a mechanism designed to produce a two-party system and avoid the need for coalition government.

Preparing his people for democracy, the king devolved power to elected local bodies in the 1980s and to a council of ministers in 1998.

Wangdi said the turnout was lower in the country's more remote eastern region because many people registered in their home villages had now moved to the capital Thimphu, which lies in the west, for work.

As for real political parties, only two have been formed so far, disappointing those who had hoped for a vibrant debate ahead of next year's vote.

One, led by the former king's brother-in-law and Agriculture Minister, Sangay Ngedup, is strongly tipped to take power.

Living Memory



Jeetan Muskan

...I am Balkrishna Acharya, a permanent resident of Goshi Block under Dagana District. While in Bhutan I was a business man. When peaceful demonstration was coined during early 1990s, most of the villagers were unknown about politics. The movement blazed-off rapidly thereby creating confusions.

I was also one among many blind supporters of the then failed leadership of the movement. Despite my innocence I was also compelled to involve in the movement that was against absolute regime. Considering my active participation in the demonstration in front of Dagana Dzong, the security force of RGOB took me under their control inside cruel Bhutanese jail. I was inhumanly tortured—it is beyond imagination to quote schemes of their cruel acts inside the jail. The intolerable physical torture, which took lives of hundreds of innocent Bhutanese, sometimes strikes in my mind.

In early 1991 I began barefooted journey along with my six family members. All most all the properties and wealth were seized by the then regime. After a year stay in the Kankai Maidhar, my family was shifted to Beldangi-II. Then I started to spend horrific lives inside unimproved refugee camps in Sector I/1 along with my two sons and two daughters.

Due to severe physical torture while inside Bhutanese jails I have been able to generate numerous diseases. Despite all hindrances I always encouraged my children to pursue better and higher education and so do they now. I still have a fresh dream to die in the country of origin.

Refugees Around US

Tibetan Refugees

Response to resettlement still at large

Kathmandu: April 26: The visiting US officials; Mr. Lawrence Bartlett, Deputy Director for Asia and Near East and Ms Janice Belz, Deputy Director for Admissions, in a press statement here, confirmed that the Government of Nepal has agreed to allow third-country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees but, they did not answer whether the same applied to the resettlement of Tibetan refugees too.

During the press conference this afternoon, the US delegation said that their current mission is primarily focused on Bhutanese resettlement programme only. The delegation also added that it did not mean to rule out consideration for Tibetan refugees in future either.

When asked if they have had any talk with Nepalese leaders about Tibetan resettlement; Mr. Bartlett said, "In terms of resettlement, this time our mission is to look at Bhutanese refugee resettlement programme and we have not entered into discussion on those (Tibetan resettlement) issues". Mr Bartlett, however, mentioned that he and Ms Belz were pleased to have visited the Tibetan Reception Centre to look at its functioning. Responding to the question on the long pending fate of Tibetan refugees for a possible resettlement in US, Ms

Belz said, "At this juncture, we have the support from the Government of Nepal and from UNHCR, and others to begin with the case of Bhutanese refugees". She further adds, "...that does not preclude our consideration for the future of Tibetan refugees". "For now the Bhutanese programme is our central focus" she said.

As of now, the planned decision to resettle about 5000 Tibetan refugees in Nepal to US still remains uncertain. These Tibetans are said to be living in Nepal without any proper legal paper. Tibetans here find it difficult to understand why the Nepalese Government is willing to allow resettlement of Bhutanese refugees and not Tibetans.

According to a reliable source here, some important Tibetan officials in Kathmandu have earlier met with the visiting officials and briefed them about the problems of Tibetans in Nepal. A source also mentioned that, in the long run, there is every hope that the Nepalese Government will possibly clear the door of resettlement for Tibetan refugees too.

There are approximately over 20,000 Tibetans living in Nepal, and many of them, especially the newly arrived ones, have no proper residential permits to stay in Nepal as refugees.

Source: phayul.com

Iran urged to suspend repatriation

Afghanistan's government has called on neighbouring Iran to suspend the repatriation of Afghan refugees because the country lacks the resources to resettle them.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Sultan Ahmad Baheem said about 30,000 Afghan refugees, including women and children, had been sent home from Iran in the past week alone. He said war-torn Afghanistan lacks resources and the repatriation would cause problems for the government and the refugees. Iran says around one million Afghans living there have illegally entered and will be sent home. BNS

Before We Move to US.....

Overseas Processing Entity

In most processing locations, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in the Department of State manages an Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) to assist in the processing of refugees for admission to the United States. All of the OPEs pre-screen applicants to preliminarily determine if they qualify for one of the applicable processing priorities and to prepare cases for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) adjudication. The OPEs assist applicants in completing documentary requirements and schedule USCIS refugee interviews as appropriate. If an applicant is approved for resettlement, OPE staff guide the refugee through post-adjudication steps, including obtaining medical screening exams and attending



Vidhyapati Mishra

cultural orientation programs. The OPE obtains sponsorship assurances, and, once appropriate clearances are obtained, refers the case to International Organization for Migration (IOM) for transportation to the United States.

Actions on Admission

Refugees are authorized for employment upon admission.

After one year, a refugee may be granted adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident.

Five years after admission, a refugee who has been granted lawful permanent resident status is eligible to apply for citizenship.

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