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Core-group urged Agencies Condemn Attack, Warn to Quit Support for repatriation

**Bhutan News Service
Damak, June 27**

Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) has urged the United States of America and members of core-group formed to resettle interested Bhutanese to expedite the process of repatriation of exiled Bhutanese.

The HUROB petition sent to the US Ambassador to Nepal, Nancy J. Powell reads, "The lackadaisical stand of the core countries for Bhutanese refugees on repatriation has disappointed especially the youths and they have now resorted to violent activities in the camps and as well as inside Bhutan".

The rights organization has asked to create excessive pressure on Bhutanese regime to start the repatriation of exiled Bhutanese.

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**The Bhutan Reporter
Kathmandu, July 1**

Citing continued intimidation and attacks on International Organization of Migration (IOM), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) including the IOM have warned of consequences on all programs delivery for refugee operation - not just the resettlement component.

Terming the incident as an 'act of senseless violence', the agencies in a joint press statement, denounced the bomb attack at the Damak-based IOM office premises on June 30 night.

"The IOM, UNHCR and WFP are shocked and outraged by this senseless attack which is aimed at undermining the humanitarian efforts by the UN agencies and the international community to aid refugees from Bhutan who have been

Two Groups Own Responsibility

Jwala Singh-led armed rebellion group in eastern belt of Nepal, Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-J) claimed responsibility for the incident a 'mistake' by the party cadres. Local media in Jhapa had quoted the leader of the group saying his party had targeted the telephone towers and other infrastructure in Damak to press Nepalese government towards their demands.

Meanwhile, a never-known-before armed group identifying itself as 'Refugee Liberation Army' also owned-up responsibility to the explosion. A press statement issued by the Army coordinator Raj Kumar, said their underground attempt to disrupt the resettlement would continue. Refuting the claim of JTMM over having its hands in explosion, the Liberation Army also owned-up responsibility to the attacks on IOM bus earlier.

through decades of suffering in camps in eastern Nepal", reads the statement, adding- "The agencies strongly urge all concerned parties to immediately stop such cowardly attacks. It is the free choice of each refugee and his/her family whether they would like to be considered for resettlement to third countries. Neither the individuals opting for resettlement nor the agencies facilitating this process

should be intimidated or threatened"

The office of Damak-based IOM was exploded on June 30 night at 8 pm local time. The three explosions caused minor damage to the office building and no human casualty was reported.

Earlier, unidentified group had vandalized the IOM bus ferrying exiled Bhutanese on May 5 near the Khudunabari in Jhapa district, and on May 21 near Morang-based Sanishchare camp.

NA Topples NC Decision

**Bhutan News Service
Thimphu, July 04**

In what appears contradict to the decision of the upper house National Council, the National Assembly decides allowing the government sanction funds to two political parties in the parliament.

The National Assembly comprise of the two parties, both of whom sought fund to pay back their debts incurred during the polls campaign.

The assembly decided separate clause for this will be inserted in the Public Election Fund Bill and the Election Bill, though the constitution hasn't been amended to include this provision.

The proposal was tabled at the assem-

bly sitting by a minister. The government proposal also stated that funds will be sanctioned to the parties having secured top two positions in three primary rounds.

The government minister said funding political parties was important to establish a strong democracy. The party leaders in the parliament were of the opinion that funding to political parties is not against the constitution since there are no constitutional provisions mentioning state must not fund the parties.

Opposition party PDP suggested for increasing the Public Election Fund through the contribution from nationals and foreigners to be distributed to political parties.

Husband Turns 'Bachelor' for Resettlement

By Arjun Pradhan

For Raju Dahal, year 2000 was enduring. On January 27, Raju from Goldhap camp had a typical marriage ceremony with Krishna Maya Adhikari from Beldangi-I. A great Hindu culture to join two hearts of opposite sex, the event was performed in an extra-ordinary way with all processing during and after marriage.

Raju, 30, of sector C-4/ 37 had decided to knot an eternal tie with Krishna, 30, of Beldangi-I sector C-1/52 and the event remains spanking new to the society, friends and relatives who joined the function.

"When he never returned to take me to my new home, I had to wait till day", lamented Adhikari with tears trickling down her cheeks. She said her husband, who promised to visit her family a week after their marriage, went missing and his whereabouts was never known.

"Difficult to narrate the despair, I

don't have enough memory how I spent eight years without my husband", cried Krishna Maya who just dragged her husband to camp management committee of Beldangi-I when she found that Raju was waiting to get Exit Permit (EP) from government of Nepal for his relocation in the United States of America.

Reality

Raju right after his marriage went to Sikkim, India and started working as an assistant teacher in a private school. Raju, who presented himself to be too innocent, slowly started neglecting the relationship with Krishna Maya.

The initial days were little odd. But, he changed his mind and developed boldness to avoid Krishna Maya and tried to remain away from his another half, who has been eagerly waiting for the reunion.

When Nepal formally announced exiled Bhutanese to declare interest for third country resettlement, he came to Nepal and applied for it. With several screenings and interviews, he was in the

process to obtain EP as 'bachelor'. He was extremely nervous when Krishna Maya found that he cheated her badly.

Reunion by IOM and UNHCR

On June 28, camp management committee and family of Krishna Maya pulled Raju for further investigation. In presence of several Bhutanese who attended his marriage function, he admitted that has been processing as 'bachelor'.

"I'll take my wife with me", told Raju who acted sternly to leave his wife unaccompanied in her ramshackle hut.

The camp administration decided to file a complaint against Raju to International Organization for Migration and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees urging them to halt the process.

"Since Krishna Maya has a dream to be relocated with Raju, she must not be denied the justice", said a camp representative. "It is a serious case and major precautions should be taken in future", he added.

HIGHLIGHTS

Looted cash Seized

Nepali police at Damak confiscated cash amounting to two hundred forty-five thousand from the hut belonging to Akal Singh Tamang in Beldangi-I, Sector C/4-370 on June 3.

Police investigated the hut following the information provided by those kept under the custody accusing their involvement in looting Laxmi Bank at Damak last month. According to Govinda Raj Kafle, DSP at the Damak police post, they seized 74 thousand Nepalese currencies from Beldangi camp on June 2.

Sipsu Sees Blast

A bomb exploded early morning on the road to Sipsu-Tendu of Samtse district on June 28. The Kuensel quoted Bhutan police claiming that the Communist Party of Bhutan (MLM) was behind the blast. Security also reported that they defused another bomb found buried under the soil. **BNS**

Tariff increases

The Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) has decided to increase tariff for foreign tourists visiting Bhutan from US\$200 to US\$250, applicable in peak seasons. The daily tariff for seasons that attract fewer tourists will remain at US\$200, including all other discount, surcharge and royalty.

The Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO) has welcomed the decision by the board to raise the daily tariff saying it could help tackle the increasing inflation caused by hike in oil prices. **BNS**

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Giri (USA) and GHRD (Hague)**No Violence Please!**

The office of Damak-based International Organisation of Migration (IOM) was exploded on June 30 night. Though it caused a minor damage to the office building, the incident can be taken quite seriously as it took place at a time when the Third Country Resettlement Program (TCRP) is getting accelerated. The violent means, opted by the group or individual, to disrupt the TCRP doesn't sound justifiable under any circumstances. This is because there is escalating number of exiled Bhutanese showing their independent interest to opt for this option.

The very incident is nothing but a tactics from another angle to coin methods of 'cheap politics' in the name of delivering justice to suppressed Bhutanese people. We are in democratic era and any violent attempt to oppose the contradictory opinions should deserve condemnation. Following the incident, the UNHCR, WFP and the IOM have warned of consequences on all programs delivery for refugee operation - not just the resettlement component. TBR believes that the 'warning' from the UN agencies in itself will not discourage those involved in the incident to stop violence but they should be ready to take strong initiatives to book the perpetrators to the court of justice.

There are still confusions as to which group was involved in the explosion. Jwala Singh-led armed rebellion group in eastern belt of Nepal, Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-J) claimed responsibility terming the incident a 'mistake' by the party cadres. Besides, a never-known-before armed group identifying itself as 'Refugee Liberation Army' also owned-up responsibility to the explosion. Anyways, what can be predicted is that the bomb explosion was aimed at disrupting TCRP of exiled Bhutanese, which should not have happened.

There is no doubt that the option for dignified return to the country of birthplace, Bhutan is slowly getting overshadowed. Still a significant portion of exiled Bhutanese is interested towards repatriation. There are groups and political parties which believe that TCRP is weakening their struggle towards the establishment of democracy in Bhutan. This is an illogical concept.

The volume of political consciousness within public was/is immeasurable but there always exists crisis in visionary leaderships. TBR urges concerned parties, organizations or individuals to restrain from all sorts of violence. Let's promise to remain under the peaceful umbrella in a united way for smashing autocratic regime from Bhutan. For this, maintaining peace and order inside exiled Bhutanese camps is a must.

Analysis**Big Brother's Hegemonic Character**

By Nira Giri (Tamang)

Bhutan's democratic transition is just a collective political approach to overshadow demand for a real political transformation. The draft constitution rubberstamped by India is gradually inviting a good volume of criticism from western democratic institutions. Rather than enriching the draft constitution with true spirits of democratic elements, India has been continuously cherishing the act of diehard Bhutanese elitists.

In fact, Bhutan is rather isolating itself from clubs of democracies which may eventually invite national crisis. The voices of 20 percent of the total population who were forcibly evicted by the regime still remain unheard. Bhutan should not delay in addressing the refugee crisis. The big democracies of the world, India had geographical compulsion to intervene peacefully and it should never have had ignored refugee issue.

Ironically, during Indian Foreign Minister's last visit to Jalpaiguri, West Bengal on June 29, he denied having made public about India's role and official stance in resolving the Bhutanese refugee issue. Nevertheless, those who had long-awaited for India's role in the issue-resolving process turned 'hopeless' when the foreign minister termed the issue to be bilateral deal between Bhutan and Nepal.

India's consistent refusal to engage herself as mediator in tripartite talks explicitly shows its diminishing role in south Asia region. India has already burnt its finger with its infamous foreign policy (IPKF) in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Not to an exception, it has high-handedness even in Nepal. India must understand that its imperialist hegemonic character of British tradition won't be acceptable in modern era in the region where annexation is bygone phenomenon. States and people in the regions are sovereign; not states within Indian union!

So far India's stance on Bhutanese refugee issue is concerned; it utters the same rhetoric as that of Bhutan-demographic imbalance. The best illustration for this can be the recent uncalled remark made by the same foreign minister during long march 'Bhutanese of Nepali ethnicity has created demographic imbalance'. Why has he failed to understand that a state has to accommodate a homogenous character of all ethnic groups? Even today, none of the ethnic groups had vied for power. It is preemptive fear of the Bhutanese ruling elites to sow such communal discord. There are no any acceptable laws in the world that states a national surpassing the number of other ethnic group is virtually a non-citizen. India herself is a country with multi ethnic, multi culture, caste and creed.

Bhutan unleashed a salient apartheid against its innocent citizens. One must know that apartheid is a weird dictatorship of minority aimed at social and economic exploitation. It is designed to strengthen the privileged position of the ruling elites. Like some of the African states, Bhutan too forced school children to learn the language of the oppressor, but not their own.

If we are to believe India's foreign minister's portrayed demographic statement, then here arises a question - who is ruling Bhutan? Again, it is the king and his handpicked ministers. The present ministers are yesteryears minister. In the past, they were there without any parties. Today, they are there with formal parties. And, this exactly matches to a famous proverb - 'old wine in a new bottle'. Where are the principles of democracy - opposition? The gist of democracy can be best enjoyed when there is strong opposition. Infact, we as oppositions are forced to flee from the hometown. Situation in Bhutan is no better than that of Zimbabwe. Doesn't Lhotshampa (Bhutanese of Nepali ethnicity) reverberate in king's mind when he used is exclusive prerogatives while nominating five members in national Council? This has vindicated true racial attitude of the Bhutan king. To refugees, the king is using dubious methods to terminate Lhotshampas, once considered the world's most dedicated and decorated army from the so-called Royal Bhutan Army and Royal Bhutan Police.

Bhutan has been creating historical blunder. Bhutan was already small and has been cut short from 46,000sq km to 37,000sq km. Such an uncompromising compromise; issue of national sovereignty, have been made without people's approval. States belong to the people. But king indicated as if he and his associates are the owners of Bhutan. Infact, Bhutan has been exposing to danger per se.

Bhutan's win-win diplomacy to both gigantic China in the north and mighty India in the south; squeezing herself by compromising northern territory to China and providing unconditional access to India to exploit water and mineral resources is raising many eyebrows. Is this blind diplomacy a need to get favor to ruling elites to thwart democratic demand? This issue is being debated amongst educated lords in Bhutan. When entire conspiracy is unveiled, that will be the beginning of an end to present ruling class. Bhutan must understand that the legitimate right of the people to govern themselves can never be suppressed. It is just a matter of time.

Thus, Bhutanese leaders must build up confidence for final reconciliation with Bhutan with support of other international communities.

The Bhutanese refugees are caught in discord. On the one hand, Bhutan is constantly downplaying refugee's claim for repatriation and citizenship. On the other hand, Nepal still unsure what diplomacy is to be pursued. Refugee must explore alternate strategies in the changing political scenario. India has shown shifting attitude towards the Tibetan and Burmese refugees as well. India has recently made an agreement to train Yangon Airforce (Tamdawley) at Indian Naval Service at Garida in Kuch. Also, India has agreed to provide Islander aircraft; despite United Kingdoms (original manufacturer) opposed the deal. The Indian government has supplied 105mm field guns, T-55 tanks, and rocket and rifle grenade launcher with ammunition last year.

If we analyze properly, India has dim record supporting for democracy and human rights in the region. Immediate reasons cannot be easy sorted out as to why the states in the region support India for permanent seat in the Security Council. Growing military power should not be criterion for any states to claim a regional or global power. It makes no sense to vive for global or regional power without setting its own house (neighbors) right. International security must rest on a mutual commitment to joint survival rather than on a threat of mutual destruction. In this context, apropos to US secretary for State Condoleezza Rice for her statement that India vis-à-vis Non Alignment Movement (NAM) has lost its meaning. India's growing alliances with the west on economic, military and nuclear fronts can be felt.

Bhutanese Human rights and democratic activists must stop lobbying for India's intervention once and for all. One of the veteran right activists of India as saying 'it is useless to draw India's intervention' is enough to mean it. Thus, Bhutanese leaders must build up confidence for final reconciliation with Bhutan with support of other international communities. Prudent Bhutan will come forward for talks, or this may inexorably result in the whole thing ending in a fearfully violent and bloody conflict in long run.

Bhutan's Perception Towards Resettlement

By Vidhyapati Mishra

Now-a-days Bhutan's despotic regime sees greater and intensive challenges to hide its inhuman and barbaric activities which resulted in expelling its more than 1, 00, 000 citizens during late 80s and early 90s. The acceleration of Third Country Resettlement Program (TCRP) has been undeniably impacting on Bhutanese authority to institutionalize a national trepidation on the long-run effects of the TCRP.

The government-censored newspaper *Kuensel* in its special editorial on June 28 exposed in black-and-white the confusion of Bhutanese authority. The statement, 'We know that some of the refugees- we do not know how many- came from Bhutan, but refugees from Bhutan and Bhutanese refugees are two entirely different concepts' simply shows that Bhutan is busy preparing to blindfold international communities simply telling

that those refugees being resettled in various western countries from UNHCR-administered camps in Nepal are refugees from Bhutan but not Bhutanese refugees. Bhutan still hopes that it can create propaganda blowing a drum that those refugees flying to America and other countries are illegal immigrants who sheltered in Bhutan before they flee to Nepal.

Such a remark from state-owned media, which is just creeping towards professionalism, seems to a suggesting media-tip for American press having professionalism since centuries. However, Bhutan is yet to make such comments to media owned by other refugee resettling countries.

Bhutanese regime has already cultured a belief that outsiders do not know about Bhutan. The *Kuensel's* version, 'What do American people know about Bhutan? Not much. But that is not a problem since

most people around the world do not know much about Bhutan. Neither does that worry us because Bhutan has always been happy being left alone', speaks the bitter realities. This misconception assisted Bhutan at least for two decades until its genuine citizens remained dumped in camps in Nepal. Now the reality is different as more than 1300 Bhutanese refugees are already resettled in various seven countries. And what happens to that 'fear' when 60, 000 or more Bhutanese refugees from Nepal fly abroad?

Resettled Bhutanese will be never away from their country. Instead, they search for alternate means to collapse absolute regime from Bhutan. Unrest in Srilanka mostly funded by resettled Srilankans, and demonstrations by Tibetan refugees worldwide against China are living examples of rebound of unjustness from regimes to citizens.

AT first we were taken to the Tribhuvan International Airport and we had to board the Etihad Airways (9 PM), the national airways of United Arab Emirates. After the journey of 4.5 hours, we landed in Dubai at 1.30 AM. Then we were again boarded by another Etihad Airways after half an hour to be landed in John F Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York. 17 hours journey as it was, you can easily figure out how tedious it was. Whatever we were served in the plane was almost sweet; so we could hardly eat anything. Up to Dubai, it was okay for they even gave us Nepali dishes (Daal Bhaat).

We landed safely in the JFK at 8.30 next morning. It was at that place we had to wait till 1.30 PM. We had to complete some paper works and the fingerprint taken in the immigration section before we were rushed to another airport, to be taken to our respective destination. All the refugees were together up to JFK. We had to board the flight of US Airways at 4.20 PM but it was delayed by three hours and we had to pass the whole time sitting on the chairs, with the IOM bag in one hand. It was really cold evening; where the sun sets at 9 pm in summer and we had no choice.

The tiredness we had been feeling so far was gone at least for some times when we happened to meet Hari Bangaley and others in the Syracuse International Airport. We were a bit nostalgic and felt homely when *Mali Maiju*, the wife to Bangaley served us hot rice with mutton and cheese-chilly (ema dachi).

The days that followed were somewhat busy since we were rushed to different places for the intake programs. Now we have got everything—Social Security Card, Benefit Card, New York State ID, Employment Authorization Card—needed for us to stay and work in the US.

They (resettling agencies) give each person—regardless of whether he is a child, an old person or an adult \$ 425 for the first four months. However, we need to pay the house rent and other utilities with the same amount. Actually, the receiving agency fixes everything and if there is any money left, it gives us the cheque. This does not include our food expenses. They give some amount in the form of card, which is called Food Stamp. This card can be used to purchase only food items. The card contains sufficient amount for a month. After the month, it must be again activated each month so that the card works for other three months.

Match Grand and Public Assistance

There are two programs for the refugees—Match Grant (MG) and Public Assistance (PA). Those refugees who are able to work or those who are healthy shall be kept under MG. They must get into the job within four months as they will not be assisted further. This is a sort of risk but any one gets job as per his/her capability.

Those who are sick have some chronic diseases or any disabilities are kept under PA. The assistance provided to them continues for some more time, may be as long as they need support.

Health Facility

Regarding the health facility, it is free for eight months. We are given a Beneficiary Card which can be used for Medicaid (health insurance). But, after eight months we need to pay for our health check up and all, which is the most expensive. However, it can be managed though health insurance that we need to start once we get to the job.

For Newcomers

The refugees who are longing to get resettled in the US should not worry about anything but focus themselves in learning English, advisably the spoken one, attend computer classes if and possibly get enrolled in the vocational courses. If your spoken English is good and you have knowledge of basic computer application (the office package), you are more likely to get good jobs. Then comes to learning to drive a car. That is an added advantage.

I found the beginning of the life in the US to be very tough—learning to talk, eat, walk, use the kitchen and bathroom, wash clothes and learn the culture. We really need to start from zero. But the people in the US are found to be very helpful. So this makes our life a little easier.

I advise those who are coming to the US to bring a pressure cooker for it is hardly found here. Even if found, it might be difficult to get at the beginning. I don't think one needs to bring other stuffs save some clothes of the proper size.

It's been a month that I have been resettled here and I have found everything—rice, vegetables (all kinds), milk, and meat, fruits and even *gundruk* and *sinki*. So there is nothing to worry about. If you just pack some warm clothes in your hand bag and set a journey to the US, you are done.

By Kazi Gautam, NY

ABA holds first convention in America

Bhutan News Service
New York, June 26

The Association of Bhutanese in America (ABA), a membership based community organization of Bhutanese permanently residing in the United States, held its first convention in Berkeley, California on June 13-15.

In a statement, latterly received, ABA said Bhutanese from across the United States participated in the convention. Apart from providing opportunity for friends and families to reconnect and to build new friendships and connections, the association said it also conducted its first election of its Board of Directors.

Earlier, the association was being governed by an interim board which comprised Bhutanese who had volunteered their time to establish it.

The convention elected seven-member board. The convention unanimously elected Dil Prasad Basnet to the position of the Chair of the board for the next two years. He was also the Chair of the interim time.

From Regime Laptops banned in NA

Bhutan News Service
Thimphu, July 01

The National Assembly restricted all its members from using laptop computers during the house session for fear they might spend their time playing computer games.

The decision came soon after some member demanded the use of laptops instead of bundles of papers while coming to the session.

The provision has been made in the new rules set for the House without any elaborate discussion at the assembly about its pros and cons.

Speaker Nima Tshering said the restriction was made fearing that playing games and viewing pictures might distract member from discussion sessions.

Additionally, house rules ban members from using electronic gadgets, eating and smoking.

Provision was made after it was revealed that lawmakers mostly use the laptops for checking up on their Facebook accounts and posting funny pictures on their blogs.

Parties to be deprived of funds

Bhutan News Service
Thimphu, July 02

The Bhutanese political parties will have to face further crunches of fund for their upcoming political activities, who already are in massive debt after the first national election campaign early this year.

After few rounds of discussion, the National Council or the Upper House of the parliament rejected the government proposal to allocate additional support to two political parties in the parliament.

The cabinet had earlier, without approval from the parliament, decided to allocate some Nu 15 to 20 million annual fund for each People's Democratic Party and Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, which was meant to repay their loans consumed during the polls campaign and pay the party workers.

Legal provisions bar political parties from getting fund from the government or any other foreign donors, leading to virtual collapse of the newly formed parties. Political parties need to sustain with registration, membership fees and voluntary contributions.

International Coverage on Bhutanese Issues

TCR of Bhutanese 'refugees' to increase

KATHMANDU, 30 June 2008 (IRIN) - More than 1,400 Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal have been resettled in the USA and six other countries, with numbers expected to grow in the coming months, says the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

The Bhutanese refugees, who were initially against the idea of third-country resettlement, hoping instead to be repatriated to their homes - were expressing stronger interest to UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for third-country resettlement.

The two agencies have been facilitating their resettlement since 2007.

The first batch of 100 refugees left for Arizona in March 2008. By 25 June, a total of 1,255 refugees had departed for the USA, with 169 to Canada, The Netherlands, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand and Norway, UNHCR reported.

The refugees are Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin - known as "Lhotsampas" in Bhutan.

The Lhotsampas have been living in seven camps in eastern Nepal for the past 17 years since being evicted from their homes by the Bhutanese government, which introduced a law stripping them of their citizenship and civil rights because of their ancestry.

Pro-resettlement feeling growing

"It is expected that within a few months, some 2,000 refugees will be able to leave each month. The offers for resettlement have been made for a period covering some four to five years," UNHCR Nepal representative, Daisy Dell, told IRIN.

More countries in Europe have shown interest in housing refugees from Bhutan but so far there has been no confirmation of additional offers, she added.

To date, more than 38,500 Bhutanese refugees have registered their desire for resettlement - nearly one-third of the total 107,000.

"Other families have still not decided what is best for them and may need additional information from those already resettled," explained Dell.

"The numbers could grow immensely as they become

aware of better lives [abroad] rather than the hardship of living in the camps," refugee Ashok Gurung said.

Gurung, a member of the Nepal-based Refugee Rights Coordinating Committee, said the past 17 years of hardship had affected their lives so badly that mental health and depression problems were spreading among the population.

"We know the political reality. For how long can we refugees deal with this suffering?" Gurung asked.

However, while most experience culture shock when they move, they gradually adjust to "new and better lives", according to relatives and friends of resettled refugees.

"They are treated with care and provided with good facilities. There is no more suspicion over refugees just dumped in some foreign country," said Thakur Mishra, a Bhutanese journalist and editor of the online Bhutan News Service.

Security concerns

However, there remain security concerns due to constant threats by underground organisations run by some refugees who advocate for repatriation and against resettlement.

"One of them includes the Bhutan Communist Party-Marxist Leninist Maoist [BCP-MLM], which has often been blamed for intimidating refugees against applying for resettlement," said one refugee activist who declined to be identified.

He added, however, that as more refugees declared their desire to leave openly, the threats had decreased.

In fact, several of those who supported the BCP-MLM had left the party and applied for third-country resettlement themselves, he explained.

"Refugees must be able to exercise their freedom of decision regarding durable solutions," said UNHCR's Dell, adding that the agency was working closely with local authorities and police to protect refugees from harassment, intimidation and the use of force.

Source: IRIN



“King hasn’t understood what the problem in Bhutan is”

Devi Bhakta Lamitayey was and still is in the list of wanted anti-government leader in Bhutan. Being one of the founding leaders of Bhutan State Congress (later renamed Bhutan National Congress), Lamitayey waged peaceful war against discriminatory policies of the government, and most importantly for establishing democracy and human rights in Bhutan. Through two of his sensational books – *Dankido Bhutan* and *Murder of Democracy* – Lamitayey not only became a political figure in southern Bhutan but also an image of inspiration for Bhutan who wished changes, ending absolute monarchy in Bhutan.

He escaped the government’s attempt to arrest and torture. Since then, he made India as his base for operation. His activism is silent but punching. Despite being very old, this leader in saint-dress still preserves youthful strength to fight for equality, justice, democracy and rights. Bhutan News Service hopes, this exclusive interview would be the stimulation for our leaders and young generation in our struggle against the despotism in Bhutan. *Excerpts: Bhutan has formulated a number of policies including one for cultural uniformity. What you think of them?*

Whatever the policies it might impose, Bhutan targets the Hindus. There are many big cultural organizations in India or Japan, and Bhutan wants them to enter Bhutan and work for its interests.

What is your reaction to the government banning smoking? You smoke so much, how can you stay in that country?

I also wish to impose it. Those under 50 years of age should not be allowed smoking, but for those above 50 years it should be free. The youngsters can sell but they shouldn’t smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco. There is police authority to take action against those not following the law. The youngster should be allowed to sell it because they have to live through business. Most of the country is covered with forest, and business is the only best option for earning in that country for livelihood. They can run hotels or run tourism company, where selling cigarettes is necessary. So, those under 50 years should not be allowed to take tobacco and other narcotic products. These are anti-sex products.

How do you see the future of Bhutan and with whose control?

Bhutan has a good future, with people ruling the country. Future of Bhutan rests with Bhutanese people. There are many parties – they talk of Gurkhas, Sarchops or Ngalongs, but my party talks of the people.

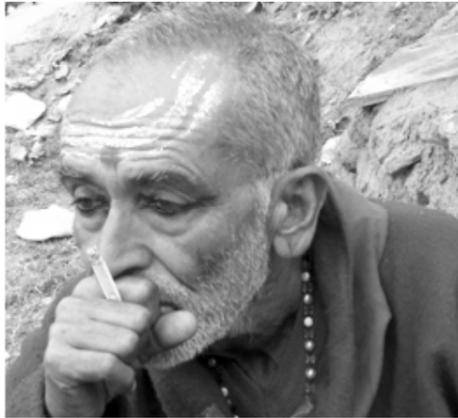
How can you bring these three groups together?

Culture varies within short distance. Language cannot change but tone changes. Bhutan has direct affect of the continental atmosphere – there are places with hot and cold weather within short distances. That makes culture differ. Culture is created in a community and is protected it to keep its purity. You can see in India as well where cultural variation exists. There are people who eat dog or cow and pray both these animals. In our country as well, there are many cultural groups. We pray cow while other one eat them. We have to keep both of them satisfied. So, what my party proposes to divide the country into provinces ensuring nation remains united. Divide at the bottom, unite at the top. Bhutan can adjust with that system. Nepal will also have it soon, India already has it. **What Bhutanese king says, small country like Bhutan cannot resist with diversities that India can. But you propose the other way!**

Without that democratic system cannot begin. My party cannot assume a constitution inferior to that of India. Citizens are the same – they can freely move in two countries. So, what difficulties are there to divide the country (into provinces)? Gurkhas will have their own government, Sarchops their own or the ruling ethnic Ngalong. The Ngalongs, who ruled the country, are in minority, they must now seek support from other ethnic communities for government formation. (Rongthong) Kuenley Dorji has realized this fact and is trying to win the support of the Gurkhas.

Do you know that Lhendup Dorji said? He asked for a constitution in Bhutan, like in India, soon after the murder of prime minister (in 1964) so that such incidents would never occur again. The murder was a plan of the king; he had used Brigadier (of the Bhutan Army Chhabda) Namgyal, one of the leaders of Bhutan State Congress, for that murder. Dorji had been more popular (among the people) and there was power struggle with king. Namgyal said the work was done as per the order from the king, who was at that time the supreme power, but compelled to let people know that Namgyal did the murder. This way, the monarch did not allow to mature relation between Dorjis and southern people.

With which community – Ngalong or Sarchops—coalition of Lhotsampas would be best in Bhutan? The first coalition would that of Gurkhas and Sarchops. These two communities must come together for freedom of Bhutan because if a minority community continues to hold on the power, the Sikkim formula will get implemented. The larger communities have greater responsibility for safeguarding the sovereignty.



Do you think the Sikkim episode would repeat in Bhutan as well?

Of course. If the refugees are not repatriated, there won’t be any other results. If they are repatriated, the king will get continuity, he won’t face any difficulties. He will get grants and donation to run the country. He will invest for the people – like he made you doctor. You consumed over 500,000 dollars of the grants. Mr Gazmere also consumed similar amount. There are many such others. Prepare the list, who all have taken the money. You are not entitled to stay here, but should have directly gone to the Bhutanese king and brief him the reality. I had told you earlier to inform king about the torture being given to Lamitayey. Since you were one of the witnesses, you should have just said, ‘I have received the notice of the torture and informed the king taking it to be my responsibility’. That would not have caused any harm on you. You afraid to do that.

The government intended to arrest the second son of Tika Ram Lamitayey—the writer of *Dankido Bhutan*, unfortunately, they arrested another Lamitayey from Damphu, the last son of Jaya Ram Lamitayey and tortured.

What all you wrote in your books – *Dankido Bhutan* and *Murder of Democracy* – have come to be a reality. How did you predict that?

When you work for the interest of the people without having any personal vested interest, you will receive information from all sides, intelligence will come to you. The security agreement between Bhutan and Indian states that India will only interfere in case of external threats on Bhutan. However, the agreement did not state anything about Indian involvement where there is misunderstanding between the king and the people. But, India misused the agreement. The Indian government mistreated the refugees in Saralapada camp and another in Bengal. These are mistakes by the Indian government who thought if it flushed Nepali speaking Bhutanese from taking shelter in India, Bhutan will flush from inside to take them to Nepal. With this India is mocking with the UN office, mandated to protect the rights of the people. India is making, bridges, roads, schools, hospitals and other infrastructures, and what the independent government of Bhutan is looking at? What they are doing for Bhutan’s independence? The people will raise this question (when time matures).

Are the rulers in Bhutan realizing that this is a greater plan designed by India? Bhutan used to think, when demands for equality surfaced, that it was part of the Sikkim episode. Gradually, they are understanding the reality because feudals take long time to learn what is wrong and right. Democracy prevailed in Britain only when the king was axed. You might remember the statement by Leo Tolstoy who mocked with communists for gathering poverty stricken people to fight against the king. He called communist foolish, intellectually corrupt but the revolution succeeded two years after Tolstoy’s death. Similar is the story from France. In all these, the sickness is the democracy. Similar episode resurrected in China under the leadership of Dr Sun Yat Sen.

Has Bhutan learnt from what happened in all these countries including recent one in Nepal?

To learn or not to learn rests on the (topographical) condition of our own country. For me, there is nothing to learn from Nepal.

How many had left Bhutan in early 1950s?

It should be around 1500. You might count the population how many have they become by this time, because they might not have stayed as saints like me. They should also have not stayed quite in their struggle against Bhutanese suppression. Even those who have been designated as refugees now are not staying mum. They are readying to die for their cause. King killed over 360, again many must die. What the government of India is saying? Thousands died in Nepal for democracy, similar number died for Gurkhaland in India but Bhutan has killed only few. Kill more to get democracy. All those landed in

Nepal are made failed. How can you work under such a feeble foundation? We have the works with Assam, New Delhi, West Bengal government or Gurkhas in West Bengal. We must work from these places.

Why didn’t you come forward after the 1990s demonstration?

When someone opens party within the country trying to stand in his own and make efforts to get support from people, why should I interfere in the middle. I already had opened a party, if Bhutanese people wish to reactivate it, they will do it. They (parties opened after 1990) have taken donations from people, but Lamitayey hasn’t. I have received Rs 7 donation for my struggle – Rs 5 from my mother and Rs 2 from my relative. People from Jharbari had contributed me Rs 150 to help me arrive here.

You have been talking about repatriating those people who left country in 1950s?

I have been staying in India and eating the products of Indian government. I eat India but India will not eat me. I talk about struggle staying in India yet party operates within the country. This party was not formed here, like yours. King had asked those fled in 1952 to return to country because if they did not do so, freedom of Bhutan will culminate. Yet they have been staying in India (though few returned). Go along the Indo-Bhutan borders, you will find large population who fled Bhutan. We must fight for repatriating these people as well if not more people will be made refugees. Another 10,000 might be expelled into Bangladesh if we keep mum. Bhote hegemony will soon end in Bhutan like that of Gurkhas whose hegemony has ended in Nepal giving rise to Nepalese people’s sovereignty. There shouldn’t be dominance of a particular group, the dominance should be of national population. We must be ready for long term struggle without violence.

What you wish to say to the new king?

Rulers do not experience the reality of life as the people in the streets experience. They have all the luxuries so they fail to feel what poverty stricken citizens say. You just have seen the fate of Nepalese king who had asked his citizens to call him the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. I don’t know how far sighted our king is. I heard king consulted his prime minister recently if the refugees could be repatriated. In response prime minister is learnt to have advised the king that repatriating the refugees meant inviting Maoism in Bhutan. But I think, it is opposite. Failure to repatriate refugees meant giving rise to the Maoism in Bhutan. If they are repatriated, there won’t be any Maoist, ULFA or LTTE. If you maintain economic equality, provide rights, is there a need of rebellion? Rebellion is the last option people choose for seeking justice. What should I tell the king, because what happens in the country doesn’t reach him in reality? People near him bar him from knowing the facts. Until you get the rights to speak and write, there is no need to raise the arms. Arms bring greater destruction than solution.

There are various groups in the refugee community, who haven’t come together in all these years. What do you think would be good to do now?

If you have any political affiliations, first go back to the country and work for your right to voting. Educate people on political changes, circulate the pamphlets and teach the people about your intention and plans. Only after that you establish your party. Otherwise, keep quiet. You had once brought out a pamphlet entitled ‘democratic movement’.

The whole movement in Bhutan is a democratic movement. My party had published that and distributed in Bhutan. But I wonder how many citizens read it because who cared democratic movement at that time leaving your village business?

Now people are moving to different countries. Don’t you think it would dismantle democratic movement (in Bhutan)?

First you prepare the list who all are going and where. Tell them go wherever they wish but request to contribute one dollar a month. Contributing one dollar would not be a big problem. When that money comes, be prepared to use it in proper manner.

Once Jaya Prakash Narayan, whom I met in Bangalore to hand over by book (*Murder of Democracy*), had told me that mentality of the Bhutanese rulers have not changed over the years they cultivated during the British rule in India. They still believe in central supremacy, one-man leadership. Until this mentality remains with Bhutanese rulers, India might face it difficult to support us. As such, let you go your fellowmen anywhere they wish until this situation remains in Bhutan. You must know that our struggle shouldn’t derail the relation between two governments.

BINOCULAR VIEW ...

By Janadoot

This time the ‘binocular’ turned its lens towards The Last Shangri-La where it saw the special editorial written in the *Kuensel* on June 28 with regime’s intention to continue suppressing Nepali-ethnic community inside the country. Do you know that the democratically elected government in the country is still not going to count you as Bhutanese citizen? Oops! The lens of the ‘binocular’ certainly shut-down as it could not see any Bhutanese inside the country to raise voice against Druk autocrats.



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