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CANADIAN ASSISTANCE

In its continuing effort to provide humanitarian assistance, the Government of Canada has announced an additional assistance of 700,000 Canadian Dollars for the welfare of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. A press release from the Canadian Cooperation Office in Kathmandu says that the amount would be provided to UNHCR, the main implementing agency of the refugee welfare programme. Out of the total amount, C\$100,000 will be used for activities targeted towards helping the local people living in the vicinity of the refugee camps.

A year ago, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) announced its plans to eliminate bilateral aid programmes to some fourteen countries, seven each in Africa and Asia, including Bhutan. Last May, the Government of Canada provided C\$150,000 as humanitarian assistance to the Bhutanese refugees welfare programme. The present assistance comes amidst growing concerns in the international community about the Bhutanese refugee problem. To obtain first hand information about the living condition of the refugees, the Canadian Embassy's Chief Counsellor John Moore visited the refugee camps in eastern Nepal last month, along with the Charge d'affaires of the Embassy of the United States of America and the Representative of UNHCR.

PRISONERS RELEASED

The Bhutanese news media reported the grant of "royal pardon" by the King to 83 prisoners on February 22, coinciding with the 400th birth anniversary celebration of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. The released prisoners included 23 alleged "anti-national" prisoners while the rest were common law criminals which included women and juvenile delinquents.

The gravity of the problem of arbitrary arrests and illegal detention by the Government is evident from these frequent "royal pardons." While the government vociferously denies that there have been large-scale arrests, such "amnesties" continue. The total number of "anti-nationals" amnestied has crossed 1,600 even though the regime has admitted to taking less than 50 people into custody.

The slightest dissent against the government is dealt with severely - people disappear, and the lucky ones reappear only when there is a royal pardon. Though the Chemgang prison near Thimphu and a few cells in Thimphu jail have been opened to select visitors, little is known of prisons and prisoners in other parts of the kingdom.

BHUTAN - NEPAL TALKS

The second meeting of the Ministerial Joint Committee of the Royal Government of Bhutan and His Majesty's Government of Nepal took place in Thimphu on 22 and 23 February 1994. The delegations were led by the respective Home Ministers. A Committee member on each side has been replaced due to recent personnel changes both in Kathmandu and Thimphu. For Bhutan, Nado Rinchen, Ambassador designate to Nepal, replaced

former Home Secretary Jigme Thinley who has taken over as the Kingdom's Representative to the United Nations in Geneva. Chakra Prasad Bastola, Nepal's Ambassador to India and Bhutan replaced Kedar Bhakta Shrestha who has been elevated to the post of Foreign Secretary.

The meeting which took place after a long span of four months since the first meeting in Kathmandu last October, produced no progress

except for an agreement to meet once again in a months' time in Kathmandu. A joint press release issued at the end of the talks stated that "the Joint Committee discussed the mechanisms for verification of the four agreed categories of the people in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal." "The Joint Committee agreed to continue discussions in Kathmandu towards the end of March at a mutually convenient date," the press release added.

FRESH EVICTIONS

Kakarvita, February 22, 1994: Even as the two delegations from Bhutan and Nepal were meeting in Thimphu to discuss the fate of over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, more people seeking asylum reported to the UNHCR screening post in Kakarvita in eastern Nepal. In a disturbing trend, 111 Bhutanese from different southern districts were forced to leave the country during the middle of February. Intimidation methods vary but the ultimate aim of the Royal Government remains the same: to evict as many southern Bhutanese as possible.

32-year old Som Bahadur Rai along with his wife and four children arrived at Kakarvita on February 15. They were forced to leave the country after being declared in the F7 category. Rai was placed in the F1 category during 1989 but found himself included in the F4 group in the 1990 census. In the latest round of enumeration conducted during the beginning of this year he was categorized as an F7 and, therefore, a non-Bhutanese. Born and brought up in Dorokha, Samchi district, Rai and his family have lost their nationality just because the government willed it that way.

Surya Man Kharka, 59 year old village elder from Daifam was no exception. Despite having served the government as a *mandal* or *gup* as far back as 1966 and later as a National Assembly Member, Kharka was forced to leave the country. He arrived in Nepal on 15 February and now lives in Khudunabari camp.

Tika Maya Kharel from Pattalay in Chirang who arrived in Nepal recently left the country after her husband disappeared mysteriously. Failure to get assistance from the local authorities to trace her husband and unable to bear the regular intimidation from the local authorities, she finally left the country.

DIPLOMATS VISIT REFUGEE CAMPS



While the grounds were being prepared by Nepal and Bhutan for the second round of bilateral talks between the two governments with regard to the question of Bhutanese refugees sheltered in Jhapa, East Nepal, many senior diplomats based in Kathmandu and New Delhi in India visited the refugee camps on Sunday, February 20, 1994. The visit was organized by His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the UNHCR. This is the second such visit arranged for diplomats by His Majesty's Government of Nepal and UNHCR. In December 1992 also Kathmandu-based diplomats had inspected the refugee camps. Besides these formal

group-visits, members of the diplomatic corp undertake separate journeys to the refugee camps throughout the year.

The February 20 group included the ambassadors of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Austria. Other representatives included diplomats from Denmark, Finland, United States of America, Australia, The Netherlands and the European Economic Community. Professor Leo Rose from the University of California, Berkeley, and an expert on South Asia was also in the group which was accompanied by B. R. Pokhrel, Home Secretary, Tahir Ali,

Resident Representative of UNHCR, and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Before touching down at the Bhadrapur airport, the aircraft carrying the group provided the visitors with views of the camps from the air. On arrival at the Beldangi camps, the visitors were briefed by the C. D. O. and the head of the UNHCR Jhapa Field Office. With the help of refugee guides/interpreters, the distinguished visitors inspected the camps and talked to some of the refugees. The visitors also made a hurried round of the Sanishare camp on their way back to the Biratnagar airport in the afternoon.

LYONPO SANGYE PENJOR - A TRAGIC DEATH

Lyonpo Sangye Penjor one of the most distinguished and respected personalities in Bhutan is reported to have died in an accident on February 6, 1994 at the Duenmang hot spring in Shemgang District. Born in the Chhume valley of Bumthang in an aristocratic family in 1928, Lyonpo Sangye served in the Royal Government for over 35 years in various capacities. Among the important posts he held while serving the government he was a Royal Representative in the Advisory Council, Chief Justice and Minister for Communications and Social Services. He also served as Bhutan's Ambassador to India, Kuwait and Bahrain as well as Bhutan's first Permanent Represent-

tative to the UN in New York. Late Lyonpo Sangye is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

The tragic death comes as a shock to the nation since it comes only a month after he resigned from service. The incident was reported very briefly by the official media. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service made an announcement on February 7. The print media Kuensel made it worse by ensuring that this news was overshadowed by a photo-story full of hype - "Prayer ceremony for a Japanese friend" - on the passing away of Onishi, Bhutan's Honorary Consul in Japan. No doubt the late Consul's contributions to many highly-placed individuals in Bhutan

was substantial, but the callous treatment of this tragic story about a respected and senior minister was unwarranted. Kuensel brushed aside the details with the brusque statement that Lyonpo Sangye "passed away on February 6, after being critically injured by a 28-kilogramme stone which became dislodged from the cliff 500 feet above the Tsachhu." Lyonpo Sangye's tragic death certainly deserved more than this scant coverage in the Kuensel. People in Bhutan and well-wishers abroad are also baffled as to why the government did not give details of the accident which killed only the honourable minister without even the slightest injury to others around him. In keep-

ing with the high stature of the late minister and his contribution to the nation, an independent report after a thorough investigation on the cause of the accident is necessary.

Lyonpo Sangye was a simple man. He had planned to spend the rest of his life after leaving government service praying in the solitude of the Bumthang valley. He treated everybody equally - the rich and the poor, peers and subordinates, the Southerner and the Northerner, the Easterner and the Westerner. For him all human being were truly equal. We at the Review offer our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family and offer our prayers for the peace of the departed soul.

The Bhutan REVIEW

THE THIMPHU ROUND

The joint press release issued in Thimphu after the last round of talks between Nepal and Bhutan on February 22 and 23 stood out for its brevity. While minimal use of words can often convey much, the terse statement this time simply confirmed the dates the "talks" were held, provided the names of those formally attending the meeting, supplied a summary of past meetings, and indicated that discussions would continue in Kathmandu before the end of March.

Whatever may have transpired over the two days of discussions, it was clear that at least the Nepalese delegation wished to keep matters close to their chests. Media persons badgering the Nepalese Home Minister on the delegation's return to Kathmandu did not come up with any scoops. While there were hints of some new developments, the Nepalese media did not get, or perhaps did not carry, more information than that which was indicated in the joint press statement.

In Thimphu meanwhile, forced to come on the air on Thursday evening before an approved government position was 'Kuensel-ready', the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), true to form, played it safe by going strictly by the press release. But there apparently were concerns over what the recently departed guests would convey to the world. Thus, hours before his Friday evening deadline, the editor of *Kuensel*, the only weekly, was heard over the wires fishing in the Bagmati in attempts to pry information loose regarding the level of disclosure by the Nepalese delegation, and to obtain feedback about the consequent media reaction. In the end, satisfied that the erstwhile guests had behaved themselves on their return home, the Bhutanese print media came up with a news report of the talks that rubs in the 'good comradery and friendly relations' bit to the extreme. Naturally, there is nothing of substance in the story.

Given that neither side is talking, at least to the media, what can one make of the February talks. Can the stark absence of information be taken to imply that we are now faced with a stalemate? A deadlock? Success? Failure?

Although neither side has let it be known as to what acted as a hurdle in the Thimphu round, it does not require a great deal of thought to pin the blame on the Bhutanese side. The fact that this is a dissident publication is not the reason for this conclusion - considering that Bhutanese refugees are in Nepal, and becoming an increasingly heavier burden on the host nation, it is unthinkable that Kathmandu would throw a spanner in the works. Bhutan, on the other hand, has consistently attempted to stall the resolution of the southern problem and the consequent refugee crisis.

From refusing to acknowledge Bhutanese refugees in camps in eastern Nepal as genuine Bhutanese nationals, to grudgingly admitting that many are indeed bona fide citizens, the Royal Government has been forced to travel part of the way towards facing reality and accepting the truth. However, admission at each step has come with the greatest of reluctance, and only after facts have compelled the regime to own up. Thimphu may already be convinced that in the end it will have to concede "defeat", but meanwhile, having unnecessarily and wrongfully misled the Bhutanese people, the regime is forced by circumstances to make the task of finding a solution as difficult as possible, both for itself and for others who wish to see the problem resolved.

There are unmistakable signs that the meeting of the joint committee in Thimphu did not take the direction envisaged by the Royal Government. If the Bhutanese side believed that the Nepalese, in honest efforts to keep the dialogue going, would acquiesce as easily as in the past, they obviously received a bit of a jolt. Convinced it had latched on to a wimpy negotiating strategy based on dogged obstinacy because of what Thimphu wrongly perceived as a "victory" in the October round - the categorization concession - the Bhutanese regime clearly opted to display its inflexible side once again. It hoped that in the interest of "progress", like the last time, Nepal would come good at the last minute yet again. But Kathmandu apparently was not willing to make further concessions, even if the talks headed towards a deadlock. Thus, the talks may have faltered and an agreement to meet again became necessary. It is encouraging that the Nepalese team was able to ensure that the Bhutanese delegation leader's "sense of urgency" was translated into a quicker meeting schedule. Real progress is therefore possible in the days ahead in spite of the Bhutanese regime's reluctance to move forward.

With the preliminaries dispensed with, the two governments are now finally engaged in tackling the real issues. Disagreements and divergent views at this stage are not unexpected. Therefore, while the fact that no immediate agreement emerged between the two sides in Thimphu may worry some, with the negotiations at a critical stage, Bhutanese in exile can take comfort from the knowledge that Nepal has shown that she is not willing to concede on issues of principles. In that sense, from the refugee viewpoint, the Thimphu round must be termed a success.

ON HUMAN RIGHTS

- Justice P.N. Bhagwati

Former Chief Justice of India, Justice Bhagwati is a noted human rights activist. This article has been extracted from *The Times of India*, New Delhi.

History shows that considerations of expediency which are not founded on observance of human rights may appear momentarily attractive and may yield short term advantages, but they cannot form the basis of an enduring relationship conducive to peace and security. That is why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights opens with the statement that recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of all human beings is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace.

The question of human rights has never had a greater moral significance than in the period from 1948 to date. Not only for the intellectuals and the elite, but also for the masses. Today, human rights have become a subject of animated discussion worldwide. Every country, whether developed or developing, expresses concern for promotion of human rights, but the approach varies. There is a distinct approach to human rights in Asia as distinguished from what I would call the liberal western approach.

The story of human rights begins with the UN Charter which included, as one of the basic principles, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This concern was translated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly on December 10, 1948. But it focussed more on civil and political rights than on social, economic and cultural rights, principally on account of two reasons. First, when the Universal Declaration was framed, many of the Third World countries were not independent and had no opportunity of participating in the process. Second, the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi regime were still fresh in the minds of the framers and they realised that if there is violation of civil and political rights in one country, it is bound to have repercussions in other nations.

The broad principles of the Universal Declaration had to be formalised in treaty instruments. Two instruments were adopted by the UN:

one was on civil and political rights and the other on social, economic and cultural rights. Civil and political rights represent basically individual rights against the state and the western approach to human rights focuses principally on enforcement of these rights. They are individualistic rights such as, to name a few, the right to life and personal liberty, the right to pre-trial release, the right to fair trial, the right of free speech and expression, the right of association, the right to equality. This western concept of human rights is based on the existence of a political structure organised on the traditional democratic formulae. This formulae accepts political and ideological pluralism and a multi-party system.

But it was soon realised that unless social, economic and cultural rights are made effective, civil and political rights would have no meaning for the under-privileged segments. This realisation came on account of the pressure generated by the Third World countries which became politically free and began to play an active role in the UN. It was also inspired by socialist states which laid great emphasis on realisation of social, economic and cultural rights. Social and economic rights are essential, but no state can be permitted to claim that they can be realised at the expense of the civil and political rights of the individual. Both sets of rights are vital to the existence of the democratic [state]. That is why the Instrument on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights came to be adopted by the UN along with the Instrument on Civil and Political Rights.

Asian governments have shown a degree of reluctance to engage actively in human rights issues, especially at the international level. Very few countries in the Asia Pacific region have ratified the two international covenants. Moreover, not a single country in the Asia Pacific region, except New Zealand, has ratified the Optional Protocol. This reluctance seems to proceed partly from a fear of parting with

some elements of sovereignty and partly from a feeling, perhaps not altogether unjustified, that the human rights committee may not be able to appreciate the socio-economic conditions and cultural values prevailing in the country which are quite different from those in the western world.

No other region of the world has so many diversities and disparities as Asia. It has countries of radically different social structures and diverse religions, philosophical and cultural traditions, legal systems and degrees of economic development. It contains the largest component of the world's population. Some of the governments in Asia, though having a democratic facade, are authoritarian in character. Though there are over 50 states and politically organised communities in Asia, only a handful can claim to have institutionalised rule of law, free and fair elections and a strong and independent judiciary. India, and now the Philippines also, being two outstanding examples. But even in these countries, and in many others in Asia, there is widespread denial of civil liberties. There is censorship of the press, albeit covert, in Singapore and Iran. There are killings of human rights lawyers in the Philippines. There is suppression of freedom of association in some parts of Asia. There is need — great need — to expose these suppressions of civil liberties and mobilise national and international opinion against them.

Rulers of countries which have suppressed civil and political rights sometimes claim that these rights are a luxury which Third World nations can afford only after they have achieved economic development. But this is an egregious fallacy. Civil and political rights cannot be bartered away under the pretext of realisation of social and economic rights. This is only an excuse which dictatorial or authoritarian regimes conjure up in order to justify suppression of civil liberties.

THE YEAR OF THE DOG



Bhutanese celebrated *Losar*, the New Year, on February 11 when the lunar calendar ushered in the year of the Male Wood Dog. Quoting from Theodora Lau's Chinese horoscope, *Kuensel* boldly wrote: Paradoxically the Year of the Dog will bring happiness and dissent in the same boat. The Dog's domestic auspices will bring harmony to home life, patriotism to one's country and unwavering fealty to what-

ever cause you wish to support. On the other hand, his rigid willpower and unbending sense of justice will also lead to major confrontations with the weaker side getting the upper hand. It is a year in which controversial issues will be awarded a hearing and unconventional but effective changes will be introduced. Equality and Liberty will be advocated by the Dog's noble influence. We will become more idealistic in

our views, shedding some materialism by doing some charitable acts or otherwise championing some worthy projects. It is a year in which we will shift away from the pursuit of the almighty dollar and become a little more reflective. A perfect time to reassess our sense of values, polish up our virtues and go on crusades against tyranny and oppression.

ASIA 1994 YEAR BOOK

FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW

The Asia 1994 Yearbook of the Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) has provided some startling bits of information in its review of the events of 1993 relating to Bhutan. Mercifully, there has been a toning down of the "Gorkhaland" rhetoric of the 1993 Yearbook (see On His Majesty's Service, *The Bhutan Review*, February 1993). This has necessitated a minor alteration to its lengthy summary so that: "Some have since become involved in a campaign of terrorism and intimidation to establish a "Gorkha" homeland in Bhutan" now reads, "Some have allegedly waged a campaign of terrorism and intimidation to establish a Nepali homeland in Bhutan." Also, a final sentence has been added in the 1994 summary: "In October the first bilateral talks with Nepal were held to determine the status of Bhutanese refugees of Nepalese origin."

At the *Review*, we are heartened by the use of the word *Bhutanese* in the last sentence. We also appreciate the significant word replacement, and are grateful for the inclusion of the all important qualifier "alleged" in the revised version of the summary. The body of the report acknowledges the presence of 85,000 ethnic Nepali refugees who "claim" to have been expelled from their homes in Bhutan. The report states that the exodus "allegedly" began in 1988 and accelerated in 1990 after ethnic Nepalis mounted demonstrations in response to "Bhutanization" programmes. The report confirms that arrivals in the camps peaked in April-July 1992 when upto 1,000 people (daily) crossed into Nepal. According to FEER, the Bhutanese government has relaxed its policies since then.

The standard Bhutanese claims that "most of the refugees are not Bhutanese nationals at all, but rather a mixture of people who had once illegally occupied Bhutanese land plus Nepalese evicted from north-

1991." Since the report has indicated earlier that the exodus did indeed begin in 1988, astute readers may ask why the government admits that there are possible legitimate citizens, but only among those fleeing after November 1991. If there are readers who fail to see the significance of the month and year in this admission, they cannot be faulted for failing to see through the machinations of the Bhutanese regime. Until this landmark date the government had not yet come up with its brilliant idea of the "emigrating" ethnic Nepalese. From this date on, if the government propaganda is to be believed, there was a sudden scramble to fill in "voluntary emigration forms" so that the people could apparently depart joyfully for the squalor of life in refugee camps leaving behind their homes and all their property. Thus, while finally admitting that there are Bhutanese citizens in the camps, "Thimphu maintains that many of these people emigrated voluntarily or illicitly. Under Bhutanese law, citizens forfeit their Bhutanese nationality when they emigrate." While earlier the Bhutanese regime, through its utterly confused Foreign Minister, was explicit in its claims of a "Greater Nepal" conspiracy, currently the regime only hints, "darkly", that refugees were "recruited to serve as a kind of trojan horse aimed at incorporating Bhutan and other neighbouring regions into a "Greater Nepal", according to this report. Either, the editors at FEER are behind the times or confusion reigns in Thimphu because the Bhutanese Foreign Minister was last heard, during the course of 1993 itself, that "Greater Nepal" was a myth with no basis in history and that it was "Greater Sikkim" which Bhutan, and for that matter India, needs to be more worried about. [See Media Scan, *The Bhutan Review*, January 1994]

In any case, the report refers to gov-

negotiate from a defensive position. And, horror of horrors, Thimphu alleges that the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB), the publisher of the *Review*, arms refugees and dispatches them to Bhutan to rob and intimidate local villagers. To find out just how outrageous such allegations are, the Royal Government would do well to despatch a high-level espionage team to the refugee camps. Among those who deal with Bhutanese refugees, and among those who have visited the camps in eastern Nepal, no takers will be found for Thimphu's outlandish allegations of training of armed militants in refugee camps and teams of refugee terrorists venturing out under the control of dissident groups. By pointing an accusing finger at HUROB, the Bhutanese government cuts an exceptionally sorry figure. And if this allegation against HUROB is deemed maliciously false - as it positively will be by everyone following the Bhutanese crisis - dissidents will need to make very little effort to convince the world that all other claims of the Royal Government must be taken with a pinch of salt.

The report states that Nepal and Bhutan are still far from reaching a solution although tentative steps were taken during 1993. The first high-level meeting in July and the formation of the joint committee are mentioned but a final settlement still appears years away, according to the report.

The editors believe that Bhutan has put "considerable effort" into improving relations with India whose "presence looms large in the tiny mountain kingdom." India has reportedly put considerable pressure on both Bhutan and Nepal to take steps towards solving the refugee crisis. Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao made a brief two-day visit and maintained that the relations between the two countries were "excellent, free of irritants or problematic issues."

AID: In the area of Economy and Infrastructure, the report essentially runs through the generous assistance received by the kingdom from a number of sources.

India agreed to fund the 120 MW Bunakha reservoir scheme estimated to cost US\$40 million as also the US\$85 million Dungsam Cement Plant. Agreements were also reached for the Kurichu hydroelectric project and the Sunkosh multipurpose dam, "one of the largest of its kind in South Asia." India also agreed to give Paro airport a facelift at a cost of Nu 1.56 million. But, most significantly, India bailed out the regime with a "Rs 100 million (US\$3.2 million) loan in March, valid for three years at a nominal 7% interest, and a further credit at mid-year of Rs 150 million to meet Bhutan's short-term rupee cash flow deficits."

From the Japanese Government, Bhutan received grant aid amounting to 1.567 billion yen (US\$14.5 million) for the telecommunication sector, and a further 300 million yen for agricultural mechanization. Austria contributed US\$3.16 million for the 1.1 MW hydro project at Rangjung in Tashigang and the 49

"IN QUOTES"

"Over the last three years or so, we have all noticed an increasing infiltration of non-national from across the border into the towns, villages and even in the restricted areas of our Dzongkhag. The consequence of this influx of undesirable people has added a new dimension to our prolonged law and order problem as this has promoted several menaces and unlawful activities such as robberies, thefts and plundering of our natural resources to a considerable extent.

On our careful observation and analysis it is also learnt that this intrusion from across the border has resulted partially because of the empty villages and mainly because of the increasing dependence of our people on cheap labour and supply of firewood, vegetable etc. from them indiscriminately." Circular No. Sardzong / Adm/38/93-94/1930 dated 16-02-94 issued by Dr. Sonam Tenzin, Dzongdag.

MEDIA SCAN

ULFA CAMP NEAR BHUTAN BORDER RAIDED

In a combined operation, the Border Security Force and the police raided United Liberation Front of Asom camp on the Assam-Bhutan border in Nalbari district last night and picked up two girls and a boy following a heavy exchange of fire.

Acting on a tip-off, the security forces raided the ULFA camp, located on the Bhutan side of the border, provoking the militants to open fire. A BSF jawan was injured.

However, all the hardcore activists escaped into the thick jungles of Bhutan. Those picked up have been identified as Aswini Deka, Arpana Das and Nisha Devi. The security forces have seized literature and incriminating documents.

Nalbari, in lower Assam, remains one of the hotbeds of ULFA, whose over 3,500 activists laid down arms two years ago at the instance of chief minister, Mr Hiteswar Saikia.

The Times of India, New Delhi - February 19, 1994.

TWO ULFA CAMPS PROVIDE VITAL PROOF

The dismantling of two training camps of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) deep inside Bhutan by the Border Security Force and the Assam police on two successive days last week has provided the first concrete proof of the militants extensively using the tiny neighbouring kingdom for training and shelter.

Both the state and Central governments have long been alleging that Bhutanese territory was being used for training by the militants of ULFA and Bodo Security Force. During his visit to the state early this month, the Union Minister of state for home, Mr Rajesh Pilot, had reiterated the Union government's concern over the militant's bases in Bhutan - a fact which Bhutan never admitted.

But last week's smashing of two "large and well-attended camps", located 20 km inside Bhutan, which led to the arrest of three activists, weapons, communication sets and secessionist literature, has provided beyond doubt that the insurgents' training camps existed in the tiny country.

Thus, Bhutan becomes the third country, besides Bangladesh and Nepal, where the north-east insurgents train and take refuge. A senior official of Nalbari district had recently told The Times of India News Service that the insurgents used Bhutan extensively for training and refuge. "Whenever we put pressure on them, they cross the international border and vanish into the thick jungles of Bhutan where they have training camps," he said.

According to him, though officially the government maintained that the camps on the Indo-Bhutanese border were busted, actually the forces had to go 20 km across the border to raid the camps.

Several camps are said to be located in the Bhutanese districts of Shemgang and Samdrup Jongkhar, opposite Assam's Bongaigaon and Nalbari districts. They have been set up both by ULFA and Bodo militants. Bhutan, which has a security problem of its own in the same southern border, is elusive on the issue.

Much of this part of the country has dense forests, including the Manas sanctuary which falls in both countries.

The latest camps to be destroyed were located in the Kuklanga (sic) reserve forest in Bhutan and had barracks for about 100 people with playgrounds and was protected by watch-towers at strategic points. The camps were organized seven months ago and had all facilities, including training and infrastructure.

The Times of India, New Delhi - February 24, 1994.

NEPAL....

"Nepal made scant progress in 1993 towards resolving its long-standing refugee dispute with Bhutan. The presence of 100,000 ethnic-Nepalese refugees from the neighbouring kingdom continues to vex the government after more than two years, despite repeated high-level discussions between the two countries. Three days of ministerial-level talks held in Kathmandu on 5-7 October produced no solution.

The refugees have been entering Nepal from Bhutan via Indian territory. Nepal offers them asylum on humanitarian grounds; Bhutan claims Kathmandu wants to create a

"greater Nepal" at its neighbour's expense.

The two countries set up a joint committee to sort out the problem. In October, the panel at least agreed to classify the refugees in four groups for the purposes of repatriation: bona fide Bhutanese forcibly evicted; migrating Bhutanese; non-Bhutanese; and Bhutanese who have committed criminal acts. The committee is to establish verification procedures at its February 1994 meeting.

Koirala's government seems to enjoy broad support on the refugee issue."

east Indian states and opportunists drawn by the guaranteed rations and other facilities offered by international agencies at the camp sites" is repeated. However, the report continues to add the now revised Bhutanese government position, that "more recently, Bhutan has acknowledged that some of the people in the camps are legitimate Bhutanese nationals of Nepalese descent who left southern Bhutan after November

ernment propaganda and states that "Thimphu publications describe a mounting campaign of terror by Greater Nepal nationalists, including use of ex-Gurkha soldiers to train and arm infiltrators working from bases in the Nepali refugee camps." The regime further is said to maintain that "refugee camp controllers" from Nepal have instigated terrorism and violence in southern Bhutan as a means of pressuring Bhutan to

IN DEFENSE OF THE *BACTROCERA (TETRADACUS) MINAX*

"Bhutan's main cash crop and a source of substantial revenue for a large proportion of the population - the Citrus Mandarin (locally called orange) - was struck by an unprecedented disaster last season, plunging farmers and businessmen into a deep crisis. With the entire mandarin production belt harvesting just 10,040 tonnes this year, exporters face the possibility of bankruptcy, financial institutions have no hope of recovering loans, and farmers are reeling under debt and the pressure of beginning the year without their annual income." Thus began a lengthy feature in the February 19 issue of the Royal Government's weekly newspaper Kuensel, on last season's bleak orange harvest. Oranges, grown extensively in southern Bhutan, constitute one of the main exports of the country. The know-how and expertise relating to this fruit, along with knowledge about cardamom, another southern Bhutanese revenue earner, were imported into the country via Sikkim by ethnic-Nepalese settlers during the early part of this century. According to government records there are 2.6 million orange trees on over 25,000 acres in southern Bhutan. Of this, only a small fraction, mainly in Dechheling sub-division of Pema Gatsel and the Bongo area of Chhukha, falls in non-lhotshampa territory. Earnings from this cash crop are good but people must work hard to match the earnings. Because most orchards are located in the shade of forests some distance away from the villages, nutrients must be replenished through seasonal camping of livestock. Besides irrigation and manuring, the trees also need regular pruning. Despite the Government's persistent denial regarding forcible eviction of people from the southern districts of the country, facts have a habit of unfolding on their own. Falling revenues from the export of oranges is one such example. In recent

years the crop has been severely affected after the owners of many of these orchards were forcibly evicted or forced to flee the country. Even in the case of those villagers permitted to remain in the country, until 1993 they were denied the proceeds from the sale of their own cash crops. All farm produce was auctioned by the government and the money withheld on the alleged grounds that the money would be channelled to "anti-nationals" for subversive activities against the state. Naturally, under such circumstances, the orchards received little care. After three consecutive years of neglect, it is hardly surprising that the yield finally plummeted to a level that has obviously alarmed the regime. Convertible currency exports to Bangladesh reportedly fell from 16,282 tonnes last year to only 6,000 tonnes. Sales to the Indian market also fell drastically, netting only Rs 69.75 million, 40% of last year's value, despite a 122% increase in prices. The Kuensel story focuses on the fruitfly as being the main culprit responsible for the poor harvest: "Out of proportion to the massive damage which has been wreaked right across the kingdom's southern belt, resulting in losses amounting to millions of Ngultrums, the main cause of this year's bleak harvest and the subsequent despair of the farmers and exporters appears to be a small insect known as the citrus Fruitfly." However, considering that the drop in yield in eastern district of Pema Gatsel was not quite as alarming by Kuensel's own account, it is quite clear that the poor little insect is not deserving of all the blame. This is corroborated by officials of the National Plant Protection Centre (NPPC) who have argued that the fruitfly has been damaging orange crops every year, and that while the pest may have been more destructive this season, it was not exceptional. They point instead to "mis-

management" of the orchards since "many trees were not pruned, irrigated or manured, and the result was that the fruit bearing potential of the trees was substantially reduced." The Director of NPPC is quoted as saying, "I have seen trees about 20 feet tall in Tsirang [Chirang]. The problem with our people is that they want outputs without inputs." The shift in blame from humble fruitfly to "mismanagement" is significant since it serves to provide a much clearer picture of the actual problem. To fully appreciate the current situation, it must be noted that southern Bhutanese were growing, harvesting and exporting the fruit long before the start of the modern development process in the country and the establishment of the Department of Agriculture. By the time the world began to know of the existence of the rest of Bhutan in the late nineteen fifties, the orange markets in southern Bhutan were already firmly established with celebrated month-long orange-season Maghay Melas or January Fairs. From the time the species was introduced into the country early this century, the necessary knowledge and expertise required to grow and nurture orange trees has developed and been strengthened within the villages without inputs or help from government agencies. Although export of the fruit earned the second highest revenue after timber until recently, the government had neither programme nor expertise in this field. But in the case of apples, introduced in the seventies, there was an overdose of assistance, not the least because apples are grown in the north and because the entire privileged class are also big-time apple-growers. It isn't surprising, therefore, that free pruning of entire apple orchards by government personnel formed a part of the services. In recent times, however, there has been a quantum jump in government interest over oranges, too, primarily

because of the regime's desire to propagate this bountiful fruit into other non-lhotshampa districts - government encouragement, inputs and subsidies are, therefore, now available to new orange growers in Shemgang, Chhukha and Samdrup Jongkhar. Thus, even though programmes related to orange care was conspicuous for its absence until 1988, one now comes across frequent announcements for training for farmers, distribution of saplings etc. In the light of this background, the observations of the NPPC regarding "mismanaged" orchards, unpruned trees, lack of manure and irrigation etc. are telling. Having tended orange trees without external support and government expertise for nearly a century, any aspersions on the ability of southern Bhutanese to "manage" these orchards will hold little water. On the other hand, signs of neglect have obviously been detected. How can this have happened? There are now over 20,000 families living in exile. At least half this number have left behind a few orange trees while many had orchards containing hundreds to a few thousand trees. Who tends to the plants now? Relatives, friends and neighbours may have looked after some of the orchards. There are also rumours of refugees, concerned over their orchards going to ruin, stealthily returning home to prune their trees (some of the "terrorists" being caught and paraded by the government, perhaps). But the majority of the ownerless trees have been left to the mercy of the elements. With over

three seasons of neglect, it is not surprising that the trees have become unproductive and attained unhealthy heights. During the past three years the Government has either auctioned the produce - notifications appearing in Kuensel since 1990 provide sufficient evidence of such sales - or local officials have taken the liberty of harvesting the crops from the fields of people who have been evicted from the country. There are many proxy owners who have supposedly "purchased" orange orchards from departing "emigrants". Most of these "buyers" are civil servants and their relatives from Thimphu. Yet others have acquired property through sheer force. With the government and proxy owners only looking to reap the harvests, and no knowledgeable people to tend to the trees, the yield had to come down. Soon this small harvest too will end as the trees decay and die. Kuensel reports that the agriculture sector is conducting a thorough survey and analysis on the three probable causes: the fruitfly, mismanagement of orchards, and a natural fluctuation. There is little need for the government to waste limited resources simply to arrive at a foregone conclusion. With the government and other new "owners" only showing up during the harvesting season, and the actual owners who looked after the "fruitfly affected" orchards forced to seek sanctuary in refugee camps in Nepal, the Director of the NPPC has rightly noted: "The problem with our people is that they want outputs without inputs."

CAMP SCHOOLS UPGRADED

As of end February 1994, there were 29,834 Bhutanese refugee students pursuing their primary and secondary education in the seven refugee camp schools. The large increase in formal student population this year is the result of a successful Out-of-School-Children (OSC) literacy programme. Most OSC graduates were declared fit for different grades in the formal school after selection examinations conducted this winter. There are many other students studying outside the camps either on their own or under various sponsorship schemes. All the teaching staff in the camp schools are volunteers from among the refugees. Till the 1993 academic year each camp school catered to students upto the eighth grade. A common school located in Beldangi accommodated the graduates of all these schools for continuation in the ninth and tenth grades. In February

this year 93 students from the Beldangi school appeared for the Class X School Leaving Certificate examinations conducted by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. In view of the large number of students now qualifying to continue with their education in the ninth grade, from the current academic session all the camp schools have been upgraded so that students continue with their education in Class IX in the same schools. Although this has put a strain on the already limited resources, especially in terms of teaching staff, it was unavoidable given the large number of children, nearly 300 in the ninth grade alone, who would otherwise have had to leave their camps to stay in Beldangi. The problem of refugee students does not end on the completion of high school education: in fact, it is only the beginning. Opportunities for tertiary and higher education are

limited. Thus far, Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) has sponsored 55 students for post-secondary education, starting last year. The slots for this year's scholarships are yet to be formally announced. Owing to funding constraints, from over 200 candidates who applied for fellowships this year, only a handful are expected to be selected. In another development, to cope with the unmanageably large number of children in the regular schools, especially in the primary sections, it has been decided to conduct classes for smaller children within their own sub-sectors. With the number of students in the different schools exceeding 3,000, and most schools having over 15 sections in each grade, the decentralised system appeared as a viable alternative. This has already been started in some camps.

COUNTING HEADS

During the recent tour of the southern districts by His Majesty the King, ostensibly to review the progress of the Seventh Five Year Plan (1992-97), "accurate" statistics figured prominently in the meetings. Southern Bhutanese "emigrants" were blamed for undoing much of the progress achieved in the field of Animal Husbandry through the "indiscriminate disposal of quality livestock" outside the country. On the basis of surveys allegedly conducted in 1992 and 1993 the government arrived at the exact numbers of livestock so exported. For the record, *lhotshampas* "emigrating" from Dagana had sold 10,678 heads of cattle, 480 buffaloes, 194 horses, 1,717 sheep and

3,309 goats outside Bhutan. For Sarbhang district, the government figures are 27,886 cattle, 1,098 buffaloes and 238 horses. From Chirang such export figures stand at 12,021 cattle, 607 buffaloes, 325 horses, 2221 sheep and 5859 goats. To convince the sceptics, His Majesty was pleased to take pains to even explain the route - the animals were allegedly taken from Chirang to India either via Kalikhola or through Sarbhang. The ability of the regime to come up with accurate figures must once again be appreciated. Perhaps, in the near future the never-ending process of counting citizens, too, will be completed so that the number of people in the country will be known to a greater degree of accuracy than the livestock and poultry populations.

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION

Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	8,204	3,250
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,927	2,957
Beldangi I	Jhapa	14,690	5,054
Beldangi II	Jhapa	18,759	6,632
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,538	3,371
Sanishare(Pathri)	Morang	16,640	5,364
Khudunabari(N)	Jhapa	6,992	3,206
Khudunabari(S)	Jhapa	2,715	
Total		85,465	29,834
Cumulative births:		3424	
Cumulative deaths:		2,495	

The above figures are as of February 28, 1994.