





## The Bhutan REVIEW

### THE "ENEMY" WITHIN

For four years now, the real problems in Bhutan have been overshadowed by the focus on refugees. Refugees are only the visible by-products of a more serious ailment, but all too often, in desperate efforts to find simple solutions to complex refugee situations, the larger issues surrounding the basic problem, the root cause, are conveniently overlooked.

The Bhutanese crisis, in fact, is often mistakenly seen as a problem solely about refugees. Thus, there are concerted and sincere efforts to "resolve the Bhutanese refugee problem". In the absence of political reforms within the country, however, "solutions" will have little meaning. Unless circumstances change, repatriation is neither likely to be agreed to by the current regime, nor acceptable to refugees. The solution to the problem of Bhutanese refugees must necessarily, therefore, be preceded by change. This may take time, but it is inevitable. The process has already begun and, in the days to come, as events unfolding in the Kingdom are likely to prove, the public demand for democratic reforms will cut across ethnic lines as Bhutanese are emboldened by the safety and security of international focus.

In the latest demonstration of growing discontent in the Kingdom, the Royal Government woke up on May 28 to face disturbing news: the hollowness of the regime's everyone-is-blissfully-happy-with-the-government claim had been rudely shattered by silent posters all over the country screaming out for change. Following in the wake of the stalemate with Nepal on the question of refugees and uncertainty about the future of the bilateral talks - a forum which Thimphu skillfully exploited to both prevaricate and procrastinate - this challenge from within must have been unnerving.

The Royal Government expectedly made no effort to publicise the recent dissident effort. But, in a country where news travels fast official machinery need not have been pressed into service to inform the people, especially since even some policemen were reportedly responsible for sticking the posters. The predicament that the regime has been placed in is understandable - take action against the people and face more dissent or ignore the event and give dissident activists greater confidence.

More than five years ago, faced with a similar dilemma, the regime took action by kidnapping and arbitrarily arresting southern Bhutanese dissidents while keeping a tight lid on information for nearly two years. [Kuensel first touched upon the southern problem in October 1990]. It would be foolish if the authorities tried to get away with a similar strategy now - the dissident network has grown and no arbitrary arrest will now go unreported or unchallenged.

The DNC campaign at the end of the month, which served the dual purpose of sensitizing the public and warning the Government, adds a fresh, but not unexpected, dimension to the Bhutanese crisis. While it would be wholly unfair to suggest that this latest effort is the first serious opposition campaign against the authorities in recent history, it surely must stand out as a forerunner of the most potentially dangerous. In the past, besides handling the usual court intrigues, the regime also successfully suppressed peoples' unrest. From an uprising in Paro in the west, discontent in the east and the demands of the Bhutan State Congress in the south, to the reaction of southern Bhutanese community forced into exile, the authorities have managed to survive. The significance of the DNC campaign lies not so much in the fact that this challenge to authority was spearheaded by a non-Lhotshampa group, but more in the fact that the activity succeeded in all the 20 districts through the active involvement of dissidents in each of these places. This is the first time that the regime is faced with a country-wide dissident activity cutting across ethnic lines.

The success of the poster campaign is a pointer not only to the existence of dissatisfaction among at least some people on a nationwide basis, more importantly, it proves that there are individuals convinced about the need for change and committed enough to the cause to willingly risk their personal freedom and life. While this may appear seemingly inconsequential at first glance, it is a momentous step in the process of opposition dissent in Bhutan. Until today most dissident efforts have always been confined to a single ethnic community or region and have generally been undertaken from a safe distance in exile. The international attention, however limited, that has now been drawn to the Bhutanese crisis makes it difficult for the regime to suppress dissent using the traditionally harsh and barbaric methods. This knowledge has also provided confidence to internal dissidents, encouraging more people to fight for their rights. For a Government which tried desperately to create an ethnic rift and play the ethnic card, with increasing dissidence nationwide, for the first time, it finds itself in a situation when distinguishing friend from foe is not going to be an easy task.

## Democracy and Human Rights

We recognize democracy and human rights to be truly universal values. They have their origin and history in societies on all continents. During the past years, they have become increasingly potent ideals. They have challenged political structures and transformed societies all around the world. We believe, that democracy and human rights will become still more important issues in the coming years, crucial as they are to sustaining development, and vulnerable as they are to failures in development.

The past years saw not only the revolutionary transformation of Eastern Europe, but also, over the decade, the democratic breakthrough in practically all of Latin America. In other parts of the world, demands for greater democracy have developed into strong forces. In Asia, authoritarian regimes have been shaken and forced to political reforms. In Africa, many countries are reassessing and reforming political systems that were instituted after the struggle for independence was won.

There and elsewhere, the political systems are not sufficient to meet people's demand for political participation and desire to see old power structures change. Even in Western Europe and North America, where representative democracy is well established, decreasing participation in elections and the lack of focus on long-term issues indicates the need for a democratic revival.

Democracy and human rights are essential to the prospects of development. Only on the basis of social and economic systems that recognize the potential of the people, on both the social and individual level, can efforts in development have a chance to progress.

While there are examples of authoritarian countries where economic growth has been strong, and while there are examples of countries with free elections where there has been developmental retrogression, it has become clear in one country after the other that certain democratic requisites are crucial to sustain development. Analysis differ on what these requisites are, but certainly the following are necessary parts of the concept: respect for human rights, constitutional government and the rule of law, transparency in the wielding of power, and accountability of those who exercise power.

Democracy cannot develop on external command, it has to evolve as a result of internal demand. Democracy is not a top down approach but has to develop from the grassroots level - from local and communal structures that allow equal participation of men and women to a strong parliamentary representation at the national and federal level.

Nevertheless, we believe that there is a duty for the international community to support the respect for human rights and the development of democracy.

Human solidarity demands it. The imperative of interdependence necessitates it.

Support should be extended first and foremost to the social institutions demanding democratic change. Because civil society is built by the process of development itself, support to democracy, in a general sense, cannot be separated from the way development is supported. That is why failure in development is such a dangerous threat against a democratic development.

It is a serious reality that the conditions endured by many countries undergoing structural adjustment programmes in the interest of economic recovery, create grave political tensions in their societies. If democracy is to be sustained, freedom will have to be harnessed to constitutionalism. But, the rule of law becomes endangered if it is synonymous in the eyes of people with sustained deprivation and with the sense of injustice it breeds. This is not the stuff on which democracy thrives.

As the Report of the South Commission acknowledges, as does e.g. also the OAU "African Charter on Popular Participation in Development and Transformation", without democracy, a people's potential for social and economic development cannot be fully realized. Yet, without tolerable social and economic conditions and a vision of the future that

makes hope plausible, democracy itself will be unsustainable.

A development strategy such as we have suggested is, therefore, crucial to democracy. There are also many ways to give specially directed support to a democratic development. In particular, non-governmental organizations in developing countries should be supported and strengthened. There are, already, a large number of these organizations which have emerged during the 1980s. It is important that they also gain support within their own societies, and get involved in decision-making there.

How the international community should effectively confront undemocratic governments is a problematic issue, as we see presently in the plight of oppressed minorities in Iraq. Sometimes outright sanctions against oppressors have been called for, as in the case of apartheid South Africa. On a global scale and for the longer term, it is, however, dialogue and norms-building that can prove effective in strengthening democracy and human rights. Norms-building came into disrepute as the big powers continued to support dictatorships and undemocratic regimes in their respective fields of influence. They thus polarized the political debate and effectively blocked democratic development in many parts of the world. Today, the situation is different. With the ending of the Cold War, most governments can no longer blame a hostile world for not carrying through domestic democratic

reforms.

The work of the United Nations in its conventions and declarations is more important than is generally given credit for. In the improved international climate, the work of the United Nations in monitoring and promoting respect for human rights can be even more forceful. The increased involvement of the UN organization in supervising elections and the behaviour of countries also in other ways is in itself an important contribution to the building of democratic norms.

Regional organizations will also have an important role to play. The work of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was successful in promoting the legitimacy and respect for human rights and democracy. Because of the confidence that is built through regional security arrangements, opposition by apprehensive regimes to democratic reforms may grow less strong. We believe that similar regional negotiations should be tried also elsewhere.

The strength of observing and judging should not be underestimated - witness the influence of Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists as regards the respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The United Nations should act firmly on the basis of internationally established standards of human rights. There

are, however, situations of transition to democracy where the UN might find it difficult to pass judgment or involve itself. Overseeing elections other than those that are part of a wider process of conflict resolution or decolonization can be difficult for an intergovernmental organization like the UN to handle. To certify fairness in a highly politicized situation is controversial for the UN. The United Nations organization must fully respect the sovereignty of its member nations. At the same time, the surveillance by others of election processes is important and can facilitate democratic transition.

As countries open, many suppressed and unresolved conflicts may appear. National aspirations of peoples and minorities, ethnical strife, religious fundamentalism etc. may prove to be strong forces, strong enough to throw many countries and regions into intolerance, extremism, violence and even war. Leaders of these countries will be faced with difficult options. The risk is real that in certain regions such conflicts will overtake the positive opportunities that have been appearing in the world. A dangerous period of global instability could follow. It only further underlines how urgent it is to press ahead with international cooperation in the fields discussed above.

*Extract from the recommendations of the Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance - The United Nations Charter, April 1991.*



## BHUTAN IN THE NEWS!

### DRAGONS hit the newsstands

The Thunder Dragon from the United States of America and The Dragon Times from Kathmandu are the latest newsletters covering news on Bhutan. While the former is published by the California-based America-Bhutan Council, the latter is a publication of the Youth Organization of Bhutan (YOB) edited by Chenchu Jigme Dorji.

The America-Bhutan Council which was established in 1993 to "promote knowledge and understanding of Bhutan in America and to foster good relations between the two countries" has been authorized by the Royal Government to "undertake activities on its behalf" in pursuit of the Council's objectives. The Thunder Dragon, a glossy quarterly, is intended to inform the people in America about the Kingdom. Or so it states.

The inaugural March 1995 issue contains a collection of good wishes, including one from one of the four Queens, Her Majesty Sangay Chhoden Wangchuck, and also from Her Majesty the Queen Mother. All the heavyweight Lyonpos (ministers) in the Royal Government have also contributed words of encouragement. These serve to authenticate the high and royal connections of Karl G. Springer, the Editor-in-Chief of the quarterly, in Bhutan - and, for good measure, he has also included a number of photographs of himself with them to prove it. In return for their blessings and other help, Springer dutifully allocates adequate space and energy to cover the political crisis in the Kingdom. Naturally, the binoculars are located atop Tashichhodzong. He is ably assisted in this task by

Kuensel Editor-in-Chief Kinley Dorji whose March 11, 1995 editorial on the refugee issue is reproduced, and by Professor Leo Rose whose presentation in Kandy, Sri Lanka (Aug 1993) and New York (Feb 1995) [reviewed in the May 95 issue - Ed], Phoenix-like, appears yet again.

The unusually high level of support for Springer's effort to produce a simple newsletter is revealing. There can be no doubt that Thimphu has found - or founded - a propaganda vehicle meeting its requirements in the United States. But there are further revelations; the regime will not discard its old devious ways and that the dissident movement has grown. Serious Bhutan-watchers may recall an obscure publication from Siliguri in India, The North Bengal Citizen, which faithfully carried the Royal Government's views between 1990 and 1991. The same suave ministers and members of royalty courting Springer may still recall, perhaps with some distaste, having to, quite literally, wine and dine the non-entity who, as long as the regime paid handsomely, produced the tabloid. From Marxist West Bengal to liberal California, from Indian Rupees to U.S. Dollars, from a Rajendra Baid to a Karl Springer... the movement has, indeed, grown.

The Dragon Times, also a quarterly, is published from Kathmandu in a format very similar to The Bhutan Review. While mainly focussing on the activities of YOB, the Times also carries news related to the current crisis in the country and the problem of Bhutanese in exile.

### Views from Ireland

*The Irish Press extensively covered the recent visit of two Bhutanese refugee teachers to Ireland. Some excerpts*

#### CRISIS IN BHUTAN

Two Bhutanese educationalists are currently in Ireland on a visit funded by the INTO Third World Fund. Hari Sharma, headmaster of a primary school in a refugee camp, and Tek Bir Chhetri, who administers the Bhutanese refugee education programme, have been invited to speak to teachers groups in Dublin, Cork, Killarney, Trelee, Waterford, Wexford, Donegal and Kilkenny. They will meet the President, Mrs Robinson, on Thursday.

Since their arrival there has been great interest in their story and, in particular, how they help children who have suffered expulsion from their homeland because of ethnic cleansing.

Bhutan, a small country in the Himalayas, has the highest proportion of refugees in the world, at over one sixth of the population. The Irish Times, Dublin, May 9, 1995.

...REFUGEE EDUCATION

Since 1990, the Royal Government of Bhutan has been evicting thousands of Southern Bhutanese of Nepali descent. At present there are 85,000 refugees in 7 camps in South-Eastern Nepal. Of that number, 30,000 are school-going students. BRECC (Bhutanese Refugee Education Co-ordination Committee) wishes to continue to implement the methods and curriculum employed in Bhutan, despite the students' vastly changed circumstances. This means that the basic curriculum, we were familiar with in Bhutan is still being taught. Part of our job here is to revise and adapt it to suit the students' changed lives. The vast majority of teachers are untrained and would have been High School students before leaving Bhutan.

As they are in a refugee situation, children do not have much work at home so school attendance is quite high. Parents still build and maintain schools

but with adult literacy classes being held in all camps, there is more active involvement by parents in education in general.

#### Basis of hope

Perhaps the most striking feature of education in refugee camps is the fact that it embodies the community's hopes for the future. People, having being made refugees, feel despair and a sense of hopelessness but the one hope they cling to is that their children are given a chance in life.

BRECC has maintained the medium of instruction (English) and the curriculum content that was used in Bhutan in the belief that, once repatriated, students will be able to adjust more easily to school and life back home. In higher classes, students learn Bhutanese history and Geography, keeping up the links with home which otherwise could disappear.

In congested refugee camps, the need for teaching life skills is essential. Farmers and villagers from remote parts from Bhutan have been suddenly thrust into a city-like situation, with the results that the norms and controls which would have guided children are now less powerful. Appropriate programmes for the increasing youth population will be needed... Eilis Kavanagh, Education Today, Summer 1995.

#### Teachers tell of 100,000 Bhutanese forced into exile

More than 100,000 citizens of Bhutan - one-sixths of the country's population - are now refugees, the annual general meeting of Amnesty International heard at the weekend.

The meeting was addressed by two Bhutanese educationalists, both now living in forced exile. Delegates to the conference, held in Kilkenny, later passed a motion condemning violations of human rights in the country and calling on the Department of Foreign Affairs to use all appropriate means to bring pressure on the Bhutanese government for a solution.

The educationalists, Mr Tek Bir Chhetri and Mr Hari Sharma, are now based in Nepal, where most of the refugees have settled. The two men have been touring Ireland and Britain as guests of the Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO).

Bhutan, a country about half the size of Ireland and bordered by India and China, is an absolute monarchy with no written constitution. The current crisis has developed since the mid-1980s, when the king, backed by Bhutan's dominant grouping - the mainly Buddhist Drukpas, of Tibetan origin - introduced strict new citizenship laws.

Thousands who could not meet the new criteria for citizenship were forced to leave the country, and the situation of those who remained worsened in 1989 when the government dropped the Nepali language from the school curriculum and introduced laws enforcing North Bhutanese codes of dress and

etiquette.

A violent crackdown on protests, with allegations of extrajudicial killings, rape and torture, followed, before visits to the country in 1991 by Amnesty International and the Red Cross. The situation had calmed by then, Mr Chhetri told the Irish Times, but the objectives had been achieved.

Since 1991, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has established eight refugee camps in Nepal, and these are now home to most of those who have fled Bhutan. ...

The INTO president, Ms Sally Shiels, who proposed the motion on Bhutan to the Amnesty conference, also urged the Department of Foreign Affairs to put pressure on the Indian government.

Frank McNally, The Irish Times, May 15, 1995.

### "IN QUOTES"

"The United States says that the refugee issue is a very serious problem of Nepal, which has to be resolved soon. We understand the position of Nepal and we believe that its first efforts should be bilateral to find ways for rapid resolution. Refugees have ample documentation as to their origin. It is likely to trigger social problems, including violence. Nepal should provide the international community more information that Thimphu is doing."

Dr. Sandra Vogelgesang, U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, in an interview to The Rising Nepal, May 15, 1995.

"You have not come to Nepal as beggars. You were being persecuted. Be strong. We are with you."

Yugal Sharma, a close associate of Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao talking to the Bhutanese refugees in Beldangi.

## MEDIA SCAN

### The men from God knows where

President Mary Robinson will this morning receive two refugees from Bhutan. You probably won't know where that is. Their names are Tek Bir Chhetri and Hari Prasad Sharma. You probably won't be able to pronounce them. It's awful being a refugee with a name nobody can remember from a country that nobody knows about, trying to draw attention to a struggle that has never been heard of. The two men who will meet the President have a heartbreaking, uphill struggle ahead of them. Good for her that she has taken the time and effort to extend a helping hand to the men from God knows where.

I met these two fellows in Galway three weeks ago under the worst possible conditions. They were at the INTO annual conference, hoping to have a word with journalists. The teachers had voted to go on strike, the Minister for Education was anxious to have her White Paper publicized, parents were concerned about the future of their children, and this couple of foreign strangers wanted publicity about their unheard of cause in the midst of all that? Impossible.

You might wonder why they were at the conference. It's because they are teachers and the INTO has a Third World fund which it uses to bring Bhutanese teachers to Ireland for training in child education. Why does the INTO do that? Because some Irish teachers, keen on working abroad, got jobs in Bhutan years ago. They noticed what was going on, brought word back home and enlisted the help of their union. President Robinson is keen on trade unions and on the Third World - and the INTO's general secretary, Joe O'Toole, is a Senator and he used to work in the Oireachtas with the President in her Senatorial days.

Thus were connections made and hence two obscure refugees, who have been in virtual anonymity in Ireland since April, find themselves this morning talking to the most important citizen in the land.

I wonder how it will go for them. Will they get on television, on radio, onto the front pages of all the national papers, or even into the inside sections? I'm curious because a long time ago I was in a similar situation, as one of a little group of twelve women who went looking for publicity for a cause. My initial foray leaves me laughing still. It was 1970, in Dublin, we wanted to have contraception legalized, and nobody paid us a blind bit of attention - except for English playwrights Margaretta d'Arcy and John Arden, who were living in the depths of Connemara.

...On the journey back to Dublin, where we arrived around four in the morning, Frank told me that "this is how the cause begins. In little ways, among the few, from the centre." All these years later, I can only agree with him and say "Didn't we do well?"

I hope the two Bhutanese who meet the President this morning will someday be able to look back and laugh and say the same. If only they knew - and I'm sure the INTO will tell them - that the President herself, before she was elected to the high office, used to tramp alone up side roads and borens pleading causes that nobody wanted to know about. It is a long road that has no turning, though it can take decades to arrive at a place in the sun.

Neil McCafferty, The Irish Press, May 11, 1995.



**Indian Prime Minister's brother visits refugee camps**

P.V.Manohar Rao, younger brother of Indian Prime Minister P.V.Narasimha Rao alongwith Yugal Sharma, a close associate of the Prime Minister visited the Goldhap refugee camp on May 13 and Beldangi II the next day. Addressing the gathering of camp committee members and elders in Beldangi camp, Yugal Sharma assured the refugees that they were not alone and that they should not lose heart. "You have not come to Nepal as beggars. You were being persecuted. Be strong. We are with you," said Sharma.

In Jhapa, the visitors also separately met with a delegation

of Bhutanese dissident groups. Sharma said that they had met Prime Minister Rao before they left for Nepal to visit the refugee camps and informed the delegation that the Government of India is very much aware of the problem. Noting the lack of adequate media coverage of the Bhutanese issue in India, Sharma assured refugees of his cooperation in this regard.

Prior to their visit to Jhapa, Rao and Sharma also had a meeting with senior representatives of the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) and Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) in Kathmandu.



**Refugee representatives meet Deputy Prime Minister Nepal**

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense and Foreign Affairs of Nepal Madhav Kumar Nepal visited Khudunabari refugee camp on May 20. The Deputy Prime Minister talked to the refugees and inquired about their day to day well-being. Our correspondent from the camp reports that the people did not talk about their present difficulties but instead requested the Deputy Prime Minister for their earliest repatriation.

"We are very grateful to His Majesty's Government of Nepal for providing us food and shelter, but now we would like your assistance in getting us back to our own homes in Bhutan where we can look after ourselves," said one refugee to the visiting dignitary.

Later in the day, a delegation of refugee representatives representing BNDP, BPP, HUROB, AHURA, SUB, ABRAWA and BHA separately called on the Deputy Prime Minister in Chandragadi. On the occasion, Deputy Prime Minister Nepal informed them about the status of the bilateral talks and the steps His Majesty's Government of Nepal intends to take in the future. He reiterated that Bhutan must take back all its citizens and also informed that Nepal has requested the Royal Government to come forward for the verification of the refugees while simultaneously continuing with the bilateral Ministerial level talks.

**Not Allowed to carry out father's last rites**

Lal Bahadur Subba of Gairigaon village under Sibsoo Sub-Division, Samchi district expired during the last week of March 1995. Two days after his death, while his son Rudra Man Subba was carrying out the last rites, the mandal (village head) of the village, Ghallay, accompanied by 5 policemen came to his house. All the important documents available in the house were confiscated by the team and Subba alongwith his wife were asked to leave the country immediately. Subba was told that since his mother was not in F1 category in the census register he could not continue to live in the country. Subba's mother, who had earlier left Lal Bahadur and married another man, had been placed under F4 category during the latest census enumeration.

Subba pleaded that he be permitted atleast to finish the last rites of his father but the officials would not relent. Left with no alternative, Subba was forced to leave the country with his family. They stayed on across the border on the Indian side to complete the last rites of his father. On April 25 they arrived at the refugee screening post in Kakarvita and are now living in Khudunabari (South) camp.

The family's property including 5 acres of land under Thram No. 173 and House bearing No. G2/02 which was registered in the name of the late Lal Bahadur has been seized by the Royal Government.

**BHUTANESE REFUGEE TEACHERS MEET IRISH PRESIDENT**

Two Bhutanese refugee teachers on a month-long visit to Ireland met with Mrs. Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland on May 10, 1995 and took the opportunity to apprise her of the current political crisis in Bhutan and the consequent problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. She was also presented with a painting by one of the children from the Bhutanese refugee camps in Jhapa, Nepal. A professional human rights lawyer and a renowned figure internationally in the area of human rights, the President gave a patient hearing.

Tek Bir Chhetri, presently working with CARITAS/Nepal in the Bhutanese refugee education programme and Hari Sharma, headmaster of the school in Sanischare refugee camp in Jhapa, eastern Nepal were in Ireland at the invitation of the Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO).

The INTO Third World Fund was earlier funding teachers from Bhutan to visit Ireland for study tours and training on child-centered education. However, since the current political crisis in Bhutan began, the sponsors raised

questions since there was lack of clarity in the selection and representation of teachers. In the absence of any positive response from the Royal Government, the programme was discontinued and the INTO began assisting the Bhutanese refugee education programme in Jhapa and Morang districts of Nepal. Besides supporting the study tour and providing other assistance, a few Irish teachers are also involved as resource teachers in the camp schools.

The Bhutanese Refugee Support Group (BRSG) in Ireland, with Brian Tubert as President and Brigid Mayes as the Secretary, set up to highlight the Bhutanese refugee crisis coordinated the visit of the two teachers. Sally Sheils and Senator Joe O'Toole, President and General Secretary respectively of INTO along with other members are also advocating the cause of Bhutanese in exile.

Since the visit by the two refugee representatives to Ireland coincided with the INTO Congress, they were given an opportunity to address the meeting

and also to discuss the Bhutanese problem with the Executive Committee of the organization. Besides addressing various important gatherings and giving interviews to local radio and newspapers, Chhetri and Sharma, during their stay in Ireland also met with a number of important personalities including, Members of the Irish Parliament, Members of European Parliament (MEP), Lord Mayor of Dublin and Junior Minister for Foreign Affairs. It is learnt that Eriq Bryne, member of the Irish Parliament has already raised the issue of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal in the Irish Parliament.

A visit to London was also arranged where the two Bhutanese teachers took part in a Talk Programme organized by Michael Hutt at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). While in London, the two teachers also visited the International Secretariat of the Amnesty International where they met with concerned officials and discussed the refugee problem.

**His Majesty's Government of Nepal and UNHCR sign Agreement**

An amount of Nepalese Rupees 7.235 million will be made available by UNHCR to His Majesty's Government of Nepal under the refugee management programme. An agreement to this effect was signed on May 12 at the Home Ministry by Shriman

Shresta, Joint Secretary in the Home Ministry and Veerapong, Acting Representative of UNHCR office in Kathmandu on behalf of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and UNHCR respectively.

The assistance will be utilized for refugee registration,

distribution of identity cards, and maintaining law and order besides strengthening the administrative capability of the Refugee Coordination Unit of the Home Ministry which is responsible for the management of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

**Bhutanese human rights activists receive training**

Eleven Bhutanese human rights activists participated in a 16-day Training for Trainers programme organized by the South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) in cooperation with the Diplomacy Training Programme (DTP) of the University of New South Wales, Australia. Organized for human rights defenders of the SAARC region, 31 activists from Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka participated in the training programme.

The regional training programme was organized to provide participants with a working knowledge of international and regional human rights norms and mechanisms, including domestic obligations. The course was aimed at developing critical thinking on human rights and democratic development, identification and implementation of relevant human rights programmes and establishment of regional networking, information sharing and solidarity in the field of human rights.

Beginning with the philosophy of human rights, topics covered during the training programme included, among others, international human rights norms, special issues of human rights in the SAARC region, women rights, rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, building democratic institutions and organizing human rights networks. "We are now better

prepared to lobby our case," a Bhutanese participant said before she left for Jhapa to continue grassroots awareness generation activities.

Meanwhile, the Governing Board of SAFHR which, except for Maldives, has two members from each SAARC country, met in Kathmandu from 13 - 14 May and discussed the present activities as well as future programmes of the regional body. During their stay in the capital, the Governing Board members called on Madhav Kumar Nepal, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense and Foreign Affairs of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and apprised him of the activities of SAFHR. The delegation informed the Deputy Prime Minister of the lack of national legislation in the region to register regional organizations and

requested His Majesty's Government of Nepal to initiate necessary steps for such registration.

Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari hosted a tea party for the SAFHR Governing Board Members as well as the trainees on May 15. Speaking informally on the occasion, the Prime Minister discussed the human rights situation in the region and particularly highlighted the plight of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. He said that if Bhutan had any reasons to doubt the authenticity of the refugees, people in the camps should be verified jointly and genuine citizens allowed to return to Bhutan immediately. Prominent human rights activists of the region present on the occasion also took the opportunity to exchange views on possible ways of resolving the refugee crisis.

**REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION**

Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	8,280	2,968
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,986	3,023
Beldangi I	Jhapa	15,007	5,114
Beldangi II	Jhapa	18,833	7,092
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,410	3,327
Sanischare(Pathri)	Morang	17,071	5,858
Khudunabari(N)	Jhapa	7,220	3,904
Khudunabari(S)	Jhapa	3,849	
<b>Total</b>		<b>87,656</b>	<b>31,286</b>

Cumulative births: 6,019  
Cumulative deaths: 2,749

The above figures are as of May 31, 1995.