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ULFA BASE

According official sources quoted in Indian news reports, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and its sister organizations have recently shifted their operational base from Bangladesh to Bhutan.

The struggle of the Bodos, indigenous tribal people in India's north-eastern state of Assam, to carve out a separate state for themselves has spawned a number of dissident groups. ULFA is a major player among the militant groups waging an armed struggle for statehood.

For militants on the run from Indian security forces, the forested foothills of southern Bhutan that adjoin the area of conflict have become convenient safe havens. But although different groups are known to have sought temporary sanctuary in Bhutan since the early 1980s when the separatist struggle took a violent turn, only the Bodo Security Force (BSF) had allegedly established permanent bases and training camps in the kingdom. With the shift of ULFA into Bhutan, the two main militant outfits of the Bodoland movement will now be operating from Bhutanese territory.

In August, Indian lawmakers demanded that India resort to military strikes inside neighbouring countries, including Bhutan, adopting the "doctrine of hot pursuit" to deal with insurgency in the Indian north-east.

DIFFERENT STROKES

Reacting to the political situation days before Taliban forces ousted the Rabbani government from Kabul, officials in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs stated that India viewed the unending civil war as a threat to regional stability and a source of untold misery to Afghan people who have historical affinities with India. New Delhi expressed regret that the current situation has hampered cooperation programmes with Kabul that focussed on areas of direct benefit to the Afghan people.

As the Taliban forces closed in on the capital, the Government of India, in view of the "unstable situation in Afghanistan," expressed the opinion that "all the countries in the region should, along with the United Nations, use their influence to provide peace and stability and conciliation in Afghanistan."

On Bhutan, however, the Indian government holds an altogether different view: the southern problem is an internal matter of the Bhutan, and the refugee crisis is a bilateral issue between Bhutan and Nepal. The Government of India has indicated that she does not wish to get involved in a domestic matter and has, not very helpfully, suggested that the refugee problem be resolved within the bilateral framework. While calling for regional and international inputs to resolve the situation in Afghanistan (prior to the Taliban victory), India, despite the urgings of the international community, has consistently refused to intervene or mediate to help resolve the Bhutanese crisis.

UN adopts CTBT

Bhutan Follows India's Lead, Votes Against

On Tuesday, September 24, US President Bill Clinton signalled the international community's political commitment to end nuclear test explosions forever by being the first to put his signature on a milestone nuclear test ban treaty. The United States was followed by the four other declared nuclear states, China, France, Russia, and Britain, the only nuclear victim state, Japan, and a host of other countries on the first day the treaty was placed for signatures.

The historic global nuclear test ban treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 10. In a near unanimous vote, the resolution on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), introduced in the General Assembly by Australia after the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva failed to convince India to agree to its text, was endorsed by

158 nations. Only three countries voted against (Bhutan, India and Libya) and five states abstained (Cuba, Lebanon, Mauritius, Tanzania and Syria).

The 1963 limited test ban treaty prohibited test explosions in the atmosphere, in outer space and underwater, but permitted them underground. In 1974, a size limit was set for these underground explosions by the threshold test ban treaty. The new treaty bans all test explosions of any kind of nuclear weapons, including underground blasts.

According to the scope of the treaty, the CTBT organization to be headquartered in Vienna, Austria, under a 51-member executive council will oversee a network of 201 monitoring stations established to detect and verify underground, atmospheric or underwater explosions. Requests for inspection by member states to determine whether

test explosions have been carried out by another country must receive 30 votes in the executive council for inspections to be conducted. The treaty will enter into force 180 days after ratification by all 44 countries that have nuclear power or nuclear research reactors on their soil. If ratification is incomplete at the end of three years, countries that have ratified the treaty may accelerate the process, possibly through amending the requirements.

The CTBT has been adopted by an overwhelming margin. It can, however, come into force only if it is signed and ratified by all 44 named countries which possess nuclear reactors, including three nuclear threshold states, India, Israel and Pakistan. India which blocked the Conference on Disarmament from formally transmitting the treaty draft to the General Assembly and voted against on September 10, has vowed not to sign.

Rally in Siliguri

Indian rights organizations, Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR), Support Organization for Bhutanese Refugees (SOBRE) and Manav Adhikar Suraksha Manch (MASUM) staged a rally in Siliguri, West Bengal, on September 6 to protest the deportation of 50 appeal marchers by Bhutan. The refugees, proceeding to Thimphu to deliver an appeal to the Bhutanese monarch, were picked up by the Bhutanese authorities and dumped on Indian soil on August 16.

Addressing the mammoth gathering which included Indian supporters from West Bengal, Assam and Sikkim, as well as thousands of refugees, speakers representing Indian political parties

condemned the action of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The activities of the Bhutanese armed forces in Indian territory infringed on the sovereignty of India, they asserted, and demanded that the Bhutanese authorities take all the peace marchers back to where they were brought from on the morning of August 16.

Representatives of APDR, SOBRE and MASUM criticized the Government of India and the West Bengal state government for keeping silent on the issue and not taking a firm position on the illegal deportation of the 50 peace marchers from Bhutan. At the end of the rally, a three-day *dharna* (sit-in protest) staged in support of the peace marchers was concluded.

Armed 'terrorists' or common criminals?

In a news story headlined **Armed terrorists rob villages, Kuensel**, the government's weekly newspaper, reports armed men entered two villages in Samchi district and robbed several families, in two separate incidents.

A group of armed men reportedly entered Kalang Subba's house in Sibsoo on the night of September 16 and took away "cash and four tolas of gold." The same group also looted Chandrabir Sapkota's house, taking away "citizenship identity cards, land tax receipts, cash, and jewelry."

On the same evening, a separate group of nine, two of them armed with pistols, surprised Sanbir Limbu's family in Chargaray and robbed them of "one gold nose ring, 97 tolas of silver, a wrist watch, cash and household items."

Villages along the Indo-Bhutan border have always been the target of cross-border criminals. In the absence of an adequately trained

and equipped police force to act as a deterrent in the border towns, criminals could undertake their nefarious activities with impunity. Dense forests and a sparse population made the task easier for the raiders. Vehicles and passengers also faced some particularly frightening stretches along the highway parallel to the Indo-Bhutan border where hold-ups, often with violent results, were routine. During the 1970s, this matter was raised by representatives of the south in the National Assembly; they sought government intervention both with respect to strengthening of police outposts and initiation of discussions with the Government of India to help reduce the problem.

Since the beginning of the nineties, with the authorities quick to blame dissidents at every opportunity, the problem has grown alarmingly. Unfortunately, besides 'empowering' unarmed villagers by

Refugees Petition UN

Coinciding with the 25th anniversary of Bhutan's admission to the United Nations in 1971, a petition signed by 12,460 heads of Bhutanese refugee families in camps in eastern Nepal was despatched on September 21 to the UN Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Refugees, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the ten nations that sponsored Bhutan's entry to the world body a quarter of a century ago.

According to a press release issued by the Appeal Movement Coordination Council (AMCC) which organized the signature campaign, the petition calls for the

"Progress is too slow": Raphael

The United States is far from satisfied with the way the Bhutanese refugee issue has dragged on according to Robin Raphael, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia. Raphael was in Nepal during the first week of September on an official visit.

The resolution of the refugee issue is high on the US agenda, Raphael said, but admitted that progress in the Bhutan-Nepal bilateral talks was excruciatingly slow. "We can urge and cajole both Governments but we can't force resolutions," she stated while speaking to the media in Kathmandu on September 6.

The Assistant Secretary expressed the hope that constructive Indian mediation would be forthcoming to resolve the current stalemate because Bhutan and India enjoy a special relationship: "There is a treaty between India and Bhutan and one hopes that they will use it constructively," Raphael said.

immediate intervention of the UN to bring about a peaceful resolution of the Bhutanese refugee problem. Bhutan has consistently failed to abide by the UN charter and has persistently flouted all UN norms and principles set out for the protection and promotion of rights and freedoms of the people. The world body and the countries that supported Bhutan's admission to the UN are morally obliged to intervene in the problem, AMCC has said, and has called on them to urge the Bhutanese government to abide by the principles of the UN charter and to promote the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all Bhutanese.

commanding them to form vigilante groups, the government has done little else to protect the people. True, the security presence has been beefed up many-fold in southern Bhutan but this has been done with a view to control, not protect, the citizens. Not surprisingly, therefore, not a single instance of these forces collaring any criminals has been reported. Instead, even though villagers themselves have managed to apprehend and hand over some looters on a few occasions, by and large criminals have had a free hand, becoming more audacious as the government is clearly content collecting fodder for its propaganda campaign.

Any armed robber terrorizes his victims, it is true. However, all armed groups are not necessarily terrorists. A terrorist, as defined in the dictionary, is a person or group that uses organized violence to secure political ends. To label every violent crime and robbery a terrorist act merely because it takes place in an area where dissident activity is rife, is simply too pat.

The particular *Kuensel* story is, incidentally, interesting. But for the handy eye-catching banner, there is no further mention of dreaded 'terrorists'. Beyond the headline, they are not even loathsome dastardly criminals, just a group of "armed men".

dasain greetings
to all our readers



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The Bhutan REVIEW

NUCLEAR FALLOUT

A decade ago, ignoring Indian sensitivities and persuasion, Bhutan chose to follow her own course by signing the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Times, obviously, have changed. On the same nuclear issue in New York on September 10, the Royal Government conspicuously broke ranks, choosing instead to stand out as one among only three nations to vote against the historic Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In the quarter century since being admitted to the United Nations as a full Member, Bhutan has nearly always followed India's lead while casting her vote. In the early years when India exerted near-total control over Thimphu's affairs, it might not have been an uncommon sight to find a Bhutanese delegate desperately craning to determine how the colleague from New Delhi voted before casting his own vote.

Ten years in the UN and Druk Air changed all that. Thereafter, a snigger here and a chuckle there might still have accompanied the Thunder Dragon's flash on the scoreboard or the Bhutanese delegate's raised hand endorsing an Indian vote, but more often that not, rather than it being a case of blind, unstinted support for the Indian position it was the commonality of interests as immediate neighbours and as two South Asian, non-aligned, third-world developing states which resulted in both countries generally adopting identical voting options. A confident, self-assured Bhutan of the eighties - as distinct from the lazy, carefree attitude of the preceding decade - took a more serious and independent view of where her interests lay and prepared hard to protect and further them. If it so happened that such efforts supplemented the efforts of the Indian delegation, it was all the more advantageous.

It is not surprising, therefore, that there have been but few instances when Bhutan has consciously opted to differ with India in international fora and has cast an opposing vote. While some differences in opinion may have been very deliberate, notably in the Kampuchean resolution, sometimes, as in the case of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the decision to differ from the Indian position might have been less premeditated but was still, nonetheless, not entirely lackadaisical. Undoubtedly, Bhutanese decisions of the 1980s, whether supportive of Indian positions, mostly the case, or differing from the views held by New Delhi, including the decision to sign the NPT, were calculated.

Against this background, the recent CTBT vote is both predictable and surprising. Predictable, because the Royal Government, clearly concluded that the cultivation of Indian goodwill was necessary in view of the need for New Delhi's vital support over the continuing domestic political problem, and determined that siding with India on the CTBT vote was in the regime's best interest. Surprising, because the calculations are so flawed.

If Bhutan wished it to be known that she stood ready to stand by India, come hell or high water, she did not choose an opportune moment to do so. Indeed, the only thing Bhutan together with Libya may have jointly accomplished is to steal from India's moment of glory.

It was a foregone conclusion before the September 10 vote that the treaty would be approved with an overwhelming majority. For her very own reasons, right or wrong, India had committed herself against the treaty and had earned grudging respect for her position. What more could India have asked for but to have it recorded for posterity in the annals of history that she stood proudly and defiantly alone defending her principles against the might of the world; but for the two well-meaning spoilsports, the headlines would have read: "India vs The Rest of the World!"

What did the "Nay" then serve? Now that Bhutan has publicly displayed her loyalty to India by voting against the treaty will India look upon Bhutan any differently or, in its aftermath, cook up an even more magnanimous and selfless policy toward Bhutan in eternal gratitude? Not likely. If Bhutan had voted "Yea", would India have embarked on a ruthless, less friendly policy and drastically reduced financial assistance to her small neighbour? Again, not likely.

Friends are an asset and loyalty is a virtue. But some battles are best fought alone. Especially battles that are impossible to win; battles one knows are already lost but must be pursued to the end regardless. At such times, what is needed from a friend is understanding. Hollow backing, and gestures which make no difference one way or another, and which are made simply for the sake of making them, can never be a measure of friendship or loyalty. At 158-3, India can never be sure whether Bhutan voted along with India as a friend, or as an astute player who did so only because it was clear the vote would not matter.

For all the soul-searching and brainstorming that might have preceded the royal nod for Bhutan to vote against the treaty - a decision which meant going against each and every other 'friend' and generous donor - to the average Indian it did not show: "Only Mr Gaddafi's Libya stood by us. Bhutan, which is the other country to vote against, has its foreign affairs looked after by us." [Letters, *Times of India*, September 20, 1996]. The point is, voting as Bhutan did, in sequentially and against an overwhelming tide, the Royal Government only helped reinforce this fallacy. Or at least what most Bhutanese hoped, until now, was only a fallacy.

Preventing stress among refugees

- Joop T.V.M. de Jong

Post-traumatic stress syndrome can theoretically be prevented by eliminating traumatic events or by reducing their impact. But the psychological consequences of disasters such as war often affect so many people that current models of clinical psychology and psychiatry are inadequate to deal with them. A public mental health approach based on community action is needed to take on stress problems on this enormous scale.

A large international collaborative programme is currently being tested among refugee populations in a number of African and Asian countries, while similar initiatives are being prepared in Europe. The programme has been set up by IPSEER-Amsterdam (Institute for Psychosocial and Socio-Ecological Research) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). It is carried out mainly by local personnel, but if a country or organization requires professional expertise from abroad, the programme recruits international professionals who can support the national staff. At present the programme is being implemented through government and non government agencies in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Gaza, Mozambique and Uganda, and among the Tibetans in India and the Bhutanese in Nepal.

Psychological preventive interventions designed and carried out at the level of the community focus on security and empowerment, in the sense of decreasing dependency, stimulating rural development and strengthening social support.

After surviving a natural disaster or escaping from a war zone, survivors are often further traumatized by attacks from bandits, shelling, ambushes or landmines. In refugee camps, the relief workers and expatriates often live in protected areas, while the refugees are obliged to protect themselves. A simple preventive measure is to create as safe an environment as possible, especially in camps with a majority of women and children.

Head trauma is common among victims of war and torture, and its consequences are often hard to differentiate from post-traumatic stress syndrome. From a medical point of view, security measures can reduce both the neuropsychiatric and the psychological consequences of head trauma.

Dependency syndrome

Refugee camps easily become "total institutions" to the point where a dependency syndrome may develop which reinforces the helplessness that quickly emerges in the wake of war or natural disaster. This can happen especially in camps that reproduce the authoritarian regimes from which the refugees escaped. Refugees should be seen as resilient people living in cultures that have often developed ingenious coping strategies. By empowering the refugees, the IPSEER programme tries to break the vicious cycle of disempowerment; for example, it

tries to stimulate women and men to engage in the management and administration of the area; they are involved in the organization of tasks in the camps including such primary health care activities as filling in vaccination cards, ensuring hygiene, helping with health education, distributing food and helping with education.

Another important example of stress prevention at the community level is the stimulation of rural development, especially among populations that have been displaced for long periods of time. Rural development helps to restore a sense of control and to create a perspective for the future. It also fosters self-reliance by stimulating a sustainable agricultural system and by generating income for refugees. This can be done by setting up small-scale technological projects and by vocational skills training (such as palm-oil presses, leather handicraft, fishing or pottery), improving the water supply, diversifying food and cash crops, or reforestation.

Working with children

Children and their mothers constitute about 50% to 70% of the world's refugee population, especially in less technologically advanced countries.

Preventive interventions include promoting the well-being of children who have suffered intense trauma. Non-professionals can play an important role and are quite capable of running a variety of activities for children, including games, role-playing, drawing, writing and telling stories, music and puppet theatre.

Psychological preventive interventions designed and carried out at the level of the community focus on security and empowerment, in the sense of decreasing dependency, stimulating rural development and strengthening social support.

Another aim of the programme is the selective prevention of disturbed personality development among children. Those with potentially chronic disorders such as silent withdrawals and mutism, hyperactivity with violent behaviour, or chronic regression to an earlier developmental stage are of particular concern. The programme can help them by supporting the social network, strengthening the existing coping skills, and training school teachers. Ideally, orphans or children from disrupted families should be accommodated within their extended families or with foster families, while at the same time efforts are made to determine whether one or both parents are still alive.

Since teachers have daily contact with the children, they get additional training to identify children with serious problems and to develop skills to help them. However, the teachers, and often health workers as well, may themselves be so seriously traumatized that they have difficulty in helping their pupils, so the participants in the training programme first have to learn to work through their own trauma.

Using existing resources

One simple intervention that has an important preventive effect is to improve the basic physical aspects of the camp. This includes ensuring that there is enough water, curbing overcrowding, setting aside land to grow vegetables, making diets more varied, and draining or irrigating the terrain. Similarly, teachers can begin education programmes for children and adults, primary health care workers can provide basic health care, and traditional birth attendants can assist in deliveries and birth control. The programme encourages religious leaders and healers to undertake ceremonies and rituals, and musicians, dancers and story-tellers to organize leisure activities.

It is important for relief workers to identify victims of rape. They receive training on respecting confidentiality, on dealing with the possibility that the victim has contracted a sexually transmitted disease, on ending the social isolation of the victim, and on organizing support groups.

The programme uses a train-the-trainer approach, with trainees gradually becoming trainers themselves, learning how to set up a public mental health programme, how to design a psychosocial and rural development programme, and how to adapt activities to the local culture. Part of this training is based on the WHO/UNHCR manual on refugee mental health.

Experience has shown that prevention of post-traumatic stress syndrome in refugee situations is both feasible and necessary. However, training primary care workers, teachers or relief workers cannot alone compensate for the lack of psychosocial and mental health professionals that still exists in most post-war situations.

A final comment: mental health professionals often feel that they should avoid taking any political position when war or genocide occurs. Many prefer to provide therapy instead of making their views known to the national or international community. Although this attitude may be professionally and politically correct, many colleagues have valuable information to impart on human rights violations or the consequences of wars. In combination with their insight into the psychological mechanisms of escalating conflicts, they possess a powerful means of sensitizing politicians and the community at large.

Prof Joop T.V.M. de Jong is with IPSEER, Free University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Not playing by the rules

"I have the honour, on behalf of the Government of Bhutan, to make application for Bhutan to be admitted to the United Nations Organisation.

2. I should be grateful if you would arrange for this application to be placed before the Security Council and the General Assembly.

3. My Government endorses the purposes and principles stated in the United Nations Charter and declares that it accepts the obligations incumbent upon Members of the Organisation and solemnly undertakes to fulfil them.

4. The Government and people of Bhutan are acutely aware of the proven value of the United Nations Organisation to small and developing nations of the world and consequently attach great importance to membership.

Jigme Dorji Wangchuck
The King of Bhutan"

Bhutan's application for UN membership, 10 December 1970.

"Mr President, it gives me the greatest sense of pleasure to address this Assembly today on the occasion of the admission of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the United Nations. This is a historic occasion for us and marks the realization of one of our most cherished dreams. On behalf of His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the Government and the people of Bhutan, I should like, therefore, to take this opportunity of expressing our deepest gratitude to all Members of this Organization assembled here today, and in particular the Government of India, which has spared no efforts in securing our admission to this free association of sovereign countries. May I, Mr President, also take this opportunity of congratulating you on your election to the high office of President of the General Assembly. We have no doubt that you will guide the deliberations of this session with wisdom and dignity.

It is only a decade or so since we ended our age-old policy of national isolation and opened our country to the outside world. The policy of national isolation was motivated in the past by self-interest due to geo-political considerations and not because of a lack of desire or capacity to play an active role in the international community. The policy served its end and was instrumental in preserving our country's sovereignty and independence. With the changing of circumstances in the world and our desire to participate actively in the functioning of the international community, the policy lost its relevance when we joined the Colombo Plan for Cooperation and Economic Development in South and South-East Asia in 1962.

Our Government and people are fully committed to a policy of modernization, although we are at the same time aware of the importance of preserving our national identity by retaining the best in our ancient culture and tradition. None of us imagine that this will be an easy thing to do - to achieve this fine balance and synthesis - but with all our mind and effort directed towards this goal, we are confident of our success.

As we present before this Assembly a short outline of present developments in our country, it is important to emphasize the fact that all the radical changes in the country have been initiated by the King

himself. In the field of government and administration, it has been our aim to reform our traditional institutions to meet the needs of the present age. Representative institutions like the National Assembly, Council of Ministers and the Royal Advisory Council have been established. The sovereign powers of the Monarch have been voluntarily surrendered to the National Assembly. The judiciary is separated from the executive and a uniform legal code based on custom and present necessity have been introduced.

With technical and financial assistance provided by the Government of India, we have successfully completed two Five-Year Plans and have recently launched a third. The social and economic structure of our country is being built up through these Plans. In implementing all these developmental projects, it has been our constant endeavour that they should not conflict with the existing values of our society, the peace and purity of our natural environment and the right of the individual to pursue his private life without interference.

That we should today have succeeded in gaining admission to this Organization whose aim represents the highest aspirations of mankind, whose contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security has been substantial, and whose work in nation-building has done so much for the progress of mankind, is an occasion of great happiness and rejoicing in my country. I should like to take this opportunity of now expressing our Government's fullest confidence in its ability to participate as an active and useful Member of this Organization and also of its firm resolution to abide by the basic obligations required of its Members as enshrined in its Charter.

My Government is extremely happy that Bahrain and Qatar are being admitted as Members of the United Nations along with my country. I should like to extend our warmest felicitations to the delegations of Bahrain and Qatar on this auspicious occasion.

Before I conclude, may I, Mr President, convey the greetings of His Majesty the King of Bhutan to you and through you to all the delegations assembled here today."

Address by His Royal Highness Namgyal Wangchuck, Minister of Trade and Industries, leader of the Bhutanese delegation to the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 21 September 1971.

September 21, 1971, the day Bhutan was admitted into the United Nations as its 128th member, is a milestone in the nation's history in more ways than one. Until that day, the kingdom's status as a sovereign, independent nation hinged on a single political treaty with India, that too a limiting one in which Bhutan agrees to be "guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations." The kingdom had no other formal bilateral relations, political or economic.

It is true Bhutan had been accepted into the fold of the Colombo Plan as an aid recipient in 1962, and had become a member of the Universal Postal Union in 1969.

But in the absence of wider diplomatic relationships, membership of these two apolitical associations alone was hardly enough to establish a tiny nation's political credentials and ensure its acceptance among nations as an equal. The acceptance and admission into the world body with all the attendant political ramifications was thus crucial for a small, poor nation on the periphery of two large, populous countries.

Admission to the UN is, therefore, an undeniably major landmark in Bhutanese history because the kingdom achieved its objective of gaining recognition - and, by implication, global protection - as a sovereign, independent nation. A far more significant milestone - one which is often overlooked - however, is that, by becoming a part of the global community, the rulers and the Royal Government of Bhutan implicitly agreed to honour the set of universal rules, written and unwritten, that direct general civilized political conduct.

Has the Royal Government lived up to this obligation?

When Bhutan opted to join the world body, the Royal Government elected to forgo her former individualistic ways, agreed to abide by the UN Charter and accepted the attendant obligations. More significantly, by implication, the Bhutanese government agreed to honour and abide by a host of other unwritten rules that ensure political stability among nations. For one, by forcibly expelling certified citizens and denying them the right to return, the Royal Government is guilty of violating a fundamental code of conduct.

Consider for the moment an analogy of a basketball game where a player makes up his own rules. If, beside unilaterally deciding not to bounce the ball as he steps around the court, for example, the player also refuses to acknowledge a team's composition, he can hardly expect to be part of any regular team. But as long as he opts to play by himself within his own court, this odd individual bothers no one. Of course, if a particular action on his part effects play in the main court, such as disturbances arising from his ball landing there, the superior strength and collective will of the majority might lead to imposition of sanctions, such as a ban on his game while matches are in progress in the main courts, and other retaliatory measures, such as confiscation of his ball or even a take-over of his court.

Such a player playing by his own rules has only two choices; he can play alone, or he can join the others by accepting the standard rules and playing according to normal regulations. Playing alone, the loner runs the risk of his ball being snatched from him by a bully, and there is even the possibility that his court might be summarily usurped. If he willingly agrees to join the main body of players, playing by the rules and accepting the necessary obligations as a team-member, he benefits from the expertise, help and protection that the others can provide.

Like the defined court space and the number of players on a basketball team, nations are defined by the recognition of a territory and its people. When Bhutan chose to become a part of the global

community, she accepted this definition of nationhood. Attempts by any one nation to solve its political or economic problems by thrusting its citizens onto another, as Bhutan is seeking to accomplish, contravenes accepted norms because such an action impinges upon the sovereignty of the other. National laws, such as Bhutan's citizenship laws, that do not conform to international legislation cannot be cited to justify breach of conduct. And unilateral labelling of evicted citizens as emigrants, as Bhutan is attempting to do, will not be acceptable as explanations or lead to amicable solutions.

On the 25th anniversary of her admission to the UN, Bhutan must be reminded that she no longer remains ensconced in isolation. If she is to be a part of the global family of nations, then she must respect international laws and norms, failing which the international community must exercise its collective will to compel Bhutan to play by the rules.

"IN QUOTES"

"So, therefore, if there are any differences at all between Bhutan and Nepal on the refugee issue, India feels it must be sorted out by negotiations and consultations bilaterally."

Indian Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral, quoted in *Kuensel*, Thimphu, 17 August 1996.

"All the countries in the region should, along with the United Nations, use their influence to provide peace and stability and conciliation in Afghanistan."

Government of India official, quoted in *Times of India*, New Delhi, 19 September 1996.

MEDIA SCAN

CTBT HAILED

Europe's nuclear powers on Wednesday [September 11, 1996] hailed the adoption of a global nuclear test ban treaty, but expressed hope that dissenting UN members would soon rally to it.

Britain described the UN General Assembly vote endorsing the treaty as an historic achievement and said it would sign on September 24, but expressed dismay at India's refusal to sign.

"It is common with most of the rest of the international community, we were very disappointed by India's decision to block the treaty in Geneva and not to sign the text endorsed yesterday," Britain's Foreign Office said.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was approved by the UN General Assembly on Tuesday [September 10] by 158 votes to 3 with 5 abstentions.

Before coming into force, it must be ratified by the five declared nuclear powers - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - and the nuclear threshold states, India, Pakistan and Israel.

India, which with Bhutan and Libya voted against, argued during the Geneva disarmament negotiations that it should contain a commitment for the five powers to renounce nuclear weapons.

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said talks would continue with India over its position.

"Discussions are going to continue with India to give it the elements of security it needs to sign the CTBT," Charette said.

French President Jacques Chirac described the UN vote as a "great success for the international community," and said he will sign the accord on September 24, the opening of the three year signing period.

"This success will allow us to finally turn the page on the nuclear arms race. It gives future generations the hope of a world free from the threat of nuclear proliferation," Chirac said in comments reported by government spokesman Alain Lamassoure.

Russia also expressed hope that it would be signed by all UN members.

"We are expressing hope that the accord will receive the support of all the UN member countries and that it will be a major contribution in the gradual process towards nuclear-free peace," said foreign ministry spokesman Gennady Tarassov.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said the treaty was a "historic breakthrough," but urged those that voted against or abstained to sign.

"Although an important obstacle has been removed on the path of the definitive abolition of nuclear tests, our goal has not been reached," he said.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjoern Tore Godal said the agreement was an important step in efforts to end the nuclear weapons race and hoped that it would put pressure on those countries that decided not to join.

Australia took the treaty to the United Nations for adoption after India vetoed the text at the disarmament forum in Geneva last month.

Pakistan, which voted for the treaty but will refuse to sign over concerns about India's nuclear ambitions, said its stand achieved diplomatic dividends.

Asia-Pacific nations were quick to welcome the treaty, despite concerns over the potential nuclear flashpoint on the Indian sub-continent.

The CTBT is "a milestone in international efforts to address the threat to global security posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons," Australian Prime Minister John Howard said.

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto called for international pressure to persuade India to accept the CTBT, while China urged the treaty "be respected" by all countries.

AFP, September 11, 1996

Internationalizing the refugee issue

The Bhutanese refugee problem in Nepal started over five years ago. Faced with the crisis of a growing refugee population on her soil, His Majesty's Government of Nepal has acquitted itself fairly. It has successfully met its humanitarian obligation to provide for the basic needs of the refugees through the involvement and cooperation of concerned international and national non-governmental organizations. On the diplomatic front, the international community has been made aware of the situation and the efforts to try and resolve the problem. Domestically too, His Majesty's Government of Nepal was able to secure a national consensus to resolve the refugee tangle. The consensual options were precise and clear. While giving primacy to bilateral talks with Bhutan, it authorized the Government to seek Indian mediation and, if necessary, to internationalize the issue. These options, while all embracing, were also rooted in reality and the desire for good neighbourly relations.

For the refugees, victims of biased and mindless policies and actions of the Royal Government of Bhutan, these systematic sequel of events greatly relieved their anxiety, pain and suffering. This helped them retain their identity and elevate their sagging morale. It strengthened their confidence and raised their hopes of an eventual return to their own homes in honour and dignity.

To the Royal Government of Bhutan, however, no setback or disappointment could have been bigger. With the refugees managing to organize themselves in the camps in Nepal, the Royal Government of Bhutan found that it could not easily absolve itself of its calculated and deliberate wrongdoing. For a government which had schemed a deliberate national policy to depopulate the country of its citizens of Nepalese ethnicity, this was a clear signal that it would not succeed in its design. The regime's belief that citizens forcibly evicted from southern Bhutan would disappear in the Nepalese diaspora in India and Nepal was not to hold true.

It was, perhaps, this realization coupled with the successful diplomatic efforts of His Majesty's Government of Nepal that finally persuaded the Bhutanese authorities to agree, albeit reluctantly, to sort out the problem bilaterally. With some initial ground work, the bilateral process was eventually activated and a Joint Ministerial Committee constituted in July 1993.

THE BILATERAL PROCESS

From the very outset, however, the fragility of the bilateral process was quite evident. Nothing much has been accomplished during the last seven rounds of talks. This is not surprising. For the strategy of the Royal Government of Bhutan has been, all along, to preempt His Majesty's Government of Nepal from exercising any options other than bilateral, and that too at its calling. For the most part, it has wrested the initiative. The Royal Government of Bhutan has arrogantly and stubbornly refused

to recognize the problem realistically, and its position throughout much of this time, has vacillated between defiant denial to humble admittance of the existence of its citizens in the refugee camps, and its responsibility towards them.

Admittedly, negotiation is a process. There are advances and setbacks, the objective always being to achieve an agreement that will meet the legitimate interests of all parties involved, and to resolve conflicting interests in a fair and durable manner. Talks for their own sake, however, cannot be sufficient justification for continuing them. Discussions must lead somewhere, and must act as means to achieve the desired end. The bilateral process has fallen short here. The Royal Government of Bhutan has taken every gesture of goodwill or concession made by His Majesty's Government of Nepal during the negotiation as a sign of weakness. It sees the situation as a contest of wills in which the side that holds out longer fares better. The last round in April 1996 clearly demonstrated the futility of exclusively continuing with the bilateral process.

In the aftermath of the failure of the latest round, the mood in the refugee camps has varied from disappointment to outright disillusionment. The fear of an uncertain future has once again gripped the refugees. This disappointment has also been acutely felt and reflected in Nepal, both at the level of the general public, intellectuals and academicians, and at the governmental level. Fortunately, this concern extends further beyond the parties directly involved. The international community, which hitherto found the bilateral talks a convenient excuse for not initiating any affirmative action, is now faced with the reality, forcing them to rethink and reformulate their own positions. After all, they too have an interest in seeing the situation resolved. Hence there is a renewed interest in the refugee situation imparting a sense of urgency in resolving the problem. Questions are now being asked: What next? Which of the other two options? and When? For all its show of bravado, the Royal Government of Bhutan also cannot but recognize the negative implication of the failed seventh round of talks. The initiative now truly rests with His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

INDIAN MEDIATION

The solution to the problem can be found within the parameters of the three consensual options: bilateral, Indian mediation and internationalization. Given the inadequacy of the bilateral mechanism, opinions are that the other options must necessarily be activated to achieve a lasting solution to the refugee problem. These three options are, however, not mutually exclusive. They are not a stage by stage prescription for resolving the refugee crisis. Rather they are mutually inclusive, reinforcing each other. All these options must, therefore, be simultaneously pursued for them to be effective. Arguably, Indian

mediation, on its own, is the option that can, if the Government of India wishes, effectively contribute towards resolving the situation. Unfortunately, there are no signals that such mediation would be immediately forthcoming.

The Government of India has all along publicly made it known that the problem is of a bilateral nature to be resolved by the Governments of Nepal and Bhutan. Indeed, the problem, on the surface, appears to concern only the Governments of Nepal and Bhutan. Yet the position of the Government of India cannot be ignored given its geo-political interest in the region and its bilateral relations with both countries. Its public position notwithstanding, the Government of India has, and will continue to have, a deep interest in the situation and the manner in which it is eventually resolved. At the same time, even as it publicly disassociates itself from this problem, to consolidate her interest and position vis-a-vis Bhutan, and to determine if and when it should take an official position, the Government of India continues to monitor both the situation within Bhutan and the progress of the talks.

As regards the consolidation of her interests, India will find it easier to extract further concessions from a weakened Bhutan. With increasing international pressure building up, the regime in Bhutan has become even more dependent on the support of the Government of India. On the one hand, the Government of India will thus continue to implicitly support the regime in Bhutan in its process of consolidation. On the other, with its democratic traditions, the Government of India will be careful not to be seen to be explicitly subverting the democratic aspirations of the people. The Government of India has no special regard for the regime, and it is not against the aspirations of the people either. Its policy is basically geared towards extracting maximum gains during this period of uncertainty in the Kingdom. An immediate change in the current Indian policy cannot therefore be envisaged.

INTERNATIONALIZATION

Under the circumstances, with the bilateral process expectedly faltering and Indian intervention not yet forthcoming, internationalization seems to be the only option. A considerable body clearly favours this alternative. To a large extent, of course, internationalization by default has already taken place. The flow of international humanitarian assistance for the refugees, and the involvement of various international non-governmental agencies corroborate this truth. Perhaps, the emphasis here is a misplaced idea among some that this issue needs to be 'internationalized' by being introduced directly and formally to the United Nations (UN). If such a step is being contemplated, a cautionary note might not be out of place.

As has been proven often enough, the UN certainly is no panacea for all disputes among peoples and between States. Sadly,

the track record of the UN in settling disputes and resolving crises does not inspire much confidence. Even after decades in the UN many problems have remained unresolved. Instead, country positions have hardened, issues have become protracted and debates have turned arcane and acrimonious degenerating into sharp and angry accusations. Thus, what might be advisable in this instance, to allow for meaningful inter and extra-regional intervention and provide place for collective measures to resolve this refugee problem, is internationalization short of formally referring the problem to the UN.

This process of internationalization must take the form of properly sensitizing the international community, particularly the donor community for Bhutan including India, to the causes which have led to the refugee situation in Nepal. Far too often, it has been observed, there is too much emphasis on the humanitarian aspect of the problem and the suffering of people in the refugee camps, and too little on the legal and political aspects of the crisis. The foul motives of the current regime in Bhutan which led it to resort to depopulation of southern Bhutan and the unlawful manner in which this task of evicting lawful citizens was accomplished has not been adequately addressed. Consequently, and completely erroneously, what the international community currently is left debating is the "legal right" of the government to act in its interests versus the purely "moral and humanitarian" question of refugees suffering in the process. That, of course, is far from being the case.

It may also be worthwhile noting here that Bhutan has expended much resources and efforts in cultivating the media and the international community, especially its major traditional donors, to woo support for its heartless policies and actions. Thanks to a brilliantly conceived strategy and well-implemented disinformation campaign, the charm of Shangrila and the alleged threat to its unique culture have now been deeply and indelibly imprinted in the minds of most representatives of the international community invited to visit Bhutan. Hence, while the harsh reality of the suffering of refugees might temper their views somewhat, so far governments, especially the donors, have formulated their

policies on the political problem in Bhutan and the issue of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal based primarily on inputs received from the regime by softened representatives. Consequently, most donors have quietly continued to go along with Thimphu, the 'model aid recipient', rather than Kathmandu.

If Nepal desires that the international community take a more focussed view of the refugee problem and help her get rid of these unwanted guests by intervening directly or indirectly in the matter, then His Majesty's Government, at the least, must take the necessary steps to try and break the mystical hold that the regime clearly has over individuals and governments that matter. Serious efforts must be made to compel Bhutan's donors to undertake a fresh and objective review of the problem and alter their perceptions in the light of other truths and realities. The international community must be called upon to look beyond the humanitarian aspects of the refugee situation and focus on the validity and legality of the steps adopted by the Royal Government of Bhutan in forcibly expelling citizens and denying them the right to return.

This 'internationalization' endeavour must have as its end objective the following: the correction of any misperception fuelled by the Royal Government of Bhutan; stepping-up of international pressure on Bhutan; friendly persuasion by the donor community on India to exercise its considerable influence on Bhutan; and ensuring that the international community supplements and compliments the efforts of His Majesty's Government of Nepal towards amicably resolving the problem. Considering the adamant posture of the Royal Government of Bhutan, Nepal will need all the help it can get from the international community to send the Bhutanese refugees back to Bhutan with dignity and honour. For His Majesty's Government to bring these governments around, it must stand ready and willing to expend as much time and resources to project and present her side of the argument as Bhutan now does. For starters, the current *laissez-faire* approach must be quickly replaced by concentrated efforts to communicate directly and effectively at the highest levels with policy-makers and other relevant representatives of select governments.

REFUGEE CAMP STATISTICS			
Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	8,644	3,176
Goldhap	Jhapa	8,233	3,085
Beldangi I	Jhapa	15,675	5,219
Beldangi II	Jhapa	19,601	7,562
Beldangi Ext	Jhapa	9,822	3,385
Sanischare (Pathri)	Morong	17,874	6,363
Khudunabari	Jhapa	11,494	4,322
Total		91,343	33,112
Cumulative Births		11,549	
Cumulative Deaths		3,342	
The above figures are as of September 30, 1996			