

# The Bhutan REVIEW

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## NEPAL-BHUTAN TALKS

The failure of bilateral talks at the Seventh SAARC Summit between Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala of Nepal and King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan to work towards an amicable solution to the Bhutanese refugees problem in Nepal appeared to have firmly closed the doors to further diplomatic exercises between Kathmandu and Thimphu. The lull, however, did not last for too long. In spite of the deadlock, Prime Minister Koirala in a letter to the King of Bhutan at the end of April offered to "continue bilateral dialogue with an open mind to solve the problem of Bhutanese refugees." In response, at the end of May King Jigme invited a ministerial level delegation to Thimphu.

The Nepalese delegation to be led by Home Minister Sher Bahadur Deupa was expected to depart for Thimphu on June 3. However, in view of Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's abruptly scheduled visit to the Bhutanese capital on June 4 and 5, the programme had to be postponed. Prime Minister Rao's visit, rescheduled for 8-9 June, was later deferred indefinitely owing to illness. Consequently, the visit of the Nepalese delegation was put off until after the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

Expected to take place during the first week of July 1993, the ministerial level dialogue has now been pushed further back in view of Home Minister Deupa being unavoidably tied up with domestic issues. With the Bhutanese government engaged in deliberations in the 72nd National Assembly during the middle of July, both Indo-Bhutan discussions and the resumption of the stalled Bhutan-Nepal talks on Bhutanese refugees are likely to take place only towards the end of July.

## SEVENTY SECOND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The 72nd Session of the Bhutanese National Assembly is scheduled to begin in Thimphu on July 8. In view of "field preparations" for this session undertaken in recent months by district officials in the south, the proceedings of the 72nd session cannot be expected to deliver any surprises. The handful of members from the south (14 in a house of 150) are expected to dutifully move the motion that none from the refugee camps in Nepal be allowed to ever set foot again on sacred Bhutanese soil, even if it means that their own immediate relatives are barred from returning home; regime loyalists will detect true emotion, sentiment, truth and sincerity in the statements of speakers who "insist" that their own kith and kin not be permitted to return; and the official media will obediently report on the "emotion-charged" deliberations.



HUROB General Secretary Om Dhungel with AI Secretary General Pierre Sane at the WCHR in Vienna

## HUROB AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHT

A two member HUROB delegation returned recently to Kathmandu after participating in the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights and other parallel non-governmental organization (NGO) activities held in Vienna, Austria from 10-25 June 1993. Official representatives from 171 countries and over 2700 individuals representing around 1300 NGOs from all over the world

attended the NGO Forum and the World Conference. The HUROB delegation, which also visited Switzerland, met with a number of government and agency representatives and took the opportunity to highlight the political crisis in Bhutan and the plight of Bhutanese in exile. HUROB distributed a document "Bhutan's Southern Problem - The Genesis" prepared especially for distribution

at the Conference.

The Bhutanese government delegation led by Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering included the Permanent Representative to the U.N. in Geneva and two other Foreign Ministry officials. The government delegation is believed to have expressed dismay at being outnumbered at the Conference by dissidents who, including the HUROB members, totalled five.

## U.S. CONGRESSMEN WRITE TO KING JIGME

Bhutanese refugees and the Bhutanese issue are not entirely alien subjects around Capitol Hill. In addition to State Department and Embassy officials, a number of Washington D.C.-based U.S. human rights groups and refugee-related organizations have despatched fact-finding missions to the Bhutanese refugee camps. Visitors include Dennis Gallagher of Refugee Policy Group, Lionel Rosenblatt of Refugees International and Hiram A. Ruiz of the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR). In the 1993 World Refugees Survey by the USCR, the Bhutanese government has been charged with responding harshly to

The following is the full text of the letter :

*His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck,  
King of Bhutan,  
Royal Palace,  
Thimphu, Bhutan.*

*Your Majesty,  
We are writing to express our concern regarding the Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin who have fled the southern region of your country.*

*A number of reports reaching the United States indicate that the refugees have been forced from their homes after being subjected to intense pressure by military and police forces and other authorities in Bhutan. In many cases, the refugees' ancestors have been living in Bhutan for centuries, and they are being pressured to leave because of their ethnicity. Approximately 100,000 Bhutanese are in refugee camps in Nepal and many others in India.*

*We ask that you do everything in your power to end the practice of pressuring Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese ancestry to leave their homes in Bhutan, and we ask that you work with the government of Nepal to facilitate the return to Bhutan of those who have been forced to flee. We also ask that all discriminatory practices toward minorities in your country cease and that you move decisively to end the use of torture against those held in police custody.*

*We understand your government sent an official representative to the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna this month. We trust this is an indication that your government is concerned about human rights issues. It is in this spirit, and in recognition of the fact that human rights is becoming a greater concern for the world community as we approach a new millennium, that we write and ask that you take concrete steps to address the issue of Bhutanese civilians forced from their homes. Your attention to this matter would make clear that your government takes seriously the need to adhere to an acceptable standard for human rights.*  
Sincerely,

## RAO'S BHUTAN VISIT

Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, whose sudden programme to visit Bhutan during the first week of June was cancelled due to illness, is now scheduled to visit Bhutan during the third week of July. Although no formal announcement has been made by New Delhi, according to Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering in Vienna, Rao is scheduled to arrive in Thimphu on July 18. In the light of recent developments in the Indian capital, however, this new itinerary could also suffer further revision.

In view of the urgency displayed in the programming of the Indian Prime Minister's visit to the Kingdom, there is no doubt that current Bhutanese politics and the issue of Bhutanese refugees will feature prominently in the talks between the two leaders. In this context, it is unfortunate that ill-health prevented Rao from sharing New Delhi's perceptions with the King prior to the 72nd National Assembly. Had this sequence not been disturbed, the posture of the regime in the Assembly would have taken on added significance and, in view of the faintly discernible signals for change emanating from Delhi, possibly comforted the large body of worried and sorely-tested Bhutanese inside.

## TEK NATH RIZAL TODAY'S PRISONER-OF-CONSCIENCE ON BBC

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) featured Tek Nath Rizal as the day's Prisoner-Of-Conscience for June 24, 1993 in the programme "Outlook" presented by John Tidmarsh. Abducted by Bhutanese government agents from Birtamod, Jhapa in southeast Nepal on November 15, 1989, Rizal has now completed 43 months of unlawful detention, mostly in shackles and solitary confinement. In response to concerns expressed by Amnesty International regarding the illegal detention of prisoners over prolonged periods without charges, the Royal Government of Bhutan announced the trial of Rizal with great fanfare at the end of December 1992. The nine specific charges, including sedition and treason, levelled against Rizal were framed primarily on the basis of events and incidents that occurred during his incarceration. Recognizing subsequently that the fabricated charges are untenable, reversing its earlier decision to provide extensive publicity, the regime has opted instead for a low-key and deliberately tardy trial. Meanwhile, the 200-odd prisoners in Chemgang prison and numerous others housed in prisons elsewhere, many of whom are also starting their fourth year in detention without charges, have been conveniently forgotten.

[Transcript on Page 2]



# EDITORIAL

## ALL HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL

In the meeting organized to protect the environment and save Planet Earth, a year ago Rio played host to 121 Heads of State. In contrast, to protect the human inhabitants of Planet Earth, Vienna and the two-years-in-the-making United Nations World Conference on Human Rights, not meriting Summit status, did not feature on the itinerary of world leaders. Consequently, the most crucial meeting in 25 years to address issues related to the human being as an individual and as a part of a larger society appeared distinctly to lack appropriate commitment. Despite this, and initial concerns that the Conference could be bogged down with the questioning of the very fundamental concepts enshrined in the Universal Declaration, in the end a consensus did develop.

Although the end product, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, provides a reasonable basis upon which more substantive mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights can be built in future, the vaunted peoples' power in the form of non-governmental organizations can take little credit even for these modest gains since their role and inputs were, sadly, minimal. There were, of course, exceptions. With a set agenda and specific proposals, Amnesty International (AI) came well prepared and remained visible with a large group of staff and volunteers running daily parallel activities. But, more significantly, starting with a hard hitting speech from the floor at the opening Plenary session of the NGO Forum and maintaining his aggressive no-holds-barred position throughout the duration of the Conference, AI Secretary General Pierre Sané made a tremendous impact speaking with conviction and emotion for all victims of human rights violations throughout the world.

But generally, beginning with an NGO Forum that lacked direction and thrust, and was used, instead, as an opportunity for various interest groups to air rhetorics and make disjointed declarations, the best of opportunities were wasted by the NGOs. The absence of a basic working document, complete disregard for outcomes of regional preparatory meetings, and an agenda that permitted discussions of fundamentals, all combined to ensure that the NGO Forum could be 'gainfully' misutilized, resulting in discussions that centered on every violation of every right of every interest group; in the process, the more serious issue of inputs to the World Conference suffered badly.

The proliferation of the misconception that every NGO must necessarily by default take an anti-government stand, and coinage of perceived uncomplimentary acronyms such as GONGOs (Government Organized NGOs), may also have played some part in ensuring the lack of impact of NGOs in Vienna. Nonsensical as this skewed perception may appear, given the special conference media's willingness to buy the theme, it would have required a bold southern NGO representative to lobby his own government delegation on any issue of international humanitarian concern.

A very assertive United States providing unstinting support for NGO efforts and some other western governments committed to making the deliberations as transparent as possible ensured that the various obstacles placed on NGO participation had only marginal impact. Nonetheless, the large gathering of grassroots champions of human rights were of little help; without a properly defined group position and the existence, instead, of a plethora of individual NGO objectives, it was not surprising that major breakthroughs, such as the establishment of a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and proposed International Criminal Court, did not materialize.

## SPELLING CHANGES

Until recently the southern region of Bhutan, kept culturally, politically and administratively isolated from the Bhutanese mainstream by design and policy on the part of the government, still displayed the complete mosaic of Nepali hill culture. Even as Nepal itself, and the hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim, caved in under "modern" influences and communities shed much of their defining characteristics, in villages that had distinctly Nepali names; Lapsibotay, Daragaon, Kalikhola, Rateypani, Khorsanay, Suintalay etc., southern Bhutan mostly retained the typical way of life of nineteenth century eastern Nepal. Around ten years ago, an enthusiastic local administration in Chirang district rechristened most villages; dzongkha sounding names were coined and overnight Lapsibotay became Goseling while Bokray was suddenly Kikorthing. For official purposes the new names in Chirang stuck, but other southern districts still had their Toribaris, Gairigaons and Noonpanis, a clear indication that although the actions of the administration in Chirang were tacitly approved by the central government, a definite national policy for renaming every place in southern Bhutan was not yet in place.

Lately, however, the renaming virus appears to have spread at an alarming rate in the southern region. New names have been coined for most villages in Samdrup Jongkhar while the names of three districts are spelt differently; Samchi is now Samtse, Sarbhang is Sarpang and Chirang is Tsherang. None of the changes have been accompanied by official government notifications; instead, a subtle diffusion process is underway with the new names and spellings being unobtrusively introduced in the Kuensel. In its desperate bid to erase every trace of ethnic Nepalese habitation, the regime is taking utmost care. But people do not easily forget their land and homes, howsoever one may hope to confuse them with new names and contorted spellings. More than two decades later people have not forgotten that Gaylephug is Hatisar, or that it is Neoli which is now Samdrup Jongkhar. Instead of politically motivated changes in spelling, Thimphu would do well to motivate itself to spelling political changes.

## THE RIGHT TO REMAIN

Excerpts from recent statements by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata.

### MARCH 3, 1993 : COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS, GENEVA

The issue of human rights and the problems of refugees are so inextricably linked that it is hardly possible to discuss one without referring to the other. Human rights violations are a major cause of refugee flows and also a major obstacle to the solution of the refugee problems through voluntary repatriation.

More positively, safeguarding human rights is the best way to prevent conditions that force people to become refugees; respect for human rights is a key element in the protection of refugees in their country of asylum; and the improved observance of human rights standards is often critical for the solution of refugee problems by enabling refugees to return safely home...

There are unfortunately too many instances where human rights have been or are being deliberately violated with the aim of expelling whole groups of people from their homes and from their country... UNHCR is providing assistance not only to refugees and the displaced, but also to people who are under direct threat of expulsion either through military

attack or through the form of persecution referred to as "ethnic cleansing." The atrocities that are the instruments of this policy include murder, torture, mutilation and rape. Despite all our efforts, they continue even now. And this unfortunately is only one example of the threats worldwide to the human right to remain.

In speaking of "the right to remain," I mean to underline the need to protect the basic right of the individual not to be forced into exile and to emphasize an aspect of human rights that deserves further development in connection with our efforts to address the causes of refugee flight. The right to remain is implicit in the right to leave one's country and to return there. In its simplest form it could be said to include the right to freedom of movement and residence within one's own country. It is inherent in Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary exile. It is also linked to other fundamental human rights because when people are forced to leave their

homes, a whole range of other rights are threatened, including the right to life, liberty and security of the person, non-discrimination, the right not to be subjected to torture or degrading treatment, the right to privacy and family life.

If I, as the High Commissioner for Refugees, emphasize the right *not* to become a refugee, it is because I know that the international protection that UNHCR, in cooperation with countries of asylum, can offer to refugees is not an adequate substitute for the protection that they should have received from their own governments in their own countries. The generosity of asylum countries cannot fully replace the loss of a homeland or relieve the pain of exile. In this period of heightened tensions between various groups within countries and growing threats of conflicts whose primary aim is to force one group of people to leave territory shared with another, the question of how to enforce people's right to remain, to have their rights respected where they are, and not have to flee to find protection, has become urgent...

### JUNE 15, 1993 : WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, VIENNA

Respect for human rights is crucial for the admission and effective protection of refugees in countries of asylum; improvements in the human rights situation in the countries of origin are essential for the solution of refugee problems through voluntary repatriation; and safeguarding human rights in home countries is the best way to prevent conditions that might otherwise force people to become refugees. Each of these aspects of the refugee problem may be seen from a different human rights perspective. I will discuss these aspects under the three themes of the right to seek and enjoy asylum, the right to return and the right to remain...

**RIGHT TO SEEK AND ENJOY ASYLUM:** Securing asylum for people who are forced to flee violence and human rights abuses in their own countries is at the heart of my Office's function to provide international protection. The right to seek and to enjoy asylum is proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 14)...

**RIGHT TO RETURN:**...In terms of human rights norms, the right to return to one's country is proclaimed in the Universal Declaration (Article 13.2) together with the right to leave any country, including one's own. The responsibility lies with the countries of origin to do what is necessary to enable refugees to freely exercise this right...

Refugees have fled their homes and their homelands for compelling reasons, which include violence and human rights abuses. For them to return home safely and voluntarily, there must be a significant change in the conditions which caused their flight. There must be both peace and respect for their human rights. Assuring these requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the political, security, human rights, humanitarian and development aspects of the problem...

**RIGHT TO REMAIN:**...When people have to leave their homes to escape persecution or armed conflict, a whole range of human rights are violated, including the right to

life, liberty and security of person, the right not to be subjected to torture or other degrading treatment, the right to privacy and family life, the right to freedom of movement and residence, and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary exile...How to secure people's right to remain at home in the face of such onslaughts, how to be vigilant in our defense of tolerance and human rights for all those who live among us: these are urgent questions facing the international community, to which, I regret to say, we have yet to find an adequate response...

I call upon this Conference to reaffirm the right of refugees to seek and enjoy asylum, and to return home in safety and dignity. I call upon this Conference to reaffirm the right of all peoples to remain in peace and security in their own homes. Above all, I call upon the World Conference to forge a consensus on concrete, practical and action-oriented measures which will make the ideals of human rights into everyday reality.

## BBC TRANSCRIPT

Excerpts from BBC radio programme "Outlook", monitored at 1400 hrs GMT on June 24, 1993

**TIDMARSH:** To tell the story of Tek Nath Rizal we contacted someone in South Africa who was himself twice in prisons on the notorious Robin Island, the second time after being abducted from Swaziland by South African agents. Ibrahim Ismail Ibrahim became an activist in the struggle against apartheid when he was still no more than a child... Now that once again you are free, you are obviously very much aware of prisoners-of-conscience who are around the world, who are suffering as much you suffered for so many years.

**IBRAHIM:** I think I have a special relationship with prisoners-of-conscience like Tek Nath Rizal. He struggled for the people in Bhutan and he himself was kidnapped by the Bhutanese government. I think people like Tek Nath Rizal who has played an important role there because he was elected in the National Assembly in 1975 and he served three terms. He was expelled from the Royal Academy [Advisory] Council in 1988, after making remarks critical of the government's policy of evicting Nepalese speaking Bhutanese from their land. Tek Nath Rizal then moved with his family to Nepal. In 1989 Bhutanese officials crossed the border into Nepal, seized Tek and took him back to his native country where he was accused of sedition and treason. He is now held without charge. And what is very shocking about it was that he was in solitary confinement for three years in shackles. Now I know the experience of solitary confinement because when I was abducted from Swaziland, for five months I was in solitary confinement under very severe torture, and I know what he has gone through. People like Tek Nath Rizal symbolizes the unbreakable human spirit, the spirit of sacrifice, of resistance to oppression. And, it is important that the whole world should seriously protest against the continued detention of Tek Nath Rizal, and demand his immediate release. And it is important that the voice of the international community must always be heard loud and clear in support of political prisoners throughout the world.



**UNITED NATIONS WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
SUMMARY OF VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

**PART I - PREAMBLE**

Promotion and protection of human rights a priority for the international community; All human rights derive from the dignity and worth inherent in the human person; Commitment to purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; Concerned over violence and discrimination against women; Welcomes 1993 as the Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples; Recognizes need to enhance and strengthen UN machinery in the field of human rights; Recognizes need to remove current obstacles and meet the challenges to the full realization of all human rights; Invoking spirit of rededication to the global task of promoting and protecting all human rights and fundamental freedoms, determines to take new steps forward to achieve substantial progress in human rights endeavours by an increased and sustained effort of international cooperation and solidarity;

**PART II**

The universal nature of human rights and fundamental freedoms is beyond question; All peoples have the right of self-determination; The promotion and protection of all human rights is a legitimate concern of the international community and a priority objective for the purposes of international cooperation; All human rights are universal, indivisible, inter-dependent and inter-related: while bearing in mind national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms; The process of promoting and protecting human rights should be conducted in conformity with the United Nations Charter, and international law; Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing; promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms should be conducted without conditions attached; The right to development is a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, but lack of development may not be invoked to justify the abridgement of internationally recognized human rights; Cooperation needed in the prevention of illicit dumping of toxic wastes and with respect to certain advances in biomedical and life sciences as well as information technology which may have potentially adverse consequences for the human rights of individuals; The international community should make all efforts to assist in the alleviation of external debt burden of developing countries; accord high priority to the immediate alleviation and eventual elimination of poverty since extreme poverty inhibits full

enjoyment of human rights; States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations need to cooperate to create conditions favourable for full and effective enjoyment of human rights; Elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance is a priority task for the international community; Governments should take effective measures to prevent and combat them; The progress in dismantling apartheid is welcome, but continuing acts of violence aimed at undermining the quest for peaceful dismantling of apartheid are deplorable; The international community should take necessary steps to enhance cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism; The rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights; eradication of all forms of discrimination based on sex are priority objectives of the international community; Gender-based violence, harassment and exploitation must be eliminated; the human rights of women should form an integral part of the UN human rights activities; efforts must be intensified for the protection and promotion of human rights of women and the girl-child; Minorities must be allowed to exercise fully and effectively all human rights; persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion and to use their own language without interference or any form of discrimination; Concerted positive steps must be taken to ensure the respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people; The Convention on the Rights of the Child should be universally ratified by 1995; national and international mechanisms and programmes for the defense and protection of children, in particular the girl-child, should be strengthened; Special attention needed to ensure non-discrimination and the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by disabled persons; The human rights of vulnerable groups, including migrant workers, must be promoted and protected; Everyone, without distinction of any kind, is entitled to the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution, as well as the right to return to one's country; gross violation of human rights, including in armed conflicts, are among the multiple and complex factors leading to displacement of people; the root causes and effects of movement of refugees must be addressed and response mechanisms developed for durable preferred solutions through dignified and voluntary repatriation; Massive violations especially in the form of genocide, "ethnic cleansing" and systematic rape of women, creating mass exodus of refugees is condemned; such practices must be

immediately stopped and perpetrators of such crimes punished; Lack of rule of law and gross and systematic violations, including torture, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, summary and arbitrary executions, disappearances, arbitrary detentions, all forms of racism and racial discrimination etc., in different parts of the world is condemned; Independent administration of justice is a priority; every State should provide effective framework of remedies to redress human rights grievances or violations; The role of NGOs in the promotion of human rights is recognized; NGOs should be free to carry out their human rights activities, without interference; Increased involvement of the media is encouraged for impartial information about human rights and humanitarian issues; the media should have freedom and receive protection within the framework of national law;

**PART III**

There must be increased coordination within the UN system in support of human rights and fundamental freedoms; Concerted efforts are recommended to ensure universal acceptance of international human rights treaties and protocols; A larger role for the United Nations Centre for Human Rights is proposed; strengthening of the Centre with increased resource allocation is recommended; The necessity for continuing adaptation of the UN human rights machinery is recognized; it is recommended that the question of establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights be considered on a priority basis during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly; All States are urged to put an end to the practice of torture and eradicate this evil for ever; States are called upon to take effective measures, legislative, administrative, judicial or others, to prevent, terminate and punish acts of enforced disappearances; Priority for national and international actions to promote democracy, development and human rights is recommended with emphasis and assistance for strengthening and building institutions relating to human rights, strengthening of a pluralistic civil society, protection of groups which have been rendered vulnerable, strengthening the rule of law, promotion of freedom of expression and the administration of justice; Each State should consider the desirability of drawing up a National Action Plan identifying steps needed to improve the protection and promotion of human rights in that State; NGOs and other grass-roots organizations should be enabled to contribute to debates, activities and implementation relating to the right to development; Human rights education covering human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and the rule of law should

be subjects of study in all States in both formal and non-formal settings; Governments are urged to incorporate standards as contained in international human rights instruments in domestic legislations; A more active role for the UN is recommended to ensure full respect for humanitarian law in all situations of armed conflict; Recommends proclaiming UN Decade for Human Rights; Recommends that all States, agencies of the UN system related to human rights, and other human rights institutions be invited to submit a report on the progress made in the implementation of the final document of the World Conference, especially with regard to the goal of universal ratification of international human rights treaties and protocols, to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session which will mark the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**"IN QUOTES"**

"The administration views the World Conference as a major opportunity to show U.S. support for the popular movements for freedom and democracy that are emerging all over the world. These movements, as you know, have played a central role in ending the Cold War. Indeed, they've helped change the political map, not just of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well. This worldwide effort comes from the courageous men and women committed to advancing the cause of human rights and democracy, often at great sacrifice and risk. In recommitting itself to the goals and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United States honors the work of human rights advocates and non-governmental organizations from all cultures and continents who are helping to build a freer, safer and more peaceful world." Counselor Timothy Wirth, leader of the United States delegation to the World Conference on Human Rights at a Press briefing in Washington D.C. on June 2, 1993.

**MEDIA SCAN**

**S**AMCHI, Bhutan - Tens of thousands of people of Nepalese origin have left this remote Himalayan kingdom, many of them accusing Bhutanese officials of driving them out...The anti-immigrant drive was authorized by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck...

"The census turned up 113,000 illegals," said the 38-year-old King in an interview at his office in the Tashichhodzong or main administrative center, which also houses a sprawling Buddhist monastery, in the capital, Thimpu... King Jigme, who ascended the throne in 1972, wields near-absolute power but is respected across this ancient land of high mountains where fortresses and villages cling perilously to steep slopes, for his hard work and accessibility. The King said illegal migrations posed the greatest threat to Bhutan, a Buddhist country locked between China and India and dominated by an ethnic group known as the Drukpas...

Anti-Government rebels in Nepal discount Bhutanese fears and say that the figures of illegal immigrants are exaggerated and that the officials are ousting Bhutanese citizens...

Apart from the nationality issue, the Nepalese also resent a royal decree ordering them to wear Bhutanese dress of gowns and robes. They oppose the imposition of the Dzongkha, the main language of the north...

The continuing flight of people brought a rebuke from Amnesty International earlier this year. The human rights group denounced the shackling of prisoners and attacks on Nepalese. Such violations by security forces now have decreased, diplomats and officials here say, but the brutality by Nepalese gangs based in the neighboring Indian plains and in the refugee camps at Jhapa, Nepal, have increased. But both anti-Bhutan leaders in exile in Nepal as well as officials in Thimpu blame criminal gangs for the current violence.

**The New York Times International, Sunday June 6, 1993.**

**K**athmandu: Nepal and Bhutan have finally agreed to hold talks later this month to resolve the issue of thousands of Bhutanese refugees living in crowded camps in eastern Nepal, reports IPS. But relief workers and Bhutan-watchers here do not expect the negotiations between the two landlocked Himalayan kingdoms to immediately pave the way for their return. The refugees are Bhutanese of Nepali origin, of which there are now about 86,000 in Nepal. The flow peaked late last year and hundreds are still arriving everyday, relief officials say.

The last attempt to begin a dialogue took place in April in the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, where Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Bhutanese King Jigme Singye Wangchuck were attending a summit of South Asian leaders.

But the discussions broke down over Bhutan's insistence that the refugees be called "displaced persons." Koirala then hinted that he may take the matter before the United Nations.

Some analysts say Bhutan's new-found keenness to hold talks could have been timed to prevent Kathmandu from raising the issue at the European Community meeting of Foreign Ministers in Brussels and the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna this month.

Globalising Issue: As soon as the bilateral talks were announced in May, Nepal's Foreign Secretary, Yadav Kant Silwal, said Nepal would not try to "internationalize" the Bhutan crisis by raising it in Vienna.

**Indian Express, New Delhi, June 21, 1993.**



FROM THE WORLD CONFERENCE IN VIENNA



SNIPPETS FROM TERRA VIVA, A DAILY PUBLICATION OF INTER PRESS SERVICE (IPS) OFFICIALLY COVERING THE CONFERENCE

**11 JUNE:** The Secretary-General of the World Conference on Human Rights, Ibrahim Fall, yesterday made a last ditch attempt to save a final draft conference document prepared with more than 200 brackets signifying disagreements. Continuing the discreet behind-the-scenes ambassadorial talks he has been hosting since the last PrepCom. in Geneva in April, Fall submitted a four-page document entitled "informal conclusions on the informal consultations on the final document."

**11 JUNE:** The new proposals in the document are intended to help resolve what Fall labels the five "key controversial issues" delegates will confront Monday. The five disputed issues singled out in his paper are: 'universality vs particularity', 'self-determination', 'obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights', 'development, democracy and human rights' and 'institutional reforms of the United Nations human rights programme'.

**11 JUNE:** Some governments have been arguing at great length about the importance of not having a confrontational approach to human rights. The confrontation is over the torture and death that such governments have inflicted on their own people and on dissenters in their countries. There is only one way for that confrontation to stop and that is for governments to stop the torture and killing. Other governments have been instrumental in arguing that human rights should no longer be regarded as universal. That presumably means that they reserve to themselves the right to continue to imprison human rights activists, dissenting intellectuals, to torture their own people and execute large number of them every year. And they are actively asking the rest of the world to stand aside and let them do that - and not only them, but any other government that wants to invoke local culture as a justification for human cruelty. —Pierre Sane, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

**12 JUNE:** A press release from a coalition of fifteen Japanese NGOs also defended the universality of human rights, which has been called into question by some Asian governments. "While the Japanese groups recognizes that the world is one of infinite cultural diversity...human rights are universal values requiring an equal commitment for their protection and promotion by all governments," said the press release.

**12 JUNE:** Women's rights are human rights. Women from around the world are in Vienna this month to drive home that simple idea. But what does this phrase really mean? ...This World Conference must recognize women's rights as human rights, and act to integrate and enforce these at UN and world level.

**14 JUNE:** Preceded by uncertainty and more than its fair share of acrimony, the World Conference on Human Rights opens today with the cloud of diminished hope shadowing its laudable objectives. Two bothersome political issues which have dogged the run-up to the two-week conference still appear unresolvable: the creation of a High Commissioner for Human Rights and a proposed linkage between human rights and development assistance.

**14 JUNE:** The NGO JPC (Joint Planning Committee) voluntarily dissolved itself on the final day of the NGO Forum with a public apology for the frustrating organizational chaos that has coloured much of the World Conference. In making the move, committee members said they recognized that the JPC had lost its legitimacy and the support of the majority of the more than 2000 NGOs attending the conference.

**14 JUNE:** Well over 5000 people are expected to attend the World Conference on Human Rights that opens here today. By the beginning of the year, many of them, including journalists who would be covering it, still had only the sketchiest of details about the event.

**14 JUNE:** The United Nations says it is desperately in need of money to investigate human rights abuses throughout the world. "As far as financial resources are concerned, the Centre is in a very difficult situation," Ibrahim Fall of Senegal, the head of the Geneva based Centre for Human Rights told Terra Viva.

**15 JUNE:** United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali urged yesterday that international organizations take on a more aggressive role in protecting human rights, saying these "must take over from the States" that commit gross abuses against their own citizens. "...The State should be the best guarantor for human rights, however, the issue of international action must be raised when States prove unworthy of this task, when they violate the fundamental principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations," he said.

**15 JUNE:** "That each of us comes from different cultures absolves none of us from our obligation to comply with the Universal Declaration (of Human Rights). We respect the religious, social, and cultural characteristics that make each country unique. But we cannot let cultural relativism become the last refuge of repression, ...Democracy is the best means not just to gain, but to guarantee human rights," Warren Christopher, US Secretary of State said.

**17 JUNE:** The struggle over whether the Dalai Lama should be allowed to appear at the World Conference on Human Rights single-handedly crystallized all the hard issues at a stroke. More than that, it forced those Asian countries who are the principal antagonists to further progress on developing a more ambitious United Nations consensus on human rights

to face up to the intellectual weaknesses in their argument in a way the Western nations or Amnesty International and other non-governmental organizations could never have pushed them to on their own...When he finally made his speech the Dalai Lama addressed the most controversial issue of the conference, the universality of human rights - that certain basic rights apply across the board to every country whatever their state of development and however different their cultural traditions. "It is not enough," he said "to provide people with food and shelter and clothing. The deeper nature needs to breathe the precious air of liberty."

**18 JUNE:** Many Asian human rights activists here affirm religious discrimination is widespread in the region. China, Laos, Burma, Pakistan, Bhutan,...the list of the guilty seems to grow...But the policy which discriminates against the Hindu Nepalis, has provoked an exodus of refugees into India and Nepal. More than 80,000 people have fled through India into Nepal which does not share a border with Bhutan.

**19 JUNE:** After meeting together for the first time ever, representatives from the eleven United Nations treaty bodies have appealed to the World Conference for a major international push to increase the effectiveness of international human rights law. In the Vienna statement issued after their meeting (June 15-16), the representatives insisted the universality and indivisibility are the keys to the international human rights system, and they appealed for universal ratification by governments. Some 160 states have joined the major human rights treaties. But one third of the UN's membership has yet to ratify the two international covenants, the one covering political, the other covering economic rights. "Commitments by states to respect human rights remain inadequate and incomplete unless they are underpinned by the acceptance of international treaty obligations," said the statement.

**21 JUNE:** The U.S. delegation at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna will take a hard line against calls for easing conditions on foreign assistance or ending structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), according to an internal delegation document obtained by Terra Viva.

**21 JUNE:** "Sovereignty does not constitute a shield behind which a government may abuse the rights of its people with impunity." - US internal document at the World Conference

**21 JUNE:** Frustrated by the erosion of asylum, and worried that the World Conference could weaken existing standards of refugee protection, refugee groups have called for a new working group on independent experts to monitor government adherence to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

**21 JUNE:** The Children's Conference on Human Rights will urge

world governments today to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and act to implement its provisions. ...The 200 participants in the children's conference, drawn from 40 countries, also urged that children be granted the right to participate "as valuable members of society", to speak and to be heard, "so that their views and needs may be taken into account in all matters affecting their lives".

**22 JUNE:** In a stinging attack on the diplomatic efforts of the first week of the World Conference, Amnesty International Secretary General Pierre Sane yesterday described the seven-day period as "a week of shame". "...The people who have the torturers and the killers on their payroll are here in Vienna mouthing phrases about human rights. There was no evidence that any of the estimated half-a-million words spoken by representatives of nearly half of the world's governments during the week had saved a single life. There is no evidence that a single order was given to stop the torture and killing," he said.

**22 JUNE:** The concept of national sovereignty has received another hard knock in the ongoing World Conference on Human Rights. Western governments are saying that gross human rights violations are a legitimate concern of the international community, and that countries oppressing their own citizens can no longer hide behind the principle of non-intervention.... "States can no longer seek shelter behind the cosy screen of non-interference," said Danish Foreign Minister, Niels Helveg Peterson on behalf of the European Community and its member states last week.

**23 JUNE:** The European Community (EC), for instance, has a clear "no aid without human rights and democracy" policy and it also wants this linkage in the final document of the conference. "The positive experience of development cooperation in the field of human rights and democracy should, in the view of the European Community and its member states, be reflected in the final document of the World Conference," said Helle Degn, Denmark's Minister of Development Cooperation, who addressed the plenary on behalf of the EC. "It should also provide for a strengthening of development cooperation in areas such as constitutional processes, the preparation and

holding of free elections, the setting up of democratic institutions and national institutions for promoting and protecting human rights," the Minister said.

**24 JUNE:** Plans are taking shape among Asia-Pacific NGOs on follow up to the World Conference. Initial discussions seem to point to the setting-up of an informal regional networking mechanism which will ensure the furthering of NGO work on human rights.

**25 JUNE:** Drafters were scrambling into the small hours to meet an early morning deadline today for completion of the final conference document. U.N. sources told Terra Viva just before press time at 2 a.m. that final agreement on a text could be reached by a 5 a.m. deadline when the interpreters' shifts end.

**25 JUNE:** The World Conference on Human Rights is all but over, and as this last issues of Terra Viva comes out, civil servants and workers have already begun dismantling the conference fittings in the Austria Centre. The NGOs are also winding up their activities, all of them richer in contacts and perspectives. They have been able to build a stronger network of interpersonal relations, a network that is very different from that of the intergovernmental world. As usual, this conference has left open more questions than it has answered, and many participants are returning to their countries complaining of a lost opportunity.

**25 JUNE:** The fight for an honest recognition of the fundamental importance of human rights still has a long way to go. But at least this conference is not, as we feared it might at the beginning, winding the clock back; and, we perceive, if enough people, delegates and NGOs keep pushing, may yet wind it on a revolution or two. This conference may not change the world but it won't leave it as it found it either.



*We regret that incorrect Refugee Information figures appeared in the last two issues of the Review due to double counting of refugees who were shifted from the transit camp in Beldangi to Khujunabari.*

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION			
Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	8,032	2,674
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,827	2,493
Beldangi I	Jhapa	14,555	4,375
Beldangi II	Jhapa	18,639	5,182
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,505	3,336
Patthri	Morang	16,532	4,541
Khujunabari	Jhapa	9,094	2,624
<b>Total</b>		<b>84,184</b>	<b>25,225</b>
Cumulative births:		2,176	
Cumulative deaths:		2,031	

The above figures are as of June 30, 1993.