

# The Bhutan MONTHLY

## REPORTER

Vol V, No 48 January 2009 (Journalism of Courage for Existence of Free Media) www.bhutannewsservice.com Pages 4 Rs 4

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### PDP President Resigns

Due to acute financial pressure that the party has been facing, the president of People's Democratic Party (PDP), Sangay Ngedup, submitted his resignation to the Election Commission.

Though the actual date of submission was not disclosed, a PDP cadre has confirmed of his resignation.

The state bank earlier had informed that it was going to auction Ngedup's land in Thimphu since the party has more than 20 million overdraft loan.

There are unconfirmed reports that a number of party cadres from PDP also resigned from their portfolios. If similar trend continues, Bhutan will have a single political party for practicing so called constitution democracy. *BNS*

#### New Envoy to Delhi

Vetsop Namgyel, an army major general who served the fourth king as his ADC, has reached Delhi with his credentials as the new Bhutanese Ambassador to India.

Namgyel replaced Dago Tshering, who served as envoy in Delhi after king dismissed age-old cabinet in 1998.

"I am much excited to join Bhutanese embassy in India", Namgyel told Indian media. *TBR*

#### Awareness Program

Nepal Bar Association (NBA) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) jointly organized public awareness programs on legal matters in various camps.

"There are frequent cases of rapes and other forms of sexual harassment in camps," said a legal expert adding, "These types of awareness programs will be really useful."

According to the Bar, there are complications in processing for resettlement due to divorce, marriage or relationship, which it has been dealing with in cooperation with other aid-agencies. *BNS*

#### Notice! Notice! Notice!

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Bhutan and  
Bhutanese  
refugees.

## URFB Makes A Comeback

Bhutan News Service  
Gelephu, December

A huge blast from a detonator planted underground on the road near Singay village in Sarpang district claimed the lives of four injuring two on December 30.

Locals in Singay village reported that several rounds of gun-fire were heard early 3 pm.

Two of the four forestry personnel survived the attack in Sarpang. The survivors said they were taken completely by surprise.

The attackers also took away two SLR rifles with 40 round bullets and a Motorola mobile set.

Police officials say after the explosion the dead bodies were dragged near the

tractor and set on fire using the tractor's tyre.

One of the survivors has been injured in both eyes by splinters from the blast while other has been shot in his buttocks. They were traveling on a narrow, bumpy track on tractor through a dense forest when the militants attacked them.

One of them, 41-year-old Ladha Dukpa, a father of three children, has served in Phibsoo for over eight years and had experienced no such incident.

Authorities blamed Communist Party of Bhutan for the attack but United Revolutionary Front of Bhutan claimed responsibility of the attack. URFB circulated a release stating that it attacked armed police force personnel at Singay village in Sarpang district and looted arms

and ammunition. The release signed by its chief commander Karma claimed that the attack killed five on the spot and wounded dozens of Bhutanese army personnel.

Security measures have been tightened in Sarpang after the attack. On January 3, the Sarpang dzongkhag called a security meeting, attended by dzongkhag officials, regional heads, representatives from the armed forces, the business community and 13 village gups, and discussed the need for a voluntary security force.

Volunteer groups have been formed to patrol during nights. A person from each household has to send one volunteer to patrol every night. They will check on schools, hospitals and lhakhangs.

## NFD-Bhutan Asks For Permanent Task Force

Bhutan News Service  
Kathmandu, December

The National Front for Democracy (NFD) Bhutan has urged the government of Nepal to form permanent task force comprising of senior politicians, intellectuals, civil society members, human right workers, media persons and Bhutanese political and human rights representatives in exile to do adequate homework on the Bhutanese issue.

"We also have asked the Minister to urge the United Nations High Commis-

sioner for Refugees, core-group countries and International Organization for Migration to provide orientation prior to refugees choosing for third country resettlement", said Narad

Adhikari."We have requested for taking necessary corrective measures to curb all corruptions and irregularities and ensure transparency in the process of third country resettlement", added he.

According to Balaram Paudyal, a permanent task force is a must since there is no proper body to handle this long-standing imbroglio.

## IBFS Criticizes Bhutan

Bhutan News Service  
New Delhi, December

Indian leaders have criticized Bhutan for absence of initiation for repatriation of over 100,000 exiled Bhutanese who have been taking asylum in Nepal since they were evicted in 1990.

Former Union Minister of India and president of the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Society (IBFS) Satya Prakash Malaviya in a statement said society supports the timely repatriation of exiled Bhutanese in honor and dignity.

"IBFS is appalled that even after the institution of democratic government in Bhutan for last ten months; the reports emanating from Bhutan are disturbing," the statement reads, adding, "The fundamental human rights and democratic rights are not granted to people. The political persecution is still rampant and freedom of speech and expression are restricted."

The statement further reads, "Freedom of assembly and association is banned. Exile political parties and human rights organization are still banned. Independent judiciary is absent. Political prisoners are still incarcerated and the sentences meted out to political prisoner are utterly unbelievable."

Society decided to write letter to Bhutanese Members of Parliament highlighting the issues and to visit Bhutan, meet political prisoners and seek to hold discussion with concerned Bhutanese authorities.

## 8,000 Exiled Bhutanese Are Resettled So Far: UNHCR

Bhutan News Service  
Kathmandu, January

The UN refugee agency on Wednesday announced that in 2008, over 8000 exiled Bhutanese have left their camps in Nepal for resettlement countries in the west.

The United States of America which announced that it would resettle 60,000 of them, and even more if needed, received the largest numbers so far - 7,547.

They have gone to cities like Tucson, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Baltimore.

Departures to Australia total 393, New Zealand 129, Canada 40, Netherlands 27, Norway 24 and Denmark 13. Another 60,000 have expressed readiness for resettlement.

"We are pleased to see so many refugees starting their lives afresh after living in difficult conditions in the camps for the last 18 years and to learn that those resettled are adapting well in their new country," said Daisy Dell, UNHCR Representative in Nepal.

"This program would not have been successful without the strong support of the Government of Nepal, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the resettlement countries."

Some 16,000 - 18,000 exiled Bhutanese are expected to leave Nepal in 2009. At the same time, UNHCR, together with the international community, will continue to advocate for the option of voluntary repatriation to Bhutan for those who wish to do so.

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Giri (USA)**Analysis****Floating Population To Dominate Parliament In Bhutan**

By Govinda Rizal

Senator John MC Cain's visit to Bhutan had immense effect on the Bhutanese government's way of treating the past and present opponents. For the first time, the issue of the floating population will be discussed. One such immediate effect will be seen when the winter session of the parliament shall discuss on the issue of the families divided and broken due to several state sponsored crackdowns on the opponents in the past.

This time, the focus is mostly on the remaining relatives of the people who fled or were evicted from Bhutan in the 1990s. There may not be much to surprise the victims of earlier evictions or from other parts of the country. The people's representatives from the eastern districts may talk on the problem of the people in the south, many in favor and a few in opposition; they shall try their best not to mention the problems of their region.

The earlier government had faced and dealt with several disputes, each time crushing the opponents or rebels by death or eviction. The last two major fracasas took place in southern districts in 1990s and in eastern districts in 1997. The first one resulted in the exodus of estimated one hundred fifty thousand people residing in the southern Bhutan, most of whom took refuge in Nepal and after a long wait are being resettled in first world countries.

The second was an uprising in 1997 in the east, when the activists and local leaders were incarcerated or disappeared by the government forces. Both these movements were under the aegis of exile based political parties calling for democratic reforms, which the monarchy perceived as a threat to its survival. In response, activists and supporters were treated brutally. Many fled, others remained as silent victims, their lands and properties were confiscated and names were transferred to a different census register. In the national census conducted three years ago, this population of around one hundred thousand was termed as "floating population", which makes twenty percent of the total population.

Unlike, in the earlier parliamentary sessions where debates were presented after a rehearsal, the actual pattern in the present system is still in the making; whether the members shall speak of the people or the whip of the party.

**The problem**

To suppress the movements, government devised various methods to restrict the movement of the people, to limit their access to the welfare facilities and ultimately

to coerce them to flee. No objection certificate (NOC), police clearance, travel document, categorization in the census registration, stop on the land and property transfer registration, confiscation of citizenship cards, refusal to issue new cards, were some out of many methods executed. These restraints and limitations created miserable plight, compelled them to flee from the country. Not all did. Many challenged to resist and lived with it. It was an acid test of nationalism. After two decades the people's representatives will be talking of some of these issues with some optimism and enough hesitation.

**No objection Certificate**

Initially the brain child of the present Prime Minister, NOC, was the most effective tool government used to sieve people and their relatives who took part in the anti government protest from the rest. All those people and their family members involved in the movement were denied NOC. NOC was made mandatory for the admission and to get to next higher grade in schools, enter a university, and apply for job and business license.

**Police Clearance**

Police acquired the movie and still photographs of the people who participated in the protest rallies and demonstrations, later labeled by government as anti national activities. Based on the photographs, police gave clearance for NOC or other permits.

**Travel Document**

To travel from one village to another, people have to get TD from the authority. It takes long time to get, if at all, and one TD works for a single entry. The security is the main reason given for the method.

**Categorization in the Census Registration**

Department of immigration and census, classified the people into seven categories and registered into seven files, named as F1 to F7. Census teams place people into one of seven categories:

F1 Genuine Bhutanese

F2 Returned migrants (people who had left Bhutan and then returned)

F3 "Drop-out" cases - i.e. people who were not around at the time of the census

F4 A non-national woman married to a Bhutanese man

F5 A non-national man married to a Bhutanese woman

F6 Adoption cases (children who have been legally adopted)

F7 Non-nationals, i.e. migrants and il-

legal settlers

Besides, the families from which some family members have fled are registered into a different file. Some of the people who were absent in the census in 1992-93, but present in the subsequent census are suspected to be those who were unable to get registered in UNHCR run refugee camps in Nepal and returned to Bhutan. Citizenship cards of these people are confiscated and they are without new cards which other citizens have. In the last national census, these two groups were referred to as "floating population", because they at any time were expected to spill or get flushed into exile.

**Stop on the Land and Property Transfer Registration**

The transfer of land and properties from parents to children or purchase is not registered for more than a decade. The land and properties are bought and sold, have passed through many owners, but in absence of legal registration, the real owners are in a mess.

**Confiscation of Citizenship Cards and Refusal of New Cards**

The citizenship cards were confiscated from the people falling in other than F1 category, and the floating population. Last year, before the census, new cards were distributed nationwide. But this big segment is deprived of it. They were not allowed to participate in the election.

If and when the parliamentarians get a chance to speak on the plight of the victims affected with these discriminatory policies, it would be wiser if they talk in a wider perspective and pass laws in the greater interest of the people and the country. All Bhutanese people must be treated equally. Carrying a political ideology or keeping a different ideology should not be treated as different class of citizens. Citizenship cards and all the benefits must be given impartially to all the citizens and no force and no reason whatsoever should have authority to revoke citizenship. All the people must get back the land, houses and properties, they or their family members possessed in the past. Those whose houses were demolished must be compensated. The tags like the "relatives of anti nationals" or "anti nationals" should be dropped from use. Those imprisoned for participating in the democratic movements should no longer be incarcerated as the country itself has adopted democracy.

This parliament may not have capacity to deal with the issue of the evicted people and the Bhutanese refugees in exile, it is still the best they take care of the people who are living an appalling life in their constituencies.

admitted in Gidakom hospital.

On August 21, 2008 Thimphu dzongkhag court's Bench II had its first preliminary hearing on the case of a 14-year-old who was raped and impregnated by her 45 year-old step father 33 weeks before. The father raped the girl when mother left home for Paro. Due to pregnancy, she has been knocked out of school. "We see cases of minors being raped, sexually harassed and molested but most of these go unreported," Lieutenant Karma Rigzin had said.

On July 31, 2008, the same court made a hearing in a case where a 30-year-old teacher sexually harassed and beaten up a 10-year-old student on May 31. It was on the daylight inside school where all staffs and student witnessed.

**Contd. Page 04****Address Armed Groups!**

Not much predicted earlier, these days Bhutan is noticing series of bomb explosions, particularly in the southern part of the country. The massive bomb explosions in Sarpang district on December 30, 2008 that claimed life of four forest guards is the latest instance to doubt as to whether 'revolt' movement has been initiated inside this peaceful Himalayan kingdom.

The December 30 incident is not the first of its kind. Birat-led Communist Party of Bhutan CPB-MLM, one of the underground armed revolutionary outfits, planted a series of bombs in February 3, 2008 in Samtse district targeting the materials collected for National Assembly election in the country. To carve out a sentence from Birat's release it reads "this is the initiation of 'Armed Rural Class Struggle' in Bhutan.

Bhutan Tigers Force (BTF), United Revolutionary Front of Bhutan (URFB) and Vikalp-led Communist Party of Bhutan CPB-MLM often own up responsibilities to explosions in Bhutan. URFB, which owned-up responsibility to the recent bomb attack in Sarpang district has further warned the new settlers, who are occupying the lands of those evicted during early 1990s, to vacate it shortly. The question of having inter-connection among these armed outfits, though is tough to predict, is still suspicious.

The frequent claims of these groups having genuine demands to see political change in Bhutan shows that the armed struggle is to some extent already being coined inside the country and if the Druk regime turns deaf ears towards resolving the issue on time than further violence cannot be ignored. Despite showing interest and flexibility towards resolving the ongoing political turmoil in the country, the Druk regime is mulling over expansion of military force. Media inside the country has quoted Police chief Col Kipchu Namgyal as saying that a security squad would be formed under the 'Special Reserve Police Force' mentioned in the Police Bill to counter the armed attacks.

Not only this, volunteer groups have been formed to patrol during nights. A person from each household has to send one volunteer to patrol every night. They will check on schools, hospitals among other public places. This is not a fair and reliable initiation of the government to counter with armed attacks. Innocent civilians should not be misused in the name of fighting against armed rebellion outfits.

Thus, it has to be well understood that violence benefits no one. It is also necessary on the part of the armed revolutionary outfits to carry on peaceful campaigns for the establishment of democracy in Bhutan despite opting for violent measures. Let's be peace loving always.

**Rapes And Laws In Bhutan**

Reportedly, rape wasn't the social problem in Bhutan until recently despite the fact that Bhutanese are liberal to sex relations. However, government terms the fashionable projection of women as vulgar and put ban on all such activities, including viewing the fashion TVs.

The volumes of reports in the last few years have showed the grim pictures of Bhutanese society how rape victims were silenced in the past. It is natural, that many incidents relating to sexual violence go unnoticed or unreported in closed societies in fear that it would tarnish public image of the women, instead of the rapist. Bhutan cannot be the exception to this.

Rape cases, especially involving mi-

nors, are increasing at faster rate in the country in the last few years. Of the 28 reported cases of rape in Thimphu in the year 2008, eight were minors, below 18 years.

There were two cases of rape of six-year old girls in Thimphu and Sarpang last year. One of the convicts is at large while other has been sentenced.

In 2007, a total of 27 cases of sexual abuses and rape were recorded with 18 minors, including a 28-month-old infant. Other 70 cases have been recorded in the past three years, of which 58 percent were minors.

A 28-year old soldier raped a 12 year-old girl on the night of December 25, 2008 while attending her grandmother who was

## Exile Voice...

### Bhutanese in Netherlands Discuss Exiled Issue

Bhutan News Service  
The Hague (Netherlands), January

Ram Bahadur Karki Chhetri, an exiled Bhutanese based in the Netherlands, briefed a senior leader of Nepali Congress Ram Chandra Poudel the present situation of newly resettled Bhutanese citizens.

"There is a clear policy of Nepali Congress that exiled Bhutanese should be honorably repatriated back to their country one day or the other", said Karki quoting Poudel.

I urged Poudel to exercise all measures to carry re-settlement parallel with repatriation, Karki told Bhutan News Service.

### Repatriation Urged

Arjun Pradhan  
Damak, January

Submitting a memorandum to the Nepalese Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', a senior Bhutanese leader Dr. Bhampa Rai has asked the government of Nepal (GoN) to work out for repatriation of the Bhutanese citizens in exile.

The memorandum demanded the GoN to explore all possible means to pressurize the Bhutanese regime to take its citizens back or internationalize the long-standing imbroglio.

The paper also has asked the UN Refugee Agency not to impose compulsory measures on exiled citizens for relocation.

### YFC Organizes Friendship Football Matches

Arjun Pradhan  
Beldangi, December

Youth Friendly Center (YFC), a youth alliance of young Bhutanese from 18 to 25, is organizing inter-community friendship football match from December 31 to January 12.

"We are incorporating youths from camps and affected local community in these matches", YFC program coordinator Fr. Peter told Bhutan News Service. "We are finishing this years grants from FC Barcelona with this tournament", added he.

Caritas-Nepal, which manages education programs for the exiled Bhutanese, runs and operates programs of YFC with funding from UN Refugee Agency.

Fr. Peter said YFC works basically to create social awareness in camps.

"YFC addresses the needs and wants of youths, making them work on voluntary basis," told an YFC cadre.

### Situation In New Hampshire

Doug Hall, an American volunteer who has been helping some of the Bhutanese as they settle into their new homes in New Hampshire, told Bhutan News Service that adults who have no English speaking skills are mostly finding difficult to get a job.

"The first Bhutanese refugees to arrive here came in April 2008. Many of the adults in the families that arrived in April, May, June, and July were able to find jobs in only a few weeks or months", told Hall.

He said that the resettled families that have arrived since July are having a more difficult time finding jobs.

"Economy in the USA is in a recession and many Americans have lost their jobs in the past six months," said Hall adding, "This means that the refugees face more competition for fewer jobs than they did only six months ago."

## From Regime

### Sonam Yangden is First Bhutan Star

Bhutan News Service  
Thimphu, January

Sonam Yangden has been declared as the first Bhutan Star on New Year eve, with public votes dominating the judgment by judges in the selection procedures.

Sonam, who received 44,108 votes, said after victory that her interest is to be a playback singer.

She received a Maruti Swift car sponsored by Ugen Tshechup of Zindra Automobiles and signed a music contract worth Nu 100,000 with Jigdrel Trophel.

### Police Preparing Counter-Terror Squad

Bhutan News Service  
Thimphu, January

After armed attack in Sarpang killing four forest guards by little known United Revolutionary Front of Bhutan (URFB), the government is mulling over expansion of military force.

Police chief Col Kipchu Namgyal a security squad will be formed under the 'Special Reserve Police Force' mentioned in the Police Bill to counter the armed attacks.

He said preparations are required to tackle future attacks as well, whose strength will be around 178 personnel in the beginning who are well-built, well-qualified and medically fit.

The current police strength of the country is 4,000.

### New Democracy Fines BBS For Holding a Discussion Panel

Bhutan News Service  
Thimphu, January

The media authority body, Bhutan Infocomm and Media Authority (BICMA), which was formed for monitoring media activities in Bhutan, has fined Bhutan Broadcasting Corporation (BBS) for holding a panel discussion on the pre-paid taxi service this month.

"We are asked to deposit a sum of Nu. 18,000 before January 23", wrote the official site of BBS.

"BICMA found no adequate justifications to consider such panel discussions as fair, decent and balanced in line with the Code of Ethics of Journalists", said BSS quoting the letter of media authority.

The BSS has claimed that it conducted the panel discussion with appropriate representation including the Road Safety and Transport Authority, as there was public interest and concern over the issue.

This was the first step taken by the so-called democratic government vowing for right to expression and freedom of its citizens in Bhutan.

According to Hall it is not impossible for a 'refugee' to get a job. But it is much more difficult now.

Hall has even observed that refugee adults who do not speak or understand English will have a much harder time getting a job than those who have good English.

He said that those who have prior work experience, for example as a teacher, a shopkeeper, a social worker, a news reporter, will be able to get a job more quickly.

"There are some cities in the US where the refugees may find it easier to get jobs than other cities. But, everywhere in the US it is more difficult now than it was six months ago."

### Mining Not Regulated: NA Committee

Bhutan News Service  
Thimphu, January

The public accounts committee of the National Assembly in its first report said mining activities in the country are operating without proper legal guidelines, in line with a minister's statement recently who said mining in Bhutan is affecting West Bengal state of India.

The committee in its report said mines in Bhutan lack transparency, do not follow environment-friendly precautions and violate mining regulations.

The report said mines are being operated before they were their report on feasibility studies approved by government. It further said the mines have destroyed environment, private property, villages, and roads and that mining waste was not disposed off in designated areas.

Two mines - Chunaikhola dolomite and Khothakpa gypsum - were operating without clearance from dzongkhags and forestry departments. There are 72 companies in Samtse, Paro and Chhukha.

### Bhutan Wins First, Loses Second Match

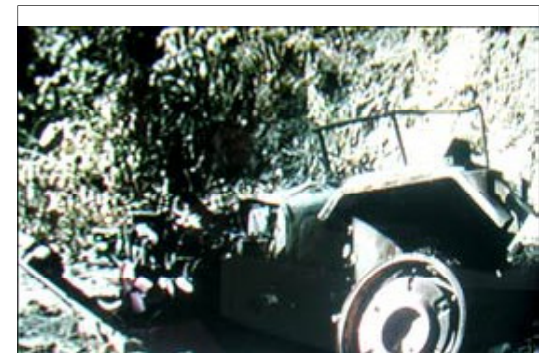
Bhutan News Service  
New Delhi, December

Bhutan could not repeat its opening-day success and went down to a nine-wicket loss to Nepal in the U19 Women Cricket at the Chiang Mai Gymkhana, Thailand this December.

On the opening day, Bhutan woman tasted success in their first outing in international cricket when the team beat Singapore by 14 runs in the Asian Cricket Council's inaugural match on the same ground.

Bhutan's 101 was the highest total of the opening day, with Ugyen Dema scoring along 17.

On the second match, no Bhutanese batsman managed double figures and limped to 34 off their 25 overs. Coach Damber S Gurung praised Nepal's performance but not of his team.



This image is of the damaged tractor which was blown-off with the help of explosives by URFB cadres in Sarpang district recently.



## Rapes And Laws....

The teacher and the parents of the child made efforts to solve the case internally but mother later reported it to the police.

On May 18, a four-year-old girl was raped in Phuentsholing by a 16 year-old boy and received only half of the punishment provisioned by the Penal Code.

The previous year, a 28-month-old infant was raped and thrown into an irrigation canal. The rapist was given a sentence of 14-and-a-half years.

In 2006, Tandin Gyaltshen, was sentenced to 18 years and ordered to pay a compensation of Nu 255,500 to the parents of his 11-month-old victim.

Between 2005 and 2008, more than 84 rape cases were reported across the kingdom, of which 71 were forwarded to court. Nine were on statutory rapes (sex with a child below 12) and 11 victims were minors above the age of 12.

On December 30, 2008, the High Court sentenced five soldiers of the Royal Bhutan Army aged 25-32 to 13 years each in prison for gangraping a 16-year old girl in Thimphu on the night of July 2, 2007.

Four of the convicts, sentenced by Thimphu district court on April 2, 2008, appealed to the high court on April 29. The high court upheld the lower court verdict.

The fifth convict, acquitted by the district court on April 1, after having stayed nine months and 15 days in custody, was also sentenced to 13 years. His sentence was based on a report submitted by the police and the four other rapists. Police had charged files against them on January 1, 2008.

A six-year-old girl was raped in Thimphu in the last week of September 2008.

These are only the reported cases of rape in Bhutan. The male dominance and public criticism compel the rape victims in Bhutan to hide their suffocations. The local authorities usually encourage settling the cases in villages thereby giving excuse for the rapist remain at large.

The rapists are usually the known by the victims but threats and intimidation bar the victims tell their stories. Forced sex with older women is not, culturally, regarded as rape and this made more and more women victims. The cases of rape are rampant in Zhemgang district where hundreds of children do not know who their fathers are. Houses with single women in the district are usually visited by men at night for forceful sex – referred as 'night hunting' in Bhutanese term. These are not the commercial sex workers because they are not paid.

Laws are not so much strong to tackle the situation. According to the Penal Code of Bhutan, life imprisonment is given to those guilty of a felony of the first degree only. Section 181 and 182 of the Penal Code of Bhutan grades statutory rape as an offense of the second degree, punishable with 9-15 years of imprisonment. The rape of a child above the age of 12 is graded under Section 183 and 184 as a felony of the third degree in which rapist get imprisonment term of between five and nine years. Child molestation is a felony of the fourth degree while sexual harassment is rarely regarded as offense.

The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), which sees to the all types of violence against women and children, seems not be wary of the problem caused by rape cases. The country is signatory to the CRC and CEDAW, on which the government submits regular reports to the UN committees but back in the country, situation of girl child and women is worsening. The situation has never been reflected in the reports submitted to UN.

### REQUEST! REQUEST!

*We have been working voluntarily to safeguard your right to information since five years. The publication of TBR is one of its parts. Thus, we request you to send write-ups on contemporary issues.*

□ **Bhutan Media Society**

## Radio Still Rules

By Sonam Pelden

*Newspapers influenced decision makers, broadcast media, mass thinking*

What was used five years ago for information is in use today for entertainment. This was one of the most significant changes in media trends, according to the draft media impact study (MIS) 2008, conducted by the centre for media and democracy.

The most visible influences of media are in the language, dress, behaviour, thinking and culture. The study found that Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) radio had the widest influence (33.8 percent), followed by BBS TV (29.5 percent) and Indian TV (22.3 percent). The study had 1191 respondents.

Though most felt that media promoted Dzongkha after the election debates, the study also states that, "a significant development is the emergence of Dzonglish (a mixture of English and Dzongkha), particularly among the youth."

The visual media's influence on dress, appearance, concept of beauty and behaviour (imitation of TV actors) are other impacts of the media. "The concept of beauty, with traditional notion of beauty being related to health and strength, is being replaced by the hour glass figure," says the study.

Newspapers influenced decision makers, while Bhutanese broadcast media had the greatest influence on mass thinking. In terms of culture, Hindi music was replaced by rigsar and youth are taken in by the fast talking radio jockeys.

One significant social change was that, today, Bhutanese have adjusted their lives around TV viewing for, in 2003, 64.5 percent said that TV viewing affected the time they have for work, while today it's only 16.3 percent.

While media now are critical players in the political process of an emerging democracy, overall, it found that there is a lack of content for children.

In terms of news preference, BBS radio tops as the main source for news. 49.4 percent respondents choose BBS radio, followed by BBS TV (37.6 percent) and Kuensel with 27.5 percent.

Kuzoo FM is the main source of entertainment for

## A Second Chance as a Refugee Child Becomes a Man

Devi Choudri has spent most of his young life growing up in a refugee camp. He learned to play soccer in a small dirt alcove next to stacks of food rations. He spent the first jittery day of school cramped in a small hut fashioned out of a plastic tarp and bamboo. Now 23 and a new resident of Norway, Devi shares his story of incredible courage and enduring hope.

Devi is from the small nation of Bhutan, a magnificent landscape of snow-capped mountains and emerald forests tucked away from the outside world. In 1991, when Devi was just six years old, soldiers set fire to his house. He heard his baby sister screaming and ran into the burning hut to save her. His whole family suffered third degree burns.

The Choudris were one of many families targeted by the reigning Drukpa ethnic group to expel people of Nepali ancestry. They were treated like criminals. Devi's father was thrown in prison, where he died. With their own lives in danger, the family fled to Nepal to find refuge.

Devi and his family ended up at one of the seven overcrowded refugee camps where more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees live for decades on end. There was no medication to treat his burns, and as they began to fill with puss, the growing infection made death a very real possibility for Devi.

It was then that Devi met Hiram Ruiz, a researcher at the U.S. Committee for Refugees. Though Hiram had visited many refugee camps before, he was struck at Devi's dire situation. He returned to the camp with oint-

The Bhutan Reporter/Jan 2009

35.8 percent, followed by international TV, 21.7 percent and BBS TV 7.7 percent.

Among other findings, the study states that, with foreign radio jockey (RJ) culture, the private radio's popularity has grown among youth and the rate of international radio listeners has dropped from 33.7 percent in 2003 to nine percent in 2008.

After the launch of satellite TV in 2006, BBS overtook international channels, with its viewership increasing from 30 percent to 54 percent. The past five years also saw a drastic increase in the use of mobile phones, with more than 250,000 users, compared to 28,000 fixed line users.

Yet, while the digital media became more popular, with eight percent of the respondents having access to Internet, 41.2 percent going to cinema, 44.8 percent watching TV for entertainment and 45.8 percent for news, the study found that newspapers were the least popular.

Among the respondents, 34.6 percent read Kuensel, 21.7 percent Bhutan Times and 20.9 percent Bhutan Observer. Though Dzongkha was the most popular language for TV and radio, for newspapers, it was English.

In terms of news coverage on developmental topics, good governance and culture were seen to be better covered than socio-economic and environmental issues. On content, however, people generally thought that youth were portrayed negatively, along with gender stereotypes, and the media was becoming more tabloidish, political and the nation's critic. They also saw a need to balance rural-urban stories and wanted more coverage on laws (marriage, citizenship, policies, NOC).

BBS TV and radio enjoy more credibility than private radios and international TV. 29.5 percent believed in BBS TV as compared to 7.5 percent in international TV. In case of press, Bhutanese newspapers were more believable than the international papers.

14.1 percent said Kuensel was a more credible source of news, while 6.5 percent said Bhutan Observer and 6.2 percent said Bhutan Times.

But the competition in the media has made people question accuracy, thus affecting the media's credibility, says the study. "Many note new sensationalism and degradation in content." Five districts representing the east (Trashigang), west (Thimphu), south (Sarpang, Chukha) and central (Bumthang) regions were covered during the survey. The survey sample includes 600 rural and 600 urban households.

ment and proper bandages. Devi says it saved his life.

"I thought I may die if I didn't see Hiram again," he said. "But then I saw him come back with medicine — it was the happiest moment of my life."

The family lived in a small hut of grass and bamboo. At 20 feet long and 12 ft wide, the tiny structure could barely hold the family of five. Every night, Devi slept side by side with his mother, brothers and sisters on the ground. They lived like this for 16 years.

As the days dragged on, Devi escaped the monotony of camp life through school, which he had to work at the local plantation to pay for. He wanted to be an engineer, yet he did not have the money to pursue a higher education.

### A bittersweet reunion

Hiram returned to the camp 11 years later to reunite with Devi and his sister, who were then 18 and 13. "I was pleased to see two very bright and articulate young adults, but sorry to see how, still stuck in a refugee camp, they had such few prospects for the future," said Hiram. So he helped Devi pay for school.

Hiram had become the closest thing to a father for Devi. "I hope to see Hiram again," he says. "I think of him and how he helped me all the time."

One day Devi heard on the radio that the United Nations planned to resettle Bhutanese refugees to another country. "I thought I would never leave the camp," said Devi. "It is a very sorrowful life."

After 17 years as a refugee in the camp, the Choudris were finally able to resettle to a small town in Norway. The small Bhutanese community there serves as a lifeline for the family as they adjust to life in this foreign — and very cold — place. Today, Devi dreams of being a social worker. "I want to help other people who struggled like me."

Source: USCR

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