**05NEWDELHI3431**

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 C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 003431 SIPDIS E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2015 TAGS: PREL PREF PTER IN NP BT SUBJECT: GOI EXPECTS BHUTANESE REFUGEE SURVEYS TO CONTINUE, SOLUTION STILL ELUSIVE Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D) [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431#par1) 1. (C) Summary: During a May 2 meeting with a visiting G/PRM/DRL/DHS delegation in India to review Tibetan and Bhutanese refugee issues, MEA Joint Secretary (North) Ranjit Rae offered his view that the UNHCR "had met the concerns" of HMGN in order to resume the registration of Bhutanese refugees in camps in Nepal, agreed that the Dewey-Wangchuck framework provides the best means to move ahead on the refugee issue, and commented that many refugees had left Bhutan voluntarily under a "pull" from Nepal. Rae also reiterated concerns that some in the camps have links to the Nepalese Maoists or insurgent groups in Northeast India, and offered suggestions for managing any eventual resettlement program. End Summary. Refugee Camp Occupants ---------------------- [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431%22%20%5Cl%20%22par2) 2. (C) Meeting with J/S Rae, the delegation led by PRM Director of Admissions Terry Rusch expressed appreciation for the GOI's long-running assistance to Tibetan refugees, and raised the possibility of US resettlement of some of them as a way of sharing the responsibility for refugee support. Noting that their current visit was focused on proposals for resettlement of Tibetan refugees, the delegation informed Rae that at the appropriate time and in coordination with other concerned governments and institutions, the USG may also participate in a resettlement effort for Bhutanese refugees. In the near term, the USG may undertake resettlement in the US for a modest number of the most vulnerable Bhutanese refugees identified by UNHCR at camps in Nepal. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431#par3) 3. (C) Rae offered an overview of GOI thinking on the Bhutanese refugees, reviewed the positions of Nepal and Bhutan on activities leading to repatriation of some of the refugees, and stated that having addressed the "concerns" of HMGN, the UNHCR is "again starting the survey" of the Bhutanese refugee camp occupants. (Note: Embassy Kathmandu informs us, and UNHCR in New Delhi has confirmed, that while UNHCR has submitted information to HMGN, it is awaiting government approval to continue the profiling activity. End Note) Rae agreed that the framework for repatriation of Category 1 refugees worked out by King Wangchuck and Assistant Secretary Dewey offered the best prospect for moving ahead. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431#par4) 4. (C) Rae stated that the number of Bhutanese refugees in camps in Nepal is much less than the 125,000 that has been reported. Estimating that of about 130,000 who had originally left Bhutan, some 30,000 remained in India, Rae commented that although some of the refugees had been driven out by a "push" from the RGOB, many had voluntarily moved to Nepal, responding to a "pull" to regroup ethnic Nepalese living in a "greater Nepal." Even among the 100,000 in Nepal, there are many with jobs or other connections to India, he said, explaining India's policy of open admission for Bhutanese and Nepalese. Because all people in the camps come from one of those countries, they enjoy visa-free movement into and out of India. Possibilities for Resettlement ------------------------------ [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431%22%20%5Cl%20%22par5) 5. (C) Rae recommended that any resettlement program take into account the "South Asian" priority given to families, suggesting that cases should be processed to ensure that parents, children and possibly grandparents remain united. He estimated that the total number of families in the camps was around 14,000-15,000. The population of the camps is very young, he noted, with about half of the residents under age 18. Rae advised that any third country resettlement option be delayed until it has been determined who will return to Bhutan. Otherwise, he warned, many will request a third country option instead of going back. (Note: UNHCR has mentioned to us in the past that the refugees are already aware of this possibility. End Note) [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431%22%20%5Cl%20%22par6) 6. (C) Commenting on the possibility of Bhutanese refugees being interviewed in India for resettlement by the US, Rae reaffirmed that Bhutanese and Nepalese citizens could freely cross the Indian border, but requested that the USG consult with the GOI before setting up any refugee processing within India for camp residents. Rae said the GOI had reports that the Bhutanese Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) was being organized in the camps, and that it may have links with both the Nepalese Maoists and Northeast Indian insurgent groups, but that India had no certain knowledge of this yet. He asked how this Maoist connection might affect resettlement in the US. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431#par7) 7. (C) In a separate May 6 meeting with the delegation, Ministry of Home Affairs Joint Secretary (Foreigners) DS Mishra noted that any refugees leaving from India for resettlement would require an exit permit from the GOI. He commented that any decision on allowing USG interviews with refugees in India would be made "at a political level," not by his Ministry, but indicated no objection in principle to such an arrangement. Comment ------- [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431%22%20%5Cl%20%22par8) 8. (C) J/S Rae's assertion that UNHCR profiling activity has already restarted is a bit premature, but UNHCR hopes that it will soon receive the required government approval. Rae's discussion of a "pull" from Nepal suggests that the GOI agrees with the Bhutanese King that not all of the refugees are legitimate claimants. The GOI appears to have no objection to a resettlement program for the small number of "extremely vulnerable" refugees, but Rae seems to believe that a larger solution is still some time away. End Comment. [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi3431#par9) 9. (U) This message was cleared by Terry Rusch, Susan O'Sullivan, Kate Friedrich, and June Tancredi. BLAKE