**05NEWDELHI8893**

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 008893 SIPDIS E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2015 TAGS: PGOV PREF PHUM PTER IN NP BT SUBJECT: INDIAN REPORTS BREAKTHROUGH IN BHUTAN/NEPAL REFUGEE TALKS, DISCUSSES ULFA TERRORISTS Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt for Reasons 1.4 (B, D) [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi8893#par1) 1. (C) Summary: The agreement reached in Dhaka between the RGOB and GON to restart the Joint Verification Process and allow for the return of Category 1 and 4 refugees from the Khudunabari refugee camp was a significant and positive step, outgoing MEA Joint Secretary (North) Ranjit Rae told PolCouns and PolOff during a November 22 meeting. Incoming Joint Secretary (North) Prakaj Saran noted that Kathmandu's recent SIPDIS acceptance of possible third country resettlement is a welcome and noticeable change in its position. Rae and Saran agreed that monitoring of refugees that return to Bhutan will be problematic, due to the RGOB's distrust of UNHCR. The GON has not raised the refugee issue with the GOI since February 2005, while the RGOB discusses the issue regularly with the MEA, Rae noted. Thimphu does not view the Friends of Bhutan group, consisting of a number of European countries, to be true friends, Saran remarked. Rae commented that Bhutan and India are determined to keep United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) terrorists out of Bhutan, acknowledging that the group has made attempts to set up new camps in the Himalayan Kingdom. The GOI is raising a new Special Security Bureau (SSB) Force to patrol Indian's Northeast borders with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Rae stated the GOI has no information on the Bhutanese Census conducted in May 2005, and agreed any use of the census to launch another round of ethnic readjustment would be unacceptable. End Summary. Dhaka Talks Productive ---------------------- [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi8893" \l "par2) 2. (C) Talks between Bhutanese Foreign Minister Wangchuk and Nepalese King Gyanendra during the SAARC Summit on November 12-13 were positive and the two sides agreed to the repatriation of Category 1 and 4 refugees from the Khudunabari Camp and to re-starting the stalled Joint Verification Team process, Ranjit Rae reported in a November 22 meeting with PolCouns and PolOff. Rae commented that it was significant in that Bhutan and Nepal reached this agreement, although Nepal was still reluctant to make the declaration public. Nepal's willingness to discuss solutions not completely ruled by the Joint Ministerial Meetings guidelines, such as resettlement, shows a welcome flexibility in Kathmandu's position, Saran argued. Rae reiterated that the GOI's official position is that a bilateral solution to the problem is the best way forward, but suggested that in private diplomatic interactions India was continuing to press for a solution. Bhutan Discusses Refugees, Nepal Does Not ----------------------------------------- [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi8893" \l "par3) 3. (C) While the RGOB regularly discusses the refugee issue with the MEA, the GON has not broached the topic with the MEA since February 2005, Rae stated. Saran, who served at the GOI's mission to Geneva and appeared well versed on the refugee issue, added that the GON's position in Geneva has not been positive regarding any plans that include third-country resettlement. He theorized that the GON fears third-country resettlement would eventually lead to large-scale local integration, which is Kathmandu's main concern regarding the refugees. PolOff noted that if resettlement countries acknowledged a willingness to accept refugees and offered general numbers of how many each country might be willing to take, it could ease the GON's fear that they will be left "holding the bag." Saran agreed that this could help ease Nepal's worries, but commented that the GON is still largely focused on the law and order situation in the country, and other issues, specifically the refugees, receive less attention. Thimphu Wary of Monitors ------------------------ [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi8893" \l "par4) 4. (C) The issue of international monitoring of the eventual repatriation of refugees to Bhutan could also be problematic, noted Rae. The RGOB does not trust UNHCR and will not allow the group to fulfill its traditional monitoring role. Rae commented that the UNHCR has vetoed the idea of using UNDP, which has an extensive presence in Bhutan and good relations with the government, in that monitor role. He added that UNDP also does not want to take on the added responsibility, as this endeavor is not in its charter. Saran noted his impression out of Geneva is that Thimphu does not consider the Friends of Bhutan group to be true friends, as it does not always have Bhutan's best interest at heart. (Note: The Friends of Bhutan group consists of: Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland and Austria. End Note.) ULFA: Keep Out! --------------- [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi8893" \l "par5) 5. (C) Bhutan and India are committed to keeping ULFA out of Bhutan, Rae asserted, adding that he had discussed this issue during a recent visit to Thimphu that included calls on the King and Foreign Minister. Rae acknowledged that the GOI has received some intelligence reports that the ULFA terrorist group has attempted to encamp in Bhutan, but has been unsuccessful. Rae told us that the GOI is in the process of raising a new SSB force, reporting to the Home Ministry, that would patrol its borders with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. He concluded that the GOI "must be very vigilant along these borders." No News on the Census --------------------- [Â¶](http://www.bhutan-research.org/us-diplomatic-cables-on-bhutan/05newdelhi8893" \l "par6) 6. (C) Regarding a recent report from the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan, which stated the May 2005 Census results have identified 125,000 non-nationals living in Bhutan, Rae told us that the GOI has not received any such information. However, he suggested that we should monitor this very carefully to ensure there is never a repeat of the expulsion that occurred in the early 1990s. BLAKE