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By Dr. S. Chandrasekharan

It is believed that the third country resettlement scheme is closing down when the last batch of refugees would be leaving by end December this year.

In this massive resettlement, the USA has taken the bulk of the refugees with 94179, followed by Canada with 6826 and Australia with 6695 refugees. The latest figures indicate that in all 110926 refugees have been finally resettled.

That leaves behind over 8500 refugees still in camps and mainly at Beldangi. Of these 2000 are still eager to apply for resettlement though they could have but did not do so earlier. Another 400 refugees who were rejected earlier are appealing for a review of their cases.

Ultimately, there is a likelihood of 5000 refugees still remaining in the camps and the question would be - what is to be done with them?

There are also many unregistered refugees outside the camps who perhaps by marriage or other political and criminal links have found it easy to stay on. Their number may not exceed a thousand. One should not forget that over the last two decades, a large number of refugees estimated to be over 20000 (twenty thousand) have also moved and settled down in India.

The best solution would be for Nepal to absorb the remaining 5000 refugees and close the Beldangi and Sanichare camps permanently. But so far, as a matter of principle, the Nepal Government is unwilling to absorb any of the refugees and is sticking onto the stand that these refugees should go back to Bhutan.

Nepal knows very well that Bhutan is not going to accept these refugees at any cost. When Bhutan dragged its feet and on some excuse or other and did not take back even those refugees who were found to be genuine Bhutanese citizens by the joint verification teams of both countries, it is doubtful whether it would take any of the residual refugees now. And why should they when there is no pressure on them?

It is sad and unfortunate that in the whole episode of the refugee problem, Bhutan managed to get away without taking even a single citizen back to Bhutan and the international community could do nothing about it. It is not too late for the international community even now as a matter of principle to pressurise Bhutan government that has a responsibility towards its own citizens to make at least a token gesture by taking back a few of the remaining refugees.

Similarly, the residual refugee population that will be 5000 or less could be easily absorbed by the Nepal Government. Perhaps the government that is being formed under the new constitution after the elections may review the stand and take a benign view of the refugees.

I have in my visits abroad have seen that most of those except the elderly people are happily settled and have tried to adjust themselves in the new environment. They are found to be hardworking, law abiding and sincere- a contrast to some of the arrivals from the middle east.

All praise should go to USA that absorbed the bulk of the refugees as also the UNHCR which enabled a seamless transfer from the camps to various countries. A word of praise and appreciation is also due to Mr. D.N.S.Dhakal but for whose untiring efforts at the cost of his own personal life, the refugees may still be languishing in the camps. The museum, the cultural centre and the temple he has built in Jhapa in memory of the refugees is worth a visit by everyone interested and involved in the refugee crisis.

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