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Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Fri, 09/21/2012 - 08:08

Note No. 119

07.02.2001

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S.B.Subha, Chairman of Bhutanese Representative Repatriation Committee (BRRRC) has sent the following report on the visit of the Joint Verification Team to Goldhap, Khudunabari and Timai camps.

Apparently the team is following the US proposal to call for both individual and family entity verification.

It appears that the leader of Bhutanese refugees are happy with the verification done so far. Though it is still a long way for the refugees to return to Bhutan, the verification started by the Joint Verification Team is a good beginning.

Goldhap:

The Joint Verification Team arrived in Goldhap camp at 9:00 AM. and first introduced with camp committee. The camp secretary, Mr. Purna Bahadur Gurung greeted and welcomed them with traditional offering of "Khada" (traditional scarf) to the team. After that the team divided themselves and went in different directions meeting the people and talking to them. They talked with maximum people and asked generally their address in Bhutan and to the few reasons for leaving Bhutan. They entered the hut of Mr. Devi Charan Bastola, Sector C/1, hut number 78. Mr. Bastola showed his documents. They were so surprised to see him as a refugee with so much of valid documents of proof of Bhutanese citizen. They asked why he has to leave Bhutan. Then they asked about his family members and also saw the names of his family members serially and asked whether all are born in Bhutan. Then they also entered the hut number 71 of Mr. Birkha Bahadur Gurung of Sector A/2. He also showed his documents. Similarly he was also asked why with so much of valid documents he has to leave Bhutan. He replied them that he was evicted by the government.

They also visited all camp level agency offices, schools and health centre. They inquired about the further studies after completing class X. All the people requested the Bhutanese team to resolve this problem as early as possible and take them back to Bhutan. The team told the people that they would go back on Monday and come back again and will try to solve the problem early. Some of the members bought "Doma" (betelnut) and share with the refugees. They were very friendly and there was complete peace in the camp.

Khudunabari:

In Khudunabari like in other camps the team dispersed in various directions and talked with the people. One of the members Mr. Tshering Yonten met Mr. Hari Prasad Adhikari, General Secretary of Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP). Mr. Adhikari was also National Assembly Member in Bhutan. He was marked as politically conscious by the Bhutan government and was also the contemporary of Mr. T.N. Rizal in the assembly. His wife and children were forcibly evicted by the government. Mr. Tshering Yonten took the background history of Mr. Adhikari and reasons for leaving Bhutan.

Mr. Tshering Yonten also met the senior citizen and ex-mondal (Block Head) of Dalim Block under Samdrupjongkhar district, Mr. Ganga Ram Nepal. He took Mr. Nepal's background history and reasons for leaving Bhutan. Late Leela Maya Nepal wife of Mr. Ganga Ram Nepal was arrested and imprisoned for seventeen days and was continuously tortured by the Police and Dungpa (sub-divisional officer) till she was released. She died on October 26, 2000 in AMDA hospital, Damak which she was suffering from the torture. Incidentally Mr. Nepal had served as "Chaprasee" (Office Guard) under the grandfather of Mr. Tshering Yonten in 1950s.

Mr. Tshering Yonten also inquired about the camp situation and the presence of non-Bhutanese. Mr. Adhikari and Nepal explained them about the people who were forced to sign the so-called voluntary migration form and the marriage cases. He told them that it is in the knowledge of the government. He told them that the government is concerned with the presence of people from Assam, Bengal and Nepal. He also talked about Mr. T.N. Rizal's health and his treatment. Bhutan government has sanctioned for his treatment and is referred to

Calcutta. He also visited one Sarchhop (eastern Bhutan) family and talked with them. He took the photograph of Sun Rise Academy, Khudunabari and also the photograph of king of Bhutan hung on the school wall.

He did not comment anything when people asked about the resettlement and occupation of their land by the people from east and west Bhutan.

Lastly he told the people that they will bring additional members from every district when they come for verification and also indicated the possibility of taking the help of school teachers. He also expressed his homely feeling in the camps.

Timai:

The final visit was at Timai. The Joint Verification Team there also dispersed in different directions and talked with the people. They talk with Mr. Parsu Ram Dahal and other refugees asking same questions and inquired like in other camps.

The Joint Verification Team (JVT) will be meeting on 29th January 2001 in Chandragadi for final decision of setting of office, fix the camp and date to start verification.

Conclusion:

The overall visit of the camps was a success without any disturbance and the Bhutanese team gained confidence of security. They freely mixed with people and gathered many information. Hope they will carry back good impression of the people and need of early resolution.

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