

Improving the quality of life of the people of Bhutan

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Letter from the President

It was a year ago this spring, on March 24, 2008, that Bhutan held its first national democratic elections and started on the path to a democratic form of government. Much has transpired over the past year, but most notable is the progress made to establish the institutions and functions of a democratic government.

The Bhutan Foundation has been assisting this process in several ways, including supporting the establishment of Bhutan's Center for Media and Democracy, a nongovernmental organization focused on building a culture of democracy and a Bhutanese citizenry knowledgeable of their role in ensuring a successful transition to a democratic form of government. The Bhutan Foundation is also working with the government and our partners to ensure a vibrant and responsible community of civil society organizations in Bhutan by introducing standards of best practice and forming the Bhutan Association of Civil Society Organizations.

As you will read in the following pages, we have a number of projects underway that will require additional funding in 2009. I would like to highlight several of these initiatives:

- The Emergency Medical Program is training a core medical team from the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital in Thimphu and providing Bhutan's first emergency medical services (EMS) ambulance equipped with advanced life-support systems. In the coming months, we plan to expand training and provide emergency medical equipment to other regional and district hospitals and upgrade existing ambulances.
- The Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment will be the country's leading center for research and policy focusing on such critical issues as climate change, which could have a profound impact on Bhutan's hydropower-based economy. The Institute will initiate several research programs this year, provide advanced educational opportunities for Bhutanese scientists, and further develop the facilities at the Institute.
- The Special Education Program is creating a different classroom model for schools to accommodate children with special needs. The pilot program has been launched successfully at a middle school in Thimphu and will expand into four other schools in Bhutan.

The Bhutan Foundation also has been quite successful in expanding its relationships with several US universities and organizations. This year will see new graduate scholarships at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and undergraduate scholarships at the University of Nebraska – Kearney for Bhutanese students. In addition, we hope to finalize a graduate scholarship with The Harris School at the University of Chicago. This spring, we are also initiating a partnership with the Panthera Foundation, supporting efforts to connect Bhutan to a 5,000 mile long genetic corridor across northeast India and southeast Asia in an effort to secure a future for a number of wild cat species, including the tiger and Asiatic and clouded leopards.

As you can see, 2009 is already providing opportunities for the Foundation as it supports Bhutan's transition to democracy and the country's longer term development aspiration of Gross National Happiness (GNH) based on the Four Pillars: Conservation of the Environment, Good Governance, Equitable Development, and Preservation of Culture. We are grateful to all of you for your generosity, without which the work of the Bhutan Foundation would not be possible. We hope you will continue to support our efforts through these challenging times as we continue to support critical programs in Bhutan.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bruce W. Bunting
President

PROJECTS THAT NEED YOUR HELP!

CONSERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Helping Farmers and Wildlife Coexist

With over 60% of the country being under forest cover, many villages in Bhutan lie within and around national parks and forest areas that are home to snow leopards, tigers, bears, boars, wild dogs, and numerous other species. One of the biggest challenges that the government of Bhutan faces is protecting endangered species while ensuring the welfare of the local farmers.

The Bhutan Foundation and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) are developing a project to find local solutions to help farmers

and wildlife coexist. This project will be piloted in selected villages within the Wamrong and Kanpara gewogs in the Trashigang district of eastern Bhutan.

The pilot will use local and international experts to develop improved land use systems, plant green fencing, study wildlife behavior, and conduct a national workshop on solutions. It also will build capacity for local people by training farmers on nursery establishment, building green fences, introducing farmers to new crops, and creating

awareness among farmers.

The Bhutan Foundation and RSPN hope to raise funds for hiring specialists in land use planning, ecology, agriculture, and wildlife biology to assess and evaluate local solutions within the pilot communities. These experts will hold several meetings and workshops in Thimphu to share ideas with partners and stakeholders. They also will survey villagers and hold meetings with local leaders. The first phase of the project, which has not received any funding, will cost approximately \$25,000.

Animal Welfare Project in Thimphu Launched

The Bhutan Foundation partnered with the Tourism Council of Bhutan to invite Humane Society International (HSI) in the fall of 2008 to look into the large numbers of stray dogs in Thimphu. HSI then submitted a proposal detailing their strategy to deal with the problem. The proposal outlined a two-phase approach. On February 20, 2009, a team put together by HSI commenced the first phase, a two-month pilot project in which strays in the capital would be sterilized. The campaign was inaugurated by Dasho Gado Tshering, Secretary, Ministry of Health. The project is jointly funded by the Department of Livestock, the Bhutan Foundation, and HSI, with support from Jangsa Animal Saving Trust, the Department of Public Health, the Royal Society for the



Protection and Care of Animals, and the Thimphu City Corporation. According to HSI, the main purpose of the campaign is to provide stray dog sterilization, spay/neuter, antirabies vaccination, and deworming. The campaign is

aimed at controlling canine diseases and stray dog overpopulation. If the pilot project, which ends April 2009, is successful, the next phase would be a nationwide sterilization campaign.

Help Improve Health in Rural Areas with Fuel Efficient Stoves

Fuel-efficient stoves require only half the amount of firewood compared to traditional fuel stoves still used in most villages in Bhutan.

Furthermore, they can contribute to improving health; using fuel-efficient stoves has proven to reduce significantly the amount of indoor pollution, including smoke and carbon monoxide, the fourth leading cause of death for children under the age of five in developing countries. It also reduces respiratory and eye diseases, including cataracts, which are commonly found in many rural areas in Bhutan, particularly in the Lunana area.

One fuel-efficient stove



(produced locally) costs \$50. Help us improve the health of students and the environment

in rural areas by providing 170 schools in Bhutan with fuel-efficient stoves.

Conservation Research Begins: Butterflies of Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, Trashi Yangtse

The Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, in the eastern part of Bhutan, is conducting research to document butterfly species and increase conservation of threatened species. It is not known how many species of butterflies Bhutan hosts, but the biodiversity action plan of Bhutan 2002 indicates only 50. In 2007, Piet Van Der Poel recorded 120 species of butterflies in Bhutan, but it is expected that Bhutan should host more than 600 species. To date, no wide-range survey of the species has been conducted, and there is a lack of detailed information about their distribution, status, and habitat. Therefore, this research will document the different butterfly species in eastern Bhutan and their

ecological habitats and conservation prospects. More importantly, this research is expected to protect one of the world's most rare and endangered species, Ludlow's Bhutan Swallowtail, discovered in 1933 by Frank Ludlow in Trashi Yangtse. The study will increase knowledge of butterfly conservation and provide a good overview of the present status of habitats, especially of threatened species, and of the existing and potential threats. These data also will provide a basis for listing endangered species of butterflies from the Eastern Himalayas on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Currently, the researcher has identified and photographed



52 species of butterflies. These are mostly early emergent species recorded in winter, and, as the research enters summer, approximately 300 species are expected to be identified and photographed. The Bhutan Foundation provided a small grant to procure equipment for the initial research. Additional funds of approximately \$\$\$ are needed in order to generate a pictorial guidebook on butterflies in eastern Bhutan, which will serve as a reference for identifying and cataloging butterflies in other parts of Bhutan and the Himalayas.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Support Media Literacy in Bhutan

With the recent surge of media outlets such as radio stations, newspapers, and television channels in Bhutan, the need for the Bhutanese citizenry to become knowledgeable consumers of media messages is greater than ever. The Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy works to increase public understanding of the media and journalism and the role and responsibility of the media in a democracy. To approach this understanding, proper educational and informative structures need to be implemented that can teach citizens about the nature of media and its role.

The Bhutan Foundation and the Bhutan Center for Media and

Democracy are working together to find support for these necessary structures of media literacy in Bhutan. We hope to build upon the activities that the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy has already begun on a small scale and expand the media literacy efforts that are already underway in Bhutan.

In order to support media literacy among the younger demographic, the Center will work with high schools in Bhutan to develop after-school media clubs, which will engage students and teachers in learning journalism basics and multimedia skills to produce school newspapers,

podcasts, and youth websites. This will encourage the new generation of Bhutanese citizens to develop quality news coverage and embrace new technologies.

The Center also will hold workshops and training for public officials, politicians, bureaucrats, students, teachers, and others on the issues related to democracy, media, and civil society.

The Bhutan Foundation and the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy are currently seeking \$25,000 to support the implementation of the media literacy clubs in high schools across Bhutan and to provide training and workshops for the citizens of Bhutan.

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Funds Needed for Developing Bhutan's Emergency Medical Services

The Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital soon will be receiving its first fully equipped EMS ambulance. The ambulance will have life-saving equipment, such as a patient monitor, a defibrillator, a ventilator, and resuscitators. The ambulance and training for a core team of trauma specialists at the hospital have been fully funded, and training for the core team is currently underway at Phelps Memorial Hospital, New York.

Upon arrival to Thimphu, the core team will treat patients in the emergency unit and train others in emergency services. Lay people with no education and health background can be



trained to provide basic help in emergency situations through a First Responders workshop. Current ambulance drivers, nurse assistants, and nurses can also be trained in prehospital trauma life support, in which they can provide basic, but potentially life-saving, care before a patient is seen by the doctor.

The general public must also be educated and aware of such services; prevention programs are key to reducing death and disability due to trauma.

The Bhutan Foundation and Ministry of Health are currently seeking \$25,000 to launch the First Responders workshop, training for ambulance drivers and health-care workers, and prevention programs.

Volunteer Emergency Medicine Physicians Needed in Bhutan

Dr. Gado Tshering, Secretary of the Ministry of Health of Bhutan, was invited to Las Vegas, Nevada, in March 2009 as the featured speaker at the Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) 50th anniversary conference. The HVO Orthopedic Program began in 1990 when Bhutan had no orthopedic surgeons. Since then, HVO has provided the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital with volunteer orthopedic surgeons, who not only serve patients in

the hospital but train Bhutanese orthotechs and doctors.

Due to the success of the HVO Orthopedic Program, the Bhutan Foundation and HVO will be launching a similar program starting in 2010, recruiting volunteer emergency room physicians to serve at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital. The volunteer physicians will serve for a minimum duration of one month, during which they will

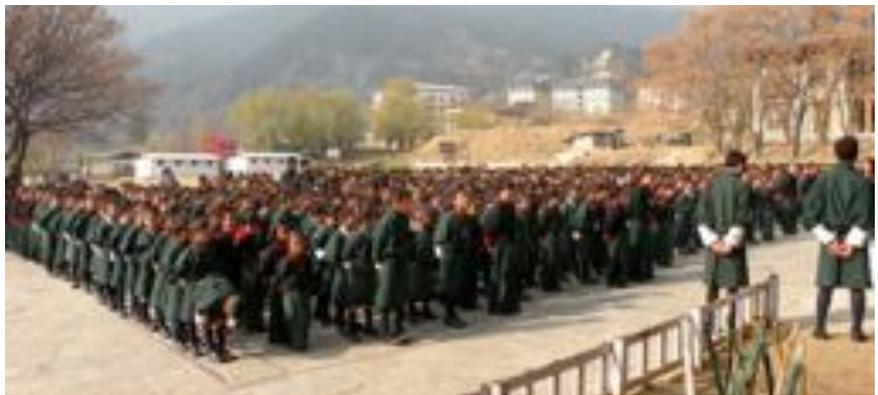
work in the emergency unit and help develop the Emergency Medical Program, which includes training a new set of health workers who will serve as emergency technicians/paramedics.

If you are interested in volunteering or know someone who would be interested in volunteering as an emergency room physician in Bhutan, please contact us at info@bhutanfound.org.

School of Model Education for All Abilities: Special Needs School, Changangkha Lower Secondary School, Thimphu

The Special Education Program, supported by the Bhutan Foundation and established by the Ministry of Education and the Youth Development Fund, is making huge strides in creating a model of best practices and a new instructional approach to meet the learning styles and needs of all students. Our Education Advisor Kim McCormack has been working extensively with this school to create a school of excellence for the 21st Century.

Presenting hands-on, experiential workshops for the teachers, including model classroom teaching, Kim is igniting a passion for learning for teachers and students alike. They have created an excellent resource center used by the teachers to expand their content knowledge and instructional techniques. The school is now addressing the needs of all students, including those with mild to moderate learning disabilities, allowing



these students to thrive and succeed in school. The Bhutan Foundation is bringing in short-term volunteer specialists to assist in the process.

A major Model Education Conference will be held this summer for the five schools identified in this project. This conference, will be held jointly with the Arts Education Conference, which addresses developing the arts curriculum for all schools, an integral part of Model Education.

Through the Bhutan Foundation, two students were

chosen to go to the University of Nebraska at Kearney to study psychology. They were given full fellowships from the University, and, with additional support from the Royal Government of Bhutan, they will be trained to work as school psychologists in Bhutan-another important component to building our Model Education Program.

The Ministry of Education is fully supporting this project and has appointed a new Head of Special Education, Tshering Lhamo, formerly at the School for the Blind.

Light Druk Yul Project Seeks International Volunteers

The Bhutan Foundation working with the Ministry of Education, Human Resources, has developed standardized procedures, applications, and contracts to formalize the process for volunteer teachers to come to Bhutan for a minimum of one year. Schools

in Bhutan are in need of qualified teachers for English, math, and science. The system has now been established and approved by the Ministry to screen and find the best candidates to work in all regions of Bhutan. They will be given a two-week orientation

and curriculum training before being assigned to their schools. You will soon see an application and information on the Ministry of Education's website: www.education.gov.bt.

Recovery Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Planned in Gidakhom

The first fully equipped rehabilitation center of Bhutan will be built on the outskirts of Thimphu in Gidakhom. The Youth Development Fund (YDF) and Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency (BNCA) will jointly run the center. It will include a 20-bed hostel for men and women undergoing rehabilitation, a multipurpose hall, an administration hall,

and a recreational field. The Bhutan Foundation will assist YDF in raising Nu 2.4 million (US\$48,000) for the project, and the government will assist in the additional Nu 11.4 million (US\$230,000).

The new center plans to recruit professionals who will help alcohol- and drug-dependent clients from various

circumstances. The center's services will focus on counseling for clients and their families and support in building individual confidence and skills. The existing drop-in centers would act as a conduit between clients and the recovery center, hold family support group meetings, and support clients who come back after recovery.

Loden Foundation's New Thimphu Office; Encouraging Entrepreneurship

The Loden Foundation's chapter in Bhutan, Loden Zhitshog, established a new office in the center of Thimphu on December 1, 2008. The office facilities, though limited, are open for the use of upcoming entrepreneurs. Loden hopes to expand and serve as the new Knowledge Base, providing information about higher education and entrepreneurship. The Knowledge Base will include a small library and computers with access to the internet for students and entrepreneurs who wish to conduct research and explore alternative sources of information to help them pursue their careers. Not everyone can attend an institute of higher learning in Bhutan, but the Knowledge



Base can provide free access to information that might help guide them in their businesses. One of the main projects of the Loden Foundation is the Loden Entrepreneurship Program (LEP), initiated by two major benefactors of the foundation. The LEP is an entrepreneurial education project that began last year to support the culture

of private enterprise among the young people of Bhutan.

The Bhutan Foundation has provided a grant to support the Loden Foundation in its charitable work within Bhutan and is exploring ways of collaborating on the Entrepreneurship Program.

PRESERVATION OF CULTURE

Help Develop Contemporary Art in Bhutan

At a period of historic transition, art can be a medium of expression and capture the essence of historical, cultural, and political changes in Bhutan. The Bhutan Foundation is supporting the Volunteer Artists' Studio, Thimphu (VAST), in its efforts to develop contemporary art in Bhutan.

The Bhutan Foundation is seeking funds to send two Bhutanese artists to an eight-week fellowship program at the Vermont Studio Center (VSC) in the United States to broaden exposure and to create opportunities in contemporary art. The VSC fellowship will

provide the attendees the opportunity to share their work in open studio tours and slideshows, to collaborate, and to forge professional connections that will help link Bhutan to other artists and art organizations.

A two-month residency for one artist from Bhutan, including tuition, international travel, medical insurance, publicity, artist selection, and administration at VSC will

require \$10,000. An additional grant of \$4,375 would provide materials, shipping allowance, and documentation of VSC shows, studios, and artwork.



Restoration Planned for Wangdue Choling Palace

The Wangdue Choling Palace is a significant site in the history of the monarchy in Bhutan. Built in 1858 by Tronsga Penlop Jigme Namgyel, the founder of the present monarchs, this palace is one of the oldest in Bhutan. The First King Ugyen Wangchuck was born within its walls, and it became the seat of Bhutan's reigning Wangchuk Dynasty and one of the finest examples of domestic architecture in the country. Today, the palace is abandoned and in disrepair, waiting for restoration to revive some of its former glory. The Bhutan Foundation will assist the Culture Trust Fund under the



Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, and we hope to launch the restoration of Wangdue Choling as our first project. Dialogue with Amankora,

Aman Resorts, has started with the hope of collaborating on fundraising. A preliminary report of the site currently is being conducted.

Sewala Shedra Plans Water Supply Project

The Sewala Shedra, built in 1718, sits 12,500 ft atop a mountain overlooking the Punakha valley in Bhutan. It recently received a new dormitory to house the more than 80 monks who, until last year, lived in sheds of bamboo and plastic. The Bhutan Foundation provided a grant, which was funded by individual donors Eric Hoffman and Michael Reynolds, to construct the three-storied building that the young monks now call home.

While the dormitory has eased much of the hardship these young monks have to endure, they still must walk four to six hours during the spring and summer months to collect water for the monastery. Rain alone does not meet their water needs, and the trip to collect water greatly interferes with their studies. The monastery also does not have proper



shower or bathroom facilities. The unhygienic conditions and lack of water have contributed to sickness, such as diarrhea, skin diseases, and lice.

The Bhutan Foundation is supporting the monastery's goal of raising funds to construct a 3,000 meter long water pipeline that will connect the water source to the monastery. The piping will be fitted to two large water storage tanks to ensure the monks have a reliable water supply for their basic needs.

The estimated cost of the water supply project is approximately \$7,000. We are also seeking support to construct proper bathroom and shower facilities. Due to the remoteness of the monastery, the cost of constructing and installing bathroom facilities and shower stalls for Sewala is approximately \$16,000.

More information on the projects at Sewala Shedra can be accessed at <http://www.bhutanfound.org/sewala>.

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BHUTAN IN THE UNITED STATES

Opening the Dragon's Gift at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco



The Dragon's Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan has made its way from Honolulu to San Francisco via New York City. On February 18, His Royal Highness Prince Jigme Dorji

Wangchuck and Mr. Dixon Dall, Chair of the Asian Art Commission and the Asian Art Museum Foundation, opened the exhibition to over 300 invited guests at the San

Francisco Asian Art Museum. Also attending the event were Ambassador Lhatu Wangchuk, Home Secretary Dasho Penden Wangchuk, and Dr. Bruce W. Bunting, President of the Bhutan Foundation. The opening address at the event was made by the Director of the museum, Dr. Jay Xu.

The exhibition focuses on Bhutan's art and culture and displays it through the *thankas* (paintings), sculptures, textiles, and ritual objects that are on view at the Museum. The exhibition will remain at the Asian Art Museum until May 10.

Arts and Culture Series: Film Screening and Discussion Promote Bhutan

On January 29, the Asia Society Washington cohosted a screening of the documentary, *Bhutan: Taking the Middle Path to Happiness*, with the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins and the Bhutan Foundation. The film screening was followed by a panel discussion featuring Mr. Dhanendra Kumar, Executive Director of the World Bank; Mr. Christian Eigen-Zucchi, Senior Economist at the World Bank; Ms. Tshering Denka, Program Associate of the Bhutan Foundation; and Mr. Jamyang Tashi, Program Advisor of the Bhutan Foundation. Dr. Bruce W. Bunting, President of the



Bhutan Foundation, moderated the panel discussion on Gross National Happiness and Bhutan.

The screening and discussion were attended by over 30 participants, including friends of the Asia Society and the Bhutan Foundation, students of Johns Hopkins, and

members of the Washington, DC, community. For the Bhutan Foundation, the screening of the film is an important way of promoting Bhutan and its development goal of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The film, produced and directed by Tom Vendetti, is an insider's look at what GNH really means to the Bhutanese people.

Arts and Culture Series: Film Screening and Discussion Promote Bhutan

Through film we learn new ways to see our world. Those of us who never could visit Antarctica or the Amazon have been able to travel with great filmmakers as our guide. For over 15 years the Environmental Film Festival has brought this special experience to lucky Washington residents.”

- Barbara Bramble,
National Wildlife Federation

The Bhutan Foundation co-presented the documentary, *Bhutan: Taking the Middle Path to Happiness*, at the 17th Annual Environmental Film Festival in Washington, DC, on March 12, 2009. The 11-day festival offered 130 documentary, feature, animated, archival, experimental, and children's films. Most screenings included discussions and were

free and open to public.

People lined around the corner on the streets in Washington DC, and many had to return home, as the venue was filled to capacity. The documentary presented by the Bhutan Foundation and the Environmental Film Festival highlighted Bhutan's unique development philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

The Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy Represented at the News Literacy Conference in Stony Brook, New York

The Executive Director of the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy, Ms. Pek Dorji, recently attended and presented “Reports from the Front” at the March 11-13 News Literacy Conference at Stony Brook University in upstate New York. The conference had over 120 participants and was hosted by the School of

Journalism. Stony Brook University was recently awarded a grant from the Knight Foundation for the News Literacy Project, which teaches students to become informed consumers of media. The course teaches about the credibility of what one hears on the radio, reads in the papers or on the web, or watches on

television.

In a similar approach to media education, the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy has been developing a Media Literacy Project in Bhutan, which does not focus solely on professional journalists but on the next generation of media consumers and aspiring journalists.

BHUTAN: EVENTS AND NEWS

Mobile Clinic for Dogs Source: Kuensel

February 16, 2009 - The founder of Bianca Trust Fund, Ms Judith Ciani Smith, from the United States, has donated US\$ 30,000 to the Royal Society for Protection and Care of Animals (RSPCA) for an appropriate vehicle to carry dogs to the pound and also to buy the animal's rations.

RSPCA has bought a Toyota Hiace Bus for the dogs. Ms Judith Ciani Smith had visited Bhutan as a tourist around mid last year and, on seeing the dog problem, had donated money through the Bhutan Foundation.

The Nu 1.7m bus will transport sick dogs to the pound at Serbithang and also be used as a mobile veterinary clinic. It has 16 seats with a wide body and power window and door lock. It also features air bags systems, rear heater, air conditioner, and audio system; super long wheelbase and high roof with wide body, providing enough space for around 50 dogs. "The bus will benefit us in collecting food (leftovers



from hotels) for the dogs, thereby cutting down cost," said RSPCA president, Tenzin Dhendup. The 3.28 acre RSPCA dog shelters in Ngabephu in Serbithang have, so far, according to officials, treated 467 dogs since 2002. The 205 dogs at Ngabephu are fed twice a day.

RSPCA's Tashi Peday said that till date they had been hiring or borrowing vehicles for rescue, emergency treatment and

transportation of dogs to their shelter. "The vehicle has come at a perfect time," she said.

The agriculture minister, Lyonpo Dr Pema Gyamtsho, inaugurated the bus. This is the second time a tourist has donated a vehicle for dog care. Earlier, the Jangsa Animal Care had received a Mahindra Bolero pick-up truck from the founder of the Brigitte Bardot foundation in May last year.

Music Of Bhutan Research Center at Work on New Project

The Bhutan Foundation supported Kheng Sonam Dorji, a renowned Bhutanese musician who founded the Music of Bhutan Research Center (MBRC) in 2008 to document, preserve, and promote the traditional music of Bhutan. The MBRC aims to record and archive the musical traditions of the country and prevent them from

disappearing amidst the influx of popular music from other countries. The MBRC works to renew appreciation and involvement in the traditional Bhutanese music realm and promotes the beautiful music of Bhutan to a global audience. MBRC plans to establish music programs for youth and to train teachers of traditional music for the school system of

Bhutan.

Dr. Janet Herman and Ms. Jane Hancock, who have supported Kheng Sonam Dorji and the work of the MBRC through numerous outreach events in California, are producing the center's current project, a CD titled, *Journey to Sengbji: Songs of Am Nimchu Pem*, which has been scheduled

How safe are Schools in Bhutan?

Source: Kuensel

April 1, 2009 - Class VI A students of Babesa primary school in Thimphu were walking towards their class after their morning assembly on March 26 when they found - much to their horror - that their classroom ceiling had collapsed.

Their desks and chairs were covered with dust, broken planks, plywood, bamboo, and the main pillar that supported the classroom ceiling was also lying on the ground. School principal Lhagey Tshering said that the ceiling had collapsed on the night of March 25. The building was 29 years old and renovated in 2000. It was built by the Babesa gewog

community with the help of Thimphu district engineers. "We'll repair the classroom as soon as possible," he said.

Although no one was injured, the incident has reinforced concerns among parents, teachers and students about the need to have good quality school buildings and on school safety issues. In 2007, a classroom in Rinchen Kuenphen school in Thimphu was nearly destroyed by a fire at night caused by an electric short-circuit.

There was also an incident in a school in Trongsa where the walls of the building had cracked and water seeping

through it had destroyed all the books and stationery in the school storeroom.

Babesa schoolteacher, Wangmo, said that children and teachers were relieved that the ceiling did not cave in during lessons. There are 32 students in the class. "Children were also worried about the other classrooms in the same block because the conditions there are equally bad," she said.

One parent said: "Ceilings don't usually fall unless it's a poorly constructed building or there's been a long term problem, so why was it not fixed?"

Takins at Risk of Inbreeding

Source: Kuensel

March 30, 2009 - The number of takins at the takin preserve in Motithang is decreasing, according to officials from the Nature Conservation Division (NCD).

From 16 takins in 1989, today there are only seven, four male and three female. This, according to a nature conservation specialist, was because of inbreeding among the animals kept in the enclosure. "Since the takins are kept in an enclosure, inbreeding is bound to take place," said nature conservation specialist, Sangay Wangchuk. "Over the years inbreeding among the takins in the preserve has become a problem."

The preserve's caretaker, Tashi Norbu, said that inbred calves find it difficult to reach for their mother's milk, since they

are very small. "Inbreeding weakens their immunity and they become susceptible to diseases," he said.

The takins from the preserve were not released into the wild because they have become too domesticated, said Sangay Wangchuk, adding that they were kept in the enclosure for about 20 to 30 years and lost their adaptability to the wild. For instance, they may not be able to climb steep slopes like their wild counterparts, he said.

In an attempt to solve the inbreeding problem in the preserve, NCD is now looking to find one male and two female takins from the wild.

Sangay Wangchuk said that sighting takins in the wild was not a problem, but it was difficult to tranquillize and transport them to the preserve.

Since their natural food is not available to them, takins in the enclosure are given additional food supplements like chickpeas. One takin consumes six kilograms of chickpeas a day, said Tashi.

The wild population of takin in the country has been stable over the years. This is "because they require a large habitat which is not a problem and poaching in Bhutan is non-existent", said Sangay Wangchuk, adding that the only threat they face were from predators like bears and wild dogs.

The takin is a migratory animal. During the summers they are found in Tsharjathang and, during the winter, they come downhill as far as Rimchu in Punakha.



Our Education Advisor, Ms. Kim McCormack introduced activities for children at the public library under the winter literacy program.

*Stay connected to Bhutan...
Support the Bhutan Foundation.*

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Mission

The Bhutan Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life of the Bhutanese people by supporting efforts that preserve the natural and cultural heritage of Bhutan and benefit human development and good governance.

The Bhutan Foundation aims to increase knowledge of Bhutan in the United States and throughout the world and to increase the mutually beneficial association between Bhutanese individuals and organizations in both the public and private sectors.

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