



Thunlam

Delegation
of the German
Bhutan Himalaya Society
20 Oct. to 2 Nov., 2002



Some members of the delegation of the German Bhutan Himalaya Society (BHS) visiting the country from 20 October to 2 November, 2002. The photo was taken at the annual convention of BHS in Bonn on 7 September 2002. From left to right (first row): Harwig Steiner, Dr. Heinrich Menzel, Friedrich Schade; (second row): Martina Krüger, Prof. Indu Prakash Pandey, Heidemarie I. Pandey, Susanne Rauscher-Schade, Lilli Conring; (third row): Hans Hiel-scher, Dr. Catharina Haenisch Ten Cate, Eric Twint, Dr. Gisela Stinner, Warner Conring.

BHS Delegation Visits Bhutan

A delegation of the Bhutan Himalaya Society (BHS) of Germany is visiting Bhutan from 20 October to 2 November, 2002. The 19-member group headed by the well-known Bhutan expert Prof. Manfred Gerner is scheduled to visit sights in Paro, Punakha, Tongsa, Talo and Gantey and to attend the Jambay Lakhang Drub and Prakartsechus in Bumthang. Also on their programme are various development projects and visits to local government representatives.

While in Thimphu, the delegation will have a number of talks with ministers and officials of the Royal Bhutan Government to obtain a comprehensive picture of development in the country. Through this visit, the BHS aims to strengthen existing ties between Germany and Bhutan and to explore new avenues of cooperation between the two countries.

The Bhutan Himalaya Society (BHS) of Germany

The Bhutan Himalaya Society (BHS) was founded in Cologne in 1986 by a group of friends of Bhutan in Germany. Its aim is to promote understanding and cooperation between Germany and Bhutan through dissemination of information and establishing contacts.

At home, the Society organises seminars and cultural programmes to introduce the Kingdom of Bhutan, its people, culture and development, to a German audience. Each year, a Bhutan Day is held which brings together BHS members from all over Germany and invited guests for lectures, discussions and presentations on Bhutan.

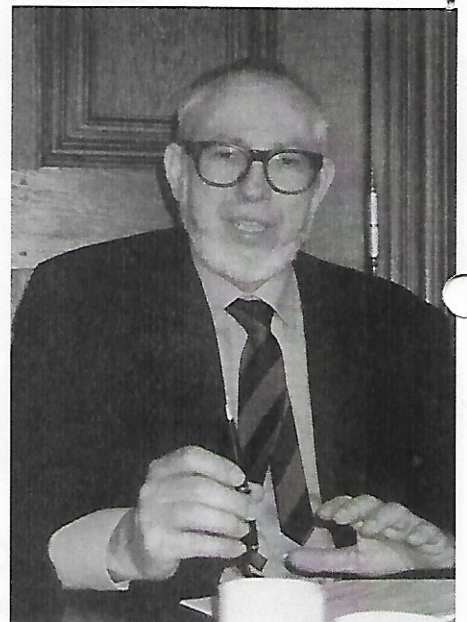
Regular activities of the BHS include entertaining and assisting visitors from Bhutan on official or business matters. At the same time, the BHS offers advice to Germans interested in contacts with or visits to Bhutan. In its newslet-

ter Thunlam and other occasional publications, the Society disseminates relevant information to an interested public in Germany. Within Europe, it maintains contact and cooperation with sister societies of friends of Bhutan in a number of neighbouring countries.

In Bhutan, the BHS tries to keep in touch with the Royal Bhutan Government, NGOs, international and national institutions. The Society provides support to various projects, especially on the preservation of the Bhutanese cultural heritage such as the restoration of monuments. Donations from the BHS helped to restore the Bjee Samtencholing Lhakhang in Tongsa. A new project funded by the BHS is the restoration of the historically important house of Kandom Sonam Peldon near Thimphu.

The Bhutan Himalaya Society is a non-governmental organisation funded exclusively by membership fees and private donations. It now has 152 members most of whom have visited Bhutan at least once.

Prof. Manfred Gerner Heads BHS Delegation



Prof. Manfred Gerner, Vice Chairman of BHS, heads the 19-member delegation to Bhutan. The trained engineer and architect who headed the German Centre for Crafts and Preservation from 1981 to 2001 is no stranger to Bhutan having visited the country at least 25 times. Gerner is a specialist on half

timbered buildings which are a traditional form of architecture both in Germany and Bhutan. This made him an ideal partner for the Bhutan government and its National Council for Cultural Affairs (NCCA) in their efforts to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the country. Gerner has written numerous books and scientific articles on Bhutan, Tibet and the Himalaya region and is considered as one of the leading experts on the culture, crafts and architecture in Bhutan. Gerner's recent work in Bhutan includes the restoration of three lhakhangs in the Thimphu and Paro valleys with funds from the German Foreign Office.

Restoration of Sonam Peldon's House

In cooperation with the German Foreign Ministry and the National Commission for Cultural Affairs (NCCA), some lhakhangs like Wangditse, Drakten and Jaba Lhakhang have already been restored in the past. In addition, Samtencholing Lhakhang has been successfully restored with the help of the Bhutan Himalaya Society. Now, the Society has offered its help in restoring Sonam Peldon's House in Thimphu valley. The house dates from the 13th century and is of high significance for the history of Bhutan because Phajo Drugom Zhigpo who founded the first Drukpa monasteries in West-Bhutan



Sonam Peldon's House near Thimphu will be restored within the next few years with the help of the Bhutan Himalaya Society and could become a tourist attraction.

lived here with his young wife Sonam Peldon. Coordinator in the restoration project is BHS Vice Chairman, Prof. Manfred Gerner. The work on the ancient monument will begin as soon as the preparations of the NCCA and the negotiations with the owners are finished.

Dr. Manfred Kulesa



Welcoming Dasho Nado Rinchen at the Bonn climate conference 2001.

Dr. Manfred Kulesa is Chairman of the Bhutan Himalaya Society (BHS). At the age of 70, he looks back at a life devoted to cooperation between Germany and the developing world, especially in Asia. The many important posts he has held included that of Director of Service Overseas; country representative of the German Development Service (DED) in India and DED Managing Director in Germany; UNDP Resident Representative in Nepal and China; Chairman of the Development Policy Forum of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) in Berlin; and President of the Asia Foundation in Essen.

Dr. Kulesa visited Bhutan during his association with UNDP and became a friend and frequent visitor of the country. In 2001, he was appointed by the Royal Bhutan Government as Honorary Consul in Germany with seat in Bonn-Bad Godesberg. Regrettably, Dr. Kulesa could not join the BHS delegation this time due to poor health, but he is looking forward to visiting Bhutan again at another occasion in the near future.

BHS and EXPO 2000

Two years ago, at the World Exhibition EXPO 2000 in Hannover, Germany, Bhutan made a great effort to present itself to a German and international public. Supported by Germany's Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), the country erected one of the most spectacular pavilions at the EXPO site – a beautiful lhakhang built in traditional style by Bhutanese craftsmen. The pavilion attracted millions of visitors and won an award as one of the best country presentations.



Bhutan's pavilion at EXPO 2000 in Hannover.

Naturally, the Bhutan Himalaya Society saw this as a chance to offer its assistance to its partners in Bhutan and also to promote its goals among the many visitors. BHS members were frequently present at the pavilion and distributed leaflets with information on the Society's work. BHS members from Hannover were particularly active in establishing contacts with the many Bhutanese who had come to the city in connection with EXPO 2000.

On Bhutan's official Nation Day at EXPO, BHS chairman Dr. Manfred Kulesa and other members of the Society were among the invited guests to the official functions which were honoured by the presence of a large Bhutanese delegation led by her Royal Highness, Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk. The German side was represented, among others, by the Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, and EXPO Commissioner, Birgit Breuel.

On the following day, 28 July 2000, the BHS organised a joint meeting of European Friends of Bhutan associations. England, France, the Netherlands, Swe-



Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk addressing the meeting of European Bhutan Friendship Societies in Hannover, July 2000.

den, Finland, Austria and Germany were represented by delegations. Chief Guest at the meeting was the Queen of Bhutan who thanked the European associations for their efforts to deepen relations between Bhutan and their respective countries. The meeting also served to discuss ideas for closer cooperation between European associations and joint activities in Bhutan.

Bhutan's success at EXPO 2000 and the wide media coverage which the previously little known country received during the five months of the exhibition helped to raise interest in the Bhutan Himalaya Society and will be of lasting benefit for its work in strengthening German-Bhutanese relations.

Bhutanese Dancers Get an Enthusiastic Response

One of the most successful activities of the Bhutan Himalaya Society was the organisation of a tour for dancers of the Royal Academy of Performing Arts in the summer of 2000. The 18-member ensemble directed by Dasho Thinley Gyamtsho dancers had come to Germany to perform at Bhutan's Nation Day at EXPO 2000, and BHS jumped at the opportunity to introduce this excellent group to a larger German and European audience. Performances were organised in London, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Geneva. In Germany, the dancers performed in Hannover and Cologne, but the highlight of the tour

was an evening of religious and mask dances in Stuttgart's Old Castle where an audience of more than 700 watched the performance in the historic courtyard. BHS member Hartwig Steiner was behind the organisation of the Stuttgart event and, together with friends and sponsors from the Stuttgart region succeeded in creating the ideal setting and atmosphere to make this a most memorable occasion.



Bhutanese Dancers in Stuttgart's Old Castle courtyard performing to an enthusiastic audience.

April Visit of BHS Delegation

A 13-member strong delegation of the Bhutan Himalaya Society visited Bhutan in April 2002. Led by Professor Manfred Gerner, the group had a very interesting programme consisting of cultural highlights as well as high-level talks with leading government officials. The group was honoured to be received by Foreign Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, Foreign Secretary Dasho Ugyen Tshering, Dasho Nado Rinchen, Deputy Minister of the National Environment Commission, and Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Minister for Health and Education. A special highlight was a meeting between part of the group and Crown Prince Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk back from England on holidays in Bhutan..

The delegation came back with many lively impressions from a memorable visit to Bhutan. Their many insights and experiences were shared with other members of BHS at this year's Bhutan Day in Bonn along with a selection of beautiful slides from various parts of the country.

Board Members of BHS

Being a registered non-profit society, the members of the BHS board are elected for three years. The present board (2000-2003) includes the following members:

Dr. Manfred Kulesa	Chairman	Marlies Wils	Minute Keeper
Prof. Manfred Gerner	Vice Chairman	Dieter Brauer	Member
Marion Hass	Secretary	Martina Krüger	Member
Alfred Brüggemann	Treasurer	Ursula Lemmer	Member
Fritz Hermanns	Honorary Chairman		

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