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I. India’s Foreign Secretary Meets Community Leaders in Washington

Sunny Wycliffe <sunnywycliffe@gmail.com> February 6:

(By Dr. Sambhu Banik)

On Monday, February 6th, 2012 a group of community leaders -- Dr. T. V.

George, Mr. J. John (Sunny) Wycliffe, Dr. Sambhu N. Banik, Dr. P. C. Nair and Dr. Joy Cherian -- met with Foreign Secretary of India, the Hon. Ranjan Mathai at his Ritz Carlton Hotel in Washington, D. C. It was Foreign Secretary Mathai's maiden visit to USA after he assumed the office of Foreign Secretary. Mathai warmly welcomed the leaders who were known to him when he worked as the First Secretary during the years 1981-1984. At that time late Sri K. R. Narayanan, former President of India, was the Ambassador of India. During the hour-long meeting Foreign Secretary Mathai recalled his days in Washington, D.C. and how his interactions with the Indian community and his active participation in many community organized activities has shaped his thinking. He was very grateful to the Indian American community for their warm hospitality during his tenure as the First Secretary.

Dr. T. V. George, Mr. Sunny Wycliffe, Dr. Joy Cherian, Dr. P. C. Nair and Dr. Sambhu N. Banik all talked about those days when the Indian American Forum for Political Education played a very leading role in educating the elected officials about India and Indian Americans. Dr. Cherian recalled Senator Paul S. Sarbanes advice as to how to get politically involved. Dr. Nair and Dr. Cherian both presented their books to him. Foreign Secretary Rajan Mathai did not forget to mention about FOKANA and its activities.

Foreign Secretary Mathai will be meeting with the Obama administration officials as well as some prominent Senators and Congressmen during his visit. His primary task would be to develop better relationships on a equality basis with all the countries including Pakistan. Mr. Sunny Wycliffe and Dr. Sambhu N. Banik invited Foreign Secretary Mathai for a community-wide Welcome Reception the next time he visits Washington. He accepted the invitation for such a dinner reception, most probably in June, 2012.

It was a very cordial and friendly meeting. We all left very happy and elated that one day he might return to Washington as the Ambassador of India to USA following the foot steps of former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao.

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II. Yvonne Hanging in There!

G. R. Baziel <simlasan@sify.com> February 2:

I can hardly believe that the last update I sent was dated December 31, 2011. How time flies when one is dealing with recuperation and rehabilitation!!

Yvonne continues to make slow but steady progress. Her food intake is very slowly on the increase, and that is related mostly to a lack of appetite. The only problematic sessions have been occasional vomiting and diarrhea, and a urinary tract infection. The treating physician said both were interrelated. Following a urine culture examination, she had to be given antibiotics by intramuscular injections over a period of ten days.

These were twice a day with 2 cc each time, so the dear lady is like a pin cushion!! Yesterday evening was the last dose - and both she and I are happy to say the least. The doctor wants the indwelling urinary catheter removed tomorrow, since repeated UTI's could lead to kidney infections. We have had a special seat made for a wheel chair that has a 'potty' underneath, in an effort to have this cushioned. Moving from bed to chair frequently is not going to be an easy task, and even though the two fractured legs are improving, she still cannot bear weight on them. Physiotherapy continues daily.

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I have just finished giving her a meal of potato and capsicum in brown sauce - something she enjoys. With the limitations of what she can eat viz-a-viz what she would like to eat - my culinary skills leave a lot to be desired!!

Simla has been bitterly cold over the past month, with the temperatures ranging between minus 1 to minus 4 degrees centigrade. This included a couple of heavy snow fall sessions. The winter season usually gives out by end February to mid-March.

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III. Christian Book Store Opens in Hosur
Gerald Christo <geraldjchris@gmail.com> January 30:
Venturing Out in Faith
January 29, 2012 saw the launching of Elim Book House, the first Christian book store in Hosur. Three enterprising lay families and one church employee came together to start this faith project to sow seeds of God's word through books and inspirational music. An evening of live Adventist soloists from Hyderabad, Bangalore and local Hosur churches provided music for those gathered for the opening ceremony.

Leading out in the evening's programme, Bobby Verghese said, "This faith enterprise is launched for making the people in Hosur and surrounding towns aware of the 'good news of salvation' and to unite our efforts with the spoken word from the pulpits of the several churches in the area." He added that with the fast-growing population of Hosur city he and his colleagues felt impressed to open this avenue to create an interest in the study of God's Word and to provide Christ's followers with tools to make their witness effective. He called upon Pastor G. J. Christo to offer a prayer of dedication as they ventured out in faith.

Children of former workers, Bobby and Mary Verghese, Selwyn and Alice (Thomas) Joseph from the Cunningham Church in Bangalore, Ernest and Kala (Masilmony) Prasad from Hyderabad and John and Madhu Masefield from Hosur, now professionals in the fields of medicine, business and engineering, have pooled their resources to provide a well designed showroom on the Hosur Railway Station/Denkanikottai Road.

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IV. Ministry in Central Nepal
Umesh Kumar Pokharel <umsan@wlink.com.np> January 24:
Recently Elder Bhaju Ram Shrestha and I were in Gimdee where the work was started three years ago when Pastor Kuber Lamichhane, Elder Bhaju and I visited that area first time. We have been having Women Literacy Programs in Gimdee and due to these classes there have been 10 baptism and we have built a village church in Gimdee. It is on the top of a mountain and any one passing by can easily see the first church standing on the mountain village witnessing for the Lord and people from three districts can see it.

While Elder Bhaju and I were there in Gimdee last June to supervise our six literacy classes, one morning when we were visiting different homes of the learners in literacy classes, three elderly ladies came to me to ask if we can help them to build toilets and, I said, "Let us pray because we had no funds for the toilets," but I knew that they need toilets very badly and they are poor but sincere people.

I talked to Elder Bhaju and he agreed that it would be good. I said, "We will do it!," and now there are toilets in that villages (we built four toilets) and these people are very happy for that. It is not expensive to build one toilet ($50 per toilet) and we need more help to build toilets in that area. Now we have a church there but we need one more church to be built in Gimdee and pray that God will open the way.

We found that many villagers drink and smoke, so we want to have health awareness programs this coming March (stop smoking and drinking) so we are praying for that also.

There many young boys and girls who have expressed their interest to learn more about our Lord Jesus Christ, so we plan to have youth evangelism in that area and for this we are also praying.

Recently Brothers Arjun and Somnath are taking 6 weeks trainings in Panchkhal, Kavre under the supervision of the Nepal Field. We want to start tailoring class in Gimdee soon. Kindly pray for the ministry work in Gimdee.

Umesh Kumar Pokharel, Pastor
Seventh-day Adventist Church, Central Region Kathaghahr, Kathmandu ~~~~~~~~~~ V. Selected Items from Darjeeling Update
Karen Lovitt <<kjloivtt@gmail.com>> January 23:

CHURCH
The church building buying process is almost at an end. The money has been transferred to India and now remains the actual putting it in the hands of the building owner. The building owner had several tenants who had to find new places to live and we were praying they'd be able to so without problems. The landlord just called to tell us all the tenants were out a month earlier than expected. We look forward to finally having the building officially "ours" so we can start renovations.

VILLAGE VISIT
Recently, Jonathan and Jared accompanied Pastor P. K. Tamsang and a local worker, Suraj, to a remote village not too far away. They travelled on motorcycles as the road wasn't passable for cars. Suraj has been doing gospel work there for the past year and has a small group of believers and others who are interested. It is an encouragement to believers when they can meet others and know they are not alone. The guys will be able to visit again in the future.

NARESH
You may remember that our lay pastor, Naresh Tudu, and his wife and son moved to Pune last May to attend Spicer Memorial College. Soon he will have completed the first year of the theology program. We are anxious that he returns to Darjeeling when he finishes. He and his family are very much missed here. Last November 2011, Jonathan flew to Pune and spent a long weekend with Naresh and his family. They enjoyed their time together and Jonathan has a much better idea of what life is like for him there. Please pray that his class scheduling will be as efficient as it can be so he doesn't have to spend unnecessary time and money there.

RIVER WATER
Before coming to India, I remember sitting in John Baxter's office joking about the Ganges River water diet. A few drops of dirty water could make you sick enough to drop some weight in a hurry. Last Sunday a group of about 18 of us drove about 3 hours away to picnic beside the Teesta River. After we arrived and were getting set up someone kindly made some juice for all of us - yep, made from straight, unboiled, fresh from the...I-don't-want-to-know-where river water. We unthinkingly drank it, realizing later when my head was in a bucket where the problem had originated. So now we can say we have drunk river water in India. If there is such a thing as an anti-Bucket List, that's on it. "Drink river water in India" - check. We've almost recovered, I think.

In closing I must say thank our sponsors for the part they play in helping be here, stay here year after year. In 2 weeks we'll pass the 7 year mark! God be with you, Jonathan & Karen Lovitt ~~~~~~~~~~~ VI. Adventist World Radio in Nepal by Dowell Chow, president of AWR
"For many years Nepal was the only officially-Hindu country in the world. All religions other than Hinduism were outlawed, and the growth of Christianity was extremely slow and difficult.
"In the late 1990s Adventist World Radio made various attempts to produce some radio programs on health in conjunction with the work of ADRA Nepal, and a few programs were finally recorded in secret. However, the government soon discovered the location and confiscated the equipment, bringing the recoding to a halt. Production was later restarted, with the help of a young Hindu man who had a tiny studio in his home where AWR's producer, Pastor Naseeb Basnet, could tape the programs. And thus an amazing personal journey began.
"In 2004, Nepal became a secular country, and AWR had the freedom to not only produce programs, but also began airing them on local FM stations. Rajesh, the studio owner, became the official technician for the production of Ashako Bani (Voice of Hope in the Nepali language).
"Rajesh comes from a very devout Hindu family. While visiting the studio, I noticed a temple shrine at the very entrance to the house where he lives with his extended family. Hindus have anywhere from hundreds of millions to billions of deities or gods. I was told that each newborn is assigned any number of gods to whom he or she will be devoted over his or her lifetime. It was in this kind of environment that Rajesh grew up.
"Over the months and years Rajesh listened attentively to the Bible studies and radio talks produced by Pastor Basnet and his wife, Rama. He began to identify so much with the programs and liked them so well that he said his desire was to work for the Lord and AWR for the rest of his life. Later he attended an AWR training series in Singapore where he met other AWR producers from neighboring countries. His vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church grew enormously as he became more aware of the worldwide mission. Rajesh is also an accomplished keyboard player and composer, and he gave me a CD with beautiful Nepali Christian music that he had prepared for our radio programs.
"Rajesh says, 'It's been 13 years since I started working with the Basnets. The stories from the Bible, their sermon presentations, talking with them and seeing their own life witness won my heart to turn to Christianity. As I listened
more, I found more joy and happiness, and I thought, "This truth is for me as well." I feel I have been chosen by God to work for Him.'

"When I visited several FM stations in Nepal that air our programs, in every instance the managers repeatedly stated that AWR's program is the best program they broadcast. They are community-based stations, owned and operated by private entrepreneurs who have no connection to the church. Thanks to the cordial relationship Rajesh developed with these people over the years, they gladly agreed to air Ashako Bani in their communities. AWR now broadcasts on 20 stations in Nepal, and the same programs can be heard worldwide on podcasts or on demand at AWR's website.

"During this visit we spent many hours traveling over the rugged mountains of central Nepal. I had much time to get to know Rajesh better. He meshed so well with us that one could not tell that he was not a Seventh-day Adventist. Just a couple of months later we received the wonderful message that Rajesh had decided to be baptized! Knowing his background, his family, and the magnitude of this step, we counseled the Basnets to go slowly with Rajesh; he had a lot to work on with his Hindu ancestry and traditions, and a sudden break away from those relationships could be very difficult for him.

"When asked how his conversion came about, Rajesh says that after hearing for so long the Bible truths from the Basnets, he could no longer resist the Holy Spirit. He says, 'I felt this was my path. I felt the 10 commandments could make a person totally happy and at peace with himself and with his fellow beings. Even though I was not showing it publicly, I was obeying those commandments in my heart.'

"A few months later, Rajesh was baptized by Pastor Basnet in a nearby river, watched by his wife, brother, and others close to him. He says, 'I have found new life in Jesus and am really blessed. My family supports me. I have a blessed wife, and she supports me in my recording. She is very talented and has learned to record, edit, and even mix the programs. I know one of these days, with God’s calling, my wife and my whole family will come to Christianity. We need to pray together.'

"Rajesh's conversion is just a harbinger of many who will step out with deep conviction and accept the message of salvation if we can get it out to them. Please pray for Rajesh and his family, and for the millions of Nepalese who are now within reach of the gospel." -- from the current issue of Elder's Digest ~~~~~~~~~ To remove your name from the mailing list of this newsletter, simply reply to this e-mail and put "REMOVE" in the Subject line.

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