



# Australia Nepal Friendship Society NEWSLETTER 2007-08

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## Silver Jubilee Celebration

The Silver Jubilee (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary) of the Australia Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS) was celebrated with a Gala Dinner on April 12, 2008. This date coincided with the Nepali New Year's Eve 2065 Bikram Sambat. More than 100 members of ANFS, guests, and well-wishers participated in the function organized at the Tuggeranong Southern Cross Club in Canberra. The participants included H.E. Yogendra Dhakal, the first resident Ambassador of Nepal to Australia, his family and colleagues from the Nepali diplomatic community as well as Ms. Indra Ban, the President of the even older Sydney-based Nepalese Australian Association.



*Life Members: (seated from left) Betty Brand, Dorothy Brown, Lindsay Brand, Reet Vallack, Sue Salthouse, Noel Semple, Dao Midgley; (and standing) Tony Fearnside (3<sup>d</sup> from left) and Steve Midgley (far right).*

One of the highlights of the Silver Jubilee celebrations was a ceremony to felicitate the founding members of the Society who are still with us, and to recognize those who made distinguished contributions to the Society over the years. Twelve such members were honored with the granting of Life Membership of the Society: Kaye Weatherall, Dorothy Brown, TBS Mahat, Reet Vallack, Betty Brand, Lindsay Brand, Sue Salthouse, Tony Fearnside, Noel Semple, Stephen Midgley, Dao Midgley and Shree Ram Lamichhane. Nine of the twelve honorees were present in person.

The Canberra based Australia-Nepal Friendship Society was founded in 1982 by an intrepid group of Canberra residents with work or travel or other connections with Nepal, and who were keen to provide support and succor to the small but growing number of Nepali students coming to Canberra for tertiary education. The Founding President of ANFS was the late Mickey Weatherall (or Mickey "Dai" to most of us). Shree Ram Lamichhane, then a student at the Australian National University was the Founding Secretary. Other members of the Inaugural Executive Committee of ANFS (elected in April 1982) were Kaye Weatherall, John Draper, Dorothy Brown, Betty Brand, TBS Mahat and Jim Curtis.



*President Hom Moorti Pant welcoming Jubilee Dinner participants.*



*Ambassador Dhakal with Di Johnstone (ex-Ambassador to Nepal)*

The Silver Jubilee celebrations were enthusiastically supported by the newly established Embassy of Nepal which offered a generous donation to help meet the cost of the Gala Dinner. Additional sponsorship contributions were made by Mohan Das Pradhan, Steve and Dao Midgley, and Shree Ram Lamichhane who is the current president of the Kathmandu-based Nepal-Australia Friendship Society. We heartily thank all of the sponsors. The proceedings closed with a rendition of the new Nepali national anthem by Mrs. Pushpa K.C.



*Barry Telfer and Robin Ward*



*Master of Ceremonies for the Jubilee Dinner: Natasha Hamal.*



*Lindsay Brand, Betty Brand and Vin Caesar-Thwaytes.*



*(from left to right) Sue Salhouse, Reet Vallack, Mrs. Dhakal, Dao Midgley and Ambika Pant.*



*Finally, traditional dancing led by Krishna Hamal.*

## Other Events 2007-08

The Annual General Meeting of the ANFS held on May 5, 2007, elected a new executive committee under the presidency of Hom Moorti Pant. During the course of the year, the executive committee formally met eight times to take decisions on the governance of the society as well as the nature of social initiatives. The first meeting formed editorial, cultural and sporting sub-committees. Major events that the Society organized during the year are as follows.

### **Sports Day, July 14, 2007**

The Society's annual Sports Day was organized in Black Mountain peninsula. Various sporting events for children and adults were held in tandem with a BBQ. The weather was not kind, and the cold somewhat restricted the scale of involvement, but those who participated greatly enjoyed the activities.



*No Nepali gathering without a game of Volleyball*



*Women and children enjoying Sports Day*

### **Fundraising, various dates**

The Society spearheaded several fundraising efforts to support established charities like Help Nepal Network (HENN-Australia) as well as respond to immediate instances of distress faced by Nepalis living in Australia. This included funeral support for Chunga Gurung, and contributions to a group of Nepali students who faced a horrific driving accident in Queensland. Cyclist Dhakeshor Chettri who appeared in Canberra as part of his international tour was also commended and financially supported by members.

### **Foreign Secretary's Visit, September 19, 2007**

The year marked the official opening of the Embassy of Nepal in Australia. The visiting Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, was warmly welcomed by members of the Society over an informal dinner. The ANFS members participated actively in all social and official events related to the inaugural

organized by the embassy. This included a talk by the Foreign Secretary on the changing political situation in Nepal at the ANU and a flag-raising ceremony on the Southern bank of Lake Burley Griffin in the presence of Australian dignitaries, well-wishers and fellow Nepalis who traveled from nearby states.

**Dashain and Tihar Festivities, October 20, 2007**  
BBQ and potluck were organized in Acton Park to celebrate the great Nepali festival, Dashain. A group of ANFS members also initiated and participated in the popular "Deusi-Bhailo" over Tihar.

### **New Year and Christmas, January 1, 2008**

BBQ and potluck were organized to mark the advent of the New Year 2008.

### **New Ambassador Welcomed, March 1, 2008**

The newly arrived Ambassador of Nepal to Australia, H.E. Yogendra Dhakal and his family were welcomed by, and introduced to, members of the ANFS over an afternoon BBQ and potluck organized at Glebe Park. The Ambassador thanked the Nepali community for helping the establishment of the embassy, and looked forward to deeper working relationships with the community to further the cause of Nepal's development and improved Nepal-Australian ties.

### **Other Engagements, various dates**

The members of ANFS actively supported and participated in events organized by other groups during the year. This included programs organized by the Embassy of Nepal to felicitate Dr. Sanduk Ruit, the

eye specialist who is the first Nepali to receive Australia's highest honor for foreigners; a talk program by Prof. Surya Dhungel; events to mark Prajatantra Diwas and Loktantra Diwas in 2008; and fund-raising events for Tansen Hospital coordinated by David Croaker on behalf of the Rotary Club of Canberra and hosted by the Indian Affair restaurant.

On May 27, 2008, some ANFS members also joined representatives of various Nepali organizations from three Australian states at an event at the Federal Parliament organized by the Embassy of Nepal and a group of Australian parliamentarians led by Andrew Laming, Member for Redlands. The event was a first step towards establishing a group of "Parliamentary Friends of Nepal." Mr. Laming represented the Australian Government in its recent monitoring of the Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal.



Event with cyclist Dhakeshwor Chettri

### Conference preparation

To contribute to the momentous socio-political changes that have been occurring in Nepal in recent years, the ANFS took the initiative of organizing an international conference, "Nepal: Forging a New Beginning" to brainstorm and synthesize new ideas for consideration by Nepali law and policymakers. A Concept Note and a call for papers were sent all around the world. However, the international response was lukewarm and because constraints on fund-raising and other logistics were foreseen, the conference was postponed.

## Office Bearers, 2007-08

**President.** Hom Moorti Pant

**Vice President.** Durga Dutta Kandel

**Secretary.** Nepali Sah

**Treasurer.** Manish Shrestha

**Public Officer.** Pramod Adhikari

**Members.** Dorothy Brown, Pritya Dhungel, Milan Gorkhali, Keshav Goutam, Surya Maharjan, Ambika Mainali, Wendy May, Taranath Pandey, Rajani Rai, Upendra Ranabhat, Sue Salthouse, Barry Telfer, Prem Jung Thapa, Swarnim Waglé.

**Advisors.** Krishna Hamal, Binod Nepal.

## New Arrivals

The Nepali community in Canberra has been growing steadily with the estimated number exceeding 150 in 2007-08. Some of the recent arrivals are as follows: H.E. Ambassador Yogendra Dhakal and family; Sagar

Khadka and Anu Khadka; Ramesh Gautam and family; Ganesh Karki and family; Bishnu Lamichhane; Bishnuhari Poudel; Krishna Giri and family; Ayush Bajracharya and family; Krishna Dhungana; Prapti Gautam; Bigya Dhungel; Mr. Chudamani; Debesh Rimal and Sonu Thapa; Bibha Waltham and family; Jitendra Khatri; Amar Prachhai; Samyam Wagle.

## Society Finances

The financial books of the Australia Nepal Friendship Society were audited for the financial year ending March 1, 2008. The balance sheet states that the society's current asset (Members' equities) is \$1948.40, while current liabilities are nil.

## Last Words from the President

It was a great privilege and a lifetime experience for me to serve the Society as President for the year 2007-08. This has been a most exciting period event-wise in the history of the Society as detailed above. We were able to hold all major events without a fuss simply because of active participation by all members of the Society and office bearers of the Executive Committee. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you all for your support, and a special thanks to Prem Jung Thapa for organizing the Silver Jubilee celebrations.

- Hom Moorti Pant

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This newsletter is prepared by the editorial sub-committee of the ANFS Ex. Com. 2007-08 comprising of Swarnim Waglé and Prem Jung Thapa, with inputs from Nepali Sah.