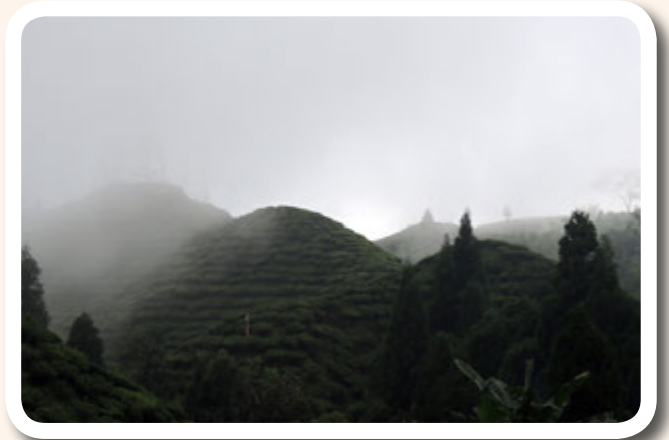
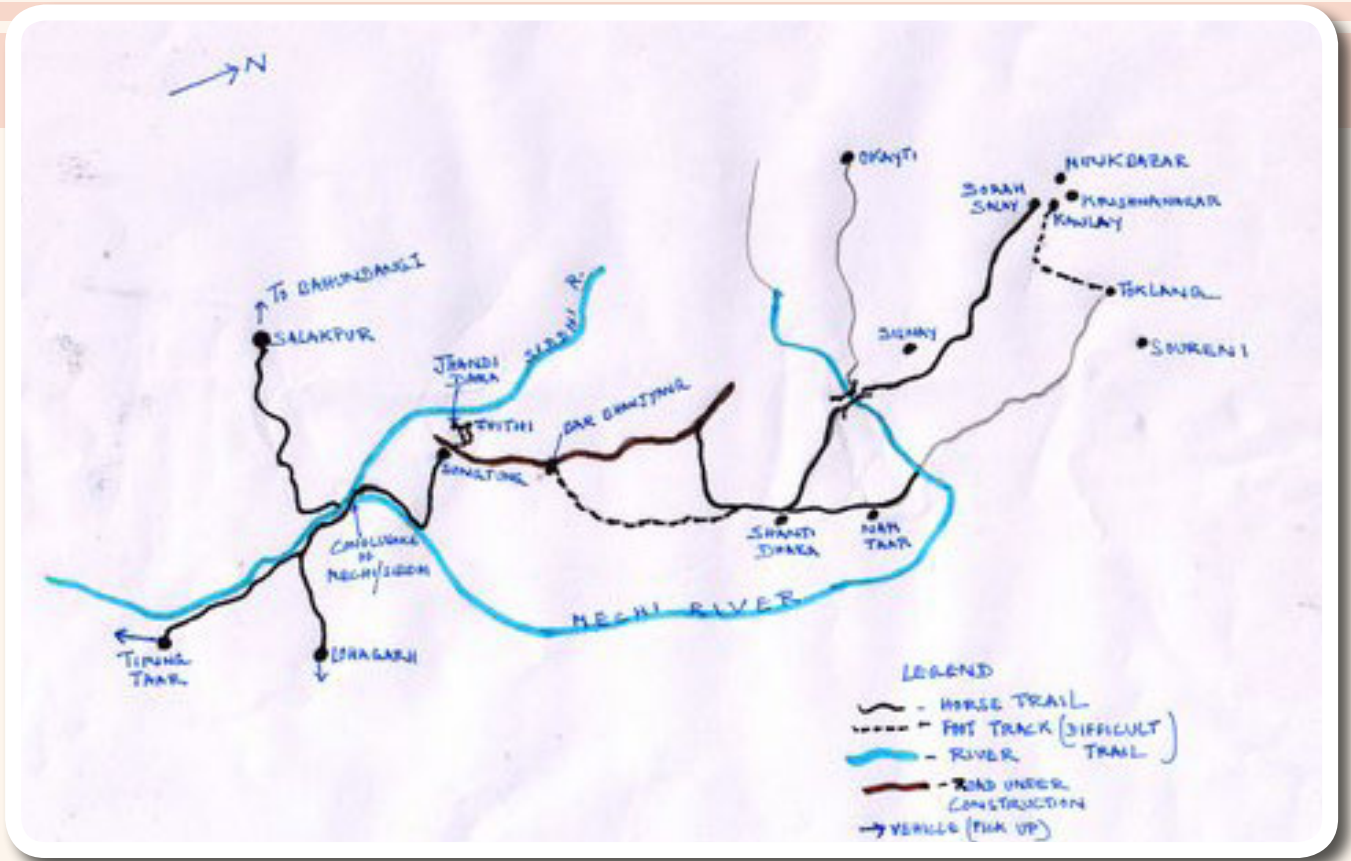


CHAUTARRE

2012-2016

INDO-NEPAL FRIENDSHIP ISSUE





Courtesy: Darjeeling Salamander Tourism Society, Mirik



Asian Rural Tourism Festival

A part of the Asian Elephant Conservation Initiative to find community sourced solutions towards Human-Elephant Conflict in Nepal, India, Bhutan & Bangladesh.

Venue: Bahundangi, Nepal



Bangladesh: DMSS, Joypurhat

Bhutan: Druk Country Explorer or KRC Tours and Travels

India: ACT (Association for Conservation & Tourism), Help Tourism

Nepal: Several local, Regional and National organizations

about bahundangi



Bahundangi VDC in the northeast of Jhapa District has 17 Kms long land border connected to West Bengal, Darjeeling District in India. It has been bordered with Jirmale VDC of Ilam In the North, Mechinagar Municipality and Shantinagar in the West and South and Darjeeling district in the east. The VDC has the population of 22897 comprises of different ethnicity (District profile Jhapa 2063).

Agriculture is the dominant occupation of the people here. The people have started to change the pattern of farming in current years. The main agro products are paddy, maize, millet and oilseed that sustain the life of the

people. The unseasoned vegetables such as tomato, cauliflower have become the major source of income. The conventional type of agriculture has been transformed into modern agriculture. The tea garden and coconut and beetle nut field have become the charming of agriculture. More than 90% people are engaged in agriculture. Animal husbandry is not so managed however it is a source of income that is contributing the educational cost of the children.

Information as on 03/01/2012 before 1st edition of ARTF

Why ARTF was planned at Bahundangi in 2012



In the midst of agro achievements, the people of Bahundangi have been facing a diverse problems every year. When malaria was eradicated in 1950 AD the people from hilly region started to migrate to the Terai. The forest and elephant corridor fragmented due to migration. The increased and unmanaged population not only created the problem in human beings but it also created a severe problem to wild elephants. The increasing population continually started encroaching the forest. As a result the elephants in hunger started roaming in to the village. This movement of elephants was not so painful in

the beginning as the community worshipped the elephants as Lord Ganesh . Later it turned into conflict which took the life of 15 people alone in Bahundangi VDC. Seven elephants have been killed. More than hundreds have been injured. Annually 50 houses have been damaged. Every year the 80% percent people of Bahundangi who are below the poverty line have to tolerate the lose of NRS 50, 00,000/- . The problem has diverted the young people from agriculture to foreign employment which is very difficult for the untrained and uneducated young people who seek the job in foreign countries.

Elephants, background on the Indian side

*The Terai and Dooars regions of North Bengal were once strongholds of the Asian elephant. The area includes about 2,200 sq km of forest. Wild elephants are found from the Mechi River on the India-Nepal border in the west, to the Sankosh River in the east on the Bengal-Assam State border.

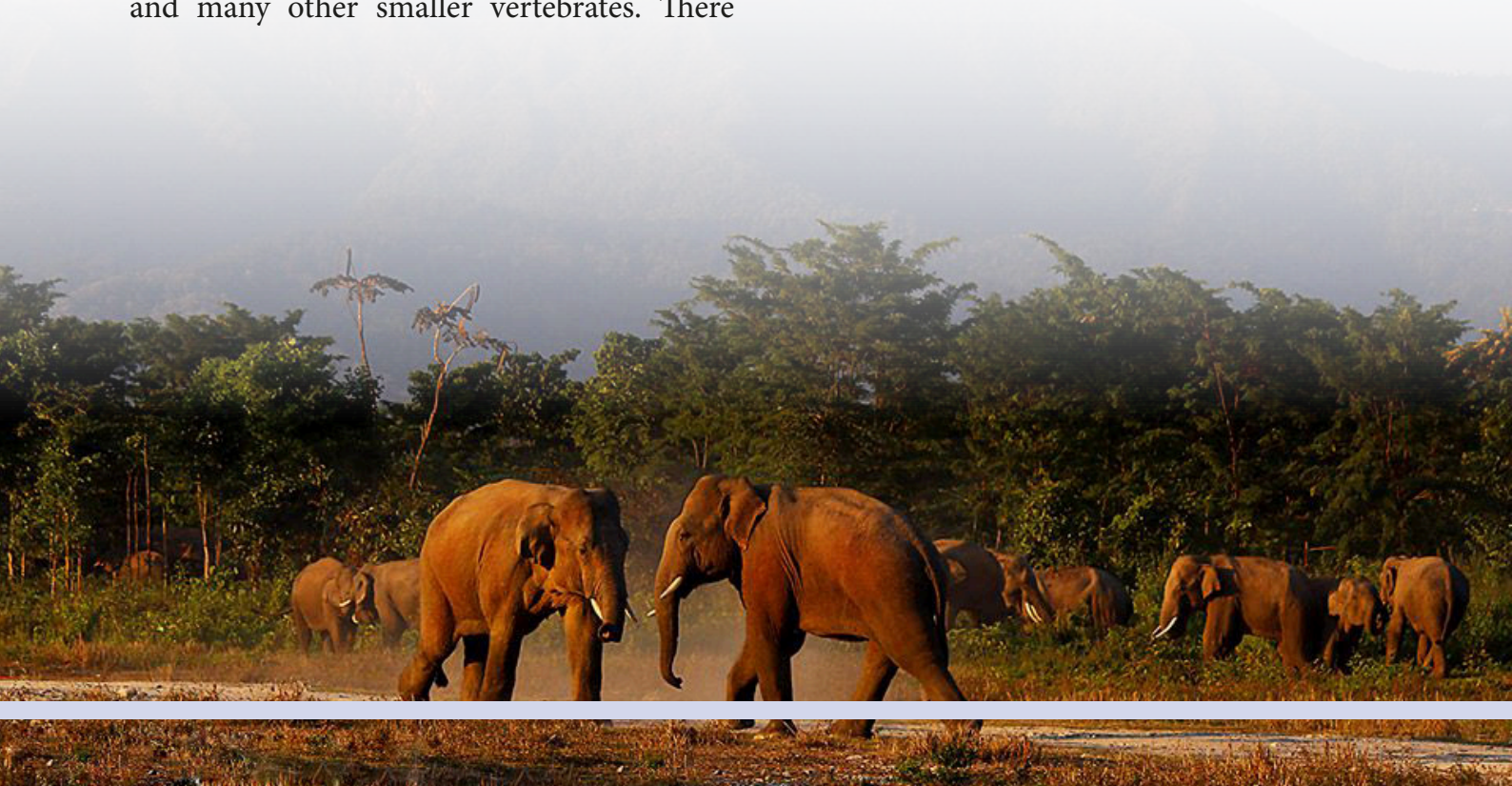
Recent and sudden changes in land-use patterns have severely threatened the elephant population of the area. The problem was exacerbated by habitat fragmentation and human encroachment. There is now a large-scale human-elephant conflict in the region.

**Northern West Bengal is one important elephant habitat housing nearly 400 resident elephants. The protected and reserve forests in Northern West Bengal are the only habitat housing 90% of the state elephants having link with North East Indian elephant population. However the zone is interspersed with human settlements, tea gardens, rail and roadways. This region of the state is the habitat of other large mammals like Rhinoceros, Tiger, Gaur and many other smaller vertebrates. There

are 16 mammals listed in Red Data Book of IUCN; 18 mammals occurring here are listed in the CITES Appendix. The forests here host 50-60% of species richness of the state. Notified Protected Areas cover 1225 sq. km i.e., 55% of the forests in Northern Bengal. There is nearly 2200 sq. km of elephant habitat in Northern West Bengal. Eastern Duars Elephant Reserve was constituted in 2002 for better management of elephant population here. The railroad cuts across 1 National Park, 1 Tiger Reserve and 3 sanctuaries of this region. Northern Bengal houses about 1.5% of the total elephant population in India. However, each of these elephants is responsible for about 1.15 human casualties (during 1998-2008) probably highest rate anywhere in Asia where elephants exist. This region contributes to over 20% of the human casualties caused by elephants in the country. Looking at the records, this is the hotspot of human-elephant conflict in India.

*Source WPSI website.

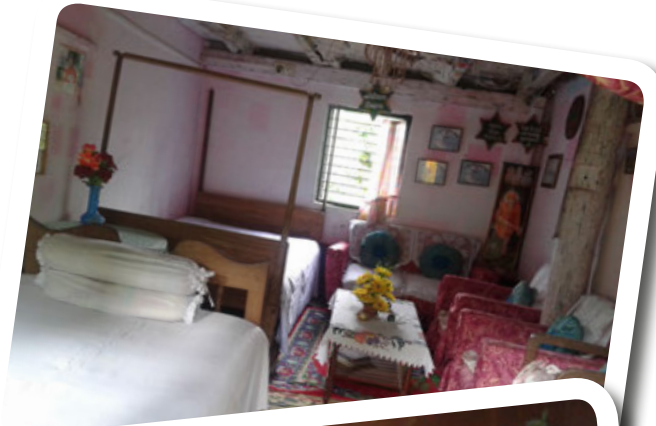
**Source WWF-India website.



Extension in Nepal

Browse on Google with Human-Elephant Conflict and the maximum search results will show the name of the place, Bahundangi.

A small haat (weekly market) based village with a few satellite villages in Mechi District of Nepal, just beside the Mechi River is designated as one of the worst conflict zones, both in terms of elephants and people. The situation is such, there are no forests on the Nepal side, only agriculture based villages have replaced the forests a few decades ago when malaria and cholera was almost eradicated from this area. On the Indian side is the Kalabari Forest, an extension of the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, which is the day resting place of the elephant herds and at dusk, almost all through the night these elephants raid the Nepal agriculture fields. Till about 03 years ago, there was possibly no compensation for life or crop damage by elephants on the Nepal side, which was long existing on the Indian side. Hence, the Nepal villagers attacked the elephants calling them 'Bhartiya Haathi' or Indian Elephant, which they complained that the India side forest Department drove them into Nepal to avoid the compensation in India.



Elephant tourism Nepal

Sudipta Chanda (13/02/12)

Siliguri: Nothing goes to waste - even elephant attacks. That pachyderm depredation also has an economic angle to it and can be turned into a money spinner is a unique strategy that is about to be tried on a large scale at Bahundangi in East Nepal by a group of associations and individuals engaged in promoting tourism and preserving bio-diversity.

Bahundangi in Jhapa district of Nepal is just across the Mechi river from Siliguri sub-division. Elephants roam the north Bengal jungles from the Bhutan foothills in the northeast through the 'elephant trail' westwards since time immemorial. Pressure on land has shrunk their trail increasing conflict with mankind.

Physiological reasons take the elephants across the Mechi to Bahundangi in Nepal, particularly during the harvesting period. The problem is, Bahundangi does not have forests and so the elephants are not welcome.

It used to be sheer war once the elephants crossed with them gobbling up the standing corn and damaging, if not destroying anything that came in their way and the Nepalese peasants in an attempt to save what is theirs, getting brutal towards the marauders.

It took a group of whiz-kid to see an opportunity in that vicious pattern. "We turned the arrival, stay and departure of the mammoths into 'elephant sighting tourism' at Bahundangi. The tourists started coming, home stay caught up and the locals got an alternative source of income. The aggression towards the pachyderms lessened since," claimed Govind Neopani a Bahundangi resident involved in the project.

"Lessened", but not eliminated since the elephants do plunder when they cross and that leaves the question of compensation for the victims wide open. "The government of Nepal compensates the victims, but it arrives late. Attacks on elephants therefore continue," underlined Ramesh Dahal, another Bahundangi resident.

It was back to the drawing boards again and this time the solution lay this side of the border in India. "Apprised of the problem, we decided to organize a festival at Bahundangi with support from tourism promoters from India and Bangladesh too," informed Supratim Basu, co-organiser of the festival from Siliguri.

And so, they would all converge at Bahundangi for a week starting February 15 to hold the Asian Rural Tourism Festival (ARTF) 2012 to compress culture, history and wild-life in one big milieu that they hope would do the trick - eliminate the conflict.

The sale proceeds from the tourism jamboree would after all go to the victims of elephant depredation.





Project: **Human-Elephant Conflict:** **Household Impact Assessment in** **Bahundangi VDC, Nepal**

Prepared by:

Dr. Brijesh Thapa (Project Director)
and **Bhuwan Dhakal** (Project Manager)

Majority of households were land owners and the size of ownership varied. On average, each household owned about 1 hectare of land with the majority engaged in agricultural practice. Collectively, one-third of the households were forced to abandon cultivation in certain lands due to crop raiding. About forty two percent of households suffered from some type of crop raiding with the most impact on paddy and corn. On average, each household experienced raiding in 0.26 hectares, and were able to harvest 1491.5 kg of paddy while they faced 495.88 kg loss due to raiding. Overall, the three most affected crops as per land area and amount raided by the elephants were ginger, corn, and mustard. Converting all these losses into the monetary value, by considering the market price of the product in the local market (in 2012), it was identified that on average each household lost approximately NRs 15,732 (USD \$179) in crop loss.

Elephant crop raiding had created multitude of impacts within the community such as economic loss to the family, affected the amount of food consumption and their ability to sell surplus field produce, and increased diseases to their crops. Also, slightly more than a quarter of the households had to work in other's farm to fulfil household's food needs, while a sizeable majority had to consistently guard their lands from being raided. Additionally, storage of harvested crop was identified as an issue due to the lack of a separate place instead of their house – which would make them more vulnerable, as elephants break into the houses to eat the stored crops. Almost all households stored crops in the house where their family slept – notably in a jar and also hung inside the house. Due to the major impacts on paddy and

corn, cultivation of alternative crops that are not eaten by elephants (e.g. tea, coffee, lemon, bay leaf) has been recommended. However, almost two-thirds of the respondents were unaware and lacked knowledge about the types of alternative crops. While respondents expressed optimism towards alternative crops, however some reservations also existed. Hence, additional programs along with technical assistance would be needed to further increase adoption of alternative crops as a diversification strategy.

The impact (injured and/deceased) of elephants on livestock was not relatively identified. However, respondents expressed strong sentiments with respect to potential indirect effects as the majority of the households owned different types of livestock. Residents were more concerned about increase in disease to their livestock, shortage of grass/food for livestock as their livestock could not browse where elephants had earlier browsed. It was evident that some level of education was needed to alleviate fears of disease transmission via direct and indirect contact of elephants. The impacts created by elephants on personal physical property varied and was dependent on the type of structure. The impacts were largely to a house/hut, dwelling/land boundaries and cowsheds. Most of the damage occurred during the monsoon season and usually at night. Such damage was outlined by the fact that structures were not strong enough to withstand elephant incursions. With respect to impacts to humans (bodily injury/death), a total of six people (four males and two females) were 7 reported to be injured and/or deceased by elephants which included three in 2012 among the sampled households.

(excerpts from project paper)

Indo-Nepal Initiatives



- HEC solutions at Indo-Nepal border at Chenga 2013.
- Indo-Nepal Friendship Meet at Naxalbari.
- Include Nepal in the ACT Himalayan Orange Tourism Council (Eastern Nepal, North of West Bengal in India and Southern Bhutan) with the first secretary of the council from Nepal.
- Terai Himalayan Orange Tourism Festival at the Indo-Nepal border, Lohagarh.
- Indo-Nepal Tourism Committee with the initiative of CII-North Bengal and Office of the Consul General of Nepal at Kolkata.
- Chalo ILAM, a launching program at Kolkata.
- MCCS, school from India organizes Sit & Draw for students in Nepal, Teacher's nature tour to picnic point in the border in Nepal and has organized camps for cultural teams from Nepal.

Actions from ARTF



- Creating a special tourism circuit including entire Eastern Nepal in collaboration with neighbouring region of India.
- National and International organizations are working round the year to access and solve the Human Elephant Conflict.
- Local residents have shown a more respectable stand towards the HEC issue.
- Tourists have already started visiting the region based out of India.



HOTEL MONARCH AACHAL

Indo-Nepal Cross-Border Tourism Possibilities

An workshop being organized by Association for Conservation & Tourism (ACT) and technically supported by CII-North Bengal, along with the Department of Management, North Bengal University

India and Nepal, shares a long history and boundary, which has come into better light with the emphasis laid by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri.Narendra Modi. One of the most popular parts of the India-Nepal border is shared with the Indian state of West Bengal, which falls in the North. This geographically is the Singalila ridge, which rises from the Mechi river and ends on the third highest peak of the world, Mt.Khangchendzonga, a portion of which runs along the Indian state of Sikkim.

In the year 2002, on the occasion of World Tourism Day, 27th of September, the concept of KRIEP (Khangchendzonga Region International Ecotourism Region) was launched by ACT in the presence of the then Tourism Minister for West Bengal, Mr.Dinesh Dakua, the Founder of Ecotourism Society of Sikkim, Mr.P.D.Rai and various other local, National and International delegates. Since, then we at ACT have continuously worked on this concept at the grassroots level with local stakeholders. We at ACT have organized the Indo-Nepal Friendship Meet during 2015 in collaboration with the office of the Consulate General of Nepal in India at Kolkata (which is often referred to as the office of the Mahabaniyadoot).

This fortunately was followed by the Indo-Nepal Business Meet organized by CII North Bengal, and CII (Confederation of Indian Industries) being the largest body of the Industrialists and Traders Nationally, the impact was more at the policy level for the Governments to follow. The Bus Service between Siliguri to Kathmandu was put into priority, and above all the tourism industry development between Eastern Nepal and North of West Bengal was given utmost importance. A small committee was proposed on behalf of CII North Bengal to be led by the Principal Secretary of North Bengal Development Department, Government of West Bengal and Supratim (Raj) Basu, on behalf of CII North Bengal. The office of the Consulate General has recently sent a list of names to represent in the committee from Eastern Nepal.

This workshop in particular, is the way forward towards creating a few destinations between Eastern Nepal, North of West Bengal and Sikkim, which can be promoted jointly. There are a few Cross-Border tourism circuits which have been developed and worked upon for quite some years. Few of them were launched at the 2013 ARTF (Asian Rural Tourism Bazaar), held at Bahundangi, Nepal by the Director of the Nepal Tourism Board. Today, with several trainings, awareness programs and change in mindset, several homestays have been established and many investments have taken place in the least known area of the Tourism Country, Nepal, the Eastern part. We believe that this region can be much better promoted with the tourism circuit of North Bengal (North of West Bengal) and Sikkim.



HEC Action in Terai India



12th November, 2013 at Chenga, Terai, India

ACT (Association for Conservation & Tourism) along with State Bank of India Officers' Association identified 200 affected residents and helped them with zero balance account and an insurance policy with Mr. Gautam Deb, the Minister for North Bengal Development Department, Government of West Bengal as the Chief Guest.

Indo-Nepal Friendship Meet 2015

An introduction:

Two countries, Nepal and India, often seen by the world as one of the best neighbours and this border being divided by the almost dry Mechi River, going up the Singalila Ridge through Darjeeling Hills and West Sikkim with the backdrop of the Guardian Deity, Mt.Kanchenzonga. How much have we shown concern about the people to people relations along this border???

Socially, we are more connected to each other at the village and the town market level, then to our country or state capitals. We are there in each other's social functions, like marriages, pujas etc, but we cannot stay there late evening as the gates at the border will close down. We are with each other in sorrows and joys, in health related issues and children education etc, but we have more hurdles in interaction, we cannot change NARU (Nepali Currency) to BHARU (Indian currency easily). In an unorganized way, both Shalakupur and Mirik are known for our oranges, but we cannot sell them in the same market together.

Mythologically, we are connected through both Mahabharata and Ramayana, we fail to recognize this as a single landscape, We have forgotten our old trade routes, along which the first Tea Estates of Terai were established. We drink the water from the same rivers. When it comes to Elephants, we often try to put a country citizenship to our wild friends, who had adopted this cross-border area as their home. There are several such issues.

We had initially proposed to develop a better cross-border relation by using tourism as tool, but then we felt how we can avoid the other day to day issues. This event is more to create a

ground for the local people to express and the administration of both countries to listen and act, under the presence of His Excellency, The Consul General of Nepal in India, Kolkata and the other administrative decision makers of the common region of both countries.

Only last month, when I had come to conduct a sit & draw contest for students at the 'Kala Sahitya Utsav' at Kakkarvitta, I had listened to a seminar on Nepal-India relation, where the pressures of big and small brothers were being discussed, policies being diagnosed and cultural relations being seen. I remember a old discussion of my parents, when one of the Indian Prime Ministers were denied entry to a religious shrine, the Jagannath Temple in the Indian state of Orissa, whereas, when the King of Nepal visited the same temple, the entry was closed to general pilgrims and an exclusive entry was allowed to the Royal Family. This is the age old relation between the people of Nepal and India, this is the respect, which has been rooted.

It was also realized that a lot of this border problem can be solved through regular interaction between the people from different backgrounds; different speciality associations and specially the local media on both sides can help to reduce most of the issues. Hence, we expect that this event of Indo-Nepal Friendship Meet evolves to be the largest platform for people living along this border.

Be Happy,

Raj Basu

ACT (Association for Conservation & Tourism)

Naxalbari, 15th March, 2015





INDO-NEPAL FRIENDSHIP MEET 2015

promoting better people to people relations along the border

Initiated by:
Consulate General of Nepal, Kolkata, India
and
ACT-Himalaya Range Tourism Council

Organized by:
Naxalbari Science & Adventure Association, India
and
Nature Conservation Society

Venue:
Naxalbari Science & Adventure Academy, Sikkim
Inauguration
2015



Support East Nepal Program:

“CHALO ILAM”

The hidden Himalayan retreat in Nepal, continuous with India



Organized by:



Supported by:

