

## LATEST NEWS # 406, April 16, 2007

### The following news concerns Nepal.

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[http://biblesociety.org/latestnews/index\\_latestnews.html](http://biblesociety.org/latestnews/index_latestnews.html)

## Nepal Bible Society gains official recognition

**NEPAL** — At the third attempt in 11 years, the Nepal Bible Society has had its registration application accepted by the Nepal government.

The news was communicated on March 21 – the day the government made its decision known. Sharing the news with the Fellowship, Tej Jirel, the Society's General Secretary, quoted chapter 64 of the book of Isaiah: "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him." (Isaiah 64:4 NIV)

"What the prophet Isaiah has said here, God has fulfilled for the Nepal Bible Society today," declared Mr Jirel. "He has enabled the Nepal Bible Society to be registered with the Nepal government as 'Nepal Bible Society' this very day! We want to praise him for what he has done. We also want to say our heartfelt thanks to each one of you for your fervent prayers and for encouragement we are receiving each new day."

He said that after being informed by the Society's legal assistant that he was going to present a registration application that morning, he led colleagues in a short time of prayer and thanksgiving.

"We asked the Lord to grant a special anointing of the Holy Spirit to our legal assistant and to control the mind and heart of all the authorities responsible for the registration process so that God's will might be done," he added.

The Society has applied to register with the government twice before: once in the 1990s and again, under Mr Jirel's leadership, in December 2003. "Obtaining a registered status after about 11 years is a great encouragement, but at the same time a challenge," he cautioned. "We have to go through different offices of the Nepal government to meet their requirements. Please continue to pray for us so that we may move according to the direction of the Holy Spirit."



Asked what it had meant to the Bible Society to work without official recognition, he said the Society had experienced continual insecurity.

“At any time the government could have walked into the building that the Bible Society rents and told us, ‘This is the end of your work.’” Equally, he added, “They could have arrested us and taken legal action against us for translating, publishing and selling Bibles as an unregistered organisation. By saying this, I do not mean to say that we can do everything freely now. We have to renew our registration every fiscal year and we have to wait and see.”

Other restrictions meant it was not possible to open a bank account, to engage the services of a telephone company, to buy land or to purchase a vehicle in the name of the Society. Nor, without difficulty, could the Society rent public places in which to hold events.

Not having the required documents, Mr Jirel added, “We were unable to import or export Bibles as per our need. We are still struggling to release and collect six boxes of Scholarly Editions sent to us by the German Bible Society as a gift. The first thing we shall do now is to get a customs clearance letter from the government to bring in those books.

“On top of that, our unofficial status prevented us from applying for membership of the United Bible Societies (UBS),” he added.

Reflecting on the changing attitudes to Christians in his country, Mr Jirel said that years ago it was considered unwise to carry a Bible openly on the way to church and the Bible Society had to have the Nepali Bible printed by the Bible Society of India. It started printing Bibles locally in 1997.

Last year the landlocked country that was known as the only Hindu kingdom in the world responded to public pro-democracy protests by declaring itself a secular state.

With its new status, the Bible Society is looking forward to freedoms it has never experienced before. In addition to being released from the kinds of restriction described above, it expects to be able raise its profile by placing publications in Kathmandu’s Central Library and giving each of its publications the unique ISBN which not only acts as an official ‘seal of authority’ but facilitates stock control and reprinting. In addition, it hopes it can start to promote its work through newspapers, radio and television.

Of a population of more than 26 million, mainly Hindus and Buddhists, Nepali Christians are thought to number about 700,000.

Mr Jirel used the occasion of the Bible Society’s change of official status to reflect on how, in spite of the limited resources and physical infrastructure with which it has worked since its foundation 30 years ago, the Society has won the hearts and goodwill of the Nepalese Churches.

“The majority consider it the only authoritative organisation which faithfully serves them by providing the Word of God,” he said. “During one of my church visits, a local pastor described his feeling towards the Society this way: ‘Your mother is always your mother. You cannot call any young woman your mother even after your mother gets old.’ What he meant was that he cannot forget what the Nepal Bible Society has been doing for the Churches throughout all these years in spite of all the challenges it has had to go through. Even if other organisations bring out a New Nepali Bible, he would still use the Nepal Bible Society Bible!”

And in spite of the limitations it has worked under, the Nepal Bible Society does much of what other Societies do, albeit on a smaller scale: it provides Scriptures in (Nepali) Braille, makes the audio New Testament available through the *Faith Comes By Hearing* program, provides its own sets of audio New Testament for people with low literacy skills, a large-print New Testament and a

diglot (English and Nepali) New Testament for expatriates and language students. It has also produced two editions of the complete Nepali Bible – the Revised Version and the New Revised Version (the latter was published locally). In near future, the Society is bringing out another Bible in Simple Nepali. Its current translation projects are a Common Language translation of the Tibetan Old Testament and some Bible Stories for Children.

In the past three years (2004-2006), it has distributed a total of 2.8 million Scriptures. In 2006, due to political changes, it actually exceeded its targets for both Bibles and New Testaments. These achievements are all the more impressive when you consider that the Society does not have any branches or outlets of its own across the country; it relies exclusively on Churches, Christian bookshops and para-Church organisations.

At its General Assembly last October, the Bible Society formed a new National Council and the same event saw the official publication of the Concordance to the New Revised Version of the Nepali Bible.

Summing up recent developments, Mr Jirel said again that it was really God who had acted on behalf of the Nepal Bible Society as the Scripture says in Isaiah 64:4.

“We bring all the glory to Him!” he said. He also offered his gratitude on behalf of the Nepal Bible Society to the Rev Dr Miller Milloy, General Secretary of UBS, and to David Thorne, Secretary of the UBS Asia Pacific Area, along with the Global and Area Board members, “for the able leadership, encouragement and support they are providing towards us.”

*Photos (Nepal Bible Society):*

*NEL07DJ-1: Church leaders visiting the Nepal Bible Society's warehouse.*

*NEL07DJ-2: Staff of the Nepal Bible Society with UBS Asia-Pacific Area Secretary David Thorne in October 2006.*

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