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## 15th MJC meeting agree on a number of issues

Posted on Thursday, October 23 @ 17:06:02 CDT BST

➤ The 15th ministerial joint committee (MJC) meeting between Nepal and Bhutan on the refugee issue concluded yesterday in Thimphu.

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The meeting concludes on a happy note: Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk shaking hands with Dr Bhekh B Thapa

Described as a 'historic' and major breakthrough, the meeting ended on a happy note with both the sides agreeing on a number of issues.

It was agreed that the appeals submitted by the people in Category 3 would be reviewed by the joint verification team (JVT) by the end of January 2004. People falling under Category 3 are non-Bhutanese who are claiming to be Bhutanese



Delegates from the two countries

It was also agreed that people falling under category 4 (people who have committed crimes against the people and country of Bhutan) would be allowed to return and

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given a chance to prove their innocence in a court of law. Their family members will not be prosecuted on their return to Bhutan.

It was also agreed that people in category one (people who claim they were forcefully evicted from the country), two (people who emigrated on their own free will), and four who have applied to return to Bhutan will be repatriated as 'per the harmonized position on these categories.' Those people in Category 2 who do not want to return to Bhutan will be allowed to apply for the Nepali citizenship.

The terms and procedures for repatriation, reapplication and application for Bhutan and Nepal will be as prescribed by laws of the two countries.

The 15th MJC has agreed to implement the outcome of the meeting with the JVT deciding to meet in Damak, Jhapa, in the last week of November this year.

The MJC has also selected Sanischare as the next camp for verification and directed the JVT to explore ways and means of expediting the verification process in the remaining camps.

Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk said that the meeting came to a fruitful conclusion and that it was a major step forward for both the countries.

The Nepalese foreign minister said that the MJC meeting was the 'end of talk and the beginning of action.'

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