

H.E. Kutshab's address for the MSBG, Sarasota

My wife and I are honoured to be here at the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Florida, which as we are all aware, has been instrumental in nurturing the appreciation of tropical plants through programs of research, conservation, education, and display. I understand The Selby Gardens has in its living collection, more than 6,000 orchids which are famously showcased to the wonder of more than 180,000 visitors each year. The Gardens are a gift to the unending stream of visitors, and to future generations who all are fortunate to experience the spectacular enchantment of your gardens' abundance of 20,000 living specimens of tropical flora and fauna.

This year, as The Gardens host the third annual Asian Cultural Festival on February 23 and 24, I take immense pride in that my small country nestled in the foothills of the great Himalayan Mountains has caught the consideration of our American friends. This special event precedes the Smithsonian Folklife Festival to be held at Washington D.C. from June 25th to July 6th that will celebrate and I quote "*Bhutan's special approach towards life in the 21st century*," which has off late caught global interest as the pursuit of "Gross National Happiness." Also, the Honolulu Academy of Arts is organising *The Dragon's Gift: The Sacred Arts of Bhutan* from February 26th to May 23rd as a major exhibition that focuses on our Buddhist art and culture. The exhibition coincides with the first month of the Bhutanese lunar new year, and marks the one hundredth anniversary of the Royal Wangchuck Dynasty.

The timing of these three special events that commemorate our small country in this great land is momentous as we are in the process of transforming into a democratically elected constitutional monarchy.

Bhutan is the last Mahayana Buddhist country in the world, and is ruled by a young monarch, who like his father, the benevolent and visionary 4th Druk Gyalpo subscribes to the philosophy that the happiness of the people is the ultimate goal of our development process; in short, "*Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product.*" We, in Bhutan

have chosen our singular path towards development, ingrained in profound respect for the Kingdom's unique resources. In a few months, we will have in place a strong constitution, already distributed to the people for wide consultation. We recently ushered in the New Year with our first national democratically elected National Council and very soon will be electing the members of the national Assembly.

Change is inevitable but our traditions play an important role in day to day life, from social gathering to official ceremonies and in our interactions with the world.

Bhutan, by and large would have been well liked by both Marie and Bill Selby who, I am given to understand shunned all ostentation, and preferred to live serenely in modest but beautiful surroundings. We too, for the better of the last century, lived thus in what may be termed a self-imposed yet peaceful existence, and only recently with the imperatives of global pressures did the country begin to open up to visitors. Even today, with rapid developments taking place at all fronts of our political, social, economic, and cultural life, we strive to bring a balance between the affects [both positive and negative] of modernisation and our traditional values.

Far away from the tropical heat of Florida, Bhutan is a small independent kingdom in the Himalayas lying between Tibet and India. The only thing hot about us is our cuisine, and OH! Yes, Bhutan is an integral part of the high bio-diversity conservation Eastern Himalayan hotspot. Strong ecological commitments have meant that Bhutan does not suffer from rampant deforestation and environmental degradation, and over 72% of the land is still forested with 26% of total land area protected as National Parks that are positioned at the junction of migrating birds and animals.

For those of you, whether new to botany or seasoned enthusiasts, who are eager to visit Bhutan, I urge you to not forget your gumboots and umbrellas as you delve into our protected natural habitats. We wish only to offer you an enriching experience, not the common flu. The monsoon rains of July are ideal for exploring the mountain passes and national parks decked in natural splendor of more than 16 species of rhododendrons, an astounding array of exotic orchids bloom, among them dendrobium, cymbidium, bulbophyllum, calanthe and goodyera. With luck, you might even see a red panda rolling in the meadows, or catch sight of a takin lazing about.

Tashi Delek!

Note: Asian Festival at the Selby Gardens

The Sarasota Ikebana International, Bonsai and Sumi-e Societies will bring the sights, sounds and smells of the orient to visitors. The festivities will begin on Saturday the 23rd with opening ceremonies at 11:00 a.m., including performances by taiko drummers. Enjoy displays of ikebana flower arrangements, bonsai and sumi-e paintings. Demonstrations on origami paper folding, bonsai cultivation, Chinese brush painting and more will be offered throughout the event. Asian food and beverages will be available from area restaurants.

The honorable Daw Penjo, Bhutan's Ambassador to the United Nations, and his wife will be honored guests at a special dinner Saturday evening, February 23 during the Asian Festival. Ambassador Penjo will give a presentation at the dinner about his beautiful country. Displays and films about Bhutan will be featured during the Festival. Linda Bush and Martha Mascia-Strickler of our Selby Gardens Associates are co-chairing the dinner. Stig Dalstrom, Jessica Ventimiglia and others are assisting with the Ambassador's visit. Sponsorship opportunities are available for this exciting event; please call Jessica at 941 366-5731, extention 221 for details.

Selby Gardens Vision/Mission Statement

Mission

The mission of The Marie Selby Botanical Gardens is to understand and conserve tropical plants -- with emphasis on epiphytes and their natural habitats - through programs of research, education and horticultural display that promote appreciation of plant life and provide enjoyment for all who visit the Gardens.

Vision

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens will be a recognized world leader in the research, identification, conservation and display of epiphytes, especially orchids and bromeliads, and their canopy ecosystems.

Our collections of epiphytes, especially orchids and bromeliads, will be the best in the botanical world. Our horticulture and facilities will enhance the beauty of our natural site on Sarasota Bay and provide an enriching visitor experience. Our education programs will enlighten adults and children, and provide practical information about the importance of tropical plants in their daily lives. Our expertise and experience will be used to advocate points of view where we can make a difference.