
French language manual for tour guides

THE DEPARTMENT of tourism has come out with a basic French language manual book - Bienvenue! Level 1 - that should help local tourist guides meet the basic language needs of French tourists who are sensitive over the issue of language and often reluctant to speak English.

"In some instances, even basic language skills have proved a decisive factor in selecting a particular tourist guide or in recommending other French speakers to visit our country," said the director general of the Department of Tourism, Dasho Lhatu Wangchuk. Only about 11 percent of French speaking tourists visit Bhutan according to the department.

The manual which comes in a book and two audio tapes, one for dialogue and the other for phonetics, also includes essential vocabulary required to explain and describe things and places in French.

"The existing manuals available currently are designed primarily for people who either study or visit France and other French speaking countries in Europe," said the author of the publication, Sonia V. Josserand-mercier with the department. "These manuals are inadequate to answer specific linguistic needs of Bhutanese tourist guides," she added. "Not only the basic linguistic skills but also a certain amount of specific vocabulary is important to describe and explain certain aspects of culture and tradition."

The accompanying audio tapes are considered important for the correct pronunciation and familiarity with various accents of French to its varied speakers from Belgium, Switzerland and other French speaking European countries.

Split into 18 learning units based on real-life situations experienced by the

Bhutanese tourist guides, the manual which took over a year to be completed includes dialogues between the tourist and the guide in places like the airport, travelling from Paro to Thimphu and while visiting monasteries and handicraft shops.

"It was important for us to note what are the things a tourist might be interested in and accordingly prepare our guides to be ready with the answers," said Sonia V. Josserand-mercier, adding that the manual could be a tangible educational tool to be used by future French instructors and also by Bhutanese interested in new language skills.

The tourism department started the French classes three years ago to promote language skills among the tour guides. The department will distribute the manual and hopes to place the package at Nu. 300 to cover the cost price.

By Karma Choden

KUENSEL 9/10/2004.