



TSHOGDU

News

A Newsletter of the National Assembly Secretariat

COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

VOL.-1

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The National Assembly of Bhutan is an institution where elected representatives of the people gather to pass the laws of the country, scrutinise and approve the national budget, approve the Five Year Plans, deliberate on issues affecting the security and well-being of the country and promote welfare and happiness of the people.



It is an institution which embodies parliamentary democracy and has its roots in Bhutan since 1907. The proceedings of the National Assembly are regulated by the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly. All the members are required to report to the National Assembly two days prior to the commencement of the Assembly session during which time the newly elected members take their oath and complete other formalities. The conduct and proceedings of a National Assembly session in Bhutan is unique. The elaborate traditional ceremonies during the inaugural and closing sessions, the observance of a dress and speech code, proper floor decorum, mandatory presence of all its members throughout the session, and above all the observance of courtesy and respect among its members for maintaining and upholding the sanctity of the highest decision making body in the country, all contribute to the unique nature of Bhutan's National Assembly.

The Tshogdu Chhenmo was initially housed in the Pungthang Dechen Phodrang Dzong with Dasho Kesang Dawa as the first Speaker. There have been twelve Speakers over the last 50 years. The first session was held in the Autumn of

1953 in Pungthang Dechen Phodrang Dzong. Thereafter, subsequent sessions from 2nd to 13th were held in Tashichho-dzong. During the construction of the Trashichho Dzong, the 14th to 28th Sessions were held in Paro. The 29th to 72nd sessions of the Assembly were held again in Tashichho-dzong and all the sessions after 73rd were held inside the Gyelyong Tshokhang.

In 1993, the National Assembly moved to its new premises, the Gyelyong Tshokhang, a new landmark in the capital. This sacred hall, adorned with traditional artwork and fully equipped with modern convention facilities, symbolizes yet another new era in the history of the Tshogdu Chhenmo (the National Assembly).

The 81st session of the National Assembly held in June 2003 is historic in the evolution of Bhutanese political system. Our parliamentary system was established on the 15th Day of the 12th Month of the Water Snake Year corresponding to January 18, 1953. Hence we crossed the threshold of the Golden Jubilee in January 2003.

Felicitations to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo

On the joyous occasion of the 30th Coronation Anniversary of Our King, the National Assembly of Bhutan have the honour to felicitate Our Beloved Druk Gyalpo and wish Him a long and happy life. We also take this opportunity to offer our solemn pledge to serve the TSA-WA-SUM with loyalty and dedication. We pray for a glorious reign with peace and prosperity in the Kingdom.

Expression of Appreciation to His Majesty the King, Dratshang and the Armed Forces



The continued presence of militants from neighboring Indian States in the country was posing a very serious threat to the security and sovereignty of the country. The National Assembly has reposed in His Majesty the King the full responsibility of resolving the militant problem. His Majesty's initiatives to resolve the problem through peaceful measures for last six years has been disregarded by the militants, compelling Bhutan to resort to military action on 15th December 2003, as per the resolution of the 81st session of the National Assembly.

Under the personal command of His Majesty the King, the blessings of the guardian deities and

the valiant actions of our men and women, the flush out operation was successfully completed within a short span of time with minimum casualties on both the sides.

The Speaker of the National Assembly and Staff Members of the Assembly Secretariat would like to express our sincere appreciation to His Majesty the King, Dratshang and the armed forces for their bold and tireless effort in successfully evicting the armed Indian militants from our soil. We would also like to express our deepest condolences to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the security of the country.

**Long live His Majesty the King
Long live Glorious Palden Drukpa**

82nd Session to begin

The 82nd session of the National Assembly is scheduled to commence from 28th June 2004 corresponding to the 11th day of 5th Month of the Bhutanese calendar year. All the honourable members are to report to the National Assembly Secretariat on 25th June 2004 for registration and complete other formalities.

Royal Advisory Councillors to be elected

The Royal Advisory Councillors are due to complete their three year term on 31st October 2004. Six new councillors will be elected during the 82nd session of the National Assembly. The newly elected councillors will take oath of office after the term of the incumbent councillors is completed.

In case, the draft constitution comes into effect before the newly elected councillors complete their term of office, the Royal Advisory Council Act shall stand repealed and the councillors shall automatically retire.

The year under Review

2003 has been an eventful year for the National Assembly. It has been a significant year for many reasons. Little did we realize that we could accomplish so many things in the year.

Legislative Committee launched



A new Legislative Committee of the National Assembly was launched on May 23, 2003. The Committee is mandated to review all new Acts and legislation before they are submitted to the National Assembly for endorsement. The legislative committee was established as decided during the 80th Session of the National Assembly. His Excellency Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji was the Chief Guest during the inaugural ceremony held in the Royal Banquet Hall.

81st Session of the National Assembly



The 81st Session of the National Assembly was held from 28th June to 18th August 2003. It has been a significant year for the National Assembly as the Council of Ministers and the Speaker of the National Assembly were elected during the session. Four new cabinet ministers were elected in addition to the six council of ministers who won the vote of confidence through secret ballot. The incumbent Speaker Dasho Ugen Dorje was re-elected in a land-slide victory.



UNDP Project

A micro project for strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Assembly was signed with UNDP on 12th August 2003. This was a one-time project which terminated on 31st December 2003. Under this assistance, a number of short term training programmes were undertaken including study visit to the Parliaments of Thailand and Singapore and purchase of few office equipment

Installation of Audio Conference, Audio Recording and Distribution and Video Archival System and strengthening security and surveillance in and around Gyelyong Tshokhang

A Consultant was hired to assist the National Assembly to design integrated hall displays,

access cards, electronic voting, close circuit television (CCTV) based image capture, live recording and distribution system for installation in the Assembly Hall. This package also incorporates video surveillance of important locations within and outside the complex with provisions for metal detector gates, explosive detectors and hand-held metal detectors. The Consultant submitted a comprehensive plan for revamping the existing system with a new system.

Subsequently, a holistic project proposal was formulated and submitted to the Department of Planning and Department of Aid and Debt Management. Keeping in view the need to strengthen the security in and around the Gyelyong Tshokhang on a priority basis, the Royal Government has sanctioned funds for strengthening the security system around the Gyelyong Tshokhang. The security aspect of the project will be implemented in collaboration with Royal Bhutan Police and is expected to be completed within June 2004.

The installation and commissioning of the integrated hall displays, access cards, electronic voting, close circuit television (CCTV) based image capture, live recording and distribution system for installation in the Assembly Hall will be taken up as soon as the funds are available.

It is hoped that with the installation of these systems in the Gyelyong Tshokhang, the National Assembly would be in a better position to cope up with the increasing diversity of its functional roles and responsibilities in keeping with the requirement of the changing needs of time.



AAPP Conference in Manila

The National Assembly of Bhutan was represented by a five-member delegation led by

the Honourable Speaker Dasho Ugen Dorje at the 4th General Assembly of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP), hosted by the House of Representatives, Republic of Philippines, and held in Manila from 1-4 September 2003.

The Assembly, attended by 252 delegates from 27 member and 9 observer countries, discussed a wide range of topics from globalization, human rights to joint anti-terrorism efforts.

Meeting of Legislative Committee

The Legislative Committee of the National Assembly has been meeting regularly and Acts/Chathrim have been reviewed and revised by the Committee in consultation with the line ministries and agencies. With the work load of the committee drastically increased over the time, the Administrative structure has been reviewed and submitted to Royal Civil Service Commission for consideration. A separate Legal and Committee Affairs Division is proposed in the new administrative structure which will greatly enhance the performance of the committee. Establishment of other committees is also in the pipeline.

Staff Coordination Meeting

Staff Coordination Meeting has been introduced which meets every month under the Chairmanship of the Secretary. The objectives of the meeting are to provide information to the officials of the Secretariat, ensure consensus of decision and to avoid rash decision-making, solve problems in a common forum and report and review planned activities. All the members of the staff participate in the monthly coordination meeting.

Familiarization tour to Dzongkhags

Officials of the Secretariat undertook Dzongkhag tour to develop linkages with the Dzongkhag Administrations and brief the Dzongdas on the various activities initiated at the National Assembly. The objective of the tour was also to familiarize with the workings of the Dzongkhag Administrations and get their feedback on various issues related to the National Assembly which would help us to improve on our facilities provided to the honourable members.

Workshop on Rules of Procedure and Committee to improve the efficiency of National Assembly

A three-day workshop was organized by the National Assembly Secretariat from 3 to 5 February, 2004. In this workshop, legal experts, parliamentarians and planners gathered in Thimphu to review and fine tune the draft Committees Acts and the Rules of Procedures of the National Assembly. The draft Committee Act will be submitted to the 82nd Session of the National Assembly for ratification. The cross-sectoral participation comprised of approximately 35 officials including Gups, Chimis, Lawyers, RAC Members and other senior government officials.

Documentary Film

The Secretariat has developed a 32-minute documentary film on National Assembly of Bhutan titled "Tshogdu -People's Assembly. The advancement of the National Assembly both in terms of its physical set-up and quality of deliberations has been kept in mind while producing the film directed for information and educational purpose. The Secretariat envisages making mass reproduction of the documentary film and distributing it to various dzongkhags. The documentary film was produced by M/S THUENDREL Communications on behalf of the National Assembly.

Contributions of articles

To enable the Secretariat to produce the Newsletter on a regular basis, we would like to encourage the honourable members to contribute news and articles about their respective constituencies and any other issues relating to the National Assembly.

Parliamentary Glossary

A Parliamentary glossary is being developed by the Secretariat. The glossary which is being published by the Secretariat contains many parliamentary terms and phrases for the benefit of all concerned particularly the honourable members of the National Assembly. Any feedback on the glossary is welcome for its improvement in the future.

Friends who left us



Dasho Tashi Phuntsog, Secretary was transferred to the Ministry of Information and Communications in September 2003 after serving in the National Assembly as Secretary for over 14 years. We wish Dasho all the very best in his present place of posting and career advancement.

Mr. Ugyen Thinley, Assistant Documentation Officer resigned from service with effect from May 1, 2003 to join the National Militia. We wish him all the success in his career.

New Arrivals



Paro Dzongda Jigme Zangpo was transferred as the new Secretary of the National Assembly Secretariat. Jigme Zangpo formally took over on 10th October 2003. The National Assembly extends a very warm welcome and wishes him a rewarding career in the Secretariat.

Ugyen Thinley got his first appointment at the National Assembly Secretariat on July 2003 as Office Assistant and Sangay Thinley joined the Secretariat and is attached to the office of the Honourable Speaker as his Private Secretary. We

wish them very fruitful career in the Secretariat respectively.

Training Programmes attended



Mr. Lakshuman Chhetri, Information Officer attended a short training programme on Information Management organized by the Asian Banking Center, Manila, Philippines from 29th September to 24th October 2003.

Mr. Lobzang Dorji, Sr. Human Resource Officer, Mr. Pema Wangchuk, Sr. Legislative Officer, Mr. Rinchen Penjor, Legislative Officer, Mr. Yeshey Lhendup, Asstt. Documentation Officer and Ms. Sonam Lhamo, Asstt. Documentation Officer attended a 3-weeks training programme on legislative drafting organized by Asian Banking Center, Manila, Philippines from 13th October to 2nd November 2003 which was conducted in the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Republic of Philippines.



Mr. Kinley Tshering, Printing Assistant and Mr. Wangdi Tshering, Printing Technician attended

a course on Intermediate of Printing Technology and Graphics Designing conducted by Sunrise Training Institute, Pune, India from October 6 to November 14, 2003. They underwent extensive training on handling of printing machines and graphic designing using computer. This training has further enhanced the capacity of the Secretariat in in-house printing.

Mr. Leki Tenzin, Documentation Assistant underwent a short course on Computer Operation and Office Management conducted at the Computer Management Institute, Phuentsholing from November 17 to November 28, 2003. He was nominated for the training to upgrade computer operations skills in MS Windows and MS Office, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access.

Likewise, Mr. Dorji, Administration Assistant underwent Inventory Control and Stores Management at Computer Management Institute, Phuentsholing from November 17 to November 28, 2003. He was nominated for the training to enhance skills in maintenance of stock inventory using tailor-made computer software and acquire the concept of database like Microsoft Access in the inventory management.

Ms. Karma, P.A. to the Honourable Speaker attended training on Modern Office Administration and Management organized by Visual Institute of Technology, Thimphu in collaboration with Sunrise Training Institute, Pune held in Phuentsholing from November 20 to December 17, 2004.

Similarly, Ms. Yangka Wangmo, P.A. to the Secretary attended training on Computer Applications organized by Computer Management Institute, Phuentsholing from December 30 to January 12, 2004.

Mr. Krishna Bahadur Kharka, Accountant, Mr. Ugyen Thinley, Office Secretary, Mr. Tashi Dorji, Mr. Gyeltshen Wangdi and Mr. Rinchen Letho, Messengers attended a short training course on Basic computer operations and management organized at Info Tech Solutions, Thimphu from December 23 to January 22 2004 for a period of one month. This training has helped them immensely.

Secretary attends South Asia Public Accounts Committee Forum

The Secretary of the National Assembly Jigme Zangpo attended the South Asia Accounts Committee Forum held in Bangkok, Thailand from 17 to 19 November 2003 hosted by the World Bank.

Attachment Programme

Mr. Kazilal Rai, Mr. Tshering Dorji, Mr. Wangchuck Norbu, Mr. Lotey Gyeltshen, Mr. Tenzin Namgay and Mr. Lakshuman Chhetri were attached to the Parliaments of Singapore and Thailand from 29th November to 6th December 2003. During their attachment, they learnt, among many other things, about the structure of Singapore and Thai Parliaments, parliamentary procedures, Parliament Reports and the functions of the various departments of the Parliament Secretariat in both the countries.



The Secretary Jigme Zangpo also visited the Singapore Parliament from 3rd to 10th January 2004. Besides attachment with the various departments in the Singapore Parliament, the Secretary held discussion on the possibility of establishing linkages between the two Parliaments with the Speaker of Singapore Parliament H.E. Mr. Abdullah Tarmugi and Mr. P O Ram, Clerk of Parliament.

On the invitation of the Election Commission of India, Mr. Lobzang Dorji, Sr. HR Officer, Mr. Rinchen Penjor, Legislative Officer and Mr. Yeshey Lhendup, Documentation Officer visited New Delhi to witness the election and counting of votes from 29th November to 5th December 2003.

During their visit, they called on the Chief Election Commissioner of India H.E. Mr. J M Lyndoh and visited few polling booths and counting centres in and around New Delhi and paid Courtesy Call on to Rangit Rae, Joint Secretary of the External Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi before their return to the country.

Bhutanese Parliamentary Delegation participates

On the invitation of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Parliament of India, a five member Bhutanese delegation led by the Honourable Speaker Dasho Ugen Dorje attended the International Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Parliament of India from January 22-26, 2003 at New Delhi.

The Conference was inaugurated by the President of India Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam in the Central Hall of the Parliament House. Present were delegates from over 77 countries besides the members of the Parliament and Presiding Officers of State Legislatures in India.

Similarly, a five-member delegation led by Sangay Dorji, Dzongda, Dagana Dzongkhag attended Regional Workshop on Parliamentary Advocacy for the Prevention of Violence Against Women held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 18-19 March 2003 organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD). The objectives of this Workshop were to review and assess current legal initiatives dealing with Violence Against Women (VAW) in the region with a view to adopting reforms for a more responsive legislation, to draft a regional Plan of action for legislative measures to adopt VAW and to organize national follow-up meetings and actions for strengthening national legislation on VAW.



The honourable Speaker receives:

1. Mr. Liu Shuqing, Former Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China and party on 15.9.2003
2. Shri James M. Lyngdoh, Chief Election Commissioner of India on 22.9.2003



3. Prof. Miquel Alfonso Martinez, Member of the United Nations Sub-Commission for Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Geneva on 23.9.2003
4. Dr. Heinz Fischer, Vice-President of the Austrian Parliament and Party, Austria on 6.10.2003
5. Farewell Visit of H.E. Mr. Abdullah Ahmed Al-Murad, Ambassador of Kuwait to Bhutan on 8.10.2003

6. H.E. Dr. Gian Reto Plattner, Senate Speaker & Vice Chancellor. Basel University and Party, Switzerland on 27.10.2003
7. Mr. K.K Venugopal, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India November 6, 2003
8. European Delegation for Relations with the countries of South Asia and the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation on 26.11.2003
9. 27 Member Group Councillors of Kargil (Ladakh) on 17.2.2004



10. Prof. Gerry Clark, UNB, Canada with seven Canadian students visited the National Assembly on May 5, 2004.



Editorial Board

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