



TSHOGDU *News*

A Newsletter of the National Assembly Secretariat

FIFTH ISSUE

VOL-5

JANUARY- JUNE 2007



FELICITATION TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING

On the auspicious occasion of the commemoration of the Coronation day of the Fourth King of Bhutan on 2 June 2007, the National Assembly of Bhutan offers its heartiest felicitation and unfathomed gratitude to our beloved King for having blessed the Bhutanese people with 33 years of glorious reign.

We pray for the long life of His Majesty and may the everlasting peace and prosperity continue to shine on the people of Bhutan under the dynamic leadership of each succeeding King of Bhutan.

The Fifth Druk Gyalpo graces the 86th National Assembly

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The 86th session of the National Assembly which began on December 22, 2006 took on a historical significance when His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck graced the session for the first time after taking on the responsibilities as the Monarch and the Head of State.

The National Assembly on behalf of all the people, offered sincere Tashi Lekmoen to His Royal Highness the Crown Prince for taking on the responsibilities of the Fifth Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan. Members offered prayers to His Majesty the Fifth King, the upholder of the Chhoesilunyi that under His dynamic leadership, the Country and the people experience unprecedented peace and prosperity. Bearing the guardian deities of the Palden Drukpa as witness, the Government, Dratshang, the people and the three armed forces reposed their full faith and confidence and sincerely pledged their loyalty and dedication to the Fifth Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan, in the sacred Hall of the National Assembly.

HALF YEARLY REPORT

The commencement of 86th National Assembly



His Majesty received by National Assembly members to the 86th session

The 86th Session of the National Assembly began on the auspicious Second day of the 11th Month of Bhutanese Calendar (Male Fire Dog Year) corresponding to December 22, 2006 amidst traditional ceremonies. His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck graced the opening ceremony of the session. His Majesty was received by the members and escorted to the Assembly Hall in an elaborate Chipdrel procession for the traditional Marchang and Zhugdrel ceremonies.

The formal inaugural was attended by the members of the Royal Family, senior government officials, diplomats and representatives from international community and the public.

Addressing the opening ceremony, the National Assembly Speaker Dasho Ugen Dorje said Bhutan had enjoyed unprecedented peace and prosperity under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. He said within a short span of time Bhutan had been able to achieve what other countries had taken hundreds of years.

The Honourable Speaker also briefed the National Assembly on some of the achievements of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. During His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's visit to India in July this year, Bhutan and India extended the agreement on trade, commerce and transit by another 10 years. The two countries also signed the protocol to the agreement on Tala Hydropower Project and the agreement on cooperation in hydropower.

The Speaker said that His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo had been conferred the 2006 J Paul Getty Conservation Leadership Award in recognition of His Majesty's par excellence leadership and profound concern for the environment and he said it was also due to the leadership of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo that Bhutan has been listed among the 32 least corrupt countries by Transparency International. In tourism, Bhutan has been ranked as top tourist destination for 2007.

The Speaker, on behalf of the National Assembly, expressed deep appreciation and gratitude to the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and reposed full faith and confidence and pledged their loyalty and dedication to His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo.

The Speaker also congratulated all the new and re-elected Assembly members and reminded them that they are chosen with full trust and confidence by the people. He expressed hope that members will engage in substantive deliberation, keeping in mind the laws of the Country and for the welfare of the entire Bhutanese people.

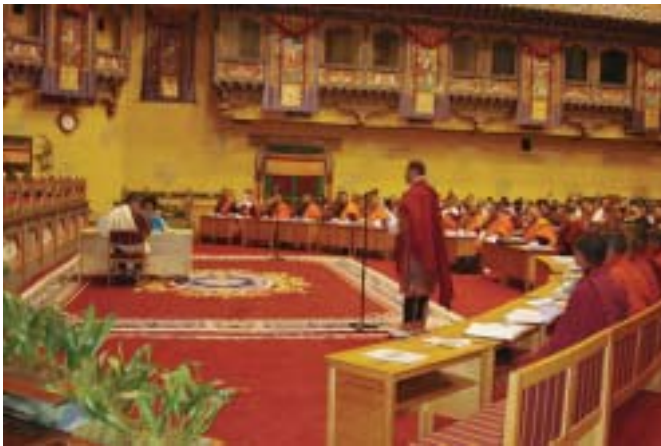


Hon'ble Speaker addressing the opening ceremony

The Prime Minister, Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk said Bhutan had seen huge socio-economic developments under benevolent and farsighted leadership of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. The Prime Minister said His Majesty had initiated major political changes for the well being of Bhutanese people. He said it was the sacred responsibility of every Bhutanese to serve the country with utmost loyalty and dedication.

Led by the Prime Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, the people of the 20 Dzongkhags, the Zhung Dratshang, the Business Community and the Armed Forces pledged their loyalty and dedication to the Fifth Druk Gyalpo. They said that Bhutan would continue to enjoy eternal peace and prosperity under the reign of the Fifth Druk Gyalpo.

The Zhung Kalyon, Dasho Rinzin Gyeltshen, presented the report on the implementation status of the resolutions of the 85th session of the National Assembly.



Zhung Kalyon presents status of the 85th session resolution

The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee presented the investigation report on the Chukha Dzong Construction Project, the Semtokha Dzong Renovation Project and the review of Annual Audit Report of 2004 and 2005 which were carried out as per the resolution of the 85th session of the National Assembly.

New members in the 86th National Assembly

Six new members were inducted in the National Assembly on December 21, 2006 to the 86th session of the National Assembly. Five of them were Chimis of which two Chimis were re-elected and one Rabdey Kutshab. The oath-of-allegiance for the new members was administered by the Speaker, Dasho Ugen Dorje.

Students observe the 86th National Assembly Session

More than 300 trainees from Rigsum Institute of Technology (RIT), Royal Institute of Management, the Institute for Zorig Chhoesum and Construction Training Centre observed the 86th Session of the National Assembly as special invitees. The Secretariat has been organizing this programme during every session of the National Assembly to create awareness among the students in the conduct and functioning of the National Assembly. The invitation of student groups in the National Assembly will be a regular feature particularly when the National Assembly is in Session. This year the invitation to witness the National Assembly in session was also extended to the private institutes.

The highlights of the agenda

The 86th National Assembly Session deliberated on a wide range of issues. It began with the implementation status report of the 85th session by the Zhung kalyon, Royal Advisory Council. The other major issues included:

- » Physical Verification Report by PAC
- » Appointment of Independent Auditors to Audit the Royal Audit Authority
- » Issues related to Development Activities
- » Bhutan-China Boundary Talks
- » Issues related to the people in the camps in Nepal
- » Land related issues
- » And miscellaneous issues



PAC Chairman presents Physical Verification Report

The main focus of deliberation was on the issues related to development activities which embodied 12 important issues. Under miscellaneous issues, it included a total of 28 points which were all pertinent issues having direct bearing on the socio-economic development and good governance. Besides the deliberations, 3 new Acts were also enacted. They include:

1. The Judicial Service Act of Bhutan, 2007,
2. Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan, 2007,
3. The Immigration Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2007.

The election Bill, the National Referendum Bill and the Public Election Fund Bill were also distributed to the members for information and awareness in preparation for the election in 2008.

National Assembly Members visit Barp Nyizergang Lhakhang and Semtokha Dzong

The National Assembly Members led by Hon'ble Speaker Dasho Ugen Dorje visited Barp Nyizergang Lhakhang and the Semtokha Dzong on December 30, 2006.

The Barp Nyizergang Lhakhang is considered to be of high importance since it was blessed as the seat of the Late Je Khenpo, His Holiness the Nyizer Trulku. Today, the Lhakhang accommodates about hundred monks of Semtokha Shedra.



Members at Nyinzerang Lhakhang

The Semtokha Dzong is one of the oldest Dzongs in the Kingdom. The Dzong is currently undergoing renovation. After the completion, the Dzong will serve as a Shedra. The Members offered prayers and lit butter lamps at the Lhakhangs and visited the seat of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and Jigme Namgyel.

The Venerable Dorji Lopen of Zhung Dratshang and Hon'ble Lyonpo Jigme Y. Thinley, Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs were also present during the visit.



Members at Semtokha Dzong

Concluding Ceremony

As the 86th Session of the National Assembly concluded on January 8, the representatives of the clergy, government, and the people gathered around the Golden Throne and offered Tashi Moenlam prayer for long life of His Majesty the King, peace and

prosperity in the country, and happiness of the Bhutanese people.



Members at the Tashi Moenlam

The closing ceremony was graced by His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Senior government officials, representatives of the international agencies and the public, attended the concluding ceremony of the Assembly.

The Speaker of the National Assembly, Dasho Ugen Dorje, said that the momentous and historic 86th session of the National Assembly which began on December 22, under the leadership of His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo had been able to conclude successfully by the blessings of the luminous benedictions of the Triple Gem and because of the benevolent guidance of his Majesty the King. The Speaker also said that the successful conclusion of the Session is also attributable to the support of the representatives of the people who stood by the agenda and engaged in constructive deliberations.

The Speaker informed the House that the 1949 Friendship Treaty between Bhutan and India has been reviewed and updated by the two Governments to reflect the contemporary nature of our close relationship and to provide a strong foundation for the continued growth of this excellent relationship in the 21st century.



National Assembly Members with His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

The Speaker informed the House that the Bhutan-India Friendship Treaty is expected to be formally signed during the visit to India by His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the Fifth Druk Gyalpo.

The Speaker on behalf of the National Assembly and the people of Bhutan, offered deep gratitude to His Majesty the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck for this precious legacy bestowed upon us for the future security and sovereignty of our kingdom.

The Speaker on behalf of the National Assembly and the people of Bhutan extended sincere gratitude and appreciation to the Government of India for their continued assistance and in particular for their goodwill and friendship in updating the Bhutan-India Friendship Treaty.

The Speaker reminded the people's representatives that the resolutions adopted by the 86th session should be taken to the people without delay and the concerned ministries to carry out the ministry related works in accordance with the resolutions.

As part of the concluding programme the Royal Academy of Performing Arts, Doegar Phuensum and Khujugluyang performed traditional songs, dances and skits. The cultural programme after the concluding ceremony was also attended by members of the Royal Family.

His Majesty the king hosted the closing lunch for the members at the Royal Banquet Hall.

Up-gradation of National Assembly Hall

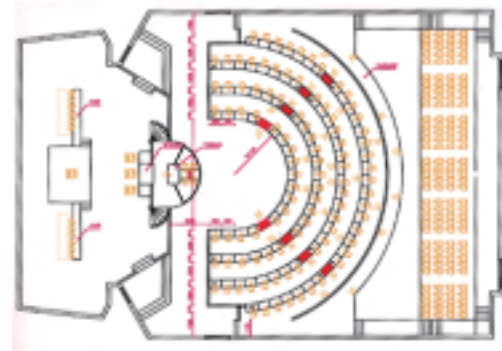
The National Assembly Hall will be up-graded to a modern Parliament House.

The drawings of the National Assembly Hall has been finalized after several necessary alterations. There will be hundred seats arranged in an arc-shape with visitors' gallery and a separate seating arrangement for the press. The Hall will have digital conference, security and surveillance and video archival system. Simultaneous interpretation machine and individual electronic voting machine will also be put in place. The work on the Hall which is scheduled to be completed by the beginning of 2008 will begin soon.

The National Assembly or the Lower House sittings will be held at the Convention Hall which will then be called as National Assembly Hall and the The

National Council or the Upper House will have its sitting in the Royal Banquet Hall. The joint-sitting will be held at the National Assembly Hall.

The up-gradation of the National Assembly Hall is funded by DANIDA through its good governance and administrative reform program.



Proposed drawings of the National Assembly Hall

Training Programme attended

Eight staffs of the Secretariat comprising senior Administrative Officer, senior Accountant and five support staffs of the Administration, Finance & Services Division and Archive Assistant from the Information Communication and Services Division attended three weeks training on the 'Office Productivity' at CMI at Phuntsholing under the in-country training programme.

The Honorable Secretary under-went an Executive Program on Effective Management of Parliament Secretariat conducted on April 9 to 27, 2007 at DFI training Centre in Philippines. The training program included sessions on Philosophical Lawmaking Traditions and Democratic Principles of Lawmaking, understanding the Principles and Nature of Legal Structure and Law Enforcement, Rights based approach to Lawmaking, Appreciative intelligence and Development Plan for the members of Bhutanese Parliament.

During the course of the training, the Secretary made courtesy call on the Senate Secretary and the Secretary General, House of Representatives and discussed issues and concerns of the House of Senate and the

House of Representatives. The Secretary made tour of the Archival Systems of both the Houses and also the Lower House of the Congress.

Mr. Sangay Thinley, PS to Honorable Speaker and Mr. Sonam Wangchuk, Assistant Research Officer also attended a course on Legislative Drafting and Review Program in the same institute.



Call on to the Deputy Speaker by EU Parliamentarians

A 9-member Delegation from European Parliament led by Ms. Neena Gill, Chair of the Committee of Budgets, PSE, UK called on the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly on March 19, 2007 in the National Assembly Conference Hall. The delegation team showed keen interest to learn about the political transition that our country was going to experience with the introduction of a new constitution and a democratic parliamentary system. The members also enquired about the steps taken by the government for fair representation of people from different regions of the country both in the current National Assembly and for the new Parliamentary System.



Dy. Speaker with delegates from European Parliament

Committee Members visit Denmark

A 13-member Bhutanese Parliamentary delegation led by the Secretary of National Assembly attended a five day Parliamentary study visit program at the Parliament of Denmark in Copenhagen with effect from 12-16 March 2007. The delegation comprised of the members of Public Accounts Committee and the Legislative Committee. The study program was organized by Folketinget, Danish Parliament as a part of Parliamentary Twinning Program (PTP) between the National Assembly and the Folketinget. During the visit, the delegation were introduced to the Danish "model" for democracy, the three independent pillars of democracy (Government, Parliament and Courts) and also other important pillars like Municipalities/regions, Organizations and the Press. The delegation was also briefed on various legislative processes including the working of various committees of the parliament. The delegations were introduced to few eminent members of the Parliament and were briefed on the works and functions of the Members of Parliament, party groups and political parties. The delegation also paid courtesy call on to H.E. Mr. Christain Mejdahl, Speaker and Mr. Henrik Tvarno, the Secretary General of the Danish Parliament.



Bhutanese Parliamentary delegation with H.E. Mr. Christain Mejdahl, Speaker of the Danish Parliament.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the National Assembly of Bhutan and the Folketinget, Parliament of Denmark was signed in July 2006 for a 3 year Parliamentary Twinning Program. The program was funded by DANIDA.

Contribution of articles

Since National Assembly has increased its yearly release to biannual, we could like to encourage the honourable members to contribute news and articles about respective constituencies and any other issues relating to the National Assembly.

Chimi election

From January 2007 till date, five Chimis were elected of which two were from Trashigang, one from Punakha, one from Dagana and a woman representative from Wangdue. She is the first woman to be elected as National Assembly member from Wangdue so far. With Wangdue chimi, the number of women representatives in the National Assembly becomes five. The election of the chimis is still going on in various parts of the Country.

Call-on to Hon'ble Speaker by the former Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition of the Parliament of Sri Lanka

H.E. Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, former Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition of the Parliament of Sri Lanka called on the Hon'ble Speaker Dasho Ugen Dorje on April 13, 2007.

The delegation expressed their satisfaction for the close ties and friendship existed between our two countries as a member to SAARC and BIMSTEC. The meeting also discussed the future areas of cooperation between the two parliaments. They expressed that there lie great challenges ahead for the National Assembly due to the major political reforms taking place in the country.

The Call on concluded with the tour of National Assembly Hall



H.E. Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe with Hon'ble Speaker

Bhutan, Canada and Democracy *(A reflection of the article by Mr. Peter Adams, former MP, Leberal Party, 1993-2006, Peterborough, Ontario)*

Bhutan is the Country united by religion, a hereditary King, an official language (plus widespread English) and strong sense of history.

Canada is one of 22 nations that officially recognize Bhutan through an embassy operated by our High

Commission in India. The current Canadian presence in the country is the Canadian Co-operation Office (CCO) located in Thimphu, the capital.

Former Parliamentarians will be particularly interested in a remarkable development in democracy which is occurring in Bhutan. With firm direction from current King's father (1), the nation is moving to become a fully democratic constitutional monarchy in 2008. In that year, a bi-cameral parliament will be elected by universal suffrage and a constitution, already published, will be debated, adopted and built into the system of government. The constitution includes a clause under which kings have to retire at 64 years of age!

There is already an elected National Assembly so that Bhutanese have experience of election. However, the 2008 election will be based for the first time on political parties that are entirely new there.

In April, 2007, the Chief Research Officer of the National Assembly of Bhutan, Tshewang Dorji, took part in the Parliamentary Officers Study Program, organized on Parliament Hill by International and Interparliamentary Affairs, sponsored by the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa, Canada.



Chief Research Officer with Parliamentary Officers Study Program participants

National Assembly members list

10 Cabinet Ministers
10 Representatives of the clergy
106 representatives of the people
24 representatives of the Government

** 5 women representatives*

ANNOUNCEMENT!

This is for the general information of all concerned that the 87th session of the National Assembly of Bhutan is scheduled to commence from 7 June, 2007.

All those who wish to observe the Session are hereby informed that as in the past, the Royal Bhutan Police entrusted with the security of the Gyelyong Tshogkhang premises shall be issuing gallery passes. While the passes for the Diplomats can be availed in advance on daily basis, the same for others will be issued in first come first serve basis during the Session.

The Chief Security Officer, RBP, Thimphu and the Security Officers at the Gyelyong Tshogkhang are authorised to issue the gallery passes during the National Assembly Session.

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