

**DECISIONS OF THE (AUTUMN) 29TH SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
BHUTAN HELD FROM 12TH TO 23RD NOVEMBER 1968**

1. MATTER RELATING TO THE FOOD SUBSIDY ALLOWANCE TO MONK BODIES

As the earnings of the Central Monk Body and Rabdeys of other districts were not sufficient, additional rations worth Nu. 4,99,000/- were provided annually by the Government. Henceforth, giving rations in kind to the Monk Bodies would not be possible as the system of collecting taxes had been converted from kind to cash all over the country.

Therefore, with effect from the first month of the Earth Bird Year, the nine monk bodies were to be paid a sum of Nu. 5,00,000/- annually in cash in lieu of rations. The Finance Ministry would render assistance to the Monk Bodies in procuring rations, and inspect their accounts.

2. MATTER RELATING TO ABOLISHMENT OF POST OF NYERCHEN

In view of the change in the system of collecting taxes from kind to cash, all the monks and members of the Royal family including His Majesty the King, were now paid in cash only. As such, it had been decided to abolish the post of Nyerchen of Dzongs with effect from the first month of the Earth Bird Year.

3. MATTER RELATING TO RENUMERATION OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN AND PRINCE AND PRINCESS

An annual sum of Nu. 11,43,000/- was released by the Finance Ministry to Her Majesty the Queen and the six Royal Family members including the prince and princess towards their overall expenditure including the construction of buildings and maintenance of vehicles. Since the taxes had been converted to cash and the post of Nyerchen is proposed to be abolished, Her Majesty the Queen would henceforth receive Nu. 12,00,000/- per annum at the rate of Nu. 1,00,000/- per month to cover the above expenditure.

4. MATTER RELATING TO PRIVY PURSE FOR HIS MAJESTY THE KING

During the spring session of the National Assembly held in the Bhutanese third month, His Majesty graciously volunteered to receive a privy purse of Nu.3,000/- per month only. Owing to the proposed abolition of the post of Nyerchen and the subsequent stop page of the supply

of rations to His Majesty the King, the National Assembly offered an additional Nu.1,000/- per month as ration allowance to His Majesty. However, His Majesty graciously volunteered to accept Nu.750/- per month for the purpose.

Nevertheless, as a round figure would be less problematic accounts-wise, the Assembly resolved that a ration allowance of Nu.1,000/- per month would be more appropriate.

5. MATTER RELATING TO EXPENDITURE ON GUESTS

Foreign visitors, irrespective of whether they were state guests or guests of private persons, had so far been accommodated at government expense at the government guest houses. The Assembly decided that henceforth only personal guests of His Majesty the King and state guests, as per the intimation of the Hon'ble Home and Finance Ministers, would be entitled to free accommodation and hospitality. Expenses of any other category of guests would not be borne by the government.

6. MATTER RELATING TO IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Owing to the shortage of labourers and the consequent apathy of civil officers, irrigation projects in the country had not been making satisfactory progress. It was now decided by the National Assembly that one civil officer would be placed in charge of irrigation projects in each district. The following officers had accordingly been selected for the above posts.

I.	The Hon'ble Home Minister	- Tashigang District
II.	The Hon'ble Finance Minister	- Paro
III.	Dasho Kelzang, High Court Judge	- Thimphu
IV.	Dasho N.Namgey, High Court Judge	- W/Phodrang
V.	Dasho J. Dorji, Kalyon	- Punakha
VI.	Dasho Pengjab Sangey, R.A.C.	- Tongsa and Shemgang
VII.	Dasho Palden Dorji, Thrimpon	- Lhuntshi district
VIII.	Dasho Nakchung, Director of publicity	- Chapcha
IX.	Dasho Lhapa Zhaw, Thrimpon	- Daga
X.	Dasho Samdrup, Thrimpon	- Mongar
XI.	Dy. Commissioner, Chirang and Samchi	- Southern Bhutan.

The above officers would be required to submit progress reports on the irrigation projects in the next National Assembly Session.

7. MATTER RELATING TO WAGES FOR LABOURERS EMPLOYED ON IRRIGATION PROJECTS

Although it was decided in the earlier session that the people themselves should contribute free unskilled labour for the construction of irrigation channels, the Assembly had now resolved that wages would be paid to the unskilled labourers employed on irrigation projects at Nu. 2/- per day for irrigation channels damaged by the recent floods and landslides, and Nu. 1.50 per day for other projects. This decision followed the reported shortage of labourers in irrigation projects.

8. MATTER RELATING TO BRIDGE ON HA MOCHU

The people's representative from Ha stated that the bridge on Ha Mochu was washed away by the recent floods. It was decided that a new suspension bridge would be built on Ha Mochu with a contribution of Nu. 5,000/- from the Ministry of Development and the Finance Minister procuring the construction materials and transporting them to Samchi. Labour for the construction of the bridge as well as transportation of the materials from Samchi to bridge site would be provided by the people of the areas.

9. MATTER RELATING TO ELECTION OF NEW SPEAKER

As per Article No. 8 of the constitution of the National Assembly, the present Speaker Yanglop Nidup would now retire after completing his three years term. The Assembly proposed the names of three candidates, one each from the Monk Body, the officers and the people, for the Speaker's post. On the basis of the secret ballot system, Dasho Kelzang, High Court Judge, was elected as the new Speaker with a majority of 74 votes. He would assume the office of the Speaker from the spring session of the National Assembly and will hold office for a term of three years.

10. MATTER RELATING TO FREE ALLOTMENT OF GOVERNMENT LAND NEAR TOWNS TO THE PUBLIC

The public of each village would be allotted pasture free of cost within one mile of their village for the purpose of grazing cattle, mules and sheep. Yearly land revenue would, however, be levied on such land. Beyond a distance of one mile from towns, both the land revenue as well as the price of land would be payable to the government as before.

11. MATTER RELATING TO CHUNIDOM LABOUR

According to the resolution of the previous session, women were exempted from chunidom and the question of exempting men from it after two years was also discussed. However, in view of the shortage of labour for various important government projects, men were not to be exempted from chunidom for the time being.

12. MATTER RELATING TO THE PRIVILEGES OF SKILLED LABOURERS

Till recently, skilled workers such as carpenters, carvers and painters were entitled to get one labourer exempted from Chunidom. This privilege would be withdrawn with effect from the first month of the Earth Bird Year, as it was felt that since skilled workers were being paid high wages, they did not require any special privileges from the government.

13. MATTER RELATING TO SOVEREIGN POWERS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

According to Article 18 of the constitution of the National Assembly promulgated in the Wood Horse Year (1954), His Majesty the King reserved the right to amend all decisions of the National Assembly. It was decided that henceforth all decisions of the National Assembly would be treated as final and binding, and not even His Majesty would be permitted to amend them. In the event that the King had serious misgivings about the soundness of any decision passed by the Assembly, he would personally address the Assembly and propose to the Assembly to reconsider the matter. The proposal to make the National Assembly a sovereign body was moved by the King and ratified by the Assembly members.

14. MATTER RELATING TO FLOOD RELIEF WORK

Many flood victims petitioned the National Assembly for assistance through their representatives. In this context, the Assembly decided to entrust the main responsibility for flood relief to the Royal Advisory Councillors, who were to work in cooperation with the Thrimpons, Gups and Chipons in this regard. Lajabs were to supervise the relief work and

maintain muster rolls of labourers employed daily on each project. After completion of the flood relief work, the Development Wing would distribute equally to each project the amount received from the government of India by way of FLOOD RELIEF FUND.

15. MATTER RELATING TO EXEMPTION OF TAX ON CATTLE BELONGING TO MONASTERIES

The House decided to grant exemption of cattle tax to monasteries owing registered livestock for dairy products and for offering sacred butter lamps, irrespective of whether the monasteries belong to the government, to the community, or to private parties. Upto 20 heads of cattle belonging to Class I monasteries, and 15 heads of cattle belonging to Class II monasteries, and 10 heads of cattle belonging to Class III monasteries would be exempted from tax.

16. MATTER RELATING TO LITURGIC PERFORMANCES OF ‘SIPAI CHIDY’

Because of the bad times, the nation had recently suffered natural calamities, and astrologers forecast that more such calamities were likely in the future. The monk bodies of the kingdom were continuously offering prayers to ward off such evils, and the great incarnate lamas had recommended that Siphai Chidy be held from 1st month of the Earth Bird Year. As such, every householder was requested to make a contribution of Nu. 0.50 and some foodgrains of any kind to meet the cost of the offerings. All such contributions were to reach the government secretariat with the seal of the concerned administrative officer by the 11th month of the Earth Monkey Year.