

**PROCEEDING AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED IN THE 63RD SESSION OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HELD FROM 27TH SEPTEMBER TO 5TH OCTOBER, 1985**

1. MATTERS RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL LOANS

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister presented the report of his Ministry to the 63rd Session of the National Assembly of Bhutan. After its presentation, he stated that the Royal Government had executed several international loan agreements after obtaining approval of the Lhengyel Shungtshog. However, as some lending agencies required the approval of the National Assembly of Bhutan, he suggested that the Lhengyel Shungtshog be empowered with such authority.

In this connection, the Hon'ble Foreign Minister drew the attention of the Assembly to Resolution No.10 of the 60th Session, wherein it had been decided to acquire international loans. The resolution however, had made no mention about the Lhengyel Shungtshog being vested with the power of approving of all international loans. It was recalled that a specific letter authorizing the Lhengyel Shungtshog to approve Kuwait Fund Loans had already been sent by the Royal Government.

After deliberation on the issue, the Assembly resolved that the Lhengyel Shungtshog exercise such authority as required.

2. MATTERS REGARDING ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS ABROAD

The Chimi of Mewang, Gyene & Dagala, Thimphu expressed his appreciation for the sincere and sustained efforts being made by the Royal Government to bring about rapid socio-economic development in the country. In this regard, he observed that agricultural tools and implements received under Japanese assistance had been of great value in the mechanization and development of agriculture in the country. As such, in order to obtain financial and technical assistance necessary for successful implementation of the country's plans and programmes, he proposed that formal relations be established between Japan and Bhutan.

In response, the Hon'ble Foreign Minister stated that Japan was not only advanced in agricultural practices, but also in major technologies. He agreed that strengthening relations with Japan would lead to additional assistance for the socio-economic development of the country. In this connection, the Hon'ble Minister informed the Assembly of the establishment

of diplomatic mission in Geneva, Switzerland. He added that the Royal Government was also considering to establish diplomatic missions in five Nordic countries i.e. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Netherland. He further stated that the consulate in Kuwait would be upgraded to an ambassadorial level, and the Honorary Consul General of the Royal Government in Hong Kong had also been accredited to neighbouring Macau. As regards the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan, he said that the Royal Government had been giving due consideration to it.

3. MATTERS RELATING TO SALE OF FUTURE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The Chimi of Chirang stated that according to the rules of the National Urban Development Corporation (NUDC), transaction of lands in the vicinity of new township areas was restricted. As a result of this rule, there were over 200 - 300 areas of lands lying idle in Chirang causing inconvenience to the public. He, therefore, requested that the restriction on the sale of such lands be lifted. The Royal Government could however retain the right to acquire such lands and in case houses were to be built on such property, Government approval could be obtained.

In response, the Chairman of the National Urban Development Corporation (NUDC), the Hon'ble Foreign Minister explained that in accordance with His Majesty's command to provide basic amenities to the people living in the township areas, and to protect the cultural heritage and architecture, necessary steps were being initiated in all the 25 township areas in the country. For development of township areas, the chairman stated that financial assistance was also being acquired from other countries and some town development experts recruited. Master plans of some of the Dzongkhag towns had already been completed and that efforts were being made to provide these towns with basic municipal facilities like water, electricity, roads, sanitation etc.

As regards the restriction on the sale of lands in the vicinity of township areas, the Hon'ble Minister pointed out that the wealthy people purchased many plots in such areas offering high prices for the construction of houses. As a result, it was found that it would be difficult for other people to acquire plots in future. In view of this, the restriction had been imposed in consultation with the local Town Planning Committee (LTPC). The LTPC chaired by Dzongdags has the Dzongkhag departmental heads, Chimis, Gups and village elders as members. The Hon'ble Minister assured the Assembly that if the people were really facing great difficulties due to this restriction, the matter would be discussed with the concerned Dzongdags and their decision reported during the next session of the National Assembly.

The Assembly endorsed the statement made by the Hon'ble Foreign Minister.

4. MATTERS RELATING TO GRADING OF LANDS

The Chimi of Chirang stated that the land taxes were currently levied on the basis of different grades recorded many years ago. As this was found to be unsatisfactory the Ministry of Home Affairs had been requested to look into the matter. He requested for the Ministry's views on the matters.

In this regard, the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs recalled that the issue had been raised during the 57th Session of the National Assembly. Accordingly, the Ministry of Home Affairs started the work on the re-survey of lands under all the Dzongkhags in a phased manner, with a view to fixing the grades properly. The re-survey had been completed in Paro and it was being carried out in Samchi and Chirang Dzongkhags. He explained that the work was taking time to complete because of the vast areas involved and the limited manpower available.

The Secretary stated that there must be only a few people in Chirang facing tax difficulties because of land grading done earlier. If this was the case, he suggested that a list of such people be forwarded through the Dzongkhag Administration to his Ministry for investigation on a priority basis.

The Assembly endorsed the suggestion of the Home Secretary.

5. MATTERS RELATING TO ILLEGAL PLANTATION OF CASH CROPS.

The Chimi of Lamidara stated that a detailed report on illegal plantation of cash crops had been submitted to the Royal Government. He requested that such plantations be allotted to the landless or to poor people with insufficient land.

In response, His Royal Highness the Hon'ble Minister for Home Affairs, stated that as per the decision taken during the 60th Session, the Royal Government had initiated investigation and surveys of all the lands illegally brought under cash crop cultivation. The Royal Government could consider allotment of such lands to the landless or people with insufficient lands after the investigation and surveys are completed. However, he made it clear that plantations which affected the forests, causing damage to the country's resource and ecology, would not be

alloted. He informed the Assembly that the total illegally planted areas was estimated at about 76,000 acres. However, the survey was still to be completed.

The Assembly, referring to the decision of the 60th Session resolved that the allotment of such lands be made on the basis of the statement made by His Royal Highness.

6. MATTERS RELATING TO CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD

The Chimi of Shemgang informed the Assembly that the Vth Plan had provision to construct a 5 Km long motorable road from Tingtingbi to Zurphey Tsanglajong. Work on the construction had already started and so far 2 Km completed. He requested the Royal Government that a road of about 79 Km be constructed from Tingtingbi to Mathanguri. This, he said, would fulfill the long felt need of the public living in the area. The proposed road would benefit 3 proposed Gewog Centres under the Dzongkhag.

The Chimi of Ha requested the Royal Government to consider construction of motorable road leading to Sangbi Block in Ha in view of the difficulties faced by the public of the area.

In response, the Director, Public Works Department clarified that the motorable road from Tingtingbi to Zurphey Tsanglajong was being constructed as a feeder road for agricultural development. The construction of the road had been stopped to finalize the road plan to serve the proposed Gewog Centres in the Dzongkhag. He informed the Assembly that over 500 Km of roads was to be completed in the Vth Plan and in the VIth Plan it was proposed that another 1000 Km be built. Hence, if the above roads in Shemgang and Ha were essential for both the Government and the people, they could be considered for implementation in the VIth Plan.

The Assembly endorsed the views expressed by the Director, Public Works Department.

7. MATTERS RELATING TO SAMCHI - SIBSOO ROAD

The Chimi of Samchi reported that the National highway between Samchi and Sibsoo had been under construction for well over seven years. However, the construction of the required bridges had not been taken up and therefore, it was requested that the bridges be constructed at an early date.

In response, the Director of Public Works Department explained that it was not possible to undertake the construction of bridges together with road because proper investigation and survey had to be carried out to assess the nature of soil, rocks, etc. Further, as the rivers in the Sibsoo - Samchi areas changed their courses frequently, if the bridges were built without proper feasibility studies, it would not serve any purpose, and cause heavy losses to the Royal Government. However, he added that the bridges required on the road between Samchi and Sibsoo would be completed within the Vth plan period as initially planned.

The Assembly endorsed the views expressed by the Director, Public Works Department.

8. MATTERS RELATING TO CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD BETWEEN YANGTHANG AND TALUNG.

The Chimi of Ha stated that although a new road from Yangthang to Talung in Bje Block was to be constructed in the Vth Plan, it had not been taken up as yet. He, therefore, requested that the road be constructed during the VIth Plan.

During the deliberation on the issue, it was clarified that the road from Yangthang to Talung was proposed to be undertaken to serve as a feeder road. In this regard, the Deputy Minister, Planning Commission informed the Assembly that several Dzongkhags were to construct similar roads for agricultural purpose during the Vth Plan. Such road, he said, could not generally be used for plying vehicles other than tractors. However, as such road have to be constructed by the people free of labour cost, it had been causing them problems and therefore the construction had been stopped. As regards the construction of road from Yangthang to Talung the Deputy Minister assured the Chimi that it would be undertaken provided it was a part of the national highway system or extremely useful to the proposed Gewog Centres under the Dzongkhag.

9. MATTERS RELATING TO APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS

The Chimi of Ha reported to the Assembly that Ha was a restricted area and foreigners were not permitted to enter the Dzongkhag. One of the results of this restriction was that the standard of the school in Ha were low as experienced and professional teachers could not be posted there. Therefore, he requested that permission be granted for foreign teachers to work in the Dzongkhag.

In response, the Director-General of Education stated that the teachers posted in the Ha Junior High School were not only of Bhutanese nationality, but also included Indians. He, therefore, felt that this was adequate and that appointment of additional expatriate teachers was not necessary. He explained that following the establishment of the Registration Department in 1978, some of the Dzongkhags, including Ha had been declared as restricted areas. He said that in all the places other than the restricted Dzongkhags, foreign teachers, mostly UNVs, had already started working. He said that the Department of Education would make necessary arrangement to appoint expatriate teachers in the Ha Junior High School, if the Royal Government accords approval.

10. MATTERS RELATING TO ESTABLISHMENT OF RIGNEY SCHOOL AT WAMRONG, TASHIGANG.

The Chimi of Wamrong requested that a Rigney School be established at Wamrong, Tashigang to enable children to receive proper traditional education.

On this issue, the Director-General of Education stated that if a Rigney School could be established at Wamrong in Tashigang the young children would receive the benefits of traditional education. However, he pointed out that the Rigney School at Simtokha in Thimphu with well over 378 students was being maintained at a cost of Nu. 7,00,000 annually. He also informed the Assembly that most of these students studying in the School came from Eastern Bhutan.

The Director-General informed the Assembly that in accordance with the commands of His Majesty, the Education Department was giving due consideration to the traditional education. They have started appointing teachers to different Buddhist institutions like Dratsang, Rabdeys and Gyendeys to encourage the learning of traditional education.

The Director-General stated that before any consideration could be given to the opening of new Rigney Schools in the country, priority had to be given to the development of existing institutions. Therefore, he suggested that the request be considered in future when the Royal Government found it more appropriate.

11. MATTERS RELATING TO THE WAGE RATE OF CHUNIDOM LABOUR

Considering the increasing costs of essential commodities and general increases in salaries and wages of the employees of the Royal Government, the Chimi of Chirang requested that the wage rate of labour working under Chunidom also be raised.

In response, the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance agreed that it would be of great benefit to the general public if the wage rate of labour working under chunidom could be raised. However, he pointed out that as the budgetary parameters for the Vth Plan had already been decided upon, it would be difficult to consider the increase in wage rates of labour working under Chunidom. In the event of the wage rate of Chunidom labour was increased, portorage and pony charges now being granted to the employees of the Royal Government would also have to be increased accordingly. As a result the expenditure could rise tremendously beyond the limits that the government could afford in the Vth Plan. He pointed out that there was already a deficit of over six crores in the budget estimate for 1985-86. He proposed that the wage rate of Chunidom labour could be increased in the VIth Plan after consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Planning Commission.

After deliberation on the issue, the Assembly resolved that the wage rate of Chunidom labour be increased in the VIth Plan.

12. MATTERS RELATING TO RURAL CREDIT SCHEME (RCS)

The Chimi of Chirang informed the Assembly that loans disbursed under the Rural Credit Scheme (RCS) had brought about vast improvement in the economic conditions of the poor people. He proposed tha the Royal Government make further changes in the RCS programmes so that the poorer and landless could also avail of this facility.

In response, the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance informed the Assembly that the Rural Credit Scheme (RCS) had been introduced only for the benefit and well-being of the poor people. He said that the funds were being availed from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in order to extend credit to the general public for their animal husbandry and agricultural activities. Under the RCS, three types of loans were being disbursed. These included short, long and medium term loans. The funds were being revolved within the Dzongkhags so that the maximum amount of loans could be given for the well-being of the general public.

The Deputy Minister further stated that applicants only require a surety and that it was not necessary for the people to mortgage properties against the loans. Therefore, even the poor people should not have any problems availing of this facility.

During discussion on the issue, it emerged that the people who received similar loans earlier and failed to make repayments were not able to provide any surety and as such could not get the RCS loans. In spite of this, about 90% of the people had been receiving the loans under each Dzongkhag. Therefore, the National Assembly suggested that in order to further ensure smooth disbursement and repayment of the loans and to protect the funds, the public proposal regarding the disbursement procedures of RCS loans be thoroughly discussed in the Dzongkhag Yargey Tshogchung. Their reports should be sent to the Ministry of Finance for consideration.

The Assembly resolved that the matter be finalized by the Ministry of Finance in consultation with the Ministries of Home, Agriculture and the Royal Monetary Authority after reports were received from the Dzongkhags.

13. MATTERS RELATING TO ESTABLISHMENT OF ASBESTOS FACTORY

The Chimi of Lamidara stated that although there was a cement factory in the country, asbestos sheets were still imported at high costs. He felt that it would be of great benefit to both the Government and the public if arrangements were made to manufacture asbestos sheets within the country.

In response, the Secretary, Trade, Industries and Power, informed the Assembly that there had been a plan to set up an asbestos factory in the country. However, it was found that the establishment of such a factory would require a large investment. Further, for manufacturing asbestos sheets, other materials like asbestos fibre were necessary, in addition to cement. As it was difficult to get asbestos fibre from India, it would have to be imported from other countries spending large amounts of hard currency. Despite these problems, the Royal Government could have established the factory, but research in the United States, Japan and other countries has proved that asbestos causes diseases like cancer and in many countries, such factories were being closed down. Therefore, the Royal Government had decided not to establish such factories.

In view of the above, the Assembly resolved that an asbestos sheet factory would not be established in the country.

14. MATTERS RELATING TO GOONGKHOLA COPPER MINE

The Chimi of Ha stated that the exploitation of minerals could contribute substantially towards the socio-economic development of the country. In this connection, the people had been informed about the Copper Mine located at Goongkhola. They hoped that the mine was being well managed by the Government, because people have developed doubts about the copper ore being taken out of the country. They had noted that over the years, helicopters have been making sometimes as many as 2 - 3 trips, almost every day to the mines. Many felt that the expenditure incurred so far on such flights must have reached an amount more than sufficient to construct a road leading to the mine. The people had been given to understand that minerals more valuable than the copper were being taken out of the country. Therefore, he requested the Government for clarification on the matter.

In response, the Secretary, Trade, Industries and Power stated that the issue had already been raised in the Assembly in 1981. During the same year some 21 Members visited Goongkhola to observe the activities at the site. To further clarify the doubts expressed by the public, he said that in addition to Indians many Bhutanese nationals were also working at the site. He also stated that the helicopters were flying only 3 trips a month, and not every day as mentioned by the Chimi of Ha. As there were no roads leading to the mine site, the helicopters were being used to carry tools and implements, rations and people.

As regards the removal of ore, the Secretary informed the Assembly that 5000 samples had been sent out till date and explained that 1000 Kg of copper ore yields only about 1 kg of pure copper. He added that all the activities at the mine site were being closely observed by the Royal Government and that the Members should have no doubt whatsoever in this regard. He stated that the work on the investigation of the site would be completed in 1986. In case the members still had doubt about the activities being undertaken at the site, they could visit the site.

Endorsing the views expressed by the Secretary, the Assembly decided that arrangements be made by the Ministry of Trade, Industries & Power to take some of the Members to the mine site on inspection during this winter.

15. MATTERS RELATING TO TIMBER FOR HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

The Chimi of Dorokha pointed out to the Assembly that in accordance with the policy of the Department of Forests, the people were not permitted to fell good species of timber for constructing new houses. As people construct new houses only once in many years, he requested that they be permitted to extract better quality timber.

In response, the Director of Forests informed the Assembly that there were over 50 species of timber that are felled, out of this only 9 species were restricted. He explained that in case these restricted species were permitted to be felled for construction of houses in the rural areas, over a hundred thousand prime trees would be required each year without any royalty return to the Government. This would seriously affect the forest resources and the income of the country. However, the Director said that in places where only restricted species were available, the department would permit felling after proper investigation.

The Assembly resolved that the extraction of superior species of timber for rural house construction be permitted in places where other non-restricted species were not available.

16. MATTERS RELATING TO SOCIAL FORESTRY

The Chimi of Dagapela pointed out that as forests were one of the main sources of national wealth, afforestation carried out under the Social Forestry Programme was very beneficial to the country. While being very grateful to the Government for implementing this scheme, he requested information on the number of seedlings planted and the extent of area covered in the country in the Vth Five Year Plan.

On this issue, the Director of Forests agreed with the Chimi of Dagapela that forests were the main source of wealth in the country and in accordance with the decision of the National Assembly, the Forest Department under its Social Forestry Programme undertook afforestation throughout the country. During the Vth Plan, the Department planted almost 3,62,000 forests seedlings in vacant lands belonging to the Government and the public, covering about 2,960 acres.

He added that the trees planted in private lands registered in the Thram could be used by the concerned families free of royalty charges after obtaining permit from the government.

17. MATTERS RELATING TO GEWOG CENTRE

The Chimi of Chirang stated that in order to further strengthen socio-economic development in the country, the Royal Government had decided to set up Gewog Centres in farflung places under various Dzongkhags during the VIth Plan period. While appreciating the benefits of the Government's programme, he requested clarification on the following issues.

- a) Administrative structure and its system of functioning.
- b) Criteria for establishment of Gewog Centre.
- c) Whether the Gups and other developmental units like schools, dispensaries and agricultural extension centres would be brought under the purview of Gewog Centres or retained as before.

In response, the Deputy Minister, Planning stated that in the past the developmental works were being managed by the government from the Centre. With the introduction of the decentralization policy of the Royal Government in the Vth Plan, development activities in various Dzongkhags were brought under the management of the Dzongkhag Administration. He informed the Assembly that it was now proposed to establish Gewog Centres in remote areas under various Dzongkhags for the benefit and well-being of the rural people and to strengthen socio-economic development in the country. The various schemes being implemented by the Dzongkhag Administration in the Vth Plan would be brought under the control and management of the Gewog Centres during the VIth Plan. The Deputy Minister stated that His Majesty the King had been personally looking into the matter for the last one year. Further, after discussion on the plans & programmes of the proposed Gewog Centre between the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance, a workshop was planned to be held in November this year.

After clarifying several questions raised by the Chimis, the Deputy Minister added that as had been done prior to introducing the decentralization policy in the Vth Plan, His Majesty the King, had been pleased to command that he would visit different Dzongkhags to meet with Gups, Chimis and village elders. During these meetings, His Majesty would explain to the general public about the Gewog Centres in detail.

18. MATTER RELATING TO BHUTAN CITIZENSHIP ACT, 1985

In accordance with resolution No.16 of the 62nd Session, the High Court Representative distributed copies of the Bhutan Citizenship Act, 1985. As there was no mention about the

date for enforcement of the Act, it was decided that a circular to this effect be issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

19. MATTER RELATING TO WAGE RATES OF ARMY LOADS

The Chimi of Paro informed the Assembly that the portorage rates paid to people carrying army loads from Paro to the border posts was fixed many years ago. The amount now was hardly sufficient to even meet the cost of fodder for the horses and had caused significant losses to the people. He, therefore, requested that the portorage charges be increased.

In response, the Goongleon, Royal Bhutan Army, stated that although the Assembly had decided that people must provide portorage service without any complaints, the RBA had often faced problems. He hoped that hereafter the people would extend cooperation in providing portorage service to army in the interest of the country's security. He informed the Assembly that His Majesty had been pleased to command that the present wage rate for carrying army loads be increased to Nu.15/- with effect from 1st November, 1985. The Assembly members expressed their gratitude for the increase in wage rates granted by the Royal Government. In addition to wages, charges for hiring ponies are fixed as follows ;

- a) Riding pony accompanied by an attendant Nu.45/-
- b) Riding pony alone Nu.30/-
- c) Pack pony Nu.30/-

20. MATTER RELATING TO POLICE POST AT TASHILAKHA

In order to protect the lives and properties of the people living in Gengu Block, the Chimi of Phuntsholing requested the Royal Government to consider setting up a Police Post at Tashilakha.

In response, the Goongleon, Royal Bhutan Army, informed the Assembly that the Police in the country was presently being managed by his Organization. While agreeing that additional Police Posts were necessary in order to protect the lives and properties of the public, he stated that the strength of the police force in the country was limited. Notwithstanding this fact, he said that several requests had been received from different Dzongkhags for increase in the strength of police personnel in the existing stations and for setting up new police posts. In view of this, he urged different Dzongkhag Administrations to assist his Organization in

recruiting new candidates. As regard the setting up a police post at Tashilakha, the Goongleon said that the matter would be studied and reported to the Royal Government for decision.

21. MATTERS RELATING TO CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

The Chimi of Mewang, Gyene and Dagala stated that the national language (Dzongkha), customs and traditions are the essence of a country's identity. Therefore, the Chimi requested information on the steps that were being taken by the Government in order to develop the national language and preserve the customs and traditions of the country.

In response, the Secretary, Dratshang Lhentshog stated that Bhutan as an independent country had developed a rich culture and traditions over the centuries. However, the country's culture and traditions were being affected by the developments which have taken place in the last 24 years. Therefore, in order to preserve the customs and traditions, a Special Commission on Culture and Traditions has been established at the command of His Majesty the King. The Commission is chaired by the Hon'ble Speaker of the National Assembly, Lyonpo T. Jagar.

The Secretary stated that with the establishment of the Commission, the various plans and programmes aimed at preserving the country's customs and traditions were being formulated and that the Members of the Assembly should not worry over the matter. He said that a Dzongkhag Development Committee in the Department of Education was looking into the development of Dzongkha language.

During deliberation on the issue it was pointed out that the education policy attached greater importance to the customs and traditions and the national language. It was also suggested that in order to encourage young people to learn and understand the national language, the Royal Civil Service Commission should provide certain in-service benefits while considering their appointment in the Government service. It was pointed out that Dzongkha was being taught in different schools as a compulsory subject. If it was not considered as an important criterion for employment, the efforts on the part of the Education Department would be rendered meaningless.

The Chairman, Special Commission on Culture and Tradition stated that efforts were being made to preserve and popularise the traditions and customs of the country, as commanded by His Majesty the King. He also urged all the Members of Dratshang, Rabdeys and Gyondyes, including the officials of the Royal Government to extend their full support and cooperation in

preserving the country's customs and traditions. He said that their cooperation was necessary in order to protect the interests and independence of the country.

The Assembly expressed gratitude to the Royal Government for making efforts to preserve the country's culture and traditions under the command of His Majesty, the King. As regards the development of national language, it was resolved that the Department of Education should make efforts to bring about proper standards. It also urged that all Government Organizations use the national language as medium of official correspondence within the country. Further, foreign nationals, employed in the service of the Government and dealing directly with the public should also learn the national language.

Dated : 5th October, 1985

Sd/-

(Sangey Dorji)

Secretary

National Assembly of Bhutan