

PROCEEDINGS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE 69TH SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BHUTAN

(19TH - 26TH - MARCH, 1990)

I. Opening Ceremony

The 69th session of the National Assembly opened with the performance of the traditional Shugdrel ceremony on the auspicious day of 19th March, 1990.

The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Dasho Pasang Dorji, welcomed His Majesty the King, Representatives of the Monk Body, Chimis and Government officials. In his opening remarks he reminded the members that the National Assembly is a forum where matters of national importance are deliberated and that all Government and People's Representatives should therefore bear in mind the national interest and well-being of the country and endeavour to participate in the deliberations in a manner worthy of the trust and faith reposed in them.

II. Creation of a Green Belt along Bhutan-India border

The National Assembly Secretary read out the report of the Planning Commission for the creation of a green belt covering one kilometre on either side of the Bhutan-India border. The report, which highlighted the need for creating such a forest corridor along the border, was presented to the National Assembly for its views and comments before the formal signing of an agreement with the Government of India for its implementation. A copy of the report is attached as annexure-1.

During the discussions on this report, the People's Representatives also enquired about the Royal Government's policy on the acquirement of public lands that would fall under the afforestation programme. They also enquired whether border townships would be affected by the creation of the green belt.

In response, the Deputy Minister of the Planning Commission stated that in the event of public lands falling under the proposed green belt, the Government, in accordance with the land compensation rules, would either allot new lands or give cash compensation to the land owners as per their individual preference. The main townships along the border would not be included under the green belt.

His Majesty the King stated that prior to the implementation of the project this year, it was important for discussions to be held with the Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs of the concerned dzongkhags in order to ensure that unnecessary problems are not created for the people and also to facilitate the smooth and successful implementation of the programme.

Since the project falls within the areas of Samchi, Gaylegphug and Samdrup Jongkhar, His Majesty asked the Dzongdags and Chimis of these dzongkhags to give due thought and clearly express their views on the report submitted by the Planning Commission.

Realizing the benefits and the importance of creating a green belt along our border for the security and well-being of the nation, the People's Representatives of these dzongkhags and other members of the Assembly all expressed their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King and the Royal Government for formulating this important project. The National Assembly unanimously endorsed the proposal of the Planning Commission for the creation of a green belt along the Bhutan-India border.

III. Recent Developments in Southern Bhutan

The Chimi of Chang and Kawang expressed the people's distress to hear about the report of the Deputy Home Minister in the 68th session of the National Assembly regarding the attempts by a few "Ngolops" to create misunderstandings and problems between the government and people. He said that the people requested the Government to take strong action against everyone involved in activities against the Tsawa-Sum.

In response, the Deputy Home Minister said that the Royal Government had been deeply saddened to learn that some Southern Bhutanese teachers, trainees, students and lower level civil servants, who were mostly from Samchi and in whom the Government had reposed its confidence and faith, had taken part in activities aimed at harming the Tsawa-Sum and had attempted to create problems and misunderstandings between the Government and people. He said that it was a matter of great regret and disappointment that these people had become involved in anti-national activities against the very government that had fed, clothed and educated them since their childhood, the government that had shouldered the responsibility of looking after them for nine months in every year, the government that had given them

opportunities for further studies abroad and groomed them for responsible posts in the civil service. However, His Majesty the King, with his great love for all his subjects and his strong faith in their loyalty advised the 108th and 109th sessions of the Lhengyel Shungtshog to show clemency and grant amnesty to all those who were involved in the recent anti-national activities, with the exception of the ring leaders directly responsible for planning and instigating seditious activities. The Deputy Home Minister said that a summary of the recent subversive activities was contained in the report distributed to all the members. This report is attached as annexure-2.

The Samchi Dzongdag, while agreeing to the statement of the Deputy Home Minister clarified that while most of the people involved in the recent anti-national activities were indeed from Samchi, many among them were actually non-nationals and not bonafide Bhutanese citizens. In this regard, he pointed out that the recent census in Samchi Dzongkhag revealed that there were about 13,000 non-nationals in the dzongkhag who were illegally registered as Bhutanese.

On this matter, the Minister of Trade and Industry stated that although small in size, Bhutan has always been a sovereign, independent and peaceful country where all its citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Our people have always enjoyed the benefits of free enterprise and opportunities are equally available to all, whether in economic activities or in government service, and the only criteria for success are the individual's own initiative, ability and capacity for hard work.

Besides providing equal opportunity and equal rights to all the people, the Royal Government has also ensured that free education and health facilities are available to everyone in the country, and there has never been any discrimination by the government against any section of the people. Nor are there any restrictions regarding the two great religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, practised in our country. In spite of all these benefits, a few people had attempted to create misunderstanding among the general public by spreading false and baseless allegations regarding the Government's policy on national dress and language and Driglam Namzha. As everyone was aware, this policy had been thoroughly discussed with the people of southern Bhutan before it was launched and the people in turn had fully supported and endorsed its implementation. Therefore, the leaders responsible for instigating and organizing the recent seditious and anti-national activities, the Minister said, should all be strictly punished in accordance with the laws of the land.

Supporting the statement of the Minister of Trade and Industry, the Minister of Social Services and Communications said that it was most regrettable that the people responsible for fomenting the recent anti-national activities were mostly teachers and students who had been enjoying the benefits of free education and civil service facilities. He said that the Ministry of Social Services and the Department of Education were greatly embarrassed and deeply saddened to learn that these persons instead of showing their loyalty, appreciation and gratitude to the Royal Government had become involved in anti-national activities.

Though the people involved in the seditious activities, aimed at harming the Tsawa-Sum, should not have been spared their just punishment, His Majesty the King and the Royal Government had shown them great magnanimity and graciously granted them amnesty. However, the Minister of Social Services was of the firm view that henceforth, any Bhutanese citizen taking part or found to be involved in anti-national activities should be strictly punished according to the provisions of the Chathrim.

On this issue, the Chimi of Dechenling and Nganglam reported that Bhutanese people, who had run away from the country and those who had been granted amnesty by His Majesty the King, after having been found involved in anti-national activities, were residing on both sides of the Bhutan-India border. It was feared that these people who were granted amnesty might stir anti-national activities with the help of those who had absconded from the country. Therefore, it was requested that the movement both within and outside the country for those who were granted amnesty should be restricted and monitored by the respective dzongkhags.

The Chimi of Dechenling and Nganglam said that the people also felt that if adequate measures were not taken against those who had run away from Bhutan and were taking shelter in India, these miscreants may harm the existing friendly relations between Bhutan and India. Therefore, it was requested that a proper dialogue on this matter should be carried out between the two Governments.

In addition, the People's Representative of Pemagatshel stated that although Bhutan is a small country, it has remained a sovereign, independent nation throughout the centuries and enjoyed peace and stability due to the deep bonds of trust, faith and loyalty between the King and people, and through the protection and blessings of our Guardian Deities. But having learnt about the recent anti-national activities instigated by a few people from the southern dzongkhags aimed at harming the Tsawa-Sum, the

people of Pemagatshel were greatly distressed because such actions would endanger and disturb the peace of the country. Therefore, in order to sustain such peace, it was important to immediately inform the general public to be alert and vigilant against such anti-national activities.

The People's Representative of Pemagatshel also pointed out that though the leader of the anti-national elements had been perpetrating subversive activities against the Tsawa-Sum even while he was in Government service, yet he had only been terminated from service and not been given any other punishment. Similarly, the people involved in the recent anti-national activities had also been granted amnesty. The people of Pemagatshel were extremely unhappy and disappointed to hear about the very lenient measures taken against those persons who had worked against the Tsawa-Sum. They, therefore, requested that all these people be strictly punished as per the laws of the land.

On this issue, many People's Representatives, Government Officials and the Royal Advisory Councillors expressed their views. Many members were very firm in calling for the strict punishment of these anti-national elements in accordance with the Chathrim. While supporting the same views other members said that since the Lhengyel Shungtshog, on the advice of His Majesty the King, had already granted amnesty during its 108th & 109th sessions, the decision of His Majesty and the Lhengyel Shungtshog should be endorsed. However, all the members were unanimous in expressing their strong view that in future such anti-national elements should be strictly dealt with in accordance with the laws of the land.

During the deliberations, the Representative of the High Court in the National Assembly stated that since the people involved in the recent anti-national activities were allowed to go free, some may feel that this step was taken because of inadequacies in our legal system. However, this was definitely not the case. In keeping with the earlier laws of our land, all persons involved in activities against the Tsawa-Sum were liable to capital punishment. The Thrimshung Chhenpo which was enacted in 1957, also clearly stated the punishment for anti-national activities in Chapter 17, Tsa 1.1 to 1.11. As per the Thrimshung Chhenpo, the persons responsible for instigating the recent anti-national activities were all liable to capital punishment under the clauses Tsa 1.5, 1.7 and 1.8 of Chapter 17.

The High Court Representative said that it was, therefore, essential to incorporate in the Resolution that henceforth any person found to be involved in anti-national activities must be strictly dealt with in accordance with Chapter 17, Tsa 1.1 to Tsa 1.11 of the Thrimshung Chhenpo.

The Deputy Home Minister clarified that the people who were involved in the anti-national activities were granted amnesty by His Majesty the King with a view to avoid creating suspicion and mistrust for their fellow countrymen among the northern Bhutanese and a sense of insecurity and anxiety among our people in southern Bhutan. This was important in order to promote the Royal Government's objective of enhancing the security and stability of the country through the generation of a spirit and feeling of unity and oneness among our people. The grant of amnesty, he added, was a reflection of His Majesty's high esteem and strong faith in the Bhutanese people and should not be mistaken as a sign of compromise and lack of firmness by the Royal Government.

On this issue, the Royal Advisory Councillors and the People's Representatives from the southern dzongkhags said that more than the disappointment felt by the people of other dzongkhags, the recent anti-national activities had become a cause of even greater distress and shame to the people of southern Bhutan. They said that during His Majesty's visits to the southern dzongkhags in February this year, it was reported in the meetings by the general public of these dzongkhags that most of them were not even aware of such activities and that these acts were the work of a few persons instigated by anti-national elements, some of whom were not even bonafide Bhutanese nationals. However, these disloyal and seditious activities by a few misguided people was a cause for deep regret and shame for the people of southern Bhutan. They, therefore, requested the Royal Government to extend its kind forgiveness and understanding about the recent unfortunate developments in southern Bhutan.

They said that the decisions of the 108th & 109th sessions of the Lhengyel Shungtshog to grant amnesty for this one time to almost all the persons involved in the recent anti-national activities reflected the Royal Government's sympathy for the people. This was indeed a source of great happiness for them and they were deeply grateful for this magnanimous gesture. While stating that from now onwards, strict punishment must be given to any person involved in anti-national activities, they all pledged the firm and unfailing support and commitment of the people of southern

Bhutan to work together with the Royal Government in dealing with such seditious activities in the future.

They also pointed out that the main aim of the anti-national elements was to create problems and misunderstanding between the Government and people by spreading false allegations against the Royal Government's policies on the census exercise, Driglam Namzha and the National Work Force. Regarding the census exercise, they said that in the absence of a comprehensive census policy in the past, many bonafide Bhutanese citizens had been left unregistered while large numbers of non-nationals had been illegally listed as Bhutanese. This, they pointed out, was mainly due to the fact that adequate importance had not been attached to the matter of maintaining proper census records by both the Royal Government and the people.

The census exercise had now resulted in a better system that could distinguish bonafide citizens from non-nationals attempting to pass off as Bhutanese nationals. This in turn had resulted in bonafide Bhutanese citizens deriving greater benefit from the facilities such as free education, health coverage and employment which they had to earlier share with large numbers of non-nationals. The people of southern Bhutan, therefore, understood and appreciated the benefits of the census exercise.

The People's Representatives and the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan also expressed their views that the implementation of Driglam Namzha was indeed necessary to uphold and promote our distinct national identity which was being eroded as more and more of our people were beginning to adopt the customs, traditions and dress of other countries. Having realised and understood the values and importance of Driglam Namzha for enhancing the security and well-being of our nation, the people of southern Bhutan wholeheartedly supported this policy. Similarly, they also deeply appreciated the creation of a National Work Force which had provided our people with employment and a source of livelihood.

Though the anti-national elements had attempted to disrupt such beneficial, farsighted and important policies of the Royal Government, His Majesty the King with his deep love for his subjects had granted them amnesty, they said. They, however, pointed out that many people involved in such anti-national activities had run away from Bhutan and taken shelter in nearby places in India. If these anti-national elements, who were residing across our border, continued to spread false and baseless allegations about our country through the distribution of malicious

pamphlets and booklets, there was every possibility that outside people who were not familiar with our country and the true situation here might come to harbour negative views about our nation. Moreover, many of our people had to travel frequently through the Indian states of Assam and Bengal and it was possible that these anti-national elements might try to cause them harm. The People's Representatives and the Royal Advisory Councillors from the southern dzongkhags, therefore, emphasized that the Royal Government should spare no efforts to extradite these persons, who had absconded and settled in the nearby areas across the border, and punish them strictly according to the laws of the land.

While supporting the above statements of the People's Representatives and Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan, many other People's Representatives stated that even though the amnesty granted to the anti-national elements for this one time should be honoured, it must be ensured that in future any such persons must be strictly punished according to the laws of the land. They also reiterated the call for the Royal Government to make every effort to initiate a dialogue with the Government of India to extradite the anti-national elements who had absconded from the country.

In this connection, the Deputy Home Minister stated that since the formation of the new government in India, His Majesty the King had already visited New Delhi twice during the past months and our excellent relations with India were as close and happy as before. Moreover, whenever we require their cooperation and assistance along our border areas, the Indian authorities have continued to be most positive and forthcoming in extending their cooperation. The Deputy Minister further stated that the Royal Government would continue to make every effort to safeguard the security, well-being and the long term national interests of the country.

Endorsing the decisions of the 108th & 109th sessions of the Lhengyel Shungtshog as recommended by His Majesty the King to grant amnesty to persons involved in the recent anti-national activities, the National Assembly unanimously resolved that in future any person/persons found to be involved in anti-national activities against the Tsawa-Sum would be strictly punished in accordance with Chapter 17, Tsa 1.1 to 1.11 of the Thrimshung Chhenpo.

IV. National Identity: National Dress, Language and Driglam Namzha

The People's Representative of Paro stated that the observance of our unique national identity as manifested in our national dress, language and Driglam Namzha had slackened over the years. However, the people greatly appreciated the policy to promote the national dress and language and Driglam Namzha formulated by His Majesty the King to strengthen the immediate and long term peace and security of the country, and which had given us renewed strength to observe these values.

He also stated that in the past there had been a system of granting Nu. 5,000/ as "soilra" for any intermarriage between southern and northern Bhutanese. Since the 68th session of the National Assembly, this incentive had been raised to Nu. 10,000/. However, the fact that there had not been many intermarriages could be attributed to the differences in dress and social habits between the two sections of our people. If such differences could be reconciled, it would greatly help our people to overcome the feeling of being different from each other. The public requested the government to spare no efforts in strengthening the policies and programmes on national integration and they pledged their full support and commitment towards the implementation of such policies.

In reply, the Deputy Home Minister submitted that as our national dress, "gho" and "kira" was completely different from the dresses of other countries, it was a unique symbol of our national identity. In view of this, during the 68th session of the National Assembly the People's Representatives from Gaylegphug, Kalikhola and Sarbhang had reported that the people would highly appreciate it if the Government further strengthened and promoted the policy of wearing the national dress and the practice of Driglam Namzha. This request had accordingly been endorsed by the National Assembly in its resolutions.

Moreover, during the visits of His Majesty the King to the southern dzongkhags, both in 1989 and 1990, the people had submitted that there was no inconvenience whatsoever in wearing the national dress and practicing Driglam Namzha as these practices were absolutely necessary and important for promoting our unique national identity and ensuring the security, stability and well-being of our country.

For its part, the Royal Government had not only been taking steps to promote Driglam Namzha and the national dress and language, but it would continue to strive

in the service of the people and the nation and endeavour to formulate policies that would promote our national interests.

In addition, the Royal Advisory Councillors and the Representative of the High Court stated that the values of the national dress and language and Driglam Namzha would not only have immediate benefits but all our future generations would also stand to gain from the implementation of this policy. They, therefore, called upon the people and the Government officials not to merely lend their verbal support to this programme but to make every effort to ensure its successful implementation by actually adopting and promoting it themselves.

The National Assembly unanimously resolved that the wearing of the national dress and the learning and practice of the national language and Driglam Namzha must be cherished by all Bhutanese people and promoted with the greatest dedication and vigour.

V. Increase in Wages for the National Work Force

The People's Representative of Pemagatshel reported that in line with the national policy of self-reliance, the government had formulated a policy to form the National Work Force. The public had realised that this policy was beneficial both to the country as well as to the people and that the wage structure had also been made attractive. However, the National Work Force constituted of mostly landless and illiterate people who were faced with a situation whereby a single person's wage had to support large numbers of family dependants. Therefore, the public requested the Government to kindly increase the wage structure of the National Work Force.

In reply, the Deputy Home Minister said that although the policy behind the creation of the National Work Force as mentioned by the People's Representative of Pemagatshel was correct, the decision to increase the wages of the National Work Force cannot be taken without carefully examining various other issues as well.

He said that increases in the wages for workers in the Government and private sectors should be examined in terms of the effect it will have on our economy. If a decision to increase the wages was to be taken, studies should also be carried out to examine whether the Government and private industries and firms were in a position to increase their wage structure concurrently. It was also necessary to consider the Royal Government's difficulties in making budgetary allocations commensurately,

and the impact it would have on our national economy and the rate of inflation in the country. All these factors had to be carefully examined before considering any increase in the wages of the National Work Force.

The Deputy Minister reported that out of special consideration for the poorer sections of the society who comprised the National Work Force, the wage structure had been increased to the extent possible. Thus, for Thimphu, Paro, Haa, Wangdiphodrang and Jakar, the wages had been fixed at Nu.750/ per month for males and Nu.650/ per month for females because of the generally high rate of wages prevalent in these dzongkhags. In other dzongkhags where the rates were lower, the wages had been fixed at Nu.600/ per month for males and Nu.500/ for females. In addition, even for the annual gungdangwoola, an allowance of Nu.375/ was being provided along with lodging facilities and free transportation by the Royal Government to the work site. Facilities were also being extended for buying food items from the FCB at lower prices.

All workers were also graded as skilled or unskilled depending on their skill and experience. The monthly wages for skilled workers ranged from Nu.1200/ to Nu.1500/. The Deputy Minister pointed out that a worker's children who had reached 17 years of age and the women in his family were also eligible to work and earn wages as laid down in the Rules and Regulations of the National Work Force. Moreover, the children of all the workers were entitled to educational and medical facilities. All these provisions had been made to ensure the welfare of the National Work Force.

The Deputy Minister of Home Affairs stated that bearing in mind the above facilities provided to the National Work Force and the fact that the Rules and Regulations governing the National Work Force had been in effect for only one and half years, it was not possible to increase the wages of the National Work Force at present.

In support of this statement, the Finance Minister and the Minister of Trade and Industry mentioned that the introduction of the National Work Force had proved to be beneficial both to the Royal Government and the people. They pointed out that our worker's wages were the highest in comparison to the general wages of labour forces in the South Asian region. If the wages of the National Work Force were further increased it would result in an increase in the prices of essential commodities, industrial goods and agriculture and animal husbandry products. This would

adversely affect our exports and also lower the value of our currency. Since our internal revenues were not adequate for development works, we may then have to seek more external grants and loans and thereby face greater difficulties in achieving our goal of economic self-reliance.

In view of the above mentioned facts, they pointed out that it was necessary to carefully examine the issue of increasing the wages of the National Work Force. Since the Rules and Regulations governing the National Work Force had barely been in force for two years any modification at this early date would result in more inconveniences than benefits. The members were reminded that the policy on the National Work Force had not only proved to be beneficial to all but it had been specifically formulated for the welfare of the people and the wages had also been considerably raised in comparison to the earlier remunerations. Hence, it was submitted that in the interest of the economic progress and development of the country, the Rules and Regulations on the National Work Force should not be modified.

In recognition of the above factors, the National Assembly resolved that there should be no increase in the wages of the National Work Force for the time being and that the present Rules and Regulations governing the National Work Force should remain in force without any modification.

VI. Seperate Kabney for Chimis

The People's Representative of Chengmari Dungkhag submitted a proposal for a separate kabney of different colour or design for easy identification of the Chimis.

In reply, the Deputy Home Minister mentioned that there were at the most only three to four Chimis in most of the dzongkhags and till now, there had been no difficulty in identifying them in any of the dzongkhags. Moreover, he said that in Bhutan, there were already over six different kabneys worn by people below the rank of a Minister and to add any more kabneys would only create confusion. He therefore, submitted that the present system of wearing a white kabney for Chimis be kept as it was.

On this issue, His Majesty the King was pleased to comment that although the points expressed by the Deputy Home Minister were quite valid, the proposal by the Chimi to introduce a different kabney should be given further consideration. Therefore, His Majesty the King instructed the National Assembly Secretariat to select a few

kabneys of different colours and submit them to the National Assembly during the next session.

As there were no further comments on this issue, the National Assembly resolved to act in accordance with His Majesty's suggestion.

VII. Merger of gewogs with Pemagatshel Dzongkhag and relocation of Dzongkhag Headquarters

The People's Representative of Dechenling and Nganglam submitted that in view of the fact that the six gewogs of Ngangla, Dokar, Dagsa, Silambi, Dechenling and Norbugang were located far from their respective dzongkhag administration headquarters, it was requested that these gewogs be merged under Pemagatshel Dzongkhag. Furthermore, in view of the likely danger to the existing Dzongkhag Administration Headquarters at Pemagatshel from erosion and landslide due to its unsuitable location, it was proposed that the dzong may kindly be shifted to a more suitable place under Dechenling Dzongkhag.

The Deputy Home Minister replied that as petitioned by the Public of Dechenling and Nganglam and for the benefit of the people, His Majesty the King had been pleased to command that thorough investigations be carried out to study the feasibility of merging Yangmari, Dechenling, Nganglam and Dagsa with Pemagatshel Dzongkhag. Accordingly, the Deputy Minister himself had undertaken the investigation and travelled to Samdrup Jongkhar and had held consultations with the concerned Gups, Chimis and people. It had been revealed that the journey from Dechenling and Norbugang to Samdrup Jongkhar would take only three hours by motor road, whereas it would take three days to reach Pemagatshel. The people, therefore, requested that until the construction of the Khothakpai motor road was completed, the above gewogs should not be merged under Pemagatshel Dzongkhag.

Bearing in mind the benefits and convenience of the people of Dechenling, Norbugang and Nganglam, the dzongkhag headquarters had also been shifted to Nganglam from Dechenling.

Similarly, for the benefit and convenience of the people of Nangla, Dokar and Pangkhar, a new dzongkhag at Panbang had been established. The Deputy Home Minister, therefore, submitted that for the time being the merger with Pemagatshel of the six gewogs of the three dzongkhags as proposed was not necessary.

Regarding the relocation of the Pemagatshel Dzongkhag Headquarters, the Deputy Home Minister stated that the dzong, the Rabdey (Monk Body) and gewog headquarters had already been established in their present location at great cost to both the Government and the public. He, therefore, submitted that the relocation of the Dzongkhag Headquarters would not be feasible.

The People's Representatives of Ngangla, Dokar, Silambi and Wamrong supported the submission made by the Deputy Home Minister. They also felt that the proposed merger of the six gewogs with Pemagatshel Dzongkhag would not result in much additional benefits and submitted that the present gewog affiliations be kept as they were.

The National Assembly decided that for the time being the above six gewogs should retain their present dzongkhag affiliations.

VIII. Construction of Houses in Paddy Fields

The People's Representative of Chang and Kawang Gewog submitted that when it became unavoidable for a family to divide into separate households it was necessary to build a house for the new family. In view of this, he requested the Royal Government to consider permitting the construction of houses in one's own paddy field.

In reply, the Deputy Home Minister clarified that in the past, paddy fields were developed with much difficulty by our forefathers to be used as agricultural land and not for building houses on them.

However, today the number of houses being constructed in the paddy fields is on the increase not only because of the fragmentation of families but also because of the new concepts in their usage. If this trend remained unchecked, there was every possibility of a serious reduction of paddy fields which would in turn result in further increasing our present rice deficit. With the immediate and long term objective to strengthen the country's economy which was dependant upon agriculture, the 93rd session of the Lhengyel Shungtshog had, therefore, resolved and issued an additional clause to the existing clause KA 3.3 and 3.10 of the Land Act with regard to construction of houses in paddy fields.

Accordingly, on 16th February 1989, the Ministry of Home Affairs had issued a circular containing the above decision of the Lhengyel Shungtshog for strict compliance by all. As this decision was specifically made to promote the policy of food self-sufficiency, the Deputy Minister submitted that this clause should not be amended.

In the discussions that followed, some of the Royal Advisory Councillors and People's Representatives expressed the view that the construction of houses in paddy fields should be permitted to help those people who do not own any other type of land aside from paddy fields, and those who had moved from higher altitudes and purchased paddy fields and therefore needed to construct a house. Some members submitted that the construction of houses in paddy fields should not be permitted as the country was dependant on agriculture. Others were of the view that there was a need to categorise paddy fields located in the villages and in the vicinity of towns.

In reply, the Deputy Home Minister stated that he saw no inconvenience if people observed the existing rules and regulations of the Department of Works and Housing for constructing houses in urban areas and followed the provisions of the Land Act for constructing houses in rural areas.

In this connection, His Majesty the King clarified that he had repeatedly reminded the Government officials and People's Representatives that frequent amendments of our important national policies and laws to accomodate the inconvenience and Kidug of a few persons would greatly undermine the credibility of all existing rules, regulations and laws of the country. His Majesty, therefore, stated that the National Assembly should carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of amending the additional clause to the Land Act which was enacted just over a year ago.

His Majesty informed the National Assembly that at the time of enacting this additional clause to the Land Act the country was importing at least 25,000MT of rice every year to meet our cereal deficits. This was adversely affecting our policy of food self-sufficiency and the additional clause was therefore enacted. His Majesty also commented that if the existing Land Act was amended as proposed by the Chimis, then very soon most of the villagers would sell their paddy fields to businessmen and government servants.

Moreover, His Majesty observed, since there was no ban on the construction of houses in other categories of land such as tseri, kamshing, pangshing and kitchen garden, it was not necessary for people to build houses only in paddy fields.

Many members submitted that amending the additional clause would not serve any useful purpose for the people in general, but would adversely affect our national policy of rice self-sufficiency and they, therefore, requested that the additional clause of 1989 to the Land Act be retained without amendment. This request was accordingly endorsed by the National Assembly.

IX. Clarification on the Land Act

The People's Representative of Samchi submitted that in accordance with clause 4 of section KA 3 of the Land Act, a family could not possess more than 25 acres of agricultural land. However, there were some people who owned land exceeding the 25 acres ceiling. The Land Act did not contain any details concerning such cases. Therefore, the public of Samchi sought clarification from the Government on the issue.

In response, the Deputy Home Minister and the Representative of the High Court clarified that point 13 of the 58th National Assembly session held in 1983 contained clear directives on the matter in addition to which clause KA 3.4 and KA 6.11 of the Land Act contained provisions relating to the confiscation of land and compensation by the Government with regard to a family's land exceeding the 25 acres ceiling. It was also submitted that clause KA 4.2 and KA 4.3 pertaining to the division of land contained clear provisions on the retainment and surrender of land by the Thram holder in cases of land exceeding the registered acreage in the Thram.

The Surveyor General further submitted that as contained in point 13 of the 58th session of the National Assembly convened in 1983, His Majesty the King had been pleased to command that entry into the owner's Thrums should be permitted for the excessive land holdings realized during the re-survey if they had not been acquired through illegal means and did not exceed the 25 acres land ceiling. He reported that while re-survey was being conducted, much inconvenience was faced as cases relating to the deliberate division of land were frequently being encountered. There had even been occasions when the surveyors, in keeping with the directives of the Home Ministry, had to ask the courts in the dzongkhags not to accept requests for

any division and transfer of land until the completion of the re-survey of the concerned household's land. However, the actual re-surveys had always been carried out on the basis of the registration in the owner's Thram.

The People's Representative of Samchi acknowledged his understanding of the Land Act regarding the 25 acres land ceiling and expressed his appreciation for the clarification. There was no further discussion on the matter.

X. Regulations for Granting Land

With the objective to promote national integration among the people of northern and southern Bhutan, the Ministry of Home Affairs submitted a report on a system of rehabilitating the people from southern Bhutan in northern dzongkhags. The report which was distributed to all the National Assembly members is attached as annexure-3.

During the discussions on the report, the members of the Royal Advisory Council and the People's Representatives from eastern, western and central Bhutan requested that the same facility be extended to their areas as there were many people in their dzongkhags who did not have enough agricultural land. Other People's Representatives also requested the government to extend the same facility of rehabilitation programme to all the subjects of the country equally.

The Minister of Finance clarified that the system of granting land submitted by the Home Ministry was basically to promote the long term interest of the nation by strengthening the security and stability of the country through the promotion of national integration and unity among the people of northern and southern Bhutan.

This special project had been formulated in order to encourage the integration of our people by resettling the landless Lhotshampas in the northern dzongkhags. Although, the Royal Government would have to spend millions of ngultrum for this purpose, the programme was planned with a view to promote our long term national security and stability and to ensure peace and social harmony in the country. He pointed out that this project was not planned specifically for distributing land to all the landless people in the country and it was important for all the People's Representatives to realise the benefits this programme would have in promoting the important policy of national integration. All the members were, therefore, requested to extend their full support towards fulfilling this national objective.

As no People's Representatives from the southern dzongkhags had any different views on this programme, the National Assembly resolved that everyone should endeavour to ensure the successful implementation of this important national policy.

XI. Need for Dzongkha Teachers

The People's Representative of Dagana requested for the appointment of one teacher in each gewog for the promotion of Dzongkha Adult Education.

As submitted by the Chimi of Dagana, the People's Representative of Dagapela also said that the development of the national language would contribute towards greater social integration in the country, and he too requested for one teacher in every gewog.

In response, the Minister of Social Services and Communications stated that the Ministry of Social Services deeply appreciated the concern expressed by the public of Dagana for the appointment of one teacher in each gewog for the promotion of Dzongkha Adult Education. This was an indication of the positive attitude and support towards the attainment of the concept of one country and one people united through the bonds of a common language. Although the Education Department was facing an acute shortage of teachers, the Ministry of Social Services and the Department of Education for their part, would make provision for the appointment of Dzongkha Language Teachers.

Since there were no further discussions on the matter, the National Assembly endorsed the statement of the Minister of Social Services and Communications.

XII. Junior High School at Orong

The People's Representative of Orong reported that they had heard about the construction of a Junior High School in Nganglam. However, as Nganglam was too far away, the public requested for the establishment of a Junior High School in Deothang. The Chimi of Samdrup Jongkhar also requested that a Junior High School may be established in a suitable place either at Bhangtar, Daifam or Orong for the benefit of 11 gewogs in Samdrup Jongkhar. He requested that even if the school could not be established during the current Plan period, provisions may be made for its construction during the VIIth Plan.

In response, the Minister of Social Services and Communications stated that High Schools and Junior High Schools were considered as national institutes. Therefore, in addition to the children from the concerned gewogs or dzongkhags, all High Schools and Junior High Schools must also give admission to students from other parts of the country. Hence, while requesting for the establishment of Junior High Schools, we must not merely consider the individual interest of our respective dzongkhags, dungkhags and gewogs but think along broader lines at the national level.

The Minister added that Orong Gewog had five schools and was, therefore, served very well in terms of schools and educational facilities when compared to other gewogs. The only Polytechnic in the kingdom was also located at Deothang under Orong gewog.

As the construction of a Junior High School at Nganglam was already nearing completion, there was no justification for building another Junior High School in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Since there was no further deliberation on the subject, the National Assembly decided to act in accordance with the statement made by the Minister of Social Services and Communications.

XIII. Trade and Transit Routes

The People's Representative of Dechenling and Nganglam referred to the discussions on trade and transit during the 68th session of the National Assembly, and said that a trade route was supposed to have been made operational from Nganglam to the Bangladesh border through the Indian town of Dhubri in Assam. He requested the Government to report on the progress of the above decision.

The Minister of Trade and Industry reported that with a view to promote and develop the trade and export potentials of the public of the south-eastern dzongkhags, particularly Gaylegphug, Nganglam, Dechenling and Samdrup Jongkhar, the Ministry of Trade and Industry had conducted a detailed study on the feasibility of using the Dhubri riverine route for trade and transit after the 68th session of the National Assembly last year. The study revealed that the above transit route on the Brahmaputra river was highly unreliable due to the changing course of the river in the monsoon season. The establishment of the necessary infrastructure for a reliable trade route was also going to be extremely expensive and difficult. Therefore, the

Royal Government had decided not to use the Dhubri river route for trade and transit. Instead, discussions were initiated with the Government of India for using the transit point at Pandu near Guwahati in Assam. As the Government of India did not have adequate customs and trade personnel at Pandu, they had agreed to seek Cabinet approval and thereafter facilitate trade and transit for Bhutan through Pandu.

The Minister, however, noted that the commodities for export to Bangladesh from Bhutan were mainly potatoes, oranges, cardamom and other fruits and vegetables which were mostly of a perishable nature. Hence, if we were to use the Brahmaputra riverine route, there was a high possibility of these items going bad because of the long journey. Therefore, it would be better to use the transit routes through Changrabandh in India and Burimari in Bangladesh for export of perishable items. The Pandu riverine route could be utilized for items such as stones, stone chips and minerals like gypsum, dolomite, etc.

The Minister further stated that for export from Nganglam to Bangladesh, it was not necessary to bring the commodities to Phuntsholing. They could be taken directly to Changrabandh and from there to Burimari.

The People's Representatives expressed their appreciation for the Royal Government's efforts to explore all the possibilities for the establishment and improvement of trade and transit routes. As there was no further discussion on the subject, the Assembly resolved that the efforts of the Ministry of Trade and Industry to establish trade and transit routes, as reported by the Minister, were adequate and appropriate.

In the course of the discussions on the trade and transit routes, the Ministry of Trade and Industry circulated a copy of the recently signed Trade and Transit Agreement between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India.

XIV. Social Forestry

The People's Representative of Chhoekhor, Bumthang, stated that as per Resolutions No. 1 of the 57th session, No. 18 of the 58th session and No. 16 of the 63rd session of the National Assembly, the trees grown under the Social Forestry Programme were meant for the benefit of the communities. In Bumthang, among various types of trees, the blue pine grew much faster than those which were planted by the people. Therefore, the public requested that the blue pines which were grown in and around

the land belonging to individual households may kindly be allowed for inclusion in the Social Forestry Programme of the concerned land owners in view of the limited crops grown in Bumthang.

In reply, the Secretary, Department of Forest and Roads mentioned that the main objective of the Social Forestry Programme was to provide firewood to the public, timber for house construction and fodder for livestock. Regarding trees in one's own land, he said, the owner had the right to claim them according to the Forest Act and the Land Act.

He also added that if the owner was given permission to include naturally regenerated trees in and around his land under the Social Forestry Programme, it would not only result in extensive felling of trees under the jurisdiction of the Forest Department, but also affect the Rules and Regulations of the Forest Act and the Social Forestry Programme which covers not only Bumthang but all other dzongkhags in the country. The Secretary said that it was, therefore, not possible to grant people the ownership of trees which were not planted and grown under the Social Forestry Programme.

In connection with this issue, several speakers took the floor and stressed the increasing need and importance of protecting our forests and the environment. They, therefore, supported the statement of the Secretary of Forest and Roads.

The National Assembly resolved that the present Social Forestry Act shall remain in force without modification.

XV. Cost of Farm Machineries and Increase in Rural Credit

The People's Representative of Punakha requested the National Assembly to either reduce the cost of farm machineries or raise the ceiling of rural credit to enable the villagers to buy farm machineries which were at present too expensive for them to purchase.

In response, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture stated that in line with the policy of self-reliance, the Government, having given high priority to the agriculture sector, had formulated many plans and projects. While there was a subsidy of 20 to 30 percent on all farm machineries, the cost of some of the larger and more expensive machineries had been subsidised by as much as 60 to 70 percent.

The Government was bearing the heavy costs of these subsidies in order to help the welfare of the people and to promote the farm mechanisation programme. Apart from subsidising the cost of machineries, tools and implements, the government was also subsidising transit insurance, transport cost and sales tax. Free installation and commissioning of the machineries were also being provided.

With regard to the reportedly high price of the machineries, he stated that just as there was an increase in the price of all items every year, the manufacturers abroad were also increasing the cost price of farm machineries.

Moreover, the Royal Government was providing credit facilities to the farmers through the Bhutan Development Finance Corporation and the Bank of Bhutan at low interest rates ranging from 10-12 percent for a period of one to five years. The credit amount for short-term loans of Nu.3,000 and Nu.5,000 had been increased to Nu.7,000 and long term loans from Nu.10,000 to Nu. 20,000.

Loans were also available under the industrial fund with low interest rates of 12 percent for amounts upto Nu.100,000 and 13 percent for amounts exceeding Nu.100,000. These loans were payable in five years. Furthermore, the Department was hopeful that with the increasing assistance of the UNCDF, the rural credit facilities would become even more extensive.

In this connection, the People's Representative of Punakha expressed his gratitude to the Royal Government for the high priority and generous subsidies given to the development of the agriculture sector.

The National Assembly endorsed the statement of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

XVI. Bhutan-China boundary talks

The deliberations on the Bhutan-China boundary talks were held in the RBA auditorium at Lungtenphug. His Majesty the King was pleased to command the Foreign Minister and the Surveyor General to present their report to the National Assembly on the outcome of the sixth round of boundary talks which were held in Beijing during October-November, 1989.

The Foreign Minister reported that while in Beijing, the Bhutanese delegation called on President Yang Shangkun, Premier Li Peng and Vice Premier Wu Xu Xian and

other senior government officials, who all expressed their goodwill and spoke positively about relations between the two countries. The boundary talks were held on the basis of sovereign equality. During the talks, both sides presented their perceptions of the boundary. No firm decision on the boundary demarcation was arrived at because of differences in the perceptions of the traditional boundary between Bhutan and China. It was, therefore, decided that the negotiations would be resumed during the seventh round of boundary talks which would be held later this year.

Several Government and People's Representatives expressed the view that as the boundary talks between the countries were extremely important, the negotiations should be conducted with great care and patience.

The Surveyor General recapitulated the decisions of the 68th session regarding the demarcation of the boundary. On the large scale maps displayed in the auditorium, he highlighted the differences in the perceptions of the two sides regarding the traditional boundary.

The People's Representative of Lhuntshi reported that the historical and traditional boundary at Menchuma sector of the Bhutan-China border were along Gengla, Menchuma, Sakardung-pek-sum, Napa-leu-sum, Zambotshering, Metse-zur-sum, Bagarthang-sum and Bodla.

The People's Representative of Gasengtshowog expressed the wholehearted gratitude of the people to His Majesty the King due to whose wise leadership and farsightedness, the Royal Government had been able to initiate boundary talks with China. He also proposed that knowledgeable people who were familiar with the Bhutan-Tibet border be identified and included in the delegation for the boundary talks.

The Minister of Trade and Industry mentioned that negotiations between nations on border issues were normally conducted by the concerned ministries and departments of the Government and that there was no practice of members of the public being involved in such talks.

The Foreign Minister stated that the negotiations between Bhutan and China were always conducted in the English and Chinese languages. It was also necessary for members of the delegation to be both experienced and well-versed with the

Government's policies. Therefore, the proposal for including People's Representatives in the boundary negotiations should be carefully examined.

His Majesty the King was pleased to observe that although the submissions of the Foreign Minister and the Minister of Trade and Industry were valid, it was clear that the people were keen to actively participate in the boundary talks. His Majesty was, therefore, pleased to recommend the inclusion of three Royal Advisory Councillors in the Boundary Committee and suggested that the advantages of People's Representatives being included in the delegations for boundary talks could also be studied.

Several People's Representatives expressed their deep appreciation for His Majesty's recommendation to include three Royal Advisory Councillors in the Boundary Committee.

His Majesty reminded the National Assembly that as the seventh round of the boundary talks were to be held this year, members desiring to express their views should do so while the issue was still being deliberated. The National Assembly was also requested to take note of the differences in the boundary perceptions as pointed out by the Surveyor General, and decide whether there was a need to review the Royal Government's position on the boundary talks.

All the members of the National Assembly requested the Government to adhere to the decision of the 68th session of the National Assembly and maintain the Bhutanese perceptions of the traditional boundary as the basis for conducting negotiations during the forthcoming seventh round of boundary talks.

The National Assembly resolved that the Royal Government should act in accordance with the decisions of the 68th session of the National Assembly while conducting the seventh round of boundary talks.

Date : March 26, 1990

sd/-
(Pasang Dorji)
Deputy Speaker,
National Assembly of Bhutan.

Green Belt Along the Indo-Bhutan Border

The concept of a green belt along the common border between Bhutan and India first began to receive the attention of both the governments in 1984. That year, a joint aerial survey by the two governments was undertaken. The Government of India was represented by Mr. Digvijoy Singh, the Minister for Environment. The survey having proved this to be feasible, a formal proposal was received from the Government of India in 1985. Bhutan was pleased with the proposal and conveyed its acceptance in 1986. In the following year, to give every possible effect to this scheme, the Royal Government, inspite of past efforts at intensive afforestation and the reserved status of parks and sancturies in the area, placed all existing forests within two kilometres of the border under legal protection. Then in 1988 the Government of India sent another request to form a joint high-level Co-ordination Committee to formulate an action programme and to monitor its implementation. The Committee's first meeting was scheduled for Autumn 1988 in Manas. Owing to the disturbances in Assam, however, the meeting could not be convened. It was eventually held in Delhi in May 1989. Our delegation was led by Dasho Pema Wangchuk, the Surveyor General, and the Indian side was headed by the Inspector-General of Forests. The Co-ordination Committee is next expected to meet here in Thimphu this year.

The programme has been agreed to in principle by both the governments. It calls for a forested belt of one kilometre each on either side of the international boundary line. Within our side of the corridor, the Royal Government intends to grow valuable species of wood such as teak, sisso, champ, sal etc...

The creation of the green belt will result in immense benefits for both countries. While good forest cover will effectively check dangerous soil erosion in Bhutan, the annual loss of life and property through flooding, across the border in India, will be appreciably reduced.

Apart from immediate and long-term ecological and environmental benefits, the establishment of a forested corridor will provide physically, the most distinct definition of our border. A well defined and congenial border between Bhutan and India will have a positive impact and go a long way towards ensuring and further strengthening the excellent relations between our two countries.

The creation of a forest corridor will obviate the need to position police posts right at the border, which otherwise misportrays incorrectly our existing close interstate relations. A clearly visible boundary will also remove the potentials for criminals and apprehending law enforcers from unknowingly intruding into each others' territory. Eliminating the chances of such untoward incidents in the future is of great importance for ensuring continued good neighbourly relations between Bhutan and India.

In the world today there is an ever increasing concern over environmental and ecological degradation, and programmes seeking to conserve the environment are, consequently, immensely popular, and can count on wide international support. For our programme along the Bhutan-India border, many countries such as Denmark, Japan, Switzerland, West Germany, various agencies of the United Nations system and several other international agencies have indicated interest and support. We, therefore, feel confident that we can easily raise around US\$ 20 million (Nu. 340 million) to start the project.

Note on the Recent Developments in Southern Bhutan

Background

On 16 January 1989, His Majesty the King, through a Kasho to all the Dzongdags and Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchung (DYT) members of the southern Bhutan dzongkhags, apprised the southern Bhutanese people of the urgent and important need to facilitate national integration and strengthen our unique national identity through the promotion of national dress and language. The Dzongdags and the DYT members were instructed to conduct detailed meetings at the gewog level to explain and clarify every aspect of the Kasho and obtain the genuine views and thinking of the people. After conducting such meetings, written reports signed by the people expressing full understanding, appreciation and support for the policy were submitted through the DYT by all the gewogs.

His Majesty the King then visited all the southern dzongkhags and held meetings with all the gewog tshogpas (members of the gewog councils), DYT members and dzongkhag officials to personally explain the policy outlined in the Kasho and to ask the people whether the reports submitted by the DYT were accurate reflections of their views and thinking. The people confirmed the accuracy of the signed documents submitted by the DYT and once again expressed their full understanding, appreciation and support for the policy to promote national integration and strengthen our unique identity through the promotion of national dress and language. His Majesty the King was deeply touched by the clear understanding and whole-hearted support shown by the people. Rural tax was, therefore, exempted for all the households in the southern Dzongkhags. The implementation of the programme to promote the national dress and language was also entrusted to the DYT, and “ghos” and “kiras” worth Nu. 32.15 lakhs were subsequently supplied to the people by the Royal Government at ex-factory prices.

Subversive elements, however, tried to disturb the minds of our people in southern Bhutan and instigate them against the national policies of the Royal Government. Anti-national literature in English, Hindi and Nepali were printed and distributed by these people. During the past six months a total of six pamphlets and 72 newspaper articles maliciously and baselessly attacking the Royal Government’s policies, and countless threat letters to various people, officials and even His Majesty the King were clandestinely circulated.

The Royal Government was deeply saddened to learn that southern Bhutanese students and trainees and some of the staff in the three major educational institutions - the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Samchi, the Sherubtse College in Kanglung and the Royal Polytechnic in Deothang - were involved in varying degrees in the publication of seditious literature and also in holding meetings and collecting donations to support Tek Nath Rizal who was organising anti-national activities from BIRTHAMOD, Nepal, where he had settled down after absconding from Bhutan. Besides these students, some lower level - civil servants, businessmen and villagers were also involved in the recent subversive activities.

Throughout the past months, the general public, however, were not swayed by the malicious allegations and propaganda launched by the anti-national elements aimed at creating misunderstanding and suspicion between the government and the people and social instability and friction between the northern and southern Bhutanese people. Nor has there been any reason why the people should not stand firm and extend full support to the Royal Government's policy of promoting national integration and strengthening our unique national identity. It was the people themselves who had endorsed "ghos" and "kiras" as the most suitable national dress both in their written response to His Majesty's Kasho and during their meetings with His Majesty the King. They had also strongly expressed their whole-hearted support for promoting Dzongkha as the national language although the Royal Government has not yet started the process of teaching Dzongkha to the people. While highlighting the compatibility of Buddhism and Hinduism and explaining the importance of religious values in the modern world, His Majesty the King has been calling on the people to take advantage of the close affinity between the two great religions practiced in Bhutan to promote social unity and harmony in the country. With regard to Driglam Namzha, although it has only been taught to the DYT members and school children, it is basically a form of national etiquette and should therefore be valued by all cultured people.

It is clear that the people at large have fully understood the importance and long term implications and benefits that the policy of promoting national integration and strengthening our unique national identity will have in determining the well-being, happiness and security of the Bhutanese people. This was clearly evident from the report submitted by the Representatives of the Gaylegphug, Sarbhang and Kalikhola dungkhags to the 68th session of the National Assembly in 1989 stating that the people felt it would be beneficial for the country if more emphasis was given to the implementation of the policy on Driglam Namzha, national dress and language, as it would further promote and foster social harmony and unity among our people. The appreciation, understanding and support of the people for the Royal Government's policies was also clearly evident during the meetings held with the people by His Majesty the King during his recent tour

of all the southern dzongkhags. In all these meetings, which were attended by a senior member of each household from every gewog, the people once again expressed their full support for the policy of strengthening our unique national identity and promoting national integration. They also strongly condemned the anti-national elements working against the interests of the country and called for strict punishment to them in keeping with the laws of the land.

Actions Taken by the Royal Government

A total of 42 people who were actively involved in these anti-national activities were arrested by the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP). Tek Nath Rizal and two of his main supporters were also extradited from Nepal.

On the advice of His Majesty the King, the Lhengyel Shungtshog, during its 108th session, took a decision to grant amnesty to all those who were involved in anti-national activities before 31 December 1989, but were not the leaders ultimately responsible for planning and instigating the recent subversive activities. During its 109th session, the Lhengyel Shungtshog, on the advice of His Majesty the King, granted clemency to 39 out of the 42 people arrested by the RBP and these people were accordingly released from police custody. The period for amnesty to all those who were involved in anti-national activities was also extended on the advice of His Majesty the King and kept open for two months till the end of February 1990. The Lhengyel Shungtshog also decided that it must be made clear to one and all that henceforth any Bhutanese citizen taking part or in any way becoming involved in anti-national activities would be strictly punished according to the provisions of the Chathrim.

The grant of amnesty and clemency is a reflection of His Majesty the King's high esteem and strong faith in the Bhutanese people and therefore should not be mistaken as a sign of compromise and lack of firmness by the Royal Government. The extension of the time frame for this amnesty was granted so that the people who had absconded from the country would have a chance to take advantage of the magnanimous pardon offered to them by His Majesty the King and the Royal Government. The Home Ministry, however, regrets to report that during the amnesty period of two months starting from 1st January to 28th February, 1990 only 11 absconders have returned to receive the generous pardon granted by His Majesty the King.

The Ministry of Home Affairs would like to assure the National Assembly members that under the wise leadership of His Majesty the King, the Royal Government will take effective and appropriate actions in dealing with problems which affect the security and national interest of the country.

Regulations For Granting Land

1. Criteria for Eligibility :

- a) A family who wish to migrate and resettle on land allotted by the government.
- b) This special kidu shall be extended only to the poorer section of the people.

2. Modality of Land Allotment :

- a) Depending on the size of the family, one to four acres of land shall be granted.
- b) They shall settle only where the land is allotted and no absentee land holding shall be entertained.

3. Facilities :

- a) A set of Agricultural tools and seeds for the first year shall be granted free of cost.
- b) All participatory Woolas for 3 years shall be exempted.
- c) Two bullocks shall be given free of cost.
- d) A cash grant of Nu. 5,000/= shall be paid for construction of house.
- e) Transportation to the new settlement site of the dzongkhag shall be provided free by the Government.

4. Restriction :

- a) No person or family is permitted to gift, sell or mortgage the land within 10 years of allotment.
- b) Violation of this provision shall result in confiscation of the entire property.