

PROCEEDINGS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE 70TH SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BHUTAN.

I. OPENING CEREMONY

The 70th Session of the National Assembly of Bhutan began with the hallowed tradition of Shugdrel Ceremony on the first day of the ninth month of the year of the Iron Sheep corresponding to 8th October, 1991.

In his opening address, the Speaker of the Assembly, Dasho Passang Dorji, welcomed His Majesty the King and all the representatives of the Central Monk Body and Rabdeys, ministers and officials representing the Royal Government, and the representatives of the public. He stated that this most auspicious occasion which had enabled the King, Government and People to assemble in the Great Hall of the National Assembly to deliberate upon matters of great importance to the country was due to the age-old and timeless blessings of the Revered Guru Ugyen Rimpochey, and the most Venerable Lineage of Lamas of the Kagyu tradition established by the great spiritual ruler Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel to whom the nation would forever be indebted. Secondly, he said it was due to the boundless merit of the nation's most revered sovereigns, His Majesty the King and the preceding monarchs. Thirdly, it was due to the good fortune, loyalty and unity of all the people.

The Speaker reminded the House that since the months of September and October of the year 1990, the ngolops in the south had perpetrated acts of high treason, wanton destruction of life and property and senseless acts of terrorism to shatter the peace and tranquility of the country. He praised the Royal Bhutan Army, the Royal Body Guards and the Royal Bhutan Police who, with steadfast loyalty to the TSA-WA-SUM (King, People and Country) had served courageously both day and night for endless months of the changing seasons. Had it not been for their selfless contribution, the 5 Dzongkhags and 1 Dungkhag in the south would have fallen into the hands of the ngolops.

The ngolops posed a most severe threat to the security and spiritual well-being of the nation, said the Speaker. Nevertheless, under the wise and able leadership of His Majesty the King, the same spirit that prevailed among the security forces had been manifested in the ministers and the senior officials of the Royal Government who

discharged their high responsibilities with extreme patience and great dedication. Being fully conscious of the Dharmic law of cause and effect, the general public also had been most admirable in the demonstration of their sense of unity, devotion and zealous will to defend the beloved Palden Drukpa by offering all their material possessions and by being ready to even sacrifice their lives to safeguard the security of the nation. It was by virtue of such thought and action that the spiritual and political life of the people and the freedom and sovereignty of Bhutan had never been compromised throughout history.

He further stated that the National Assembly had not been able to hold its autumn session in the year 1990 owing to the disturbances caused by the ngolops. The people had responded by submitting an agenda that barely reflected any concern for development matters but was almost entirely devoted to issues concerning ways and means to restore peace and security in the nation. He said that it was clear that the people were single-minded in their conviction that development activities could always be resumed in the future once the anti-national threat to the peace and the security of the nation was removed.

The Speaker expressed his full confidence that through the unfailing protection of the country's Guardian Deities, and guided by their sense of unwavering loyalty and allegiance to the TSA-WA-SUM, the representatives of the Royal Government, the monastic bodies and the people would apply their collective wisdom to the deliberations, keeping in mind the immediate and long term interest and the peace, progress and security of the country, so that this land of Palden Drukpa could be handed over to posterity along with all its glorious attributes as a sovereign, independent nation under the system of hereditary monarchy institutionalized by our forefathers. Having thus reminded the House of the great importance of this session, the Speaker opened the deliberations in accordance with the Agenda before the Assembly.

II. PROGRESS REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON THE FORMULATION OF THE 7TH FIVE YEAR PLAN :

The Planning Minister reported that the formulation of the 7th Five Year Plan which would begin on 1st July 1992, had actually been initiated two and a half years ago. He added that the Plan was based on the valuable experiences and knowledge gained during the implementation of the current plan. These included, among others, the problems and achievements of the current plan; needs and aspirations of the people of each

Dzongkhag; external and internal financial resources available for development; and general manpower capacities both within and outside the government. He reported that, as in the past, His Majesty the King had personally visited each Dzongkhag and held extensive discussions with the people on the subject of the 7th Five Year Plan which would aim at attaining the following objectives:

Main objectives of the 7th Plan

- a) Self-reliance with emphasis on Internal Resource Mobilisation:
 - Although during the 6th Five Year Plan, our internal revenue could meet about 82% of the recurrent expenditure, based on the current levels and projections, it would meet only about 46% of the recurrent expenditure in the 7th Plan which would have risen considerably. The Planning Minister reported that estimates of the recurrent expenditure for the 7th Plan was about Nu. 8,600 million while our revenue for the same period would be about Nu. 4,600 million only. This would leave a shortfall of approximately Nu. 3,990 million. Therefore, in order to achieve our policy of self-reliance, every effort would be made to increase the internal revenue during the 7th Plan by optimizing revenue earnings from Trade and Industrial Development, Power Generation, Income Tax, Public Sector earnings and government savings.
- b) Human Resources Development:
 - One of the main constraints faced by the country was the inadequacy of qualified manpower. The Assembly was informed that a Human Resource Development Master Plan was being prepared with the main objective of attaining self-sufficiency in trained manpower in all the fields in order to ensure continued progress in socio-economic development during the 7th Plan period.
- c) Participation of the People in Development through Effective Decentralization:
 - The process of decentralisation which began in 1981 during the 5th Five Year Plan, aimed at promoting participative decision-making between the government and the people, whereby, considerable financial and

administrative powers were also devolved upon the local authorities. Together with the establishment of Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs (District Development Committees) as the main forum for decision-making in every Dzongkhag, the 5th Plan saw the emergence of individual Dzongkhag Development Plans in place of Sector Based National Plans, which resulted in major accomplishments. Therefore, it was reported that, in accordance with the command of His Majesty the King, Gewog Tshogpas (Block Committees) were already being established to further decentralize and encourage active participation in decision-making at the grass-root level during the 7th Plan.

d) Integrated and balanced development throughout the country:

- The 7th Plan would aim at promoting a uniform distribution of the benefits of development in all parts of the country. However, with a view to maximise the efficient use of resources, due weightage would be given to the economic feasibility of projects in each sector. Nevertheless, to the extent possible, the Planning Commission expressed its commitment to ensure an equitable distribution of social services and industrial investments.

e) Sustainable Development with emphasis on Environmental Protection:

- Given the fragile mountainous environment of the country, it was of paramount importance to ensure that our development strategies were environmentally sustainable. This was highlighted by the fact that while almost 80% of our people depended on crop and livestock production, the cultivatable land was estimated to be only about 8% without much scope for further expansion. It was, therefore, imperative to maintain a judicious balance between the available agriculture land on one hand and livestock and human population on the other. With these considerations in mind, the 7th Plan programmes and projects would be carefully scrutinized to minimise any possible adverse impact on the environment.

f) Development and Expansion of the Private Sector:

- The policy of privatisation was being implemented by the Royal Government at a vigorous pace during the 6th Five Year Plan. The policy was pursued with

a view to promote private enterprise and at the same time ensure equitable distribution of wealth through enhancement of general efficiency and productivity in the business/industrial sector. Accordingly, many public undertakings had now come under private ownership. The Royal Government would continue to pursue this policy until such time as it was only left with the role of over-all planning, co-ordinating and regulating of business and industry. The Royal Government would also continue to support the development of the private sector through the provision of special and substantial incentive packages and entrepreneurial trainings.

Seventh Five Year Plan Outlay

Of the total 6th Plan allocation of Nu.9,559 million, recurrent expenditure amounted to Nu.3,854 million while capital expenditure reached Nu. 5,704 million. The 7th Plan would receive a total outlay of Nu.15,000 million. Of this, 57.3% (Nu.8,600 million) would be allocated for recurrent expenditure and the remaining 42.7% (Nu.6,400 million) would be devoted to capital expenditure. The total plan outlay of Nu. 15,000 million did not include the planned investment for Dungsum Cement Plant and proposed power projects which would amount to approximately Nu.7,000 million. As these projects were over and above the plan outlay, this additional amount would be considered as a non-plan investment budget.

Core Areas of Development

Having briefed the National Assembly on the 7th Plan outlay, the Planning Minister reported that the following comprised the core areas of development in the 7th Plan :

1. Power
2. Trade and Industry
3. Communications
4. Human Resource Development
5. Health
6. Education

At this point, His Majesty the King was pleased to command that, since 80% of Bhutan's population was dependent on agriculture, it would be highly beneficial for the people if the Planning Commission could include the agriculture sector among the core areas of the 7th Plan. Accordingly, the house decided to incorporate the Agriculture Sector in the plan under formulation.

Resource Mobilisation

The Planning Minister reiterated his statement that our domestic resources would only meet 30% of the total outlay of Nu.15,000 million for the 7th Plan excluding the additional amount of Nu.7,000 million required for the establishment of industries and new power projects. He informed the House that the Royal Government had, therefore, initiated dialogue with existing and potential donors to seek financial and technical assistance on both bilateral and multilateral basis.

In this regard, he reported that the Government of India, Bhutan's major development partner, was sending a delegation to Thimphu on the 17th of October to discuss Indo-Bhutan co-operation projects for the 7th Plan. He expressed his confidence that the Planning Commission would have fruitful discussions with the team. He further informed that the Royal Government would also be holding talks with other donors at the Round Table Meeting to be held in Paris in March, 1992. This would be an opportunity for the donors to discuss Bhutan's development strategy and requests for assistance as outlined in the proposed 7th Plan. He was optimistic of the Royal Government being able to mobilize the required resources.

Upon concluding his report on the objectives and funding of the 7th Plan, the Planning Minister briefed the National Assembly on some important developments. Ever since the Planning Commission had been established in 1972, His Majesty the King had been its Chairman until March, 1991, when His Majesty was pleased to appoint the Planning Minister as the new Chairman. Fifteen new members had also been appointed to serve in the Commission which would be ably supported by a Technical Committee comprising of twenty one members who were heads of departments or senior officials in the ministries.

The Planning Minister highlighted the many land-mark achievements and the rapid progress made by the country in the field of socio-economic development during the twenty years that His Majesty the King had personally guided the Planning Commission as its Chairman. In particular, he praised His Majesty the King for raising the national revenue from approximately Nu.40 million in 1972 to over Nu.1,000 million as of 1991.

Speaking of achievements in the area of health services, the Minister informed the Assembly that compared to a total of only 39 health facilities of all categories which existed in 1972, there were now a total of 160 major health facilities including hospitals in the country. This figure did not include the numerous Out-Reach Clinics established to provide health coverage to even the remotest parts of the country. In keeping with the UNICEF/WHO goal of universal child immunization, 84% of children under the age of four had been immunized against the major targeted diseases within the prescribed time schedule. This phenomenal success had earned high praise from the donor countries. Similarly, in the field of education, where there were only about 100 educational institutions with only 12,000 school going children in 1972, today there were 316 institutions providing education and training to over 70,000 children.

Highlighting the achievements in the Road Sector, the Minister compared the total length of 799 Km of motorable road in 1972 to the total of nearly 3,000 Km of such roads in 1991. He also noted that although there had been no programme for the provision of safe and convenient rural drinking water supply until 1972, over 2,000 rural drinking water facilities and more than 1,800 latrines had already been installed to promote better health and sanitation in the rural areas.

In terms of indicators for general economic development, it was pointed out that whereas the per capita income of a Bhutanese was below US\$ 140 (Nu.2,400) in 1972, it had today reached US\$ 425 (Nu.12,000). Major advancements in communication services had also been made. Apart from the establishment of air services, other vital tele-communication services such as, telephone, telex and facsimile facilities were now available with global linkages. Yet another noteworthy achievement was the success in the power sector which now generated a substantial revenue in excess of Nu. 400 million every year.

Upon the conclusion of the report by the Planning Minister, the Royal Advisory Councillors and representatives of the people expressed their deep appreciation for the very concise and lucid briefing on the highly commendable achievements of the Royal Government. They were unanimous in their acceptance and support for the policies and objectives of the 7th Plan. Although they deeply respected the decision of His Majesty the King to relinquish his post as Chairman of the Planning Commission, and even though they shared His Majesty's confidence in the competence of the Planning Minister to fill the post of Chairman, several Chimis (People's Representatives) requested His Majesty the King to continue as Chairman despite His Majesty's many other burdens of state. They reasoned that it was because of His Majesty's Chairmanship of the Planning Commission that such monumental successes had been made in the development and security of our nation. The National Assembly was unanimous in this request.

His Majesty the King was pleased to remind the Assembly that apart from appointing the Planning Minister as the Chairman, the Commission itself had been reconstituted with 15 members including ministers and other high ranking officials. Furthermore, 21 heads of departments and senior officials had been appointed as members of a Technical Committee which would provide technical and professional support to the Planning Commission. His Majesty pointed out that under a new Chairman, the Commission's decision making system would be greatly decentralised. Increased participation by representatives from the ministries and departments would be facilitated. This would in turn give greater responsibility and accountability to senior members of the Royal Government and result in increased cooperation and contribution from all ministries and departments in the implementation of plans and programmes formulated by the Commission. His Majesty noted that already the Commission was functioning very satisfactorily under the new arrangement. He expressed his full confidence in the Commission's ability to serve the Royal Government and the people with distinction and prove itself worthy of the combined trust and confidence reposed in it. Moreover, since there was already a procedure requiring the submission of the 5 Year Plans to the National Assembly for final ratification and incorporation of necessary changes, every member of the National Assembly also had the opportunity to play as decisive a role in the formulation of the Plans as the members of the Commission. The Assembly was also reminded that it was increasingly important for His Majesty to devote more time and effort to finding a

solution to the ngolop problem which was posing a grave threat to the security and well-being of the country.

Having fully understood the role and responsibilities of the newly constituted Planning Commission and the Technical Committee, as well as their own role in planning, the House resolved not to make any alterations to the recent re-organization of the Planning Commission.

III. MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS

1. Protection of Forests

A People's Representative from Paro stated on behalf of the people of Paro that although Bhutan was a very small country, it was bountifully endowed with natural beauty and a wealth of forest resources. He stressed that in order to prevent any form of environmental degradation, not only should the conservation of forests be given continued priority, but extraction of timber should be done only to meet the internal requirement of the government and the public. He, therefore, proposed that all forms of timber extraction for export be minimized to the extent possible.

The Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture expressed his appreciation for the inclusion of the item on forest conservation in the Agenda of the National Assembly. He said that although Bhutan had the largest forest coverage among the countries in the South Asian region, the extensive damage done by the bark beetle disease that appeared a few years ago had necessitated extensive felling of trees in Wangdiphodrang, Paro and Ha Dzongkhags. He informed the Assembly that the Royal Government had obtained external assistance and had been successful in controlling this disease. In order to prevent land slides, soil erosion and floods, as well as to prevent the depletion of forest coverage, appropriate strategies had been framed to ensure that every time a tree was felled, it would be replaced by planting a new seedling. He agreed that as proposed by the people, extraction of forest resources should be carried out in strict compliance with the Forest Act and policies.

The concerned representative thanked the Deputy Minister, and as there were no comments raised by any one, and since the interest of the people and the policies of the Royal Government were identical, the National Assembly resolved that the actions being taken by the Ministry of Agriculture were adequate and should be continued.

2. Construction of Road to Dagana after re-alignment

The representative of the people of Khibisa and Lajab Gewogs of Dagana stated that the people of the constituency were extremely grateful to the Royal Government for the construction of a motorable road via Dagapela in 1983. It was, however, regretted that the unstable soil condition along the road caused land slides that continuously blocked the road to vehicular traffic resulting in considerable maintenance costs to the Royal Government. The people, therefore, proposed that the Royal Government should consider categorizing the present road as a feeder road and construct a new road via Drugyel Gang to Khibisa Primary School and onwards to Khibi-gang and Daga Dzong. The people observed that this new alignment would go across areas with stable soil conditions to sustain the road and thereby give greater benefit to the people. The Chimi further stated that the people were ready to contribute labour and requested the Royal Government for machinery, explosives, tools and nominal wages.

The Secretary, Department of Roads responded with the observation that it was true that there had been problems caused by the Dagana road being often damaged by landslides and erosion during the rainy seasons. Even the bridge across Daga river had been destroyed by heavy flooding. He reported that the reason why timely maintenance work could not be carried out was due to the disturbances caused by the ngolops during 1990 which made it unsafe for government servants and equipment to be deployed in the area. This year, however, the bridge had been reconstructed and landslides cleared to allow unhindered flow of traffic. He added that in order for a new road to stabilize, it usually took about fifteen years whereas the 107 Km Dagana road was constructed only nine years ago at a substantial cost of over Nu.74.3 million. On the other hand, preliminary estimates based on topographical maps indicated that the proposed alignment would entail the construction of about 57 Km of new road at an approximate cost of Nu. 80 million. This cost would exclude the many small bridges and the three major

bridges that would have to be constructed. Furthermore, even the suitability of the soil condition could not be ascertained from external appearance and would require extensive geo-technical studies to be carried out. He also pointed out that since there was already an existing road of 107 Km from Chirang to Dagana there was no justification for the Department of Roads to build a new road.

The National Assembly resolved that a new road to Dagana need not be constructed and that the existing road should be properly maintained.

3. Merger of Villages under other Dzongkhags

The People's Representative of Chukha Dzongkhag requested the National Assembly to consider the merger of 109 households of seven villages in Gyaltana Gewog under Chukha Dzongkhag with Dagana Dzongkhag in view of their close proximity to Dagana Dzongkhag. This would greatly enhance the people's ability to undertake developmental works and also facilitate more effective public administration. The seven villages proposed for the merger were the following:-

1. Bartcha
2. Puchag Gang
3. Namgyal Gang
4. Etosi
5. Bjuru Gang
6. Lungten Gang
7. Kar-zhing Thang

The Home Minister informed the House that as requested by the representative from Chukha Dzongkhag, the proposal to transfer the jurisdiction of the 107 gungs and the villages under Daga Dzongkhag Administration had been received as early as 1986. Necessary feasibility studies which had been carried out subsequently confirmed that such a merger would greatly benefit the people. The Home Minister recommended the transfer of the seven villages to Dagana Dzongkhag since signed agreements confirming the desire of the people to this effect had also been obtained by the Ministry.

As the people would greatly benefit in terms of general convenience and development activities, and as the Royal Government did not foresee any problems, The National Assembly resolved to merge the above mentioned villages under Karling gewog of Dagana Dzongkhag.

4. Merger of people under the gewogs where they are settled

The public of Punakha Dzongkhag proposed that all those people who resided in the villages of Punakha Dzongkhag should be merged under concerned gewogs in the Dzongkhag in accordance with their landed properties.

To this the Home Minister reported that the problem was not peculiar to Punakha but that other dzongkhags also had similar problems. This caused various difficulties in the gewogs in the implementation of development schemes in addition to major complications in civil administration. He added that the Home Ministry had been undertaking a thorough study of the issue. A government directive had in 1983 to the effect that, notwithstanding their place of origin or residence, registration of all landed properties must be done in the Gewog and Dzongkhag where the land is located. Subsequent reminders to the directive were circulated in 1986 and 1989. Since the reports from all the Dzongkhags on the implementation of the directive were yet to be received, any decision on the subject would be premature. He stated that as the cadastral survey was going on in the 18 Dzongkhags, and as new land registrations (Sathram) had to be prepared, the people should follow the government directives and register their land in the Gewogs and Dzongkhag where the land/house were located, irrespective of where they originally came from or were residing. Taxes should also be paid accordingly.

The Minister further informed the Assembly that even the boundary demarcation of gewogs had been carried out in consultation with the concerned Gups, Chimis and Village Elders. He said that these boundaries had been clearly delineated and also recorded on the map by the Survey Department and a report was submitted to the Home Ministry. Once these gewog boundary delineations were fully verified, it would be submitted to the Royal Government for final approval, and circulars would be issued to all the people and government authorities. He thus stated that

the merger or transfer of people in relation to the issue raised by the public of Punakha would be taken care of at that time.

As there was no disagreement from the representative of Punakha, the National Assembly resolved to endorse the proposal of the Home Minister.

5. Establishment of New Dungkhag at Sangbekha

The representative of the people of Sangbekha (Haa Dzongkhag) invited the reference of the House to Resolution No.2 of the 68th Session of the National Assembly in which it was recorded that the request of the people for the establishment of a Dungkhag at Sangbekha was deferred for consideration at an appropriate time in the future. He stated that Sangbekha was not only very far from the Dzongkhag Administration headquarters but also located near the international boundary. In order to facilitate the maintenance of effective public administration and to provide adequate security to the people, the proposal for the establishment of a Dungkhag office at Sangbekha was again put forward for reconsideration. He added that the size and population of Sangbekha was also large enough to be divided into two gewogs.

The Home Minister informed that, although according to the above quoted resolution of the National Assembly, the Royal Government was to establish a Dungkhag at Sangbekha at a convenient time, it was revealed that, in fact, even with the inclusion of two villages on the Mochu river, the small population of Sangbekha did not justify the establishment of a Dungkhag. When the possibility of merging several villages from Dorokha and Sibsoo was considered, the concerned people expressed reservations since they were closer to their existing Dungkhags.

In order to alleviate the problems of the people, the Royal Government had established a Basic Health Unit, Veterinary Centre and a Primary School at Sangbekha. In addition to these, a wireless station had also been set up to facilitate communication for development purposes. The Home Minister also made it clear that the people need not have any fear about their security since security forces from Sibsoo, Tendoo and Haa Dzongkhag would always be available upon request. In light of these considerations and in view of the high

cost involved to build and maintain a Dungkhag office, the Home Minister said that it was not feasible to establish a Dungkhag at Sangbekha.

There being no further debate on the subject, the National Assembly resolved that a Dungkhag Office at Sangbekha was not necessary.

6. Proposal for a Driglam Namzha Act

The Chimi representing the people of Shelnga, Beme and Lingbu (Punakha) proposed that a suitable act on Driglam Namzha to preserve and promote traditional values and customs be considered by the National Assembly. Taking the floor, the Secretary of the Dratshang Lhentshog observed that on twelve occasions between the 20th and 70th Sessions of the National Assembly, extensive deliberations had taken place on the subject of Driglam Namzha. Furthermore, in accordance with the directives of the Royal Government, the Zimpon, Dasho Dorji Gyaltsen and High Court Judge and Ex-Donyer, Dasho Tseten Dorji had documented, on video and in writing, various traditions and customs prevailing in all the Dzongkhags. He informed that upon completing the compilation of these records, and upon receiving the approval of the Royal Government, these materials would be distributed to all the 18 Dzongkhags. The Secretary stressed that what was of more importance than an Act on the subject, was the need to understand, cherish and practice Driglam Namzha with full sincerity and commitment.

The Home Minister intervened to state that directives had been sent to all the Dzongkhags to promote and ensure adherence to the codes of Driglam Namzha. As the Dzongdas were empowered to take suitable measures to ensure the adherence to the codes of Driglam Namzha, the need for a separate Act did not arise.

The Assembly endorsed the position of the Secretary of the Special Commission and the Home Minister and resolved that although no special laws need be enacted, it was the duty and responsibility of every true citizen to preserve, promote and practice the cherished heritage of Driglam Namzha and all other forms of our rich and splendid culture.

7. Taxation of Pasture Land

The People's Representative of Kheng Silambi (Mongar) submitted that in the past, they could obtain Tsa-Drog Lagkhers (pasture licences) by paying only Nu.1/- for a five year period, irrespective of the number of cattle owned by a licence holder. This was followed by an increase of the licence fee to Nu.5/- which now applied to only those persons who would develop their grazing grounds with improved varieties of pasture seed. A licence fee of Nu.100/- was levied for those people who did not/could not develop their own pasture fields, regardless of the number of cattle they owned.

In view of the kidug of the ordinary village people, the people requested that the licence fee be levied in accordance with the number of cattle owned by the applicant.

The Minister of Finance informed the House that taxation on pasture land was based on the policy of the Royal Government to improve the quality of grazing grounds and to reduce the number of cattle while improving their breed and productivity. He held the view that the main cause of this problem was the confusion and conflict over private and common grazing grounds which often created misunderstanding over pasture licence. He clarified that, even though it was necessary to obtain individual licence for each pasture land, it was not necessary for every person who had cattle grazing in a common/public pasture to obtain a separate licence. He said that the cattle owners needed only one combined licence in such cases.

Many representatives of the people appreciated the clarification made by the Finance Minister. However, they stressed the problem faced by the poor farmers who only had a few heads of cattle and, thus, had no reason to develop pastures. This resulted in them having to pay Nu.100/- instead of Nu.5/- as paid by those who had more cattle and, therefore, had every reason to improve their pastures. They reiterated the request for payment of licence fees according to the number of cattle.

His Majesty the King was pleased to propose that since there was no difficulty for the Royal Government to fix the rate of pasture licence fee on the basis of number

of cattle, a decision should be taken after a proper study was conducted to determine how best the interest of the people could be served.

Having noted that there prevailed certain misinterpretation of the policy on pasture development, and as proposed by His Majesty the King, the National Assembly decided that the benefit of levying fees on the basis of the number of cattle should be discussed at the Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs and their recommendations submitted to the concerned Ministry for final decision.

8. Ban on sale of cigarettes/tobacco

The People's Representative of Thimphu Dzongkhag submitted that as Bhutan was a Buddhist Kingdom that had been blessed by Guru Rimpochey, and since smoking was not in conformity with religious faith and also injurious to health, the sale of cigarettes/tobacco should be banned in the country.

In response, the Minister of Social Services said that smoking was indeed harmful to health whether it was seen from the religious or health perspective. In order to discourage smoking, he said that the 31st of May as "No Smoking" day each year. It had also been most encouraging to note that the steps taken by the individual Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs to prohibit the sale of cigarettes/ tobacco in their respective Dzongkhags had resulted in a significant reduction in smoking in the Kingdom. However, he felt that in light of the disturbances created by the ngolops in the south, regulatory actions such as a ban on the consumption of tobacco may prove counter productive.

The Royal Advisory Councillors and many representatives of the people took the common stand that, since Bhutan was a Buddhist country and as consumption of tobacco was not in conformity with the practice of Dharma and was at the same time injurious to health, sale of tobacco products should not only be banned in Thimphu but all over Bhutan. There were others who, with the objective of controlling both the sale and consumption of tobacco products, argued in favour of raising sales tax on the item.

At this juncture, the Home Minister intervened to draw the attention of the House to the difficulties that would be involved in implementing a law banning cigarette

smoking. He observed that consumption of tobacco products, liquor or doma (betel nut) were personal habits and practices, the harmful consequences of which were well known to those who indulged in them. He asserted that it would be both undesirable and near impossible to implement such a ban.

The Secretary of the Dratshang Lhentshog expressed his support for this position by stating that as long as the smokers were aware of the adverse effects of their habit, as far as religion was concerned, giving up the habit should be done out of free will and personal faith, and must never be imposed through the instrument of law. He, therefore, saw no need for the enactment of a law on this subject.

While noting with appreciation, the proposal of the people of Thimphu for a ban on tobacco products, His Majesty the King was pleased to suggest that since tobacco was harmful both in the context of religious faith as well as physical health, the Royal Government should make every effort to educate and promote awareness among the people about the adverse effects of smoking through the educational and health institutions so that indulgence in the habit could be minimised. His Majesty felt that such a campaign would be very useful, and would not have the negative impact of regulatory measures.

Appreciating the wisdom of His Majesty's suggestion, the National Assembly resolved that the Royal Government should take suitable action in accordance with it.

9. Establishment of a Farm similar to the Paro Bondey Agriculture Farm in the East

The People's Representative of Mongar requested that for the benefit of the people of eastern Bhutan, the Royal Government should establish an Agricultural Development Centre in the Eastern Zone using the Paro Bondey Agriculture Farm as a model.

In his reply to this request, the Director General of Agriculture outlined the main features of the Paro Bondey Farm as briefly listed below:

- a) The AMC Headquarters
 - i) Machines and tools for national supply
 - ii) a training centre for agricultural machinery
 - iii) a workshop for agricultural machinery
- b) The NASEPP Headquarters
 - i) seed processing and storage facility
 - ii) tissue culture and nursery for horticultural crops.
- c) Adaptive research and experimental plots on horticultural crops.

The Director General reported that the above listed three centres were responsible for the distribution and promotion of farm machinery, tools and implements; seeds and cereals and vegetables; and seeds and seedlings for horticultural plants. He said that the existence of the Centre at Paro Bondey was of no exclusive benefit to Paro in view of its nation-wide role and functions. To illustrate the point, he drew an analogy with the Sherubtse College which was located in Kanglung, Tashigang, but offered opportunity for higher education to students throughout the country. Nevertheless, he reported that since the Dzongkhags of the Eastern Zone were far from Thimphu, the Agriculture Ministry had made additional and special arrangements to provide the same services to the Eastern Zone. He enumerated them as listed below :-

- i) Construction of a large and fully equipped workshop at a cost of Nu.20 million.
- ii) To alleviate farm labour shortage and to contribute towards improvement in agricultural productivity and production, tools and machineries would be distributed on subsidy ranging from 30% to 70% for which a provision of Nu.2.39 million had been kept in the Seventh Plan.
- iii) The Khangma Agricultural Research Centre which was responsible for developing maize-based farming system for dry and humid sub-tropical to temperate zones. Besides Khangma, research works were being carried out at Rongthong, Chenari, Yarung and Tashi Yangtse farms. In addition, a vast number of farm trials virtually in every gewog in the 5 dzongkhags covering over 100 trials were being carried out during the Sixth Plan. Nu.2.84 million

was allocated during the Sixth Plan for these activities. For the Seventh Plan budget, a large provision had been made under the Integrated Eastern Zone Agricultural Development Project.

- iv) The Khangma Regional Plant Protection Centre had been established recently. A building had already been constructed and Nu.3.13 million had been allotted for the Seventh Plan.
- v) The BNPP-Khangma Centre had been in existence for quite some time now. As a result, Tashigang produced the maximum potato amounting to 7,000 MT out of the country's annual production of 32,000 MT.
- vi) The recently established Chenari Seed Processing and Storage Centre had buildings and equipment worth Nu.15.4 million. This centre would be further strengthened during the Seventh Plan. Regional seed production and processing was Department of Agriculture's new strategy during the Seventh Plan. Contract farmers would be used for seed production in the field.
- vii). Under Development and Distribution of Seeds and Seedling, Nu.2.91 million was provided for the Seventh Plan.
- viii) Nu.78.13 million was provided for the Eastern Zone Integrated Agricultural Development Project during the Seventh Plan.
- ix). Nu.127 million was kept for Forestry III Project in Eastern Bhutan.

Therefore, Nu.233.56 million had been earmarked by the Ministry of Agriculture for the development of agriculture, livestock and forestry projects in the East during the Seventh Plan. This amount was only for the projects and not for the total Seventh Plan which if taken into account would be much more. With the implementation of all these projects and programmes there was every likelihood that Khangma Agriculture Institution would surpass Bondey Farm. Hence, the Director General said that there was no reason for the people of eastern Bhutan to be envious of Bondey Farm. He added that the Ministry of Agriculture was of the view that the people should instead be grateful to His Majesty the King and the

Royal Government for granting such a large and generous plan for the East during the Seventh Plan.

The Chimi of Mongar Dramitse clarified that the request for an Agriculture Farm like the Bondey Farm was in no way prompted by any perception of disparity or discrimination between the eastern and other dzongkhags. He stated that the people in the East were fully conscious and appreciative of the fact that all the people of Bhutan were subjects of one King fully united in spirit under one faith. He thanked the Royal Government for the generous and elaborate agriculture development programme proposed for the Eastern Zone.

The discussion on the subject concluded at this point with the National Assembly resolving that there was no need to entertain any further deliberations on the subject.

IV. THE ANTI-NATIONAL PROBLEM IN SOUTHERN BHUTAN

From the second day of its 70th Session, the National Assembly deliberated on the problems created by the anti-national uprising in southern Bhutan. The representatives of the public of the 18 Dzongkhags put forth several proposals towards overcoming these problems and restoring peace and tranquility in the country once again. During the deliberations, the representatives of the Government, the Monk Body and the Public were all unanimous and singleminded in expressing the need to take every measure necessary to safeguard the security, sovereignty and well-being of the Kingdom of the Palden Drukpa.

The members recalled that past Bhutanese generations had made great sacrifices in safeguarding the security and well-being of the Bhutanese nation. Showing true patriotism and dedication, they had even risked their lives in several wars fought with the Tibetans and the British to protect the sovereignty of the country, and had passed down to their future generations the proud legacy of a sovereign, independent nation with a unique national identity. For many generations, said the members, the Kingdom of Bhutan had enjoyed peace, tranquility and happiness through the blessings and protection of our Guardian Deities, the merits and wisdom of our Kings and the good fortune, loyalty, dedication and unity of the people.

The People's Representatives pointed out that the Nepalese were recent immigrants who had come to work on the land in the foothills of Bhutan. From the very beginning they had taken advantage of the Royal Government by violating the laws of the land and bringing in relatives and fellow Nepalese to settle illegally in Bhutan. They also illegally occupied large tracts of government land and resorted to various means such as illegal registration in census records to increase the Nepalese population in southern Bhutan.

Despite these illegal actions on their part, the Royal Government had always shown tolerance and generosity towards the Nepalese in southern Bhutan. They were given more land than the original Bhutanese and provided with employment and good economic opportunities. Southern Bhutan was given preferential treatment in all development programmes and the Southern Bhutanese enjoyed greater benefits in education and employment in government service, including appointment to very senior and important posts.

At a time when the whole country was fully involved in further promoting its development process for the greater prosperity of the people, and when the nation was already beginning to reap the fruits of thirty years of development, the government and people of Bhutan were shocked and dismayed by the anti-national uprising in southern Bhutan. Starting with the distribution of subversive literature in 1988, the anti-national activities culminated with outright rebellion against the TSA-WA-SUM in the 5 Dzongkhags and 1 Dungkhag of southern Bhutan in September-October, 1990.

The Assembly members observed the following pattern in the anti-national uprising:

- a) The ngolops began by viciously maligning the rich religious and cultural heritage of Bhutan. They deliberately attacked the policy of national integration through the promotion of Driglam Namzha and the national dress and language to create misunderstanding between the people and the government, and communal discord among the people of northern and southern Bhutan.
- b) They tried to undermine the excellent state of Indo-Bhutan relations through malicious allegations of Indians being mistreated in Bhutan although the very baselessness of their charges failed to win them any sympathy or support except from the local Nepali population across the border. They also tried to win

international sympathy and support for their activities by making wild allegations of human rights violation by the Royal Government.

- c) At the same time, the ngolops started terrorist activities that began with threats, extortion, and robbery but soon graduated to kidnappings, rape and murder. They destroyed many basic service facilities in southern Bhutan such as schools, hospitals and bridges built at great cost by the government for the benefit of the Southern Bhutanese themselves. They totally disregarded the fact that the government had developed more service facilities in southern Bhutan than in any other part of the country.
- d) After the violent uprising in the 5 Dzongkhags and 1 Dungkhag of southern Bhutan last year, the anti-nationals continued to carry out large scale acts of terrorism and had not relented in their efforts to destabilise the country and achieve their subversive goals.

As the anti-nationals in southern Bhutan had shown their total lack of appreciation for everything the Royal Government had done for them and were instead bent on subverting the future security and well-being of the TSA-WA-SUM, the National Assembly deliberated on the following proposals to remove the ngolop problem once and for all.

1. Eviction of ngolops

Twenty proposals on the eviction of anti-nationals were put forth by the representatives of 79 gewogs from the Dzongkhags of Samdrupjongkhar, Haa, Tongsa, Tashigang, Samchi, Chirang, Sarbhang, Dagana and Mongar, and the representatives of the Monk Body and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The People's Representatives of Haa, Tongsa and Tashigang proposed that all individuals involved in anti-national activities should be evicted from the country. Other members proposed that some distinction should be made as all Southern Bhutanese would not be anti-nationals. In this regard one of the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan requested that only those who were involved in anti-national activities be evicted and their relatives dealt with as per the Law of the Land.

However, most members held the view that no distinction should be made whatsoever and that all Southern Bhutanese should be evicted. They also recommended that this should be applicable to all Southern Bhutanese working in the government and even to those Southern Bhutanese married to original Bhutanese. The Chimis of Samdrupjongkhar and Haa proposed that even if one individual from a household was involved in anti-national activities, the whole family should be evicted including those in government service.

The People's Representative from Chirang proposed that if a head of a family absconded from the country and was found to have joined the anti-nationals, the names of all his family members should be struck off the Census Records, and the family evicted and their property confiscated by the government. He stated that such an action was required as otherwise there was every possibility of the ngolop's family members supporting the anti-nationals. In the event that members of the household, other than the head of the family, absconded from the country, he proposed that only the names of the persons concerned should be removed from the census and their property confiscated as the other family members could still be loyal citizens.

The Chimi from Sarbhang Dzongkhag stated that if the head of the family was involved in anti-national activities, the whole family should be evicted. If such severe actions were not taken, anti-national activities would continue. This would not only endanger the life and property of the local people but also pose a great threat to the security and stability of the country.

In this regard, the People's Representative from Sibsoo Dungkhag expressed his deep disappointment and disgust at the fact that many people who had been educated by the government at great cost, and even sent for higher studies abroad and given important positions in the government, had joined the anti-nationals instead of showing appreciation and gratitude to the government. These people had not only attempted to create misunderstanding between the government and the public but had also tried to destroy the excellent relations between Bhutan and its neighbouring countries. As such, it had become impossible for the loyal citizens of southern Bhutan to tolerate the activities of such people. The public were, therefore, ready to fight these anti-nationals and requested the government to grant permission to the loyal citizens to fight them. He also reported that the family members of many anti-nationals were still in the country and mingled freely with the loyal citizens. He said that such inter-actions were not

desirable as it would have many adverse effects. The presence of such people were also making it difficult for the government and local officials to have free and frank discussions during public meetings as the relatives of the anti-nationals attending these meetings were supplying information to the ngolops. The People's Representative of Sibsoo, therefore, proposed that all family members of anti-nationals should be evicted from the country.

The People's Representatives from Tsangkhar Gewog of Dagana Dzongkhag submitted that the anti-national uprising in southern Bhutan had hampered all development in the country. He stated that he could not understand how people like R.B. Basnet, ex-Managing Director of the State Trading Corporation of Bhutan and Bhim Subba, ex-Director General of the Power Department, in whom His Majesty the King had reposed full trust and confidence, could misappropriate government funds on such a large scale and seek political asylum in Nepal. He also failed to understand how the Nepalese Government could provide support to such corrupt officials and suggested that in line with this action, the Government of Nepal should be requested to take over all the other anti-nationals in the country.

Likewise, the member from Dagapela Dungkhag stated that the uprising in southern Bhutan in September - October last year had posed a grave threat to the security of the country. He too expressed his inability to understand how the Southern Bhutanese who had been provided with good land and all the benefits of development could turn against the TSA-WA-SUM. He proposed that all Southern Bhutanese who had taken part in the demonstrations at Damphu and Sunkosh along with those who had been collecting donations for the anti-nationals should be evicted from the country. He assured the Assembly that the public would extend full cooperation to the government in identifying all such people. In the event, that these people were not evicted, they should be punished strictly as per the Law of the Land, he said.

The People's Representative from Chengmari submitted that until now people had not been in a position to oppose the anti-nationals. As such, the government had to face great difficulties in deploying security forces at considerable cost for ensuring the security of the public. He said that the public had now taken a firm decision to protect themselves from the anti-nationals as they had suffered considerably and had realized that the anti-nationals were the enemies of the people. Therefore, the public were firm in their desire to get rid of all the anti-nationals from their Dungkhag. The loyal citizens

of Chengmari Dungkhag, he said, had no feelings of love and compassion for the anti-nationals and their families. The people, therefore, requested the government to allow the public to evict the anti-nationals and their families from the Dungkhag. The representative said that for security reasons, the people also requested for permission to regroup their villages together after evicting the anti-nationals and their families.

The Home Minister expressed his appreciation for the proposal of the People's Representatives from Sibsoo, Chengmari and Dagapela that henceforth the public would on their own identify the anti-nationals and evict them from the country. Regarding the regrouping of villages, he stated that there was no need to obtain separate permission to do so as people were free to construct houses on their own land. However, he reminded them that in order to facilitate the protection of lives and properties of the Southern Bhutanese people, a circular seeking cooperation of the people to provide timely information on anti-national activities to the security forces had been issued but that so far no useful information or cooperation had been given by the public.

At this juncture, many representatives expressed grave doubts over the statements made by the Southern Bhutanese representatives condemning the anti-nationals. They cited examples of similar statements being made by the then representatives of southern Bhutan during the 68th and 69th Sessions of the National Assembly. They said that most of the previous representatives had subsequently had absconded and joined the anti-nationals. They, therefore, demanded that the representatives from southern Bhutan should make their positions very clear with regard to the punishment and eviction of anti-nationals and the methodologies thereof.

In this regard, several Government Representatives brought the attention of the Assembly to the non-discriminatory policy of His Majesty the King towards all his subjects despite the anti-national uprising that had taken place in southern Bhutan. Although they recognized that it would not be in keeping with His Majesty's magnanimous policy, these representatives felt that the time had now come to identify the anti-nationals and evict them from the country. Under the circumstances prevailing in southern Bhutan, the government should now act on the recommendations made by the representatives of the people, they said.

His Majesty the King was pleased to recognise that the representatives of the government, Dratshang and the public had brought up the proposal of evicting the anti-

nationals with the objective of safeguarding the security and well-being of the country. His Majesty, however, pointed out that it would not be fair or useful at this stage to press the representatives of the southern Dzongkhags to come up with a firm proposal on the question of identifying anti-nationals and recommending suitable punishments for them. It would be more appropriate if the representatives of southern Bhutan were directed by the Assembly to submit their proposal on this issue during the next Session of the National Assembly after holding extensive consultations and discussions with all the people in the 56 gewogs of southern Bhutan and obtaining their views and recommendations.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan expressed his deep appreciation to His Majesty the King for once again considering the issue compassionately. He thanked His Majesty for giving the representatives an opportunity to consult the public on the identification of anti-nationals and the punishment recommended for them, including eviction, and then submitting their proposals to the 71st Session of the National Assembly.

The People's Representatives from Pemagatshel, Punakha, Tashi Yangtse and Bumthang while respecting the suggestion made by His Majesty the King, stated that by and large they had lost faith in the people of southern Bhutan and that delaying decisions on the punishment and eviction of anti-nationals might not be in the best interest of the country.

In conclusion, the National Assembly resolved, as recommended by His Majesty the King, that the public of the five Dzongkhags and one Dungkhag covering the 56 gewogs of southern Bhutan would submit a comprehensive Genja (written and signed undertaking) to the 71st Session of the National Assembly on the punishment, including eviction, that should be awarded to the anti-nationals involved in ngolop activities.

2. Application of the Law against the ngolops

The People's Representatives of 59 gewogs in the Dzongkhags of Paro, Punakha, Samdrupjongkhar, Chirang, Lhuntshi, Chukha, Tashigang, Pemagatshel, Thimphu and Dagana presented 16 points as listed in the Agenda on the subject of imposing strict punishment on the ngolops without any relaxation of the Law. They argued that the ngolops had committed many criminal acts aimed at destroying the peace, security and

well-being of the peace loving Bhutanese people. They had caused irreparable damage and loss to both the government and people by destroying many basic service facilities like, schools, hospitals, bridges and roads that had been established by the Royal Government for the benefit of the people. They had deprived the people of their sense of security over life and property through their relentless acts of robbery, rape, abduction, murder and barbaric terrorism.

They pointed out that had the ngolops been brought before justice they would have been found guilty of crimes deserving capital punishment in many cases and life imprisonment in most others. Yet, on purely compassionate and humanitarian grounds, His Majesty the King and the Royal Government had granted amnesty to many of the ngolops who were still unrepentant. Instead of being grateful and living peacefully as loyal citizens, they had abused the amnesty and rejoined the ngolops in their terrorist activities. The representatives, therefore, demanded that, in order to fully eliminate the anti-national activities, the Thrimshung Chhenpo (Law of Bhutan) should be applied strictly and that no further amnesties should be granted.

The Royal Advisory Councillors and many other representatives of the people and government officials stated that Bhutan was a country where every subject was equal before the Law and the King and the Law and that the Bhutanese had always been law abiding citizens with each citizen contributing his/her share to the peace and stability of the country. Leaving aside the inconceivable crime of treason against the TSA-WA-SUM, every Bhutanese guilty of the smallest infractions of the law had always been certain of just punishment, be it a case of petty theft, slander or falsification. They maintained that the crimes of the ngolops were clearly aimed at destroying the country's socio-economic infrastructure, sowing seeds of sedition and causing communal violence in our harmonious society. It was with such intentions that the ngolops had unleashed a spate of terrorism mixed with common robbery and shameless, inflammatory propaganda against the people of Bhutan and the spiritual and political purity of the country.

The Chimis of Sephu, Kashi, Darkar, Talo and Nawang under Wangdiphodrang Dzongkhag voiced their inner sentiments and declared that until now, not only had a single ngolop criminal not been subjected to capital punishment or even life imprisonment, but that it had greatly disheartened and saddened the people to see that while the law was applied fully to loyal and law abiding citizens it was not being

applied to the ngolops. They appealed that in the larger interest of the nation, the laws of the land should be strictly applied in all cases, and that the ngolops should be punished severely in accordance with their individual crimes without conceding any form of relaxation.

The People's Representative of Chirang took the floor at this point and expressed the deep gratitude of the people of Chirang Dzongkhag for the clemencies granted to the Lhotshampas, and submitted that, henceforth, anyone guilty of inciting the people with the intent of bringing harm upon the TSA-WA-SUM should suffer capital punishment without benefit of clemency while all those who participated in any anti-national activity should be sentenced to life imprisonment.

Other Chimis joined in the deliberations by proposing that the few core ngolops who were under detention should not enjoy the pleasure of free food and lodging at government cost, but that they should be put to socially productive use through employment in activities such as road construction. Several representatives recommended that while all the ngolops must be brought before justice without exception, any Southern Bhutanese found guilty of impersonation or falsification of census records should be punished as per the national Citizenship Act just like any other Bhutanese in other regions.

Many members drew attention to the growing public opinion that, inspite of there being a penalty/punishment for every category of crime in accordance with the Law of Bhutan, the Royal Government had not taken any action against the ngolops for their treacherous crimes. They felt that the laws against treason only existed in writing as the punishments were not being implemented by the government. They observed that there were many people who believed that the continued anti-national activities were a direct outcome of the government's weakness in applying the Law. They, therefore, stated that it was imperative to apply the law firmly against any person guilty of unlawful actions against the TSA-WA-SUM.

Having taken the floor at this juncture, the Home Minister recalled that, with regard to the views and opinions of the members on the subject of punishing the ngolops as per the law, the Home Ministry had clearly briefed the Assembly during its 69th Session on the reasons why His Majesty the King had granted clemency to the ngolops. He announced that, although it had been resolved then that the ngolops should be dealt with

in accordance with the Law of Bhutan, His Majesty the King had been pleased to grant clemency five times, covering a total of 813 ngolops since then.

The Minister explained that His Majesty the King had granted amnesty keeping in mind the long term interest of the country's peace and security and that it was not done merely on compassionate and humanitarian grounds. He clarified that it was in keeping with the articles under OM-A-HUNG in the preamble of the Law of Bhutan, that His Majesty exercised the sovereign prerogative of granting clemency. He, therefore, declared that there was no reason why His Majesty the King should not continue to grant clemencies/pardons as and when His Majesty deemed it appropriate.

The Foreign Minister and the Minister of Social Services and Communications stated that, among other reasons, His Majesty the King had acted in the interest of Bhutan's image and that His Majesty had also consulted with the many officials and Royal Advisory Councillors, who were members of the National Assembly as well as the Cabinet, on the subject of granting amnesty. They added that the provisions in the Law of Bhutan as clarified by the Home Minister were well known to every member and that they fully respected the exercise of this sovereign prerogative on the basis of merit and justifications.

In response, the representatives were unanimous in submitting that they had never harboured the slightest doubt in the actions of His Majesty the King from the very beginning and that they would continue to support whole-heartedly all the actions and decisions taken by His Majesty for the well-being of the country. They further submitted that the evil and treacherous actions of the ngolops had greatly disturbed their minds and caused such anguish that they had to take the opportunity to clear their deep concerns, especially their conviction that subjection of a few ngolops to the severest form of lawful punishment would have a sobering and pacifying effect on all other anti-nationals in southern Bhutan.

At this point, one of the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan conveyed the deepest gratitude of the Lhotshampas for the unconditional clemencies that were being granted even though the law, as enacted in 1959, and covering the imposition of severe punishment for activities against the TSA-WA-SUM, was clearly enshrined in article 17 and section 1 to 11 of the Law of Bhutan. He went on to submit his personal view on the subject of punishment for ngolops by recommending that those found guilty

should be given a prison term between one year to 10 years or 14 years depending on the degree of their crime.

Several members entered the debate to warn that the ngolops, upon availing clemency, were returning to their villages and inciting the people and fanning regional and communal feelings by insinuating that the Royal Government indulged in discrimination. They maintained that such attempts had been made by the anti-nationals from the very beginning and feared that their capacity to do so may have been unwittingly strengthened by the government. They pressed for firm and severe measures on the Lhotshampa community before the problem assumed larger and more dangerous proportions.

The Chimis from Pemagatshel, Mongar and Dagana reiterated the fact that even under normal circumstances, even the most minor offence brought a just punishment upon the perpetrator, irrespective of whether the case was decided at the lowest court of law, the High Court or on appeal even by His Majesty the King. They stated that it was incumbent upon them as representatives of the people to obtain clarifications in the National Assembly on why the ngolops who had committed the vilest crime of high treason against the TSA-WA-SUM enjoyed clemency. Convinced of the wisdom of the ancient adage which advised that “a fire should be snuffed out before it becomes an inferno” and to “rid the infant enemy before he became a menacing giant”, they urged that, for the sake of national security, the country should not hesitate to let the sword of justice fall on the neck that carried the devil’s head.

His Majesty the King expressed his understanding and respect for the position of the people and the convergence of perceptions and opinions of all the members on the issue under discussion. There was good reason behind their request to the Royal Government to punish the ngolops in strict accordance with the Law of Bhutan upon their being found guilty. However, if the people all truly believed that it was imperative to not only overcome the current problem from the ngolops but to prevent it from ever surfacing again to haunt posterity, His Majesty asserted that it was essential that the people reposed in him their full trust and confidence and the total responsibility to achieve this end. The willingness of the people to understand and accept the reasons for granting amnesty to ngolops in future, should the cause arise, would help substantially in the pursuit of the ultimate solution. His Majesty confirmed that the granting of clemency to the 813 ngolops had not been an act of compassion or humanitarian persuasion alone,

but a decision that was inspired by his deep-seated commitment to uproot the very cause of the current problem so that the peace, security and sovereignty of the Palden Drukpa would never again be threatened.

The representatives of the people responded that the ultimate burden of responsibility for ensuring Bhutan's security and sovereignty had always rested fully on the strong and capable shoulders of His Majesty the King. They offered their deepest gratitude to His Majesty for his heart warming assurances and for assuming the full responsibility of bringing about a lasting solution to the ngolop problem. Towards this end, the people offered their unwavering and unconditional support to His Majesty the King .

Upon the conclusion of the lengthy deliberations on the subject of applying the law of the Land strictly to the ngolops and the granting of amnesty, the National Assembly noted that the ngolops had not only abused the trust, compassion and magnanimity of the King and the People, but had, without any cause and provocation, committed many treacherous crimes of treason against the TSA-WA-SUM. The Assembly resolved that the Royal Government should bring these criminals and terrorists to justice and award them the severest form of punishment including life imprisonment and capital punishment. In doing so, due weightage and consideration must be given to the long term security and well-being of the country as well as to the Law of the Land and the resolutions of the National Assembly.

On the subject of granting amnesty, it was unanimously resolved by all the representatives of the Clergy, the Government and the People, that His Majesty the King should continue to exercise the sovereign prerogative of granting clemency as enshrined in the Law of Bhutan in its preamble under the articles, OM-A-HUNG.

3. Extradition of ngolops and discussion with neighbouring countries on this point.

The people's representatives of 43 gewogs from the Dzongkhags of Thimphu, Tashigang, Wangdiphodrang, Bumthang, Lhuntshi, Pemagatshel, Punakha, Dagana, Haa and Chukha, and the representatives of the Monk Body and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry categorically stated that the anti-nationals who had run away to India and Nepal should be extradited and that the matter should be taken up with the neighbouring countries concerned to minimise the problems brought about by these ngolops.

Eighteen proposals in this regard were put forth. The members pointed out that the anti-nationals and their supporters had turned against the TSA-WA-SUM and were working on destabilizing the Government. They said that most of these anti-nationals were people who had been educated by the government, and given preferential treatment in employment and promotions and that some of them had been trusted senior officials. Instead of being grateful to their King, Government and Country, they had risen against the TSA-WA-SUM, and absconded from the country on the pretext of the government having adopted discriminatory policies on religion, language, customs and tradition. From their bases outside the country the anti-nationals had been continuously carrying out robbery, arson, kidnapping, murder and other terrorist activities.

The People's Representatives felt that since the anti-nationals were operating from outside the country, such acts could even affect the good relations with the neighbouring countries.

In view of these considerations, the representatives strongly felt that the Royal Government should hold discussions with the governments of the countries where these anti-nationals were taking shelter and make efforts to at least extradite the leaders of the anti-nationals. Many Chimis were unanimous in expressing the need to particularly extradite R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba, of the STCB and the Department of Power respectively, for trial as per the Laws of the Land.

Some members, while fully recognising the excellent state of Indo-Bhutan relations, expressed doubts on the effectiveness of the extradition agreement between the two countries. The Chimis from Wangdiphodrang, Punakha and Tashigang said they were disturbed by the support extended to the anti-nationals by the local Nepali population across the border as these people might even attempt to damage the excellent relations between the two neighbouring countries. Other members proposed that the Government of India should be requested to ensure that the anti-nationals did not carry out terrorist activities against Bhutan from their soil.

Similarly, members from Lhuntshi, Pemagatshel and Bumthang felt that, if necessary, Bhutan as a member of SAARC should take up the extradition of the anti-nationals during SAARC meetings with the governments concerned.

In response, the Foreign Minister expressed appreciation for the concern shown by the public for the security of the country. He said that Indo-Bhutan friendship had been growing from strength to strength over the years and this close relationship had reached new heights during His Majesty's reign. He also said that with regard to the problems posed by the anti-nationals, the Royal Government had been receiving total support and sympathy from the Central Government in India. The Chief Minister of West Bengal had also assured the Royal Government that he would not allow the anti-nationals to carry out terrorist operations against Bhutan from their soil and had made this position publicly known through the Indian newspapers.

Despite India's big population and innumerable internal problems and the problem of distinguishing the Southern Bhutanese anti-nationals from the Nepalese people of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and the Duars, the Indian Police had apprehended some of the anti-nationals and recovered a number of vehicles hijacked by them. The Indian Police in Assam and West Bengal had extended their full cooperation and support. Frequent consultations at the district level were also being held between the representatives of the West Bengal Government and the Royal Government to discuss issues related to the anti-national problem.

The Foreign Minister further clarified the doubts expressed by some of the People's Representatives on the anti-nationals operating from Indian soil. He stated that in view of the close relationship between the two countries there had always been close understanding and mutual support for each other. He stated that he had no doubt whatsoever of receiving India's full and continued support in tackling the anti-national problem. He said that though there was an Extradition Treaty between Bhutan and India, while implementing it there were some problems due to procedural formalities which had to be carried out. The two governments were working towards overcoming these problems.

The Minister also said that Bhutan being a signatory to the SAARC Regional Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism had to enact a legislation on the suppression of terrorism and also to enact a Bhutan Extradition Act. These two Acts, if passed by the National Assembly when put forth by the Ministry of Home Affairs, would greatly facilitate the extradition of criminals and terrorists.

The Foreign Minister stated that in the past there had never been any problems in relations between Bhutan and Nepal. However, as the members might be aware, the anti-nationals who had absconded from the country and sought asylum in Nepal had received the full support of the political parties and people of Nepal. As such, he felt that it would be difficult to extradite these anti-nationals and also to recover the money and property stolen by them.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army, Goongleon Gongma Lam Dorji stated that the representatives of the public need not be concerned about Indo-Bhutan relations. From the Army's point of view, the Government of India despite their own problems, had extended full cooperation and generous assistance to Bhutan. Security was being provided to Bhutanese officials and the public travelling through Indian territory. Incidents of robbery and hijacking of vehicles had taken place now and then because the drivers or owners of these vehicles had failed to inform the Royal Bhutan Police about their movement and, therefore, security by the Indian Police could not be arranged. He said that the cooperation and friendship between the Indian Army and the Royal Bhutan Army was excellent, and that the Indian Army was providing generous and valuable financial and logistic assistance to the Royal Bhutan Army. He also expressed his deep appreciation for the valuable assistance rendered to the RBA by IMTRAT.

Many representatives expressed their happiness with the excellent state of Indo-Bhutan relations and their appreciation for the assistance and support provided by the Government of India with regard to the ngolop problem. They also expressed their hope that this support would be continued in the future. They felt that though India was a big and powerful country and Bhutan a small neighbour, the excellent relations between the two countries was a model of good neighbourliness and friendship in inter-state relations.

Many members expressed their deep appreciation for the unwavering support provided by the Government of India at this critical time in Bhutan's history.

His Majesty the King proposed that the National Assembly should adopt a resolution recognizing the unfailing support which India had extended to Bhutan at a crucial time and express the Assembly's deep appreciation to the government and people of India for their staunch friendship, goodwill and cooperation.

Thereafter, the representative of Wangdiphodrang stated that throughout history there had never been any problems between Nepal and Bhutan and since Bhutan had helped Nepal in its times of trouble in the past, he felt that the government should request for the extradition of R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba. Others felt that rather than extraditing the two officials, it might be better to recover the money and property stolen by them through a court of law.

The Finance Minister stated that R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba had planned to abscond from the country for some time and had therefore flagrantly stolen considerable amounts of money from the government. He stated that it was immediately after the Royal Audit issued notifications for the auditing of the STCB and the Department of Power, that R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba had absconded from the country. Subsequently, when the auditing started, and fearing detection, a large number of other Southern Bhutanese officials from these departments also absconded. In order to make detection difficult they had deliberately not maintained the accounts properly. Writing pads, cash receipts and cash memos of 19 outside firms had been found in their offices and residence. The auditing was yet to be completed but the preliminary report showed that R.B. Basnet had stolen money, misused authority and committed other serious irregularities that brought about a loss of over Nu.50 million to the Government. Similarly, Bhim Subba had also stolen money and committed other irregularities bringing about a loss of over Nu. 30 million to the Government. Between the two of them, they had brought about a loss of over Nu.80 million to the government. The Finance Minister stated that in his opinion the Royal Government should take all possible steps to recover the stolen funds.

Thereafter, some members stated that the anti-nationals had been consistently accusing the Royal Government of violating human rights. They questioned whether acts of robbery, arson, kidnapping, murder, torture, rape and stealing money in terms of millions was in keeping with human rights. They stated that these crimes should be widely publicized by the government.

In this regard, the Minister of Trade and Industries stated that His Majesty the King had reposed full trust in R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba and had not only promoted them but had also given them charges of important Departments. As stated in the Finance Minister's report, they had brought about huge losses to the government and as such the

Foreign Ministry should work on extraditing them even if there was no extradition treaty between Nepal and Bhutan. While he was not aware of the reasons for the Nepalese Government supporting these two officials, it was clear that they had absconded as criminals and not on political grounds. As such, every step should be taken to extradite them. If this was not possible they should be charged in a court of law.

Many members repeated that the anti-nationals led by R.B.Basnet and Bhim Subba had, instead of being grateful to the country, turned against the TSA-WA-SUM and brought about huge losses amounting to over Nu.80 million to the government and people of Bhutan. As such, the Royal Government, in consultation with the Nepalese Government, should work on extraditing these officials and punishing them as per the Laws of the Land.

Many members felt that if no action was taken against these officials despite their serious crimes, there would be a great risk of many more such cases taking place and huge losses inflicted to the government and people of Bhutan. Therefore, it was important to take all necessary measures to extradite the two criminals and try them in a court of law. If the Nepalese Government knew that these officials had absconded as criminals and not on political grounds, there would be no reason for them not to hand these criminals over to the Royal Government. As such, it was suggested that the Royal Government should take immediate action to pursue the matter with the Nepalese Government.

The People's Representatives from Dagana, Shemgang and Chukha questioned how it could have been possible for the government to allow such large scale corruption by Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet to go undetected.

At this juncture, the Foreign Minister said that it was very important for all the members to be aware of the true intentions and objectives of the anti-nationals. The anti-national activities, he said, were not launched because of the national policy on dress, language, custom and religion. These issues were used only as propaganda to malign the Royal Government and to gain international sympathy and support. The anti-nationals had a much more deep-seated, long term objective. Not satisfied that they were already a large minority, they were continuously repeating that the Nepalese in Bhutan comprised 52 to 60 percent of the population and, therefore, the Nepalese constituted the majority of the

population. Simultaneously, they were calling for the introduction of multi-party democracy. Their strategy was that once democracy was introduced they would be in a position to form the government in Thimphu and take over the country. They, therefore, wanted to rapidly increase their demographic size through illegal immigration. As such, he said it was not difficult to understand why the Southern Bhutanese were always finding different ways and means of bringing illegal of Nepali immigrants into the country and why their population had been increasing by leaps and bounds.

To give the historical background, Sikkim which was immediately east of Nepal strongly opposed induction of Nepalese settlers. The British, however, forcibly brought Nepalese settlers into Sikkim for their own political reasons. In no time the Nepalese population increased through high birth rate and through regular immigration from Nepal and soon they formed 80% of the population. Today, as everyone is aware, Sikkim is governed by the Nepalese majority and the original Sikkimese people are a small minority in their own country.

In Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, which are further east of Sikkim, Nepalese labourer were brought in by the British to work in the tea plantations. The Nepalese population in these areas increased rapidly and today the Nepalese population was totally dominates the tiny indigenous population of Lepchas and Sikkimese. The eastward migration of the Nepalese, actively encouraged by the British, spread to the foothills of Bhutan and the Bengal Duars and further eastwards to India's northeast region of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

It was not merely out of ethnic affinity that the political parties and people of Nepal were supporting the anti-nationals of southern Bhutan, but more out of their deep-seated desire to promote the concept of a Greater Nepal. This concept envisaged Nepalese domination over the entire Himalayas by bringing Bhutan, parts of the Duars in West Bengal and Assam and the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland under Nepalese control just as in the case of Sikkim and Darjeeling.

In view of this, the Foreign Minister said, it was far more important to understand the deeper implications of the anti-national problem and the threat to the nation rather than to concentrate on peripheral issues like the extradition of a few ngolops or the recovery of stolen money. That was why, the Minister said, it was necessary to ensure that the ngolop problem was removed once and for all if Bhutan is to remain a sovereign,

independent country. It was, therefore, of paramount importance that the government and the people joined hands under to His Majesty the King's leadership to remove ngolop problem once and for all. If His Majesty's farsighted policies on the ngolop problem was given unstinted support by the people, a permanent solution was possible.

The representatives thanked the Foreign Minister for highlighting the long-term aims and objectives of the anti-nationals. Many members, however, insisted that since there were no problems with the Government of Nepal, the Royal Government should at least work on extraditing R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba, as they had committed serious crimes, even if the other anti-nationals could not be extradited. Other members insisted that even if the Royal Government was not able to extradite them, legal action should be initiated against these criminals in a court of law.

The National Assembly decided that though the extradition of these two officials and other anti-nationals leaders from Nepal was not important for the national security, it was essential to make every effort to bring them back since they had committed serious crimes in the country, and that they be tried and punished as per the Law. In the event this was not possible, legal proceedings should be initiated against them. Towards this the Foreign Ministry should take up the matter with its counterparts in the Nepalese Government.

4 Holding of Important Posts and Sensitive Responsibilities by Lhotshampas

The representatives of 30 gewogs from the Dzongkhags of Tongsa, Thimphu, Haa, Bumthang, Paro, Lhuntshi and Tashigang, and the representatives of the Monk Body and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry submitted nine proposals recommending that Southern Bhutanese officials should no longer be appointed to important posts or entrusted with sensitive responsibilities.

In March 1990, during the 69th Session of the National Assembly, the representatives of the people of southern Bhutan in the Royal Advisory Council and in the National Assembly had submitted that the anti-national uprising in southern Bhutan was instigated by non-nationals and a few misguided anti-national elements, and that the general public were not even aware of such activities. They had said that the people of southern Bhutan had been greatly distressed and shamed by the anti-national activities and had sought forgiveness from the Royal Government. They had given their complete

and full assurance that such subversive activities would not take place again. However from September, 1990 onwards, large members of Southern Bhutanese people had revolted violently against the TSA-WA-SUM.

In view of this, the members submitted that the people could no longer trust the Southern Bhutanese. They stated that the Royal Government had not only educated the Southern Bhutanese officials but had also employed them in the Civil Service in important positions. In return, these ungrateful officials had betrayed the trust reposed in them and taken up anti-national activities against TSA-WA-SUM. It would, therefore, not be in the national interest to retain the services of such

people. The representatives proposed that all Southern Bhutanese officials should, therefore, be relieved from government service.

The Chimis from Tashigang and Bumthang suggested that the immediate family members and relatives of anti-nationals in government service should all be relieved from service. Others proposed that only those government servants from southern Bhutan who were loyal and had no connections with the ngolops should be allowed to continue in service.

In this regard, the Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission reported that the Commission shared the concerns of the members on having Southern Bhutanese officials in the Civil Service under the present circumstances. Today, he stated, out of 12,023 civil servants, 5,383 (39.23%) were Southern Bhutanese. In the past six years, out of 213 students sponsored for further studies in India alone, 127 (60%) were from southern Bhutan. He went on to say that the government had educated these people with the hope that they would serve the government and the people with loyalty and devotion. The disappointment and misgivings of the government and the public were therefore understandable as the main leaders and participants in the anti-national activities were ex-civil servants. Till date, 349 Civil Servants had absconded and 26 Forest Guards and 99 Police and Army personnel had deserted and joined the ngolops. During May, 1991, 10 senior Southern Bhutanese officials had absconded, and as all the members were aware, most of them had sought asylum in Nepal, said the Secretary.

The Secretary of the RCSC submitted to the National Assembly that the Commission had always had one uniform policy for all Bhutanese citizens and as such had provided

equal opportunities to all citizens in their training, appointments and promotions in the civil service. Despite the uprising in southern Bhutan, the Royal Government had not resorted to any discriminatory measures against the Southern Bhutanese civil servants. All that the Commission had done was to introduce the requirement of a Police clearance for processing training, appointments and promotions. This was applicable equally to all Bhutanese and was felt necessary in order to prevent people having direct connection with terrorists and ngolops from being appointed to sensitive posts.

However, while following this non-discriminatory policy, the government had to face considerable risks and embarrassment both at home and abroad. Students sent for studies abroad had turned against the government and in some cases had sought political asylum in the host countries. Despite these risks and embarrassments, the Royal Civil Service commission had still not changed its policy nor had it received any directives from the government to do so. This, he said, reflected the very patient and tolerant stand taken by the Royal Government towards the Lhotshampas under the benevolent leadership of His Majesty the King.

However, as of now, this non-discriminatory policy had not been beneficial as could be seen from the involvement of a large number of civil servants in anti-national activities, the Secretary said.

The Secretary also submitted that it was now becoming increasingly difficult for the Royal Civil Service Commission to give employment to Lhotshampas as the employing agencies were reluctant to accept Lhotshampas. This situation had been further aggravated after senior officials like Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet, with their subordinates and colleagues, had absconded from the country. The government agencies were also becoming reluctant to process the training of Lhotshampas as they were beginning to doubt the wisdom of such investments. It was becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain their support in appointing and training Lhotshampa civil servants as they had become wary of further cases of betrayal of trust by the Lhotshampas. Moreover, the Royal Civil Service Commission could not compel these government agencies to employ, train or promote Lhotshampas, for if that was done the agencies would hold the Commission responsible in case such officials committed anti-national activities or financial irregularities and absconded from the country.

The Home Minister stated that the government officials fully shared the concern of the public in this regard. While it was hoped that all Southern Bhutanese in government service would serve with total loyalty, dedication and commitment, it was no longer possible to gauge or state with certainty how they would actually conduct themselves in the future.

The members stated that in keeping with the national policy of one country, one people, the Lhotshampas had been given equal access to education, employment and appointments to important posts. However, as the Lhotshampas had proved themselves untrustworthy, all Lhotshampas in government service should be retired. While some members were of the view that no Southern Bhutanese should be given important responsibilities nor appointed to sensitive posts including posts involving financial transactions, others expressed the need to undertake thorough screening before Southern Bhutanese officials were promoted as otherwise there was every possibility of further abuses of trust and confidence being repeated. Though the government had incurred great cost in educating and training the Southern Bhutanese officials and had conferred special treatment on them, they had shown no appreciation and gratitude whatsoever.

The Chimis from Thimphu, Paro and the Representative of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed the need to stop further employment of Southern Bhutanese and that those already employed should not receive any promotions until the anti-national problem was removed.

At this point, His Majesty the King was pleased to inform the members that the Royal Civil Service Commission had full powers and authority for appointments into the civil service, training, promotions and imposition of penalties on civil servants as per the Civil Service Rules and Regulations. As such, His Majesty the King proposed that the Royal Civil Service Commission should be given the responsibility to closely study the issues raised by the representatives of the public and to make necessary amendments in the Civil Service Rules and Regulations with the objective of having an efficient and dedicated civil service to serve the nation.

The Planning Minister informed the National Assembly that although His Majesty the King was not a member, the Royal Civil Service Commission consisted of Ministers, Representatives of the Royal Advisory Council and Secretaries of the Ministries. While considering appointments of civil servants to various posts and promotions, the criteria

taken into consideration were qualification, experience, capability, dedication and loyalty to the TSA-WA-SUM. There was no discrimination whatsoever on grounds of race or creed. They informed the Assembly that the Commission was prepared to make whatever amendments were necessary in the Civil Service Rules and Regulations.

In response, the representatives stated that the Southern Bhutanese had greatly harmed the national policy of one nation, one people and that the Lhotshampas were responsible for dividing the country into two peoples viz. the Nepalese immigrants and the original inhabitants. The representatives deeply regretted the harm caused by the Lhotshampas. They submitted that while the original and true Bhutanese would always be loyal and patriotic citizens, they now had serious reservations about the Lhotshampas who were recent immigrants and had a totally different outlook and concept of loyalty and dedication to the country. They requested the Royal Civil Service Commission to give serious consideration to their proposals regarding the employment of Southern Bhutanese in government service. The Commission should not take their proposals as individual views but as the views of the large numbers of the Bhutanese people who they represented in the Assembly.

At this juncture, one of the Royal Advisory Councillors of southern Bhutan stated that the tragic and unexpected anti-national activities in southern Bhutan which had started from 1989, had brought about considerable worries and sufferings that had made all Bhutanese citizens very concerned. The Agenda of the 70th Session of the National Assembly rightly focused mainly on the anti-national uprising in southern Bhutan. He went on to state that since the Royal Advisory Councillors and People's Representatives from southern Bhutan had been silent during the debate on the anti-national uprising, the members from different parts of the country who were concerned about the uprising might have begun to doubt the position of the people of southern Bhutan.

He went on to say that the statements made by the Royal Advisory Councillors and the representatives of the public from southern Bhutan, as recorded in Resolution No.3 of the 69th Session of the National Assembly, that all the anti-nationals were not Southern Bhutanese, had been proven incorrect by the mass anti-national demonstrations carried out by the Southern Bhutanese towards the end of 1990.

Moreover, as highlighted by the resolutions of the 67th and 68th Sessions of the National Assembly, the public of southern Bhutan had gone against their own

declaration of support and loyalty made to His Majesty the King during his tour of all the Dzongkhags in southern Bhutan and his public meetings with representatives of every household in the south. Contrary to their declaration, the people of southern Bhutan had carried out unforgiveable acts against the country. He went on to say that in order to find out what had prompted the people to carry out such acts, His Majesty had conducted extensive tours of southern Bhutan during which he met villagers, Village Elders, Village Headmen and National Assembly Members. In these meetings His Majesty had explained at great length that for the sake of the security and well-being of the country and the people, the Southern Bhutanese should not allow themselves to be influenced by anti-national elements. It was a source of deep sadness that despite His Majesty's advice, the anti-national activities in southern Bhutan had continued to take place. It was indeed a well known fact that the people of southern Bhutan chose not to pay heed to the benevolent advice given by His Majesty and had instead carried out anti-national activities, the Councillor said.

There was no denying that the government had more than amply met the needs of the people on all fronts like education, training, economic development, building of schools, roads, bridges etc. Nor could it be denied that the shocking act of betrayal and uprising against the government had taken place in southern Bhutan. The people of southern Bhutan were trying to identify those responsible for the anti-national uprising, which he said had greatly harmed the people themselves.

The Councillor also stated that there was absolutely no reason for the people of southern Bhutan to resort to such acts as there were established procedures and means to seek redressal for any genuine grievances they had. The people were all aware of the redressal system in the country and the Royal Advisory Councillors were in a position to vouch for the existence of such systems. No grievance had been brought to the notice of any authority and he expressed regret at the fact that no Southern Bhutanese had even mentioned any grievances to him although he represented them in the Royal Advisory Council. It was, therefore understandable why all the members in the Assembly had been unanimous in repeatedly voicing the need to identify the anti-nationals of southern Bhutan, he added.

He went on to say that His Majesty the King had always shown compassion towards all his people and had been deeply committed towards improving their well-being. He hoped that the government and the people would continue to work together as before to

safeguard the country's security and to ensure that peace and unity was once again restored. He said that he was deeply ashamed and regretted that the anti-national uprising had taken place in southern Bhutan.

Although it was very difficult for ordinary people to find a solution to the anti-national problem no matter how hard they might try, he was confident that if all the people put their trust and faith in His Majesty the King and extended their full support and loyalty, a solution would be found by His Majesty and the security and well-being of the country would be fully safeguarded.

Thereafter, since the members had completed their submission of the views and concerns of the public to the National Assembly, it was resolved that, as recommended by His Majesty the King, and bearing in mind the present crisis in the country, and the concerns of the people enumerated above, the Royal Civil Service Commission should closely study the policies pertaining to the civil service and revise and make amendments, if found necessary, in the existing rules. The Assembly fully empowered the Royal Civil Service Commission to introduce and implement rules in the Civil Service Rules and Regulations that were considered necessary to ensure a reliable and dependable civil service to serve the nation.

5. Allotment of Illegal Excess Land in southern Bhutan

The People's Representatives of 45 gewogs in the Dzongkhags of Tongsa, Haa, Paro, Chukha, Lhuntshi, Tashigang, Pemagatshel, Wangdiphodrang, Dagana and Samdrupjongkhar submitted eleven proposals on allotment of land in southern Bhutan to the poor and the landless people from northern Bhutan.

The members proposed that the land belonging to Southern Bhutanese who had absconded and joined the anti-nationals and all categories of illegal land should be allotted to the poor and landless people from northern Bhutan. Some members recommended that such lands should be allotted to the retired personnel from the armed forces as many of them were finding it extremely difficult to find employment after retirement and were unable to stake claims to land owned by their parents as most of the land holdings were very small and not sufficient for distribution among the children. Such resettlement programmes would also foster preservation of the country's tradition,

culture and customs thereby promoting national identity and strengthening the security and sovereignty of the country.

The Chimis from the Dzongkhags of eastern Bhutan stated that there were many people who did not have sufficient agricultural land and that many did not even own a plot of land to construct a house. They requested that the illegal land in southern Bhutan and land belonging to the ngolops should be allotted to the poor and landless people from the northern Dzongkhags. Such a step would also ensure equitable distribution of land and reduce the occurrence of anti-national activities.

The Secretary, Department of Survey and Land Records reported to the Assembly that the cadastral survey of the land holdings in Samchi and parts of Samdrupjongkhar had been recently completed. He stated that in Samchi Dzongkhag alone, when the resurvey was carried out in accordance with the 1979 Land Act, illegal land holdings of 47,235.67 acres had been detected. During January to June 1991, 208 surveyors were engaged for the cadastral survey in Samchi, out of which 160 were Southern Bhutanese. As per the Land Act, variations of 0.12 acres and 0.25 acres were allowed for every acre of wet land and dry land respectively. If this Law had been applied strictly, large tracts of land would have had to be confiscated and the people concerned penalized. However, His Majesty the King had been pleased to command the regularization of genuine excess land holdings in accordance with Resolution No.13 of the 58th Session of the National Assembly which permitted registration of excess land without paying the cost, provided the land in question was within the boundary recorded in the earlier land record. In case the owner was unable to prove that the excess land was within the boundary of his land holdings, the excess land would be registered in his/her name provided the land holding of the particular household did not exceed the national ceiling of 25 acres. However, as decided during the 60th Session of the National Assembly, all forest land illegally leased and used for growing cash crops had been confiscated.

Though the Land Act permitted land holdings of only 25 acres per household, in southern Bhutan many people registered in the census under one household had been permitted to register land in their names on the ground, that although listed as such in the census, they were not members of the same household. This relaxation of the Land Act had enabled many households to own land far in excess of the land ceiling of 25 acres.

The Secretary went on to report that despite all these special considerations given by His Majesty to the people of southern Bhutan, Samchi Dzongkhag alone had over 47,000 acres of illegal land holdings even after large areas of excess land were regularised under the above special allowances and considerations.

At this point, the Home Minister stated that even after the Royal Government had regularised all genuine excess land detected during the resurvey as per the Land Act and the resolutions of the National Assembly, the amount of illegal land found by the survey ran into tens of thousands of acres. Besides these illegal land holdings, the government would be acquiring some land as some of the Southern Bhutanese were selling their land and leaving the country. Some of these land would be handed over to the Department of Forests for plantation and protection of the environment. The balance could be distributed to the security forces, militia volunteers and landless and poor people. He reported that the Ministry of Home Affairs was working on the procedures to be adopted for such allotments.

The Chimis from Haa, Punakha and Tashi Yangtse submitted that the illegal land in southern Bhutan should be allotted to ex-service personnel as this would contribute to the security of the nation and the promotion of the national policy of one country, one people.

His Majesty the King, at this point, told the Assembly that despite the anti-national uprising and the large scale terrorism and subversive activities unleashed by the ngolops, the 5 Dzongkhags and 1 Dungkhag of southern Bhutan had remained intact and secure because of the loyalty and dedicated services of the security forces. He proposed that the allotment of the illegal land to the security forces and retired servicemen, who were also a part of the rural population, would be a fitting recognition of the important role played by the services forces and the militia volunteers in safeguarding the security of the country.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors of southern Bhutan submitted that as in the case of Samchi Dzongkhag, excess land holdings would also be detected in the other southern Dzongkhags and requested the government to consider allotting these land to the “Sukumbasis” of southern Bhutan. He also submitted that when resurvey of the land holdings in the northern Dzongkhags were carried out, excess land holdings would probably be detected there also. He requested that resettlement programmes be

undertaken as per the resolution adopted in this regard during the 69th Session of the National Assembly and allotment of excess land be made to landless people of both northern and southern Bhutan.

The Home Minister submitted that if any individual felt that his/her land had been forcibly or wrongly declared as illegal by the surveyors, His Majesty the King had issued a Royal Command that such aggrieved individuals could take the matter to the Dzongkhag Courts or directly to the High Court. His Majesty had also commanded that if any individual wanted to sell his/her land to the government and leave the country, such transactions should be undertaken only upon submission of a statement from the head of the household declaring his intention to sell the land and leave the country. This statement must be made and attested in the presence of the Dzongda, Thrimpon, Head of the local Police, Registration Officer, Dungpa, Gup (Village Headman) and the National Assembly member concerned. The payment of the cost of land must also be made to the individual in the presence of the above officials and people's representatives. With regard to settlement of Southern Bhutanese in northern Bhutan the implementation of such a programme would be considered only after the present problem in southern Bhutan was resolved, bearing in mind the overall national security, the Home Minister said. With regard to the term "Sukumbasis", as per the previous session of the National Assembly and as landless people or people with very small land holdings were found in all parts of the country, the acceptable term was "Landless People" and not "Sukumbasis".

Many People's Representatives stated that the reason why such large illegal land holdings were being found only in southern Bhutan was due to the large influx of illegal Nepalese migrants and also due to convenient and easy leasing of illegal land holdings to non-national share croppers. They recommended that the illegal land holdings in southern Bhutan should be allotted to the security forces as proposed by His Majesty the King.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army expressed his deep appreciation for the proposal to allot the illegal land in southern Bhutan to the security forces. He said that such generous considerations by the government and the people would go a long way in boosting their morale.

The National Assembly resolved that taking into account the well-being of the people and to strengthen national security, the illegal land holdings in the southern Dzongkhags should be allotted first to security force personnel and the Militia Volunteers. The additional land after such allotments should be given to landless people and to people with very small land holdings, to facilitate the national objective of ensuring equitable land distribution.

6. Withdrawal of Citizenship Identity Cards :

The People's Representatives of Tshogongma, Athang, Tshowogma, Kazhi, Phangyuel, Rubey and Sephu under Wangdiphodrang Dzongkhag reported that the family members and relatives of the ngolops were assisting the ngolops in their terrorist activities by serving as messengers and as informants through their unrestricted movements. They proposed that in order to prevent this in the interest of national security, the Royal Government should withdraw their citizenship identity cards.

The Home Minister replied that from the beginning, everyone had been issued with identity cards in accordance with the Citizenship Act and since many identity cards were being stolen and also forged by the ngolops, it would serve no useful purpose to withdraw them. He, however, agreed that, in keeping with the common concern of the people and the government on the subject, the ngolops and their immediate family members and relatives should be dealt with according to the relevant articles of the Citizenship Act as and when they were caught or proven to have engaged in anti-national activities. Anyone violating security procedures would be dealt with according to the security procedures and regulations. He, therefore, felt that there was no need to withdraw the Identity Cards.

The concerned representatives of the people clarified that the matter was brought before the National Assembly in light of the people's concern over the anti-national problem which began in September, 1990. As they expressed their satisfaction with the explanation and assurances of the Home Minister, the National Assembly resolved that there was no need to take any action on the subject.

7. No Citizenship for Non-Nationals married to Bhutanese Citizen

The People's Representatives of Samkhar, Tashigang proposed that any foreigner marrying a Bhutanese should not be granted Bhutanese Citizenship.

In this regard, the representative of the people of Bumthang noted that, even though the National Assembly had resolved during its 67th Session in 1988, that any foreigner marrying a Bhutanese Citizen after 1985 would not be granted Bhutanese Citizenship, many Southern Bhutanese continued to marry foreigners. He pointed out that with the Royal Government continuing to grant citizenship to such people, the Citizenship Act was being undermined. He called for strict implementation of the Act for all those who had entered Bhutan through marriage after 1985.

Appreciating the observation made by the People's Representatives, the Home Minister said that as long as the grant of citizenship was based according to the Marriage Act and Citizenship Act of 1985, and the relevant resolution of the 67th Session of the National Assembly, there would be no problem regarding the point raised by the representatives. The concerned representatives expressed their appreciation and as there were no more discussion on the subject, the National Assembly resolved that the Ministry of Home Affairs should act in accordance with the above existing laws and the resolutions of the National Assembly in the case of marriages involving foreigners.

8. Identification of ngolops and their collaborators

The People's Representative of Tongsa Dzongkhag reminded the House that, during the 69th Session of the National Assembly, the Royal Advisory Councillors and the Chimis of southern Bhutan had insisted that the anti-national disturbances in the south had been instigated by outsiders. Short of making a sworn pledge, they had further assured the House that such problems would never arise again from the south.

They noted that although many of the Chimis from the south had now been replaced because they had been involved in anti-national activities and had absconded, the concerned Royal Advisory Councillors who were still present in the Assembly were aware of the extent to which this assurance had been grossly violated. Consequently, it was inevitable that the people of other Dzongkhags should lose their faith in the Lhotshampas. They stated that it was for this reason that the assurances now being given by the new Lhotsham representatives could no longer be accepted at face value. Therefore, as proposed earlier by the Lhotsham representatives that the Lhotshampas

themselves would help the government to identify the ngolops, the full responsibility of identifying the ngolops and their collaborators must be taken by the Lhotshampas.

This proposal was supported by many members who stated that the Gups, Chimis and the people in the south would always be fully aware of any stranger or anti-national element who entered their villages. They insisted that they must, therefore, fully assume the responsibility of identifying the ngolops and their collaborators.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors of southern Bhutan replied that, in view of the strict implementation of the Citizenship Act and the Land Act, everyone was aware of how much illegal land had been discovered after the recent cadastral survey in Samchi and Samdrup Jongkhar. He claimed that the success of this survey was due mainly to the support extended by the genuine citizens in southern Bhutan towards identifying the illegal immigrants. He, therefore felt that it would be adequate if the Land Act and the Citizenship Act were implemented faithfully.

The representatives of Samchi and Kalikhola submitted that even though the ngolops were from the south, all Lhotshampas were not ngolops. They claimed that the main leaders of the ngolops and those who had committed anti-national activities had all absconded, and that the remaining Lhotshampas were true and loyal to the TSA-WA-SUM as well as strict adherents to the traditions, culture and laws of Bhutan. They acknowledged that it was the responsibility of the concerned villagers to identify the ngolops in their respective areas. In this regard, they reported that in the recent census which was conducted at Samchi and Samdrup Jongkhar and in the on-going census at Sarbhang, all verifications and necessary investigations were carried out through close co-operation between the census teams led by the Dungs and the census committees of the people.

They submitted that through such genuine and purposeful co-operation between the government and the people they had been successful in identifying the illegal immigrants who had entered Bhutan as well as those associated with the ngolops. As for the responsibility of the people of southern Bhutan to identify the ngolops, they reported that they had been extending their full co-operation to the security forces.

The Home Minister agreed that it would be very useful if the people themselves and their Gups and Chimis assisted the Royal Government in identifying the illegal

immigrants and the collaborators of the ngolops. He added that all those who were identified would be subjected to further verification by the concerned committees and sub-committees of the local people with whom the Royal Government would conduct joint investigations.

The Assembly noted and appreciated the support and co-operation extended by the concerned Gups, Chimis and the people of southern Bhutan to the best of their knowledge and ability. The Assembly further expressed its hope and confidence that the Southern Bhutanese people would continue to extend such support towards identifying the ngolops and their collaborators as well as illegal immigrants in the interest of national security and in ensuring the peace and stability of the country.

9. Checking of Identity Cards and Vehicles at the Checkposts

The People's Representatives of Lingbu, Shelnga and Beme of Punakha Dzongkhag pointed out that from the very beginning, only heavy vehicles and passengers travelling in buses were subjected to identification checks at the various checkposts while those travelling in light vehicles were being exempted. He proposed that, henceforth, the identity of passengers travelling in all vehicles should be checked, irrespective of rank and status, and that the checkposts should be manned with competent personnel.

To this, the Home Minister replied that in view of the disturbances in the country and the need for everyone to be concerned and to assume a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to one's duty, officers from the Department of Immigration and Census had been appointed at various checkposts. He reported that, in accordance with the Citizenship Act, they had been discharging their responsibility of controlling the movement of illegal immigrants and those who might pose a threat to the security of the country. He further reported that, apart from the diplomats and the military vehicles, who were exempted from checks, all other vehicles and passengers were being subjected to proper verification.

The Minister, however, submitted that the Ministry of Home Affairs would have no difficulty if the National Assembly were to pass a resolution calling for conducting of stricter checks on all vehicles passing through the checkposts irrespective of the type of vehicles and the rank and status of their passengers.

The representatives of the people urged that while they did not see any harm in continuing to exempt the diplomats and the military, every citizen including all government servants should not only be required to carry their Identity Cards but it should be mandatory for government servants to carry movement orders from their respective offices whether the reason for their movements was private or official. They further urged that this should be included in the resolution of the National Assembly in the interest of the country's security.

At this point, the Chief Operations Officer explained that it was an international practice to allow free passage of military vehicles through various checkpoints. He, however, assured the Assembly that the RBA vehicles, which often carried arms and ammunitions in connection with the current security problems, would be properly checked and secured before they began their movement. He therefore felt that there was no need for the RBP or the Immigration authorities to check the military vehicles at the checkpoints.

Since there was no objection or any further intervention from the members, the National Assembly resolved that the diplomats and the military personnel would continue to enjoy unhindered passage at the checkpoints, while all types of vehicles and their passengers, irrespective of rank and status, should be subjected to verification of Identity Cards.

10. Matters relating to dual citizenship

The People's Representative of Tongsa called the attention of the House to the practice of holding dual citizenship and owning land and properties outside the country by many Lhotshampas. They requested that the Royal Government should conduct an investigation and take action against such persons.

The Home Minister replied that in accordance with the Citizenship Act, any Bhutanese citizen who was found to hold the citizenship of another country would immediately forfeit his Bhutanese citizenship upon being so proven. He submitted that the law being very clear, its implementation did not pose any problem.

As the concerned representative was satisfied with the reply of the Home Minister, the National Assembly resolved that, in accordance with the submission of the Home

Minister and the relevant provision under the Citizenship Act, the Royal Government should take suitable actions against those found holding dual citizenship.

11. Matter concerning Form No. '5' of the Census Records

The People's Representative of Dagapela under Dagana Dzongkhag informed the House that inspite of the Royal Government having given incentives to encourage inter-marriages between Lhotshampas and other citizens of the country, there had been very few inter-marriages. On the other hand, everyone was aware that the number of Lhotshampa marrying non-nationals and the issues from such marriages ran into tens of thousands. He further expressed his concern that the popular tendency of the Lhotshampa girls to marry non-national Nepalese and continue to live in the country, instead of going as brides to their husband's homes, as was customary, would lead to further influx of immigrants as the relatives of the husbands could be encouraged by them to migrate into Bhutan. It was, therefore, proposed that all women marrying foreigners should be deprived of their citizenships. In addition, the census Form No. 5 which enabled foreigners married to Bhutanese nationals to avail citizenship should be changed.

Many members of the Assembly recalled that during the 67th Session of the Assembly, Census Form No. '5' had been approved in connection with the Citizenship Act to help the Southern Bhutanese whose daughters were married to foreigners. The members therefore appreciated the proposal of the Lhotshampa Chimi from Dagapela that Form No. '5' should be discontinued.

The Home Minister informed the House that in accordance with the resolution adopted in the 67th session of the National Assembly, all issues pertaining to marriage with foreigners should be decided on the basis of the Marriage Act and the Citizenship Act of 1985. He clarified that Form No.5 was only a means to obtain and verify information pertaining to marriages with outsiders without which the Marriage Act could not be implemented effectively. The National Assembly, therefore, resolved that Form No.5 should not be invalidated or altered.

12. Implementation of the Citizenship Act

The People's Representative of Pemagatshel invoked the Citizenship Act of 1985 which granted citizenship to all those who had immigrated to Bhutan before 1958, when the nationality Act was passed and citizenship was granted to the Southern Bhutanese for the first time, while those entering thereafter would not be given this right. He stated that by taking undue advantage of the concessions made after the 1985 Citizenship Act was passed, to accomodate some of the genuine problems of the Lhotshampas, large numbers of illegal immigrants had entered the country and settled among our people.

The representative drew the attention of the House to the alarming extent to which these illegal immigrants had become a considerable economic burden upon the state by enjoying free access to all kinds of benefits including free health and education facilities and employment. He advised very strongly that the Royal Government should implement the Citizenship Act and the related resolutions of the National Assembly without any concessions and exceptions.

The Home Minister noted that the objective of implementing the Citizenship Act effectively to enhance national security was a mutual concern of the people and the government. Since the responsibility of achieving this objective lay with the Home Ministry, he reported that the Ministry was doing its very best to fulfill this responsibility by strictly implementing the Citizenship Act.

Although, in keeping with the requirements of the Citizenship Act, the concerned Dzongdas and Officials had been visiting each house on a door to door basis while conducting the annual census in their respective jurisdictions, they had not been able to obtain accurate census records. Therefore, senior officials and trained census enumerators had been sent to every Dzongkhag to conduct the census thoroughly. The Minister also reported that unless and until all information including identity of parents, place of birth, number of siblings, identity of spouse etc. were thoroughly verified, no citizenship identity cards were being carelessly issued to anyone.

The National Assembly noted with satisfaction the dedication and commitment with which the concerned Ministries, Departments and Dzongkhags had strived to implement the Citizenship Act. The Assembly further directed that, with full dedication to the long term interests of the country, all government agencies should continue to strictly implement the Citizenship Act and the related resolutions of the

National Assembly without fear or favour, unmindful of social or economic status and irrespective of rank or power.

13. Revival of the tradition of the Pazaab System (Militia)

The People's Representatives of the 41 gewogs from the Dzongkhags of Tongsa, Punakha, Wangdi Phodrang, Haa, Chukha, Mongar, Tashigang, Pemagatshel and Dagana submitted thirteen points recommending that the ancient tradition of Pazaab which was still practiced in a ritual form each year in Punakha Dzong should not only be revived but strengthened as a modern militia force.

The Chimis stated that the responsibility of defending the security and sovereignty of the country was the inalienable right and responsibility of all true citizens. They cited that since ancient times the tradition of raising Pazaab forces out of volunteers from each household had ensured the successful defence of the country against both internal and external threats. Even though Bhutan had not maintained a trained and regular Army, the people had defended their country successfully during numerous wars fought against the Tibetans and the British.

The representatives submitted that such volunteer forces should be raised today and maintained at minimal cost to deal with the ngolops who continued to carry out large scale acts of terrorism and subversion. Many of the Chimis shared the view that the recently conducted militia programme should be expanded and the training duration increased. In this connection, the age limit for entry into the militia should be relaxed to allow all men between the age of 15 and 60 to avail training.

They further proposed that those who had completed militia training should be given the opportunity to join the regular security forces and assist them in discharging internal security responsibilities. Furthermore, the militia training programme should be conducted on a regular basis and should include women, many of whom had already volunteered to join. Furthermore, since the Gups, Chimis and Village Elders were participating in the militia training programme, government servants and students should also be given the opportunity to avail militia training.

To this, the Chief Operations Officer replied that the Royal Bhutan Army was filled with pride and deeply heartened by the patriotic spirit of the people and the willingness

of both men and women to join the militia forces in such large numbers. He proposed that with regard to the age limit, the Army should be empowered to take appropriate decisions on the basis of the physical fitness of the individual volunteers.

As for the duration of training, he was most happy to report that the militia volunteers had been able to successfully complete the equivalent of one year's regular military training within four months and that those who were now serving with the security forces were able to perform as well as the regular soldiers.

The Minister of Communications and Social Services informed the Assembly that there were many students who had volunteered to join the militia with great enthusiasm, and a large number had actually received training. However, since His Majesty the King had been pleased to command that the students should continue their education, they were not permitted to serve with the security forces.

At this point, the representative of the Rabdey in the Royal Advisory Council reported that in order to enable the security forces to achieve the objective of restoring peace and security in the country under the wise and able leadership of His Majesty the King, all the monk bodies and the monasteries throughout the country had been performing continuous prayers for the peace and security of the country and the well-being of the people. He said that it was the constant and cherished wish of the monastic bodies to ensure that no harm would ever fall upon His Majesty the King and that through his inspiring leadership and wise guidance, the members of the security forces, as well as the people, would always be protected against all possible harm.

In the course of the deliberations, several representatives of the people made strong recommendations to expand and strengthen the Army. Others made suggestions that the Royal Government should issue weapons to those who had received militia training or that they should be authorised to make their own arrangements for the acquisition of arms. Many members also recommended that the Royal Government should immediately withdraw the standing order forbidding the security forces from resorting to direct firing even when attacked by armed ngolops.

The Chief Operations Officer responded that the Royal Bhutan Army should be empowered to strengthen its security forces on the basis of requirement and need and that in the case of militia personnel, they would be issued with suitable arms as and

when their services were utilized. He further stated that the acquisition of arms and ammunition for personal use should be done in keeping with the National Arms and Ammunition Act. He informed the House that during the months of September and October in 1990, when the anti-nationals had indulged in violent demonstrations in the five Dzongkhags and one Dungkhag of the south, from Sibsoo in the west upto Daifam in the east, the terrorists had marched behind a human shield of women and children followed by villagers carrying Khukuries while they themselves carried guns, grenades and bombs and wore camouflage uniforms.

Intending to take advantage of the small number of security personnel, they had advanced violently in all the Dzongkhags and Dungkhags openly brandishing their weapons. The security personnel faced extreme difficulties in view of the Royal Command that not a single round should be fired by any soldier under any circumstances. This command was issued to ensure that the security personnel did not inflict injury on any one of their fellow citizens even though they would be putting their own lives to risk. By courageously adhering to this Royal Order, several security personnel lost their lives at the hands of the violent mobs and many were seriously injured.

Since then, the ngolops had been carrying out large-scale terrorism against the people. Having become common terrorists and armed enemies of the state, the security forces were now taking appropriate and successful measures against the ngolops in keeping with military tactics and procedures. The Chief Operations Officer said that the success of the security forces in discharging their duties was due to the wise and inspiring leadership of His Majesty the King and the prayers and good wishes of the monastic bodies and the people who, like members of one family, had all rallied to inspire and give moral support to the security forces. The Chief Operations Officer expressed his deep appreciation and said he was confident of continued support and commitment from all sections of the Bhutanese people.

On behalf of all the representatives, the Speaker conveyed the deep appreciation of the National Assembly to the officers and members of the security forces, through the Chief Operations Officer, for the valiant and courageous manner in which they had shouldered the responsibility of maintaining law and order and ensuring the safety and security of the country.

He further thanked the Chief Operations Officer for the clear views of the Army and the relevant steps that were being taken in connection with the age limit, duration, and nature of training for the militia. He also thanked him for giving clarifications on the procedures governing personal arms in response to the various views and opinions raised by the People's Representatives. Therefore, as proposed by the Speaker, the National Assembly resolved to accept and approve the explanations and recommendation of the Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army on the various issues that were raised on the subject of the Pazaab System.

14. Composition of Security Personnel

The People's Representative of Tashi Yangtse proposed that henceforth, arrangements should be made to have only totally loyal and true Bhutanese citizens in the RBA, RBP and the RBG, and in the civil service and financial institutions. Security personnel for important stores holding arms and ammunition etc. should all be true and loyal Bhutanese only.

The Chief Operations Officer replied that he fully appreciated the deep concerns expressed by the people. Every precaution was being taken in guarding important installations and depots, and the security personnel were instructed to be extra alert at all times. In view of the grave threat from the anti-nationals to the family members of Southern Bhutanese security personnel, posting of Southern Bhutanese personnel in the disturbed areas was being reduced to minimise the threat to their families.

As none of the members had any comments on the matter, the Chief Operations Officer's reply was duly accepted and recorded.

15. Soelray (Bonus Incentive) for inter-marriage

The People's Representative of 8 gewogs from Tashigang and Pema Gatshel proposed that the grant of Nu.5,000/- as Soelray, which was later raised to Nu.10,000/- during the 68th Session of the National Assembly to encourage inter-marriage between Lhotshampas and citizens of other regions should be discontinued. They proposed that the resultant savings should be diverted for security purposes for which the Royal Government was incurring large expenditures.

To this, the Home Minister replied that the practice of granting Soelray was introduced upon the command of His Majesty the King as an incentive to encourage inter-ethnic marriages which would in turn help to promote the national policy of integration and unity among the Bhutanese people. He further informed that the decision to raise the amount to Nu.10,000/- was taken in the Cabinet, ratified by the National Assembly in its 68th Session and implemented w.e.f. the 1st month of 1990. Since then, the Home Ministry had spent Nu.17 lakhs on account of the Soelray given for the inter-marriages that had taken place. However, since the Southern Bhutanese showed no appreciation for this policy, and had instead been maligning the government stating that they were being forced to inter-marry with Northern Bhutanese, he agreed with the proposal to do away with this Soelray incentive.

In support of this, several representatives of the people stated that although marriage was a relationship entered into by willing and consenting adults and, therefore, did not require any Soelray, the government had introduced the incentive to promote national integration and unity. Since the incentive was not proving to be useful in promoting this objective, the funds allocated for this purpose should be reappropriated to meet the cost of maintaining security forces in the south.

In light of the above discussions, the National Assembly resolved to invalidate Resolution No.8 of the 68th Session of the National Assembly pertaining to Soilray for inter-marriages.

16. Cadastral Survey and Census

The People's Representative of Yuesu of Haa Dzongkhag recommended that it was important for the Royal Government to vigorously implement the Cadastral Survey and Census programme in order to obtain complete and accurate land and census data.

The Secretary, Department of Survey and Land Records informed the House that the payment of land tax was converted to cash from kind in 1971. When subsequent chain surveys were conducted to convert land records into the acreage system, many discrepancies had arisen. In addition, a substantial amount of private land had to be acquired for development purposes. The National Assembly had therefore, appointed a legislative committee which had drawn up the Land Act that was passed by the National Assembly.

In accordance with this Act, re-surveying of land had begun in 1980 starting with Chirang and Paro. In order to mitigate the problems faced by the people during the course of the survey, several revisions had been incorporated in the Act by the National Assembly upon the command of His Majesty the King. He reported that between 1980 and 1990, the Department had completed land survey in 11 Dzongkhags. However, owing to shortage of staff, they had been able to complete the revision of land records (Thram registration) for only 2 Dzongkhags, Paro and Bumthang. The Secretary informed the Assembly that the Department had now completed the cadastral survey and verification of land records in the 16 gewogs of Samchi between January and June of 1991. Similarly, he reported that upon the completion of census in Samdrup Jongkhar, they had been able to undertake cadastral survey in 3 of the gewogs. As soon as census activities were completed in Gaylegphug, cadastral survey and verification of land records would also be undertaken.

The concerned representatives of the people expressed their satisfaction with the progress report submitted by the Secretary, Department of Survey and Land Records. The National Assembly, therefore, resolved that, in conducting the cadastral survey in the remaining Dzongkhags, the Survey Department should continue to adhere strictly to the Land Act and the related resolutions of the National Assembly.

17. Effects on contiguous areas

The public of Karling and Tshe-zang of Dagana submitted their concern that the security measures taken by the Royal Government to control anti-national terrorist activities had produced adverse effects on the true Bhutanese living in the villages of Karling and Tshe-zang which were contiguous to the Lhotshampa villages. They requested for security assistance to protect them from the terrorists.

The Home Minister observed that the reason for the concern was mainly due to the ethnic mix of people in several villages of Dagana. He asked the people not to be alarmed over this situation and to be firm and resolute in their dedication and faith in the TSA-WA-SUM. He gave his assurance that the security units stationed at Dagana and Dagapela, with radio communication facilities, would be able to make rapid response to the security needs of the people. Furthermore, a wireless station had also been established at Drugay-gang for the benefit of the people. As the concerned

representatives were satisfied with the arrangements, the National Assembly resolved that no further action needed to be taken.

18. Role of the Royal Advisory Council

The People's Representatives of 6 gewogs of Dagana and Wangdiphodrang submitted that they were not aware of the Royal Advisory Council having played any useful role to overcome the anti-national activities of the ngolops although they were responsible for ensuring that no such problems arose between the people and government. Therefore, they saw no purpose in having the Royal Advisory Councillors. They requested that the Council should inform the House on the actions and efforts it had made to improve the present situation as well as the plans and proposals for the Council's future role in solving the current problem.

The Chairman of the Royal Advisory Council agreed that, according to Section 1 under Article 4 of the Role and Responsibilities of the Royal Advisory Council, the Council was required to advise His Majesty the King on any threats to the peace and security of the country that might be perceived by the Council. He added that, according to Section 7 under Article 4, the Council was also obligated to apprise His Majesty the King and also report to the Cabinet and the National Assembly, as might be appropriate, in the event the action of any citizen or person, including His Majesty the King, was likely to cause harm to the country and the people.

He reported that, in keeping with Section 6 of the 4th Article of the above-mentioned document, the Royal Advisory Councillors, being members of the National Assembly and the Cabinet, had been doing their very best to fulfill their responsibilities. They had been giving support to the Royal Government during the regular Cabinet meetings chaired by His Majesty the King to deliberate and decide upon actions to be taken in connection with resolving the anti-national problem. The Royal Advisory Councillors from the south had also accompanied His Majesty the King during his many visits to the southern Dzongkhags to restore peace and stability. When His Majesty the King visited the northern and eastern Dzongkhags, the concerned Councillors had accompanied the Royal entourage. The Chairman said that His Majesty the King had himself personally appealed to the people of southern Bhutan not to be influenced by the ngolops and participate in anti-national activities. He said that there was little that the Royal Advisory Council, with its 9 members, could do when so many of the Lhotshampas

would not even heed to the appeals and advice of His Majesty the King. He concluded with the statement that the Council had also been actively engaged in discharging its responsibilities as an appellate authority under the judiciary system.

A Royal Advisory Councillor submitted that, one of the reasons for their not having been able to meet the public in connection with the present problem was because His Majesty the King had insisted that, more than anyone else, it was his responsibility as king to visit the people and security forces rather than let others take the risk. He informed the House that inspite of their repeated appeals, on grounds of the grave security risks involved, His Majesty the King had regularly visited the south to be with the people and the security forces who faced great hardships. Should they be directed to undertake any specific responsibility in the interest of restoring peace in the country, the Advisory Councillors would always be prepared to render service to the best of their abilities.

Many representatives of the people joined in the deliberations and expressed the hope that regardless of what action may or may not have taken by the Councillors uptil now, they would in future carry out their responsibility as a bridge between the people and the government to the best of their abilities. With this, the deliberations came to an end, having noted that there was no need for any resolution on the subject.

19. Request for Police Outpost

The People's Representative of Buka-Tading and Bara gewog in Samchi made a request for the establishment of Police outposts in their gewogs for protection of life and property.

The Chief Operations Officer stated that the main reason for the establishment of many security units in southern Bhutan was to protect the life and property of the Lhotsham people. He, therefore, said that the concern of the people of Buka-Tading could be met if they explained their problems to the security forces based at Phuntsholing and Gomtu who regularly patrolled the area. He stated that the request for the Police Outpost at Buka-Tading would be studied and an appropriate decision taken by the Royal Bhutan Army.

A few representatives observed that the effectiveness of the security forces assigned to protect the Lhotshampas had been limited even with the support of the Militia. They said that this situation was comparable with the patient who could not be healed because he refused to cooperate with the doctor and follow his prescription. They recommended that the Lhotshampas should fully co-operate and give genuine support to the security forces in the interest of their own safety.

The National Assembly noted that adequate measures were being taken concerning security in the south as reported by the Chief Operations Officer. It resolved that the justifications for the establishment of a Police Outpost should be studied by the Army and an appropriate decision taken.

20. Pledges of Support for the TSA-WA-SUM

The People's Representatives of 53 gewogs from the Dzongkhags of Thimphu, Tashigang, Punakha, Shemgang, Haa, Sarbhang, Paro, Lhuntshi, Wangdiphodrang and Chukha, and the representative of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry submitted to the National Assembly that the people were fully prepared to extend whatever support was required, both material and physical, to overcome the ngolop problem in southern Bhutan. Other representatives also stated that the people of their Dzongkhags, too, had pledged their total support for removing the ngolop problem and had submitted their pledges in writing to the Royal Government. They submitted that all loyal and true Bhutanese were fully aware that within the last three decades only, the Southern Bhutanese had already rebelled twice against the TSA-WA-SUM. However, due to the blessings and protection of the Guardian Deities, the wise leadership of His Majesty the King, and the good fortune of the people, the ngolops had not succeeded in their treacherous objectives. To ensure that the country never again faced such a grave threat to its security and well-being, the representatives unanimously reposed their full faith and confidence in His Majesty the King and entrusted him with the responsibility of bringing about a permanent solution to the ngolop problem. For their part, the representatives pledged their total support and commitment to His Majesty the King and the Royal Government. They stated that regardless of whatever difficulty or problem that may be encountered, the people of Bhutan were fully determined to safeguard the institution of hereditary monarchy and the security and well-being of the Bhutanese nation.

The Minister of Trade and Industry said that the unwavering support of all loyal and dedicated citizens was the most important requirement for ensuring the well-being of the country. Therefore, all Southern Bhutanese who wanted to remain in Bhutan as loyal citizens should abide fully by the laws of the land, ensure that the ngolops did not receive any support from them, and should all pledge their total loyalty and allegiance to the TSA-WA-SUM. Therefore, when the people of southern Bhutan submitted their written views, during the 71st Session of the National Assembly, on the punishment to be imposed on the ngolops as per Resolution No. Ga 1 of the 70th Session, they should also submit their written pledges of total loyalty and allegiance to the TSA-WA-SUM. Such a step would go a long way towards removing the ngolop problem, he said.

Some of the Assembly members pointed out that there was no need to urge people to pledge their loyalty and allegiance to the TSA-WA-SUM as loyalty and dedication to one's country should be spontaneous and sincere. As the laws of our land were not enacted recently, they said, there was also no need to urge people to abide by the law. If the Lhotshampas had not taken up unlawful and treasonable activities in the first place, there would have been no need for the matter to be brought up in the National Assembly. The Lhotshampas, who had first of all come to Bhutan as migrants, were now trying to take over the country. For such people, there was really no point in even discussing the matter of making pledges.

Some other members suggested that the Assembly could give consideration to sending a tshogpa (committee) comprising of senior government officials and capable and responsible representatives of the general public to tour southern Bhutan, meet with the people and assess their true feelings, and encourage them to pledge loyalty to the country.

His Majesty the King said that regarding the pledging of loyalty and allegiance, it should be a decision that should be left entirely upto the Southern Bhutanese themselves. It should not be a matter for government officials or people from other parts of the country to be involved in.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors stated that touring the south and talking about pledging loyalty and support to the TSA-WA-SUM at this stage could be misconstrued as coercing or stage-managing the people's response.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army said that every Dzongkhag already had a Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchung (District Development Committee), and Gewog Tshogpas (Block Development Committee). So there was no need to establish any other tshogpas or committees as the existing tshogpas already involved the people at the grassroots level.

All the Assembly members agreed that it should be left upto the Lhotshampas themselves to come forward with their own proposals and that neither the National Assembly nor the government should be involved in issuing directives or suggestions on the pledging of loyalty and allegiance by them.

It was therefore resolved that the government should not involve itself in directing the Southern Bhutanese to pledge loyalty and allegiance but leave it upto the Lhotshampas themselves to decide, and that there was no need for establishing any additional tshogpa.

The Home Minister expressed his deep appreciation to the People's Representatives for the complete support, dedication and commitment pledged by the people and their total readiness to do everything necessary to remove the ngolop problem. The Home Minister expressed his confidence that with such strong commitment and loyalty from the people, the security and well-being of the country would always be safe.

The representatives of the government, the clergy and the people resolved to repose their full faith and confidence in His Majesty the King and to extend their unwavering support, loyalty and commitment towards removing the ngolop problem.

21. Greater priority for the nation's security than for development works

The People's Representatives of 20 gewogs from the Dzongkhags of Pemagatshel, Lhuntshi, Thimphu, Wangdiphodrang and Tashigang submitted six points emphasizing that greater priority should be given to the security of the country than to the implementation of developmental works. The development programmes implemented by the government upto now had already brought great socio-economic benefits to the people in the areas of Education, Health, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Roads and Communication, and raised the per capita income and standard of living. It was of course, very important to maintain this excellent pace of development. However, at a time when the security and well-being of the country was being threatened, it was far more important to give total priority to ensuring the security of the nation. For their

part, the people were ready to even sacrifice their lives for the security of the nation. Development works were of lesser importance during such times as they could always be resumed once the ngolop problem was removed. Therefore, the representatives proposed that development works should be suspended till the ngolop problem was removed and the budgets diverted to meet the additional expenditure for ensuring the security of the country.

The People's Representatives further submitted that it was the ngolops in southern Bhutan who had disturbed the peace and tranquility of the country. It was because of the large scale terrorism unleashed by them that development works had been disrupted in southern Bhutan, and it was because of their continued terrorist and subversive activities that security forces had to be deployed in the disturbed areas. Therefore, all development works in southern Bhutan should be stopped and the funds diverted for meeting security expenditures.

The Home Minister addressed the Assembly and said that he deeply appreciated the patriotic feelings and views of the Chimis and the proposal which they had submitted on behalf of the people from all parts of Bhutan that greater priority should be given to the security of the nation than to development works. At a time when the security of the nation was threatened it was indeed gratifying that the government and the people were totally united and single-minded in their determination to overcome the grave threat to the nation. He recalled that past Bhutanese generations too had been totally dedicated and committed to the national interest and had even risked their lives to safeguard the security of the nation. They had bequeathed us with the legacy of a secure and sovereign, independent nation and it was now our sacred responsibility to safeguard and hand over this proud legacy to our future generations, the Home Minister said. The Home Minister, therefore, deeply appreciated the proposal of the representatives to suspend development works during the forthcoming 7th Plan and divert the funds to meet the additional expenditure for ensuring the nation's security.

His Majesty the King then addressed the Assembly and said that rather than cut back on development works, he felt that extra efforts should be made to achieve greater socio-economic progress in the 7th Plan period. He said that a budget of Nu.15,000 million had been proposed for the Plan and every effort would also be made to mobilise additional funds to promote ant national objectives of the 7th Plan could not be fulfilled in all the 18 Dzongkhags of the country. Regarding the expenditures or budget for

security measures, the Finance Ministry had been diverting a little portion of the country's internal revenues to meet some of the cost. If there were further requirements, the Finance Ministry could set aside 10% to 15% of the internal revenue collections to meet security expenditures. This money would be kept intact unless required and could be taken back by the Finance Ministry if not spent.

The Royal Advisory Councillors and some of the People's Representatives thanked His Majesty for his unwavering commitment to promote the prosperity, well-being and security of the people and the country. They deeply appreciated His Majesty's desire to implement the 7th Plan fully despite the present problems in the country.

One of the representatives from Bumthang said that the Lhotshampas had brought trouble with them from the time they had migrated to Bhutan. Although the Royal Government had implemented many development programmes and established many service facilities for them, the Lhotshampas had themselves destroyed these facilities and disrupted development activities. Therefore, if these facilities were re-established, there was every possibility of them being destroyed again. Therefore, until the ngolop problem was removed, no development activities should be carried out, they said.

Other representatives stated that if the government decides to implement the 7th Plan in the southern Dzongkhags, and if the ngolops continued with their anti-national activities and the Southern Bhutanese people continued to maintain their present ambivalent and uncommitted attitude, the ngolop problem would not only disrupt the development activities in the southern Dzongkhags but also affect development works in northern Dzongkhags. Therefore, all development works in the southern Dzongkhags should be stopped until the ngolop problem was removed.

The Chimis from Tashi Yangtse, Shemgang, Tongsa and Paro noted that because of the continued anti-national and terrorist activities of the ngolops in southern Bhutan it had become imperative to give greater priority to the security of the nation. As it was important to further strengthen the security forces through training as well as procurement of equipment, and also because the government would have to incur much additional expenditure for security purposes, the entire 7th Plan budget for development activities in southern Bhutan should be diverted to meet security expenditures.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan, said that the Five Year Plans were not meant for just one Dzongkhag or one Dungkhag but for the entire country. There had been no problem regarding the implementation of any of the Plans upto the 6th Plan and development works had been progressing very well in the country. Anti-national and terrorist activities did not take place only in Bhutan but also happened in other countries. He noted that the people in the other 13 Dzongkhags wanted to stop development activities in the 5 Dzongkhags and 1 Dungkhag of southern Bhutan because they were upset that anti-national activities were taking place in the southern Dzongkhags. He, however, pointed out that the southern Dzongkhags were an integral part of Bhutan and requested the members to think of the overall national interest. He reminded the members that His Majesty the King had already explained the matter very clearly. He requested that a distinction be made between the ngolops and the loyal Southern Bhutanese and that the implementation of development works should be allowed to take place as planned.

The People's Representative of Kalikhola expressed his deep gratitude to His Majesty the King for the great love and impartiality with which he had always promoted the interests and welfare of all the people of southern Bhutan and all Bhutanese citizens regardless of their race or creed. In particular, His Majesty had always been especially considerate to all Lhotsham people. He requested His Majesty for his further kind consideration and understanding. He also requested the members not to consider all Lhotshampas as ngolops.

Some representatives pointed out that although the Lhotshampas were recent immigrants, they had been given preferential treatment by the government even after they were granted Bhutanese citizenship, and had received more benefits from development programmes. So, if the Lhotshampas themselves gave clear proof through their actions that they were not all ngolops, due consideration could be given for the implementation of developmental activities in southern Bhutan.

The majority of the representatives proposed that until the ngolop problem was removed, all development works in southern Bhutan should be stopped and the budget diverted for security expenditures.

The Chief Operations Officer of the RBA then addressed the Assembly and thanked the People's Representatives for their deep concern for the financial and logistic burdens

faced by the government on account of the deployment of the security forces. This was reflected in their proposal to stop developmental works in the south and divert the funds for security expenditures. Although it was up to the National Assembly and the Royal Government to decide whether development works in the south should be implemented or not, he felt that it was necessary for him to submit some points for due consideration. He reminded the Assembly that one of the main reasons for security forces being deployed in the south was in connection with development activities. Security was being provided to all administrative centres and important service facilities and installations like schools, hospitals, bridges, projects and industries. Security also had to be provided to all government employees working in the disturbed southern Dzongkhags. In view of the existing heavy commitments, he asked the members to note that it would be extremely difficult for the security forces to provide security for any additional development activities under the present circumstances.

The Minister of Trade and Industries then addressed the Assembly and said that most of the major industries and commercial centres and towns were located in southern Bhutan. In the wake of the large scale anti-national activities, all the major industrial establishments faced grave risks from the terrorists. Although the security forces were doing their best to protect all the important establishments, the terrorists had inflicted big losses to the government with acts of sabotage like the felling of electrical pylons supplying power to the Penden Cement Factory in Gomtu. Most of the industries proposed in the 7th Plan were to be located in the south, and promoting industrial development was one of the most important 7th Plan objectives. The Ministry of Trade and Industries was, therefore, deeply concerned by the serious difficulties and grave security risks involved in implementing the industrial development programmes in the south due to the continued anti-national activities.

The Minister of Social Services and Communication, the Director General of Health Services and the Director General of Education stated that large scale arson and destruction had been carried out in the south on health and education establishments and facilities. Many schools and health centres had been destroyed and looted by the anti-nationals. Teachers, doctors and health workers had been threatened, harassed and attacked by the terrorists, and many of the schools and health establishments had to be closed down. Despite these terrorist activities many schools, health centres and all the 9 hospitals in southern Bhutan had been kept open on the command of His Majesty the King. As people working in the disturbed areas faced constant risk to their lives, the

concerned Departments were facing serious difficulties in staffing these establishments. Because of the grave risks from continued terrorist activities, the Departments of Health and Education submitted that it would be extremely difficult to resume development programmes in the south until the anti-national problem was resolved.

His Majesty the King told the Assembly that despite the serious security problems in the south, the government had managed to keep open 44 schools and 4 national educational institutions in the southern Dzongkhags and had also accommodated 6,738 Southern Bhutanese students, from the schools which had to be closed down, in the schools in other parts of Bhutan. Despite the continued terrorist activities, every effort would be made to re-open at least 10 more schools in southern Bhutan in the following year. As many schools in the south had been either destroyed or damaged by the terrorists, they would have to be re-built by the Department of Education in areas that were more safe from terrorist attacks. In spite of the high cost that would be involved, His Majesty recommended that the National Assembly should pass a resolution to establish at least 10 additional schools in southern Bhutan.

His Majesty also informed the Assembly that all the 9 hospitals in southern Bhutan, 17 BHUs, 8 Dispensaries, 33 Outreach Clinics and 16 Malaria Centres had been kept open despite the continued terrorist activities. He said that every effort would be made to open at least 8 BHUs and Dispensaries by next year. This would bring the number of health facilities kept open to 91. These facilities could also provide all essential health coverage to the people including, pre-natal and post-natal care, child immunization and TB and leprosy control programmes. His Majesty requested the National Assembly to pass a resolution to this effect.

His Majesty said that he was fully aware that although the Royal Government had carried out extensive development works in the south at great cost, the anti-nationals in southern Bhutan, instead of showing their appreciation, had destroyed and damaged many of the facilities established for their benefit. He said that it was not out of compassion that he was recommending the implementation of development projects in southern Bhutan. He was actually keeping in mind the larger interest and the long term security and well-being of the nation and the national goal of achieving a uniform and balanced development throughout the country. His Majesty told the Assembly that the construction of a 65 Km motor road would be undertaken between Bhangtar and Samdrupjongkhar next year at an estimated cost of Nu.160 million, His Majesty also

informed the members that the Dungkhag offices in Dagapela and Bhangtar, which had to be closed down in the wake of the large scale anti-national activities, would be re-opened in 1992.

The Representatives of the Government and the People submitted that although the wishes and commands of His Majesty the King were sacred and inviolate, they begged to submit their sincere and heartfelt views on the matter of resuming development works in southern Bhutan. The Royal Government had always given preferential treatment to the Southern Bhutanese and had implemented more development works in the south than in northern parts of the country. The Southern Bhutanese had been given more land and also enjoyed far greater benefits in the areas of education, health and employment. Most of the industries and commercial centres were in their dzongkhags and they enjoyed a much higher income than the rest of the people in Bhutan. Despite all this, they had turned and bitten the very hand that had been feeding them.

One of the Chimi from Haa said that in the process of openly rebelling against the TSA-WA-SUM, the Lhotshampas had burnt down and destroyed the very schools where their children were being educated, the hospitals and health centres where they were being treated and the roads and bridges that were being used by them. Even their children had abused and attacked the teachers who had been educating them. The Lhotshampas people had threatened, attacked, kidnapped and murdered government officials and staff who were implementing development programmes for their benefit. In spite of the treacherous and subversive intentions of these people and the large scale terrorism unleashed by them, which had caused great destruction and loss to the country, many service facilities had still been kept open at great cost and risk by the government.

Most of the members expressed strong reservation about resuming development works and opening schools and health facilities in the south in addition to the ones already kept open. Some members proposed that only roads and health facilities should be kept open in the southern Dzongkhags. Other members submitted that it would not only be pointless but a source of un-necessary loss and expenditure and risk to resume development activities and open additional service facilities in the south as it would only result in their being destroyed once again by the ngolops. If the Lhotshampas wanted to re-open or re-build the facilities destroyed by them, they should do so themselves at their own cost.

Other members submitted that at this stage, development works should either be suspended in the south or only taken up on a very small scale until the situation returned to normal. Some other members proposed that only those facilities and establishments that were already existing should be maintained and no additional facilities should be opened. One of the Chimi from Thimphu, on the other hand, proposed that rather than open additional facilities in the south, even the existing ones should be closed down. Several representatives submitted that there was no need to rush into any decision now and that it should be left upto the behaviour and actions of the Lhotshampas to determine whether development works should be stopped or resumed.

The Minister of Trade and Industry said that it was true that the ngolops had destroyed many facilities like schools and hospitals. However, it should be noted that not all Lhotshampas were ngolops. He, therefore, requested that facilities such as schools and hospitals should be re-opened for the benefit of these Lhotshampas. The Minister also thanked His Majesty the King for taking the full responsibility of finding a lasting solution to the ngolop problem in southern Bhutan. He said that the representatives of the government, the clergy and the people should all give their full support to His Majesty the King and serve with loyalty and dedication to remove the ngolop problem.

Some members stated that even though it may have been active ngolops who destroyed the service facilities in southern Bhutan, it was the responsibility of the Lhotshampas to look after these establishments. Since they had allowed these facilities to be destroyed, it meant that they did not want them any more.

As the debate became very prolonged, the Speaker addressed the Assembly and took due note of the almost total unanimity of opinion among the members to stop development activities in the southern Dzongkhags.

His Majesty the King intervened and requested the Assembly to give further consideration to the issue. His Majesty expressed his complete understanding and appreciation for the frankness displayed by the members. He said that it was an indication of the National Assembly's maturity that members did not hesitate to express views which they felt were in the interest of the nation. His Majesty said that he was very proud of their deep commitment and concern for the security and well-being of the country. His Majesty told the members that there need not be any concern about removing the ngolop problem as long as the people and the government were united in

their loyalty and dedication to the nation and strived together to strengthen and protect the security and sovereignty of the country.

His Majesty then reminded the members that they had already entrusted him with the responsibility of finding a permanent solution to the ngolop problem, and he had also given his full assurance that he would strive to do so with total dedication and commitment. His Majesty gave the Assembly his pledge to abdicate if he did not succeed in finding a lasting solution to the ngolop problem. However, if the authority and power to decide on how to go about finding a solution to the problem was not included with the responsibility and accountability involved, it would not at all be possible to find a proper solution to the ngolop problem. Finding a permanent solution to such a serious problem involved careful thought and planning, and required a deep understanding of long term objectives and implications. His Majesty requested the members to carefully consider and decide whether this great responsibility and accountability with all its attendant risks as well as the necessary power of decision, should be left with the National Assembly members or given to His Majesty the King.

The Royal Advisory Councillors and the People's Representatives clarified that they had expressed their views opposing the renewal of development works in the south out of their anger for the treacherous anti-national activities carried out by the ngolops last year, and also out of their deep concern that these activities still continued unabated and might even escalate further. They requested His Majesty to extend his kind indulgence and understanding for the feelings of deep concern which had prompted them to differ with his proposal. The representatives of the government, clergy and the people all pledged their complete support, loyalty and confidence in His Majesty the King.

The National Assembly decided that, as resolved earlier, the responsibility of finding a permanent solution to the ngolop problem should be entrusted fully to His Majesty the King along with all the prerogatives and powers as would be deemed necessary, and that the government and the people would give their full support and assistance to His Majesty in all his decisions and policies. It was resolved that the renewal of development activities in southern Bhutan, including the opening of schools, health centres, Dungkhag offices and construction of roads should be carried out as proposed by His Majesty the King.

22. Pledge to uphold present system

The People's Representatives of Tashigang and Lhuntshi Dzongkhags stated that Bhutan had always been a sovereign, independent country throughout its history. She had enjoyed peace, tranquility and happiness for generations since the establishment of hereditary monarchy. The people were, therefore, very upset to learn that the Nepalese in southern Bhutan were trying to overthrow the cherished system of government in Bhutan and introduce democracy so that they could one day take over the country. The representatives said that the people did not want any changes in the present system and could neither contemplate nor tolerate the idea of being ruled by Nepalis. They, therefore, requested the government to ensure that the ngolops in southern Bhutan were crushed once and for all and that such a threat to the country's security would never rise again.

The Home Minister took the floor and gave a summary of the main demands of the ngolop organization called the Bhutan People's Party.

1. Unconditional release of all prisoners
2. Establishment of constitutional monarchy with a Prime Minister and proportional representation in the Cabinet and the National Assembly.
3. Reform in the present judiciary system.
4. Ammendment of the Citizenship Act of 1985.
5. Right to culture, dress, language and script.
6. Freedom of press, speech and expression.
7. Freedom of formation of unions and political parties
8. Freedom of trade and occupation.
9. Right to equitable distribution of wealth and funds.
10. Right to equality of opportunities in employment.

11. Right to education.

The real objective of the anti-nationals was reflected in the demand for constitutional monarchy and proportional representation in the Cabinet and the National Assembly, and the demand for the amendments of the Citizenship Act, said the Home Minister. The ngolops wanted to obtain citizenship for all the illegal Nepali immigrants residing in Bhutan and to remove the curb on illegal immigration. They had already promised citizenship, land and employment to the Nepalis living outside Bhutan in return for their support if they achieved their subversive objectives of taking over the country. They had even registered the names of those who had agreed to aid and assist them.

Although the Royal Government had given equal opportunities and greater facilities of education and employment to the Lhotshampas than to the original Bhutanese, and even though they comprised 40% of the civil service, the ngolops were still not satisfied, said the Home Minister. They not only wanted to increase their numbers in the government but also wanted to change the demographic balance of the country and take control over the central administrative system. That was why they were so keen on establishing constitutional monarchy so that the head of the government would be the Prime Minister, who would be a Nepali if the majority of the population were Nepalis.

He further stated that the business community and all the Assembly members were fully aware that all genuine citizens were enjoying the freedom of “trade and occupation”. Regarding “equal distribution of wealth and funds”, a look at the development plan expenditure would suffice. The Minister said that it just needs to be asked where all the industries were located, where all the lucrative cardamom and orange gardens were located, and which part of the country had the maximum number of schools and hospitals. As everyone knows, said the Minister, all major industries and commercial centres were located in southern Bhutan and the Lhotshampas enjoyed a far greater per capita income than other Bhutanese because of their cash crop earnings. All the demands of the ngolops are pure propaganda, he said, except for the demands for constitutional monarchy and proportional representation in the Cabinet and the National Assembly, and the demand for amendment of the Citizenship Act, which reflect their true objectives.

The Home Minister said that the ngolops openly boasted that there were 18 million Nepalis in Nepal and 10 million Nepalis in India, most of them living across Bhutan’s

immediate borders in Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Sikkim and the Duars region. It was the ultimate aim of the anti-nationals to turn Bhutan into a Nepali dominated State and include it among the Nepali dominated areas in the Himalayan region. Although, fortunately, they were not yet the majority, the repeated claims of the anti-nationals that Nepalese in southern Bhutan comprised 60% of the country's total population clearly reflected their intention of dramatically changing the demographic balance in Bhutan.

The Home Minister pointed out that although His Majesty the King had repeatedly stressed over the years that the future of Bhutan lay in the hands of the people and that it was upto the people to decide whatever changes they felt were necessary, the anti-nationals in southern Bhutan would never be satisfied until they had taken over the country and turned it into a Nepali dominated state.

The Home Minister informed the Assembly that one of the reasons given by the ngolops in the international press about their activities against the Royal Government was the false allegation that the policy on national dress and language was forced upon the people. As everyone was fully aware, this policy was not arbitrarily thrust upon the people. It was explained clearly to the people that Bhutan being a small country with a small population, the policy was being introduced to promote national integration and to strengthen Bhutan's status as a sovereign, independent country with a unique national identity. The policy was discussed thoroughly with the people, first by the District Development Committees (DYT) through whom the people had been asked to submit their views and feelings about the policy. After the people had submitted written and signed endorsement of the policy through the DYT, His Majesty the King had toured all the southern Dzongkhags to personally ascertain, at the grassroots level, whether the views of the people, submitted through the DYT, were indeed genuine.

During the large public meetings he held in all the 5 southern Dzongkhags including Phuntsholing Dungkhag, His Majesty had made it explicitly clear to all the people that it was not mandatory to adopt "gho" and "kira" as the national dress and that it was perfectly all right to adopt any dress so long as it was different from the dress worn in other countries, and could, therefore, project a distinct Bhutanese identity. It was the people of southern Bhutan themselves who endorsed "gho" and "kira" as the most suitable national dress in all the public meetings in the southern Dzongkhags. They had even stated very strongly that the promotion of the national dress and language should have been introduced much earlier and requested that it be implemented without any

further delay. Thereafter, the policy on the promotion of the national dress and language was submitted for approval to the National Assembly. The policy was implemented only after it was unanimously passed by the Assembly during its 68th Session. During the 69th Session, the People's Representatives of southern Bhutan strongly requested the National Assembly and the Royal Government to ensure that the policy on national dress and language as well as Driglam Namzha was implemented more vigorously to promote national integration and unity. The malicious allegations against this policy was made by the anti-nationals to disguise their subversive objectives and to gain international sympathy and support.

The Home Minister further informed the Assembly that immediately after the violent anti-national uprising in September 1990, His Majesty the King, accompanied by the Royal Advisory Councillors of southern Bhutan, had visited the southern Dzongkhags to meet the people. During his meeting with the DYT members of Sarbhang Dzongkhag, His Majesty had expressed his deep appreciation that, among all the Dzongkhags and Dungkhags of southern Bhutan, the people of Kalikhola and Ninchula, under Kalikhola Dungkhag, had not taken part in any activity against the TSA-WA-SUM, and that it was, therefore, not necessary to deploy any security troops to protect service facilities and government installations in their Dungkhag. The DYT members from Kalikhola and Ninchula assured His Majesty that there was absolutely no danger of any anti-national uprising taking place in their Dungkhag. In view of the assurances, His Majesty requested the Gups, Chimi and people of the Dungkhag for their cooperation in ensuring the continuation of development works in their area and the security of the government staff carrying out these works. However, only a week later, the people of Kalikhola and Ninchula took part in violent anti-national activities.

Likewise, most of the Southern Bhutanese students in Samchi High School, also, had joined the anti-nationals very shortly after His Majesty had personally spoken with them and had advised them that even if they had no love and loyalty for their king, they should concentrate on completing their education and not join the ngolops to harm their own country.

The Home Minister also informed the Assembly that during the violent anti-national demonstrations, the ngolops had attacked and beaten up many loyal Bhutanese people, and even stripped them of their clothes which were burnt or cut to pieces. They had vandalised, looted and destroyed government offices and property. Many basic facilities

like schools, hospitals, and bridges had been destroyed and the lives and property of all government officials and staff working in the south were put to grave risk. As everyone was aware, the large scale terrorism unleashed by the anti-nationals continued unabated to this day in southern Bhutan.

The Home Minister then expressed his total confidence that the ngolop problem would be effectively and permanently resolved. He expressed his deep gratitude to His Majesty the King for assuming the full responsibility of finding a lasting solution to the ngolop problem and thanked the people for the unity and commitment with which they pledged their support for His Majesty the King and the Royal Government.

The People's Representative from Pemagatshel stated that the anti-nationals had been attempting to instigate the eastern Bhutanese to join them. They had made malicious allegations to create a rift between the Eastern Bhutanese and the Western Bhutanese. However, the Eastern Bhutanese were fully aware of the treachery of the Lhotshampas. When the Lhotshampas had rebelled against the TSA-WA-SUM in 1952, the older generation of the Eastern Bhutanese at that time had warned that sooner or later the Lhotshampas would once again revolt. Those words had been proven true and the treachery of the Southern Bhutanese confirmed once again. The representative said that the people of eastern Bhutan, were unwavering in their loyalty and support for the TSA-WA-SUM and were ready to take whatever steps were necessary to crush the ngolops.

The People's Representative of Phuntsholing Dungkhag said that although some of the previous National Assembly members from southern Bhutan had joined the anti-nationals, their replacements had been elected by the people and were currently attending the Assembly. He said that the ngolops were terrorizing the general public in the south to coerce them into lending their support. The new Assembly members from the south would, however, make strong efforts to exhort the people in their constituencies to resist the ngolops and safeguard the security of the country, he said.

The representatives of the government, the clergy and the people strongly condemned the anti-nationals for attempting to undermine and destroy the cherished and hallowed institution of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan by hypocritically calling for the establishment of democracy. They pointed out that although democracy in Bhutan might not be institutionalised in form it was enjoyed by the people in spirit as well as in practice. The people had a decisive say in all issues that directly concerned them as well

as in affairs of national importance. In keeping with the times, the nation's beloved sovereigns had introduced sweeping changes and reforms over the years and steered the country on a course of rapid socio-economic development so that it could assume its rightful place among the international comity of nations.

Representatives pointed out that His Majesty the King and His Majesty's father, the third king, had always insisted on greater participation by the people both in development works and in the decision making process. The National Assembly itself and the Royal Advisory Council had been established on the initiative and insistence of the king and not on any request or initiative from the people. Serfdom had been abolished and land reforms carried out to ensure social justice. The judiciary was separated from the executive, and a Cabinet and an independent Civil Service Commission established to promote more efficient government. District Development Committees were established, followed by block and village development committees to further promote effective decentralisation and full participation by the people in development works and decision making on national issues.

As everyone was fully aware, all people in Bhutan were equal before the law and enjoyed their inalienable individual rights as citizens and human beings, while equally respecting these same rights in others. The Bhutanese people also enjoyed equal opportunity in education, training, employment and entrepreneurship and the Royal Government extended all possible encouragement and assistance. The only criteria for success was the individual's ability and capacity for hard work.

The representatives said that the institution of hereditary monarchy was established by the people of Bhutan when the whole body of the Clergy, The State Councillors, the Chillas of all the districts, and the representatives of the people unanimously elected Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck as the first hereditary monarch to rule, protect and guide the destiny of the nation.

The representatives all asked for permission one after another to express their views on the sanctity and precious value they attached to this sacred institution. They said that during the previous day's debates they had not received an opportunity to do so, as the session was concluded after His Majesty had pledged to abdicate if he did not find a permanent solution to the ngolop problem.

They reiterated that the National Assembly had already entrusted His Majesty with the full responsibility, and all prerogatives and powers as he deemed necessary, to find a permanent solution to the ngolop problem. They also reiterated the pledge made by the clergy and the people to give their total and unwavering support, both physical and material, for removing the ngolop problem. With the wise, farsighted and dynamic leadership provided by His Majesty the King and the unwavering loyalty, dedication and support of the people, the representatives were confident that the ngolop problem would be removed. They were, therefore, greatly shocked and disturbed by the very mention of the word abdication by His Majesty the King. They requested His Majesty, for the sake of the TSA-WA-SUM, not to entertain even the slightest thought on such a drastic step under any circumstances. There could be no TSA-WA-SUM without the King. They strongly requested that His Majesty's statement about abdication should be deleted from the proceedings of the National Assembly.

The representatives said that they had been elected from among tens of thousands to represent the people in their constituencies. The people had sent them to the National Assembly with the full trust and hope that they would be able to contribute towards strengthening the security of the country at a time when the ngolops in southern Bhutan had risen against the TSA-WA-SUM. It was unthinkable for them to return to the people with the news that their king had offered to step down from the throne if a solution to the ngolop problem was not found. The people would be deeply hurt and disturbed to hear such grave tidings. Rather than contribute towards removing the ngolop problem, such news would demoralise the people and further encourage the ngolops to step up their treacherous activities. After all, overthrowing the hallowed institution of hereditary monarchy was one of the main objectives of the ngolops. The representatives said that it was the sacred and bounden duty of the government, clergy and the people to work together and ensure that the ngolops were left with no doubts whatsoever that, far from succeeding in their subversive intentions, it would be pointless for them to even entertain the slightest hope of doing so even in their dreams.

The representatives of the clergy and the people invoked the Guardian Deities as witness that they had unwavering love loyalty, trust and confidence in His Majesty the King and the cherished institution of hereditary monarchy established through the wisdom and farsightedness of the founding fathers. Several members stated their desire to submit a signed and sealed testament to that effect in the Great Hall of the Assembly. Other members reminded them that the signed testament of the founding fathers when

they unanimously elected Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuk as the first hereditary monarch was inviolate and binding for all generations. A new testament would not only dilute the strength of that sacred bedrock of the Bhutanese system but create the impression that there were indeed reasons for doubts between the king and the people which had to be cleared with a new testament.

His Majesty the King then intervened and addressed the Assembly. He told the representatives of the Central Monk Body, the Government Officials and the People Representatives that he was fully aware of the deep and abiding love, affection and loyalty they had for him and the trust and confidence that they reposed in him. His Majesty expressed his deep appreciation and assured them that he could not ask for more from them and that for his part, he, too, fully reciprocated their abiding love, affection, loyalty, trust and confidence. His Majesty said that the people and the king were bound together as one in body, speech and mind in their love and devotion to the nation. As such any testament to that effect would be redundant and unnecessary.

The representatives agreed with His Majesty that a testament was not necessary but once again insisted that all mention about abdication must be struck off from the proceedings of the National Assembly.

The Speaker then addressed the Assembly and stated that the most important criteria for removing the anti-national problem was fulfilled as the lengthy discussions in the Assembly had clearly confirmed that the government and the people were totally united in thought and action.

The ministers and senior officials representing the government, the Representatives of the Central Monk Body and the Rabdeys, the Royal Advisory Councillors and the People's Representatives, unanimously resolved, on behalf of the people of Bhutan, that they, with unwavering loyalty, and out of the purest and most dedicated desire and determination to further the security and well-being of the TSA-WA-SUM, would take the full responsibility to ensure that the sacred institution of hereditary monarchy, which was established by the founding fathers to promote and protect the interests of the nation, would be maintained for all times to come in Bhutan.

23. Request for forgiveness and assurance of loyalty

On behalf of all the Lhotsham people, the representative of Chirang submitted that, having been beguiled and deceived by the evil ngolops, the people were now fully conscious of the grave mistake they had made by joining the ngolops in anti-national activities against the TSA-WA-SUM in September, 1990. All the Lhotsham Gups, Chimis and people sincerely expressed their deepest regret and appealed for forgiveness of the Royal Government. They pledged from the depth of their hearts and with utmost sincerity that such uprisings or harmful activities against the TSA-WA-SUM would never again occur in their Dzongkhags.

To this, several representatives responded that if, indeed, the Lhotsham people were truly loyal and dedicated to their country and genuinely regretted their actions, the peace and normalcy in the south would once again return.

The Speaker of the National Assembly remarked that, it was not the deed that was important but the mind and attitude behind it. He advised the Lhotshampas that they should learn to differentiate between the healing medicine and the killing poison. If they wished to be true to themselves, they should commit their full loyalty and allegiance to their King and Country so that they would never again bring upon themselves the sad and shameful situation that the rest of the country had been compelled to share.

V. “BHUTAN’S EXTRADITION ACT, 1991” AND “ENABLING ACT FOR THE SAARC REGIONAL CONVENTION ON SUPPRESSION OF TERRORISM, 1991”.

On the 22nd of October 1991, the Ministry of Home Affairs submitted a proposal for the enactment of a law on extradition, “Bhutan’s Extradition Act, 1991”. It also submitted a draft “Enabling Act for the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, 1991” for the consideration of the National Assembly.

The Home Minister submitted that the “Bhutan’s Extradition Act, 1991” was necessary to enable the extradition of persons who had committed serious crimes of extraditable nature and to implement the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. The two Acts had been drafted in conformity with International Acts on the same subject and had been prepared with the co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It had also been scrutinized and cleared by the High Court which had ensured

that these drafts did not, in anyway, deviate from the various provisions of the laws of the land emanating from the Law of Bhutan. He submitted that it would greatly enhance the law and order situation in the country if the two drafts could be considered for approval by the National Assembly and any appropriate amendments made if required.

The National Assembly then proceeded to study the documents page by page and made some amendments after a close and thorough scrutiny of each article and its sections. Having thus completed this process, the National Assembly resolved to approve the two Acts, thereby bringing them, simultaneously, into force with immediate effect.

The Home Minister expressed his appreciation for the approval of these two Acts. He also expressed his confidence that, with the two Acts having now been brought into force, the laws of the land would be greatly strengthened.

Upon the conclusion of deliberations on this subject, the 70th Session of the National Assembly came to an end.

VI. OBJECTION TO THE DOCUMENTATION OF HIS MAJESTY'S PLEDGE TO ABDICATE.

During the ratification of the proceedings and resolutions of the 70th Session of the National Assembly, the members raised a strong protest and objected to the documenting of His Majesty's pledge "to abdicate if he did not find a lasting solution to the ngolop problem". The members stated that they had repeatedly requested for the pledge made by His Majesty the King during the deliberations on 17th October to be deleted from the proceedings and resolutions.

The representatives of the clergy, government and the people registered their strong protest and reiterated their demands for the particular statement to be deleted. They stated that its inclusion in the proceedings and resolutions would cause serious dismay and concern among the people.

His Majesty the King explained that the proceedings and resolutions must faithfully reflect the deliberations that have taken place. His Majesty told the members that the pledge made by him was a reflection of his commitment and dedication towards

removing the ngolop problem just as the exemplary commitment and dedication of the people were reflected in their total support for the TSA-WA-SUM and their readiness to even sacrifice their lives, if necessary, to protect the security of the country. If the members explained all these points clearly to the people there should be no reason for them to be concerned or disturbed by His Majesty's pledge.

On the insistence of His Majesty the King, the members finally relented and ratified the proceedings and resolutions of the 70th Session of the National Assembly.

Date : 24.10.1991

Sd/
(Passang Dorji)
Speaker
National Assembly of Bhutan