

**PROCEEDINGS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE 72ND SESSION OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BHUTAN
[8 TH JULY - 30 TH JULY, 1993]**

I. OPENING CEREMONY

The 72nd Session of the National Assembly began on the 19th day of the 5th month of the Female Water Bird Year corresponding to 8th July, 1993. The session was opened with the performance of the auspicious ceremony of the Shugdrel Phuntshom Tshogpai Tendrel.

In his opening address, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Dasho Passang Dorji, welcomed His Majesty the King, the representatives of the Central Dratshang and the Rabdeys, ministers and officials representing the government and the representatives of the people. He also welcomed the 20 newly elected Chimis and the Dzongkhag candidates for the Royal Advisory Council and wished them Tashi Delek.

The Speaker noted that most of the points and proposals submitted by the Chimis (people's representatives) of the different Dzongkhags reflected the people's deep concern over the threat posed by the ngolop problem to the peace, security and prosperity of the country. While it was indeed a cause for much pain and sadness that the ngolop problem had arisen from the Lhotsham Dzongkhags, the ngolops had so far not been able to do any harm to the security of the country. This was due to the blessings of the Guardian Deities of the Kingdom, the wise, far-sighted and dedicated leadership of His Majesty the King and the good fortune of the people. It was at times like this that the deep and abiding bond of faith, trust and loyalty between the people and their King always prevailed and overcame whatever threats were posed to the country. The Speaker said that it was vital for the people and the government to think and act as one to remove the ngolop problem. It was also important to ensure that none of the measures taken to remove the problem would compromise or undermine the laws of the land.

The Speaker said that His Majesty the King, who is the precious jewel of the nation, had been constantly working for the well-being and prosperity of the people and to ensure the long term security and sovereignty of the country. For their part, the people and the clergy had also pledged their total support and commitment to whatever decisions and steps that would be taken by His Majesty the King to remove

the ngolop problem. As the commitment and loyalty pledged by the people and the clergy was deep and abiding, the Speaker expressed his confidence that the ngolop problem in the south would be resolved soon.

The Speaker reminded the Chimis that they were the most important link between the people and the government. He called on them to keep in mind the well-being and security of the country and to participate actively in the deliberations. The Speaker expressed his hope and wishes for a successful session of the National Assembly.

II. DISCUSSION ON MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS

1. Request for a Dungthrim at Merak and Sakteng

The people's representative of Merak and Sakteng Gewogs in Tashigang Dzongkhag submitted a request for a Dungthrim (sub-district court) to be established in their Dungkhag (sub-district). He said that there were more than 700 households in Merak-Sakteng and it was felt that a Dungthrim was necessary to settle litigation cases.

In response, the Home Minister informed the members that Merak-Sakteng had been made into a Dungkhag to promote the welfare of the people in these two remote Gewogs. While it would certainly be of benefit to the people to have a Dungthrim it was necessary to take into account the costs involved and the actual need for a Dungthrim. He pointed out that until now all litigation cases in Merak-Sakteng were being settled by the Dungpa without any inconvenience or difficulties for the people. Moreover, the records showed that there were only 20 litigation cases in 1992 and 12 of them had been settled in the first half of the year itself. As the number of litigation cases did not justify the cost of establishing a Dungthrim and as it was the government's policy to let the Dungpa look after both judicial and administrative matters wherever the size and population of the Dungkhag made it feasible, the Home Minister recommended that it was not necessary to establish a Dungthrim in Merak-Sakteng at present. The proposal could always be considered later if the circumstances or the welfare of the people warranted it.

The representative of the High Court and several Chimis endorsed the views and recommendation of the Home Minister, and it was resolved that the establishment of a Dungthrim in Merak-Sakteng was not necessary at present.

2. Punishment for robbers of antiques and religious artefacts

The people's representatives of Paro Dzongkhag submitted a proposal calling for the strongest possible punishment to be meted out to robbers of antiques and religious artefacts. They pointed out that Bhutan was a unique country with a rich religious and cultural heritage. The venerable lineage of lamas and past Bhutanese generations had built Lhakhangs (monasteries) and Chortens (stupas) for the peace and prosperity of the country. Precious items were blessed and placed inside these Chortens as Zungs (sacred objects imparting religious vitality) to enhance the benevolent powers of these religious structures. For some time now, miscreants driven by a desire for quick wealth had been desecrating Chortens and Lhakhangs and robbing them of precious religious artefacts and selling them outside the country. These sacrilegious robberies had increased mainly because strong punishment was not being meted out to the culprits. The Chimis proposed that in order to curb and put a stop to the theft of sacred religious artefacts, all offenders should be given capital punishment or at the very least a full life sentence.

The representative of the High Court informed the members that as the Thrimshung Chhenpo which was enacted in 1959 by the 12th Session of the National Assembly did not have specific clauses covering thefts of religious artefacts, His Majesty the King had instructed the High Court to formulate separate clauses to cover such crimes. Separate clauses to cover such crimes were accordingly framed and were being followed by the High Court in all cases pertaining to thefts of Kusung Thukten (sacred images and religious artefacts). Under these separate clauses, the punishment was life imprisonment, and capital punishment for all offenders convicted of robbing Chortens and Lhakhangs for a second time. However, capital punishment had not been passed on anyone so far. As the punishment for robbery of Chortens and Lhakhangs and the stealing of religious artefacts was clearly and adequately covered under clause Tha 1-9, 1-10, 1-11 and 1-12 of the Thrimshung Chhenpo there was no need to formulate any new laws or clauses to deal with the matter.

Several Chimis pointed out that the incidence of Chorten robberies had been increasing even though the Thrimshung Chhenpo decreed capital punishment for those convicted for a second time of robbing Chortens and Lhakhangs. The Chimis noted that the miscreants who had murdered the caretaker and two other monks in Chimi Lhakhang earlier this year had robbed Chortens several times in the past but as of now there was no news of any sentences being passed on these criminals. The people, therefore, felt that the laws were not being implemented strictly enough.

In response, the representative of the High Court informed the members that the culprits of the Chimi Lhakhang murders had been arrested by the police and their case had been forwarded to the High Court after carrying out all necessary investigations. This was the first case registered against these criminals so far. The case was under review in the High Court and had not yet been finalised. The representative of the High Court assured the members that all rulings by the Court regarding any case were made in strict accordance to the relevant laws.

The Home Minister submitted that the safeguarding of the country's precious religious artefacts should not be dependent only on the laws of the country. It was very important that the people also contributed towards protecting the treasures of Bhutan's rich national heritage. He informed the members that the Police and Custom personnel had worked very hard and had recovered many stolen antiques and religious artefacts and prevented them from being taken out of the country. However, despite the constant efforts by the concerned departments of the government to prevent such thefts, 76 monasteries and 272 Chortens had been desecrated and robbed so far. Such sacrilegious acts were a cause for much sadness and regret for His Majesty and the government as well as for the people and the clergy, the Home Minister said. He reminded the members that in order to curb such robberies and thefts, His Majesty the King had issued a Kasho exempting Goongda Woola and Shapto Lemi for all caretakers of Lhakhangs and Chortens and for persons selected by the people to help look after the security of important Lhakhangs and Chortens in their villages and Gewogs. The Kasho had called on the people to take the responsibility of looking after the security of important Lhakhangs and Chortens in their own Gewogs and villages, and to work together with the government to

prevent any further loss of the precious and sacred religious artefacts that embodied an essential aspect of Bhutan's rich religious and cultural heritage. At the request of the Home Minister, His Majesty's Kasho was read out to the members by the Secretary of the National Assembly.

Several Dzongdas and Chimis reported that the contents of His Majesty's Kasho had been fully conveyed to the people through the Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs (DYTs) and the Gewog Yargye Tshogchungs (GYTs). Relevant steps had also been taken to protect the Lhakhangs and Chortens in their Dzongkhags.

Some of the people's representatives observed that robberies of Lhakhangs and Chortens had been taking place frequently because, earlier, Woola (labour contribution) was not exempted for caretakers or persons looking after the security of these religious structures and they were sometimes away from their posts. They also felt that such crimes had been taking place because the concerned officials were not strict in implementing the laws pertaining to such cases, and convicted criminals were not undergoing rigorous imprisonment. They, therefore, called for the relevant laws to be strengthened and made more stringent. Other members suggested that besides punishment prescribed by the law, all criminals convicted of robbing Lhakhangs and Chortens should have their property confiscated. It would also help to reduce the incidence of such sacrilegious crimes if the Dratshang could bring greater awareness of religious values to the people. Other Chimis said that while they stood by the existing laws on the punishment for robberies of Chortens and Lhakhangs, they felt that criminals convicted of these crimes were having a very easy and comfortable time in prison. They called for rigorous imprisonment in all such cases.

With the discussions becoming very prolonged, His Majesty the King intervened and suggested that a Committee comprising all the Dzongdas, representatives of the High Court and a representative of the Police should be appointed to study the issue and submit their recommendations to the National Assembly.

The National Assembly appointed a Committee comprising all the Dzongdas, representatives of the High Court and a representative of the Police to study the

issue and directed it to submit its recommendations to the house before the conclusion of the current session.

Accordingly, the Committee which was headed by the Speaker and comprised the representative of the High Court, the Chief of Police, all the Dzongdas and an official of the Antique Preservation Department met three times in the Tashichhodzong on the 10th, 16th and 17th of July, 1993. They discussed how to strengthen the existing laws, including the Kasho issued by His Majesty the King on 21st April, 1993, on the preservation and protection of Lhakhangs and Chortens and religious artefacts. On 26th July, 1993, the Committee submitted their recommendations to the National Assembly. After a thorough discussion, the National Assembly passed the following nine resolutions as additional measures to prevent the robbery of Lhakhangs (monasteries and temples) and Chortens (stupas) and the smuggling of religious artefacts out of the country.

1. The list of all Lhakhangs having important Kusung Thugtens (sacred images and religious artefacts) and which are located in remote areas, and where apart from the Koenyer (caretaker) there is no Shedra or Drubdra, shall be prepared jointly by the concerned Dzongdas, DYT's and the Dratshang Lhentshog and submitted to the Home Ministry. The Home Ministry shall then appoint security guards selected from retired army personnel and militia volunteers to guard these Lhakhangs. These security guards shall be provided with suitable fire-arms and given monthly stipends.
2. In line with the Kasho issued by His Majesty the King, the concerned Dzongdas and DYT's shall confirm the appointment of Koenyers of all Lhakhangs with very important Kusung Thugtens and also oversee the selection of security watchmen from the concerned villages for looking after the Chortens in their respective localities. These Koenyers and security watchmen shall be exempted from Goongda Woola, Shabtolemi and other labour contribution works during the period of their services to the Lhakhangs and Chortens. The DYT's and the GYT's shall take the full responsibility of evolving a suitable security system for the Lhakhangs and Chortens and accordingly brief the Koenyers of the Lhakhangs and the security watchmen of the Chortens.

3. As the main objective of Chorten robbers is to steal Zees which have been placed in the Chortens, all transactions of Zees shall, henceforth, be governed by the rules and regulations pertaining to the preservation of antiques and religious artefacts. Although transaction of Zees within the country will be permissible in keeping with these rules and regulations, selling of Zees outside the country shall no longer be allowed.
4. Any person who gives information to the concerned officials which leads to the recovery of Zees or religious artefacts and antiques shall be given 25 percent of the total value of the items recovered as incentive and reward for his information. This incentive shall be given in strict confidence to the informant by the Royal Bhutan Police after the items have been recovered and the value assessed.
5. Appropriate clauses shall be incorporated in the Customs Rules and Regulations regarding the restriction on Zees.
6. A person who is convicted of robbing a Lhakhang or Chorten and/or trading in Zees, religious artefacts and antiques and has been sentenced to life imprisonment shall not be allowed any form of Kidug regardless of the person's status or position. An additional clause to this effect shall be incorporated in the Prison Act.
7. All the Dzongkhags shall implement the measures outlined in the Kasho issued by His Majesty the King as soon as possible. Based on the experience acquired during the first one year of implementing the Kasho, new security measures shall be incorporated for further improving the security of Lhakhangs and Chortens.
8. The law on the awarding of life imprisonment or capital punishment for persons convicted of robbing or trading in religious artefacts and antiques is clearly laid down in Chapter Tha of the Thrimshung Chhenpo. However, with regard to capital punishment for such offences, the matter shall be discussed in the National Assembly if the implementation of His Majesty's

Kasho and the above measures fail to put a stop to or effectively curb the robberies of Lhakhangs and Chortens.

9. All the Dzongdas, Thrimpons, The Royal Bhutan Police, the DYT's, the GYT's and the people of the concerned villages and Gewogs shall faithfully adhere to the above resolutions and take full responsibility in carrying out the maintenance and effective protection of the Lhakhangs and Chortens in their respective areas.

3. Boundary Pillars

The people's representative of Merak and Sakteng Gewogs in Tashigang submitted that some of the boundary pillars along the border in their area needed proper maintenance and repair. He requested for the border to be inspected and the boundary pillars repaired. As the herdsmen of Merak and Sakteng were simple people, it would be very convenient for them if the border was inspected and clear distinctions made regarding the land within the national border and the land belonging to Tawang under India.

In response, the Surveyor General said that in order to facilitate the boundary demarcation between India and Bhutan, the borders between the two countries had been divided into 61 different areas. Starting from 1965, boundary pillars had been erected in 60 out of these 61 areas. Pillars could not be erected in one area because it was a tri-junction between India, China and Bhutan. Out of the 60 demarcated areas, proper mapping had been completed for 29 of these places by 1989. The mapping of the remaining areas could not be completed so far because of the Bodo problem in Assam and the ngolop problem in southern Bhutan. As for the proper mapping of the border in Merak-Sakteng, it would be carried out by the end of this year, the Surveyor General said.

The Merak-Sakteng Chimi said that an early demarcation of the boundary as mentioned by the Surveyor General would be very beneficial for the people. The Assembly took note of the report submitted by the Surveyor General and no separate resolution was adopted on the point.

4. Services to Rigsum Gyonpa Monastery

The people's representative from Tashiyangtsi Gewog in Tashiyangtsi Dzongkhag submitted that traditionally there were 70 households that were responsible for providing all necessary services to the Rigsum Gyonpa. As such, these families were exempted from Goongda Woola and all rural taxes. However, instead of faithfully providing the necessary services for the maintenance of the Gyonpa, many of these people were found in Thimphu and other places. Even if these people did sincerely provide their services to the Rigsum Gyonpa, they alone could not meet all the requirements for the maintenance of the Gyonpa. It would, therefore, be more appropriate if these 70 households were merged with Tashiyangtsi Gewog. Any services required for the Rigsum Gyonpa as well as for the country could then be provided jointly by all the households in Tashiyangtsi Gewog.

The Home Minister said that the Rigsum Gyonpa was a very important and sacred monastery. That was why the 70 households which were traditionally meant to look after the Gyonpa were exempted from Goongda Woola and rural taxes. Although the members of these households were not fulfilling their responsibilities, it was gratifying that the people of Tashiyangtsi Gewog were committed to maintaining and looking after the Gyonpa. He said that His Majesty the King attached great importance to the Rigsum Gyonpa and had sent the Secretary of the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs some time back to inspect the Gyonpa. As the 70 households were located in Bumdhiling, the Home Minister recommended that they should become part of Bumdhiling Gewog and should no longer be exempted from any taxes or woola. As for rendering services to the Rigsum Gyonpa, the people of Bumdhiling and Tashiyangtsi Gewogs had reported to the Home Ministry through the DYT that they would like to undertake whatever works were necessary to maintain the Gyonpa. The Home Minister said that the people of these two Gewogs could decide how to go about rendering necessary services to the Rigsum Gyonpa by discussing the matter in the DYT.

The National Assembly decided that the 70 households under the Rigsum Gyonpa should merge with the rest of the Gewog and should no longer be exempted from rural taxes or Goongda Woola. All necessary services for the maintenance of the Rigsum Gyonpa would henceforth be rendered by the people of Tashiyangtsi and Bumdhiling Gewogs.

5. Import of labourers

The people's representative from Geley Gewog under Chukha Dzongkhag submitted that most of the labourers employed in the factories, and for mining, logging, charcoal making and afforestation projects were non-nationals. The number of non-national labourers who were making charcoal was particularly high. Charcoal making was being carried out more extensively than before and was, therefore, increasing the risk of forests being destroyed in contravention of the Forest Act. Some of these labourers were suspected of criminal activities including a robbery some time back in Geley Village. The Chimi requested that the nationals of concerned localities should be given the opportunity to carry out such works as charcoal making. If that were not possible, the making of charcoal should be stopped for the time being. If charcoal was essential for running some of the factories, the government should find other alternatives such as importing charcoal or other substitutes from outside.

The Home Minister informed the members that importing of labourers was permitted only for works such as mining, charcoal making, factory works etc. in which nationals did not have experience. Permits were also issued for upto a year only and employers were responsible for training national workers to take over such jobs within that period. It was the government's policy to give whatever work that could be undertaken by them to Bhutanese nationals. Apart from charcoal making, if other works could also be undertaken by Bhutanese nationals it would contribute greatly to the progress and development of the country. All the Gups, Chimis and village elders of Chukha Dzongkhag were fully aware of this government policy, the Home Minister said. He reminded the members that the 36th Session of the National Assembly in 1972 had passed a set of rules and regulations on the employment of non-national labourers. There should be no problem on this matter if everyone followed the existing rules and regulations, he said.

The Minister of Trade and Industry said that according to government policy all industries were required to use indigenous raw materials unless the required materials were not available in the country. As for charcoal, only half the industrial requirements could be met from within the country and the rest had to

be imported from India. However, if all charcoal were to be imported, as proposed, it would render all concerned industrial factories uneconomical. The Trade and Industry Ministry would discuss with the management of the concerned industries and study the feasibility of importing suitable substitutes for charcoal. He said that the Trade Ministry fully supported the proposal that contracts for charcoal making should be given to Bhutanese nationals. This would strengthen the government's policy of awarding whatever work could be undertaken by them to Bhutanese nationals.

The Chukha Dzongda and Chimis repeated the request that the contract for charcoal making to meet industrial requirements should be given to Bhutanese nationals in the area where the charcoal was made. If that was not feasible, then charcoal making should be stopped for some time as employment of large numbers of non-nationals was not good for the security of the country.

Addressing the Assembly, His Majesty the King said that as stated by the Trade and Industry Minister, charcoal making and whatever other works that could be undertaken by Bhutanese nationals must be given to the people of the concerned Dzongkhags who wished to take them up. Since importing substitutes for charcoal involved high costs and the expenditure of hard currency, and charcoal making was not difficult to learn, contracts for charcoal supplies should be given to Bhutanese nationals. This would provide employment to the people and increase their cash income.

The Assembly resolved that as recommended by His Majesty the King, contracts for such works as charcoal making, logging and afforestation must be awarded to Bhutanese nationals.

6. Request to use Simtokha Dzong to house the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and the Thimphu Thrimkhang

The people's representatives of Thimphu Dzongkhag submitted that the Dzongkhag Administration and the Thrimkhang should by tradition be housed in a Dzong. However, since Tashichhodzong was occupied by the Central Secretariat, the Thimphu Dzongkhag Office and the Thrimkhang had to be established at Changlimithang. This location being close to the Sunday market,

the main road and the sports stadium, it was difficult to maintain proper discipline and decorum near the Dzongkhag Administration Office, thus resulting in many inconveniences. The people of Thimphu Dzongkhag, therefore, requested that the Thimphu Dzongkhag Office and Thrimkhang be housed in the historical Simtokha Dzong.

The Director General of Education submitted that the Rigney School, the only one of its kind in the country, was established in the Simtokha Dzong in 1961. As everyone was aware, besides traditional literary learning, the Rigney School imparted valuable training in painting, embroidery, carving, traditional dances and Driglam Namzha. The students who had completed their studies from the Simtokha Rigney School had proved themselves very productive and useful citizens and were serving the country well. Today, there were 551 students and 29 teachers in Simtokha and the school was facing severe accommodation problems which was further aggravated by the rapidly increasing number of students applying for admission. Because of the accommodation shortage, part of the Dzong had to be converted to dormitories for 220 students. This was in addition to the classrooms, the school library and the school store located inside the Dzong. Moving these essential facilities of the school out of the Dzong would entail heavy financial expenditure, said the Director General. Due to lack of space for further expansion in Simtokha, His Majesty the King had commanded that another Rigney School be opened in Tashigang Dzongkhag within the Seventh Five-Year Plan. The cost for this School was estimated at Nu. 150 million and the construction would take four to five years. With the projected budget yet to be mobilised from donors, it was not certain that the School could be completed within the Seventh Plan. Shifting the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and Thrimkhang to Simtokha Dzong would result in the Rigney School having to shift to another location at great cost or having to close it down altogether, said the Director General. He, therefore, requested that the Simtokha Dzong be retained for the Rigney School.

Members of the Royal Advisory Council and many Chimis pointed out that the very term “Dzongkhag” was derived from the word “Dzong”. They noted that the location of the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and Thrimkhang at Changlimithang between the Sunday Market and the sports stadium was certainly not a suitable one. On the one hand great importance had been attached to Driglam Namzha and the promotion of the high values of the country’s rich

tradition and culture. On the other hand, the very location of the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and Thrimkhang was not conducive to the promotion of these values. Such a situation could have an adverse effect on the implementation of government policies. The Councillors and Chimis accordingly recommended that a decision should be taken to shift the Rigney School to another location after a few years and the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and Thrimkhang established at the Simtokha Dzong.

The Minister of Social Services expressed his regret that the Councillors and Chimis, going by their proposals, did not seem to be aware of the many contributions to the country made over the years by the teachers and students of the Simtokha Rigney School. He requested the Assembly to direct the concerned departments and ministries of the government to carefully study the benefits and problems in shifting the Rigney School from the Simtokha Dzong and decide accordingly.

The Thimphu Dzongda and Chimis said that they were fully aware of the many contributions made to the country by the Simtokha Rigney School. They were also well aware of the problems and difficulties faced by the government and the country. The people had repeatedly expressed their readiness to contribute in any way, in terms of manpower or material requirements, to overcome any problem faced by the country. They pointed out that both in the 70th and 71st sessions of the National Assembly, great importance had been attached to the promotion of Driglam Namzha and it had been noted that this important traditional value was being undermined the most in Thimphu. Moreover, it was the responsibility of the Dzongdas and the DYT's to promote Driglam Namzha in their Dzongkhags. They also informed the Assembly that the maintenance of the Simtokha Dzong was still being carried out by the people of Thimphu Dzongkhag. The land for the construction of dormitories and other quarters outside the Simtokha Dzong had also been allotted after discussions between the Education Department and the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration. They said that being fully aware that over 200 students were accommodated inside the Dzong, they had only asked for the Dzong at the convenience of the government and had not demanded that the Rigney School must be altogether shifted from Simtokha. Nor had they asked for the Dzong to be handed over to them immediately.

The Chukha Dzongda suggested that the feasibility of shifting the Rigney School to Chukha may be studied as there were 470 houses in the Chukha Hydro-Project colony that had remained unoccupied since the completion of the project. The Minister of Trade and Industry, however, intervened and said that the Board of Directors of the Chukha Hydro-Power Corporation would have to be consulted for the use of its property. He, therefore, recommended that the Home Ministry should contact and consult the Chukha Board of Directors on this matter.

Intervening in the deliberations, the Finance Minister said that while he agreed with the points raised by the Royal Advisory Councillors and the Chimis on the advantages of shifting the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration from its present location, there were many offices under the various ministries and departments that were scattered and also located in inconvenient places. Some were located in the town in buildings rented from private parties. He said that there were plans to locate the offices of the various ministries and departments in one suitable location. He, therefore, felt that the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and the Thrimkhang could be re-located when the government was in a position to build new office complexes for the Central Secretariat.

The National Assembly resolved that the Thimphu Dzongkhag Administration and the Thrimkhang should be re-located when the government was in a position to build new office complexes for the Central Secretariat.

7. Widening of motor roads

The people's representative of Mewang, Gyene and Dagala Gewogs under Thimphu Dzongkhag submitted that the roads in the country were constructed when there were very few vehicles. The estimate of the number of vehicles in the future had also not been accurate. The number of vehicles had increased manifold and was continuing to increase even more every year. As a result, the road had become congested and many accidents were taking place. The people, therefore, requested that the motor roads be widened, particularly, in the risky places such as the bends.

The representative of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) also submitted a request for expanding the Thimphu-Phuntsholing national highway. He said that the narrowness of this road and its many bends was not only a cause of frequent accidents but also a cause of greater wear and tear on vehicles plying through it. Vehicles consumed more fuel on this road and this resulted in higher fares for passengers and goods. The Thimphu-Phuntsholing road was a very important highway since it linked the capital to the entry point to India. Widening and improving this road would be good for the national economy and greatly benefit motorists and passengers.

The Secretary, Department of Roads, said that the Thimphu-Phuntsholing highway was originally built to accommodate traffic for 150 vehicles. Today, on average, 726 vehicles were plying on this road every day. In view of the inconvenience and problems due to this increased traffic, the Department of Roads had made plans to widen the road. However, budgetary provisions could not be made for this work during the Seventh Plan as it was the objective of the Department of Roads to properly maintain and improve the existing 3,000 kilometers of roads in the country within this Plan period and make them into all-weather roads. All the national highways would be widened as and when budgetary assistance and manpower could be mobilised for such works, said the Secretary.

The National Assembly resolved that as the widening of national highways was not included in the Seventh Plan, plans should be drawn up, when feasible, to widen the highways in the future.

8. Construction of a bridge over Bhur river

The people's representative of Geylegphug under Sarbhang Dzongkhag submitted that year after year, the people of Sarbhang were confronted with great difficulties in summer as there was no bridge over the Bhur river. Vehicular communication was severely disrupted during the summer months and was only possible through trans-shipment. Many vehicles would be spoilt while trying to cross the river. Therefore, for the benefit of the people of Sarbhang and the people of all those Dzongkhags that used the Chirang-Wangdi

highway, the Geylegphug Chimi requested the government to take up the construction of a bridge over the Bhur river this winter.

The Secretary, Department of Roads reported to the Assembly that the construction of a bridge over the Bhur river had been included in the Sixth Plan. However, due to the ngolop problem in the south, the work could not be taken up. A budget of Nu.9.50 million had been allotted for building a bridge over the Bhur river during the Seventh Plan, he said. The work would be taken up after surveying a suitable site for the bridge. Presently the machine for testing soil stability was being used in eastern Bhutan. It would be brought to Geylegphug as soon as the work in the east was completed and the survey for the bridge site would be taken up as soon as possible. The Department of Roads would then take up the construction of the bridge at the selected site.

The Sarbhang Dzongda reported that the real difficulty arising from the lack of a bridge over the Bhur river was from June to October during the monsoon season. Most of the time, traffic was possible through trans-shipment only. Vehicles attempting to cross the river when the water level was lower would be frequently damaged. There was increased cost as well as greater security risk while travelling between Sarbhang and Geylegphug during these months. Administratively also, the lack of a bridge at Bhur was very inconvenient as the Dzongkhag Headquarters was in Sarbhang while the main town and business centre of the district was in Geylegphug. Even if a permanent bridge could not be built right away, it would be of immense benefit to the people if a bailey bridge could be built, said the Dzongda. The National Assembly resolved that in light of the difficulties faced by the people of Sarbhang Dzongkhag, the Department of Roads will undertake the survey of a suitable site for a bridge over the Bhur river this year itself and accordingly finalise the construction of the bridge.

9. Request for wireless facilities

The people's representatives of Drakchog Gewog in Chukha Dzongkhag and Drametsi and Chamang Gewogs in Mongar Dzongkhag submitted that since their Gewogs were not connected by motor road to the Dzongkhag Headquarters and were located at distances involving several days walk, timely

communication with the Dzongkhag Administration on any important matters was very difficult. They, therefore, requested for wireless facilities in the more remote Gewogs to ensure smooth implementation of development programmes and also for promoting better security through timely communication.

The Secretary, Ministry of Communication submitted that while it would be very convenient if wireless facilities could be installed in all the Gewogs located some distance away from the Dzongkhag Headquarters, doing so was neither cost-effective nor absolutely necessary. He pointed out that while the government had installed wireless facilities in the more remote areas such as Lunana in Gasa, Somboekha in Haa, Khomshar in Shemgang and Merak-Sakteng in Tashigang at the request of the people, the average wireless traffic in these stations was only one or two messages a week. Moreover, the Department of Civil Wireless was facing acute manpower shortage as many of the wireless operators were Lhotshampas who were involved in the ngolop uprising and who had absconded from the country. He also informed the members that the Ministry of Communications would be maintaining and strengthening all the existing wireless stations during the Seventh Plan by replacing old sets and training wireless operators and technicians. He, therefore, felt that it would be best if the decision for establishing new wireless facilities was left to the Communication Ministry which would study the need and feasibility for such facilities.

As the Chimis making the request for new wireless facilities did not differ with the position of the Communication Ministry on the matter, the National Assembly decided that the establishment of new wireless facilities should be undertaken on the basis of the need and feasibility for establishing such additional facilities.

10. Request for establishment of hydro-power project in Tashiyangtsi

The people's representative of Tashiyangtsi submitted that His Majesty the King visited Tashiyangtsi when it was still a Dungkhag to discuss the Seventh Five-Year Plan programmes with the people and made Tashiyangtsi into a separate Dzongkhag. A proposal to build a new township was also included in the Plan. The Chimi said that as electricity was very essential for development, the people

and business community requested for the construction of a hydro-power project in Tashiyangtsi from the coming year.

The Minister of Trade and Industry informed the members that when His Majesty visited Tashiyangtsi last year he had commanded a feasibility study to be carried out for a hydro-power project on the Dongdichhu stream. Accordingly, a budget of Nu.3 million had been allotted to carry out the feasibility study. The Minister pointed out that hydro-power projects could not be set up on every stream or river. Proper feasibility studies had to be carried out first, and if the project was found feasible then Detailed Project Reports had to be prepared. The decision for a hydro-power project in Tashiyangtsi would be taken by the government after the feasibility report was completed, the Minister said.

The Tashiyangtsi Chimi expressed his appreciation for the clarification given by the Trade and Industry Minister. The National Assembly decided that as reported by the Minister of Trade and Industry, a feasibility study for a hydro-power project on the Dongdichhu stream should be carried out and submitted to the government.

11. Request for power supply for Kalikhola

The people's representative of Kalikhola Dungkhag under Sarbhang Dzongkhag submitted that during the previous two sessions of the National Assembly, the people of Kalikhola had requested the government to consider the possibility of providing electricity to Kalikhola Dungkhag. This was, however, not possible as the government was not able to identify a suitable stream for a hydro-power project. Recently, it had been observed that power from Chukha had reached a neighbouring Indian tea estate only 6 kilometers away from Kalikhola. The people, therefore, requested the government to kindly negotiate with the Government of West Bengal for extending the power to Kalikhola Dungkhag. This would be of great benefit to the people as well as the government servants working in Kalikhola Dungkhag. It would also make the establishment of small scale industries possible in Kalikhola.

The Minister of Trade and Industry informed the members that electricity in the neighbouring tea estate was supplied by the West Bengal State Electricity Board (WBSEB) and not from the Chukha Hydro-Power Project as reported by the Kalikhola Chimi. Chukha was only one of the many sources supplying power to WBSEB, he said. As the Kalikhola Chimi was aware, the government had provided a 52 KW diesel generator in Kalikhola but that could only supply power for the township. He said that the Ministry of Trade and Industry was exploring various possibilities for providing power to Kalikhola and would do so as soon as a viable possibility was found.

The Kalikhola Chimi reported that running the diesel generator installed for the benefit of Kalikhola town was very expensive because of the high cost of fuel. Also, the machine broke down frequently and the town received power only for 15 to 20 days in a month. The power generated was also enough only for the town, civil administration, police and security forces and the school. He expressed his appreciation for the Ministry's efforts to explore the possibilities of supplying power to Kalikhola Dungkhag.

The National Assembly accepted and recorded the Trade and Industry Minister's clarification on the efforts of the Ministry to supply power to Kalikhola.

12. Establishment of agro-based industries

The people's representatives of Mewang, Gyene and Dagala Gewogs in Thimphu Dzongkhag submitted that due to the guidance of His Majesty the King and the government, one of the main source of income for the people was the export of fruits. As more fruits were being produced and exported every year it was possible that sometimes the fruits could become spoiled if they were not sent out on time. The people, therefore, requested that fruit preservation facilities and canning factories be set up and leased or sold to members of the private sector for making canned products from fruits that might otherwise go to waste if not exported on time.

In response, the Minister of Trade and Industry said that it was the policy of the government to give top priority to the establishment of agro-based industries. It was also the government's policy to encourage the private sector to establish

industries. Therefore, what the Chimis suggested was in full consonance with the policies of the government. He said that with the help of UNIDO and other sources the Ministry of Trade and Industry had already conducted studies for the establishment of all possible agro-based industries. However, very few private parties had come forward to set up agro-based industries. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the prices of Bhutanese agro and horticultural produce, the raw material for agro-industries, were presently very high because of the good seasonal prices these produce fetched in India and Bangladesh. Agro-based industries would become more viable only when the production of fruits and other agro produce increased, thereby resulting in a decline of the cost for the raw materials required for agro-industries. At present the private sector seemed to be reluctant to venture into agro-industries because of the high risk and low profitability and the seasonal nature of the raw material supply.

Despite these disadvantages, there were presently four processing facilities in agro-based industries, said the Minister of Trade and Industry. These were the Samchi Fruit Processing Factory, the Wangchutaba Agro-Industry, the Paro Bondey Apple Juice Plant and the Helvetas-assisted Bumthang Food Processing Unit. Out of these, the Samchi and Bumthang units were both commercially viable. The Wangchutaba Agro-Industry was under construction while the machineries of the Paro unit would be auctioned.

The Minister said that the Wangchutaba Agro-Industry which was under construction with DANIDA assistance would be completed within two months. The main concern was that this industry would not get adequate raw material supply to operate throughout the year. This unit would be able to consume large quantities of fruits and vegetables from Thimphu, Paro, Haa, Punakha, Wangdiphodrang and even from Chukha. The people of these Dzongkhags will have to grow more fruits and vegetables if this agro-based factory is to be viable, the Minister said.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry will assist any entrepreneur wanting to take up agro-based industries, the Minister said. In fact, the Cabinet had authorised the Ministry to even approve foreign collaborations for establishing agro-based industries. He said that in order to promote the growth of agro-based industries

it was important for the BCCI to work closely with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Agriculture Ministry and private entrepreneurs.

The Minister also said that although a large cold storage unit had been established at Phuntsholing it was not being utilized adequately by the farmers for storing fruits and other agricultural produce. On His Majesty the King's command, there was a plan to set up 130 small scale industries in the 20 Dzongkhags during the Seventh Plan period. Loans totalling Nu.410 million would be disbursed by the Bhutan Development Fund Corporation (BDFC) to set up these industries as early as possible. The DANIDA-assisted agro-based industry at Wangchutaba would be privatized as soon as it was completed. As already mentioned, the Paro unit, with machineries estimated to be worth Nu. 5.178 million, would be auctioned. The Minister gave his assurance that in keeping with the importance attached by the government to the establishment of agro-based industries, every effort would be made to establish as many agro-based industries as possible during the Seventh Plan.

The people's representatives expressed their deep appreciation for the government's policy on the establishment of agro-based industries. In view of the government's policy to establish as many agro-based industries as possible, the National Assembly directed the Chimis to apprise the people on the importance of increasing the production of fruits and other produce required as raw materials for these industries.

13. Establishment of international airport

The people's representative of Geylegphug Dungkhag in Sarbhang Dzongkhag submitted that although the government had made a plan to establish an international airport at Geylegphug, the project had to be abandoned because of the anti-national disturbances in the Dzongkhag. He said that the people requested the government to once again consider the establishment of an international airport in Geylegphug.

The representative of the BCCI also requested for the establishment of an all-weather international airport. He pointed out that the country's only airport at Paro faced great problems as it was not possible for the Druk Air to land during

bad weather because of the rugged and mountainous terrain in Paro. The Druk Air had to be diverted to Kathmandu, Calcutta or Dhaka thus causing heavy financial loss to the airline. Because large cargo planes could not land in Paro, perishable produce like oranges, apples and other commodities could not be transported by air for export but had to be sent out by road. If an all-weather international airport could be established at the foothills in southern Bhutan, as envisaged by the government earlier, it would greatly benefit the government and the business community as well as people travelling by air.

The Secretary, Ministry of Communication informed the members that although the Ministry had received directives to survey a suitable site for an all-weather airport, the survey could not be completed because of the ngolop uprising in the south in 1990. He informed the members that the construction of an airport would take at least five years. Besides a careful survey to select a suitable site, building an international airport also called for an accurate study of its viability in terms of international air traffic. It was, therefore, not a matter that could be finalised immediately. As reported by the Planning Minister during the 71st Session of the National Assembly, the Seventh Plan gave top priority to programmes that would promote balanced development throughout the country, and in view of the high cost involved in the construction of an international airport, a budget for a feasibility study of an international airport had not been included in the Seventh Plan. Although it was true that the Druk Air incurred additional expenditure because its flights could not land in Paro and had to be diverted during bad weather to airports in neighbouring countries, the establishment of an airport in the south would not solve the problem faced by passengers. As the airport would then be located at a great distance from the capital, Thimphu, it was questionable whether this would really benefit most of the passengers travelling by air to Bhutan. The Secretary said that it was not possible to construct an airport during the Seventh Plan. However, once the ngolop problem was resolved, a decision could be taken on carrying out a feasibility study for an airport in the south.

The concerned Chimis expressed their appreciation for the clarifications made by the Secretary, Ministry of Communication. The National Assembly accepted the Communication Secretary's submission regarding the feasibility study for an airport in the south.

14. Renovation of Chortens

The representative of the Central Monk Body expressed deep regret that many Chortens all over Bhutan had been desecrated and damaged, and robbed of the precious religious artefacts placed inside them. He said that the Monk Body, keeping in mind the benefit of sentient beings and the well-being of the country and people, would like to initiate the renovation and re-construction of these Chortens with expenses met from its own funds. Among others, they would undertake the replacement of Zungs (sacred objects imparting religious vitality), repair works, and religious ceremonies to restore the sanctity of the Chortens. He also called for assistance from the government and the people in this noble work.

The people's representative from Shongphu in Tashigang Dzongkhag expressed deep appreciation for the Monk Body's decision to undertake the renovation of Chortens. The people of Tashigang were already renovating Chortens and monasteries in their Dzongkhag in consultation with the Dzongkhag Administration to the extent possible within their means. They had requested for assistance from the Special Commission for Cultural Affairs where major work had to be done. In this regard, the people would be happy that they could now look towards the Monk Body for assistance.

The National Assembly expressed appreciation for the proposal submitted by the Central Monk Body to undertake the renovation of Chortens in the country.

15. Appreciation for establishment of Gewog Yargye Tshogchungs

The people's representatives of Serthi Gewog and Hastinapur Gewog under Samdrupjongkhar expressed the deep gratitude of the people for the establishment of Gewog Yargye Tshogchungs (GYTs) to further strengthen cooperation between the people and the government. They said that the GYTs would enable the people in the villages to express their views and needs to the government and help ensure the progress and success of developmental activities in their Gewogs and achieve the over-all national goal of self-reliance.

The Home Minister said that GYTs were established by His Majesty the King to promote people's participation right down to the village level so that the people

themselves could ensure the successful implementation of development programmes in their own villages and Gewogs and thereby derive the full benefits of the programmes. After three decades of planned development, His Majesty the King felt that the people could now shoulder responsibility and participate actively in the decision-making process and in all matters of concern for their villages, Gewogs, Dzongkhags and the nation. With the establishment of GYT's, the people could voice their needs more effectively and decide on what was best for their villages and Gewogs. The Home Minister thanked the Chimis from Samdrupjongkhar for appreciating the establishment of the GYT's. Other people's representatives also expressed deep appreciation for the many far-sighted steps taken by His Majesty the King and the government for the benefit of the people; beginning from the establishment of the National Assembly, followed by the Royal Advisory Council, the Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs (District Development Committees) and most recently the establishment of the Gewog Yargye Tshogchungs (Block Development Committees). The Chimis said that the establishment of the GYT's in particular had been most beneficial for the people.

The National Assembly noted that the establishment of GYT's by His Majesty the King had been of great benefit not only for the people of Samdrupjongkhar but for all other Dzongkhags. The Assembly resolved that in keeping with His Majesty the King's noble vision and aspirations for the people, everyone should work together to ensure that the national policies and objectives were fulfilled and the country continued to advance on the path of progress and development.

16. Expression of appreciation for Kurichhu Hydro-Power Project

The people's representatives of Lhuntsi and Mongar Dzongkhags expressed the deep appreciation of the people for the finalisation of the Kurichhu Hydro-Power Project with assistance from Bhutan's close friend and neighbour, India. The project at Gyalpoishing would be of great benefit to the people and the country, they said.

The Minister of Trade and Industry informed the members that the decision to undertake the Kurichhu Hydro-Power Project had been made on the command of His Majesty the King. Although the total capacity of the project was 60 MW,

with 4 generators each producing 15MW, only two generators giving an output of 30MW would be installed in the first phase of the work. The estimated time frame for completing the project was 5 to 6 years. The Government of India would be financing the project with 60 percent of the cost as grant and 40 percent as loan. The Minister said that the Kurichhu Project would have immediate benefits for the people of the eastern Dzongkhags by giving them the opportunity to develop industries and set up shops to meet the requirements of the project. In view of the huge manpower requirements for implementing the project it would also provide great employment opportunities for the people of the eastern Dzongkhags.

His Majesty the King informed the Assembly that the total cost of the project was estimated at Nu. 2,550 million. The project capacity was not more than 60 MW because to produce more power would require a large dam that would submerge the Kurizam Bridge and the highway to Lhunsi and Mongar. In order to enable the transportation of large and heavy machineries required for the project, the highway from Samdrupjongkhar to Gyalpoishing would have to be strengthened and improved. The additional cost for this work which was estimated at Nu. 410 million and another Nu.200 million for erecting the transmission line from Gyalpoishing to Samdrupjongkhar would be provided as grant by India. With the Memorandum of Understanding already signed by India and Bhutan, the project was scheduled to be taken up soon, His Majesty said. With the commencement of the project so generously financed by India, the people and business community of the eastern Dzongkhags would enjoy great economic benefits. On behalf of the people and government of Bhutan, His Majesty the King expressed deep appreciation for the generous assistance provided by India for the Kurichhu Project.

His Majesty said that the DYT's in the east should discuss and prepare a list of the number of people in the Dzongkhags who would like to enlist as workers for the project. The list should be forwarded to the Home Ministry. With Nu.3,160 million estimated to be spent on the project it was important to ensure that as much of this money as possible benefitted the people of eastern Bhutan. With all the machineries having to be imported, if workers also had to be brought from outside hardly any of the money spent on the project would remain in the country. It was extremely important for the prosperity of the people and the

country to ensure that the money spent on development works and projects passed into the hands of the Bhutanese people. Therefore, the people of the six eastern Dzongkhags should discuss and forward a list of contractors and businessmen from their Dzongkhags who could work on the project to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, His Majesty said.

People's representatives from the western Dzongkhags expressed their hope and wishes that just as the Chukha Hydro-Power Project was beneficial for the people in their Dzongkhags, the Kurichhu Project would be equally beneficial for the people of the eastern Dzongkhags. They hoped that in keeping with His Majesty's aspirations, the people of the eastern Dzongkhags would take active part in the implementation of the Kurichhu Project and ensure that the money poured into the project would bring greater progress and prosperity to the eastern Dzongkhags.

The people's representatives of the eastern Dzongkhags once again expressed their deep appreciation for the finalisation of the Kurichhu Project which would bring great benefit to the people of the eastern Dzongkhags.

The National Assembly resolved that all the Chimis should keep in mind the importance of ensuring His Majesty the King's aspirations that the money spent on development programmes and projects filtered down into the hands of the people and remained in the country. On behalf of the National Assembly, the Speaker expressed deep appreciation for the finalisation of the Kurichhu Project and extended a warm Tashi Delek for the successful implementation of the project.

17. Expression of appreciation for the Indian Government's assistance for the renovation of Punakha Dzong

The people's representatives of Chubu, Beymey, Talo, Shelgana and Karbi Gewogs in Punakha Dzongkhag expressed the deep appreciation of the people of Punakha to the Government of India for granting financial assistance to renovate the Pungthang Dechenphodrang Dzong. They said that the people of Punakha would always be grateful for this generous assistance which was a reflection of the excellent relations between India and Bhutan.

In the course of this vote of thanks on behalf of the people of Punakha, some Chimis raised the question of mobilizing manpower to undertake the renovation of Dzongs. The Royal Advisory Councillors, however, intervened and said that this was a matter that could be discussed and finalised at the Dzongkhag level in the DYT's. They said that what could be discussed and finalised in the GYT's and DYT's should not be brought up in the National Assembly so that the Assembly could deliberate on issues of national concern and importance.

The National Assembly recorded the vote of thanks to the Government of India by the people of Punakha and also endorsed the intervention made by the members of the Royal Advisory Council.

18. Expression of gratitude to His Holiness the Je Khenpo and His Majesty the King for the Shabdrung Thongdroel

The people's representative of Zommey and Chubu Gewogs expressed the deep gratitude of the people of Punakha Dzongkhag to His Holiness the Je Khenpo and His Majesty the King for the huge and beautiful Shabdrung Phuntshom Tshogpai Thongdroel which was made for the benefit of all sentient beings and the well-being and security of the nation. The consecration of this beautiful and sacred Thongdroel at the Pungthang Dechenphodrang Dzong was an occasion of special joy. The people were deeply grateful for the opportunity they now had every year to pay their respects and say prayers before the Thongdroel on the 10th day of the 1st month of the Bhutanese calendar.

The National Assembly also recorded a vote of thanks to His Holiness the Je Khenpo and His Majesty the King for the sacred Shabdrung Phuntshom Tshogpai Thongdroel which would promote greater awareness of the Dharma, benefit all sentient beings and help ensure the peace, security and well being of the country.

III. ELECTION OF ROYAL ADVISORY COUNCILLOR

As one of the six Royal Advisory Councillors elected during the 71st Session of the National Assembly was disqualified, fresh elections were held in the concerned 6 Dzongkhags for the vacant seat. The final election of the six Dzongkhag candidates was held by the National Assembly on 9th July, 1993. The members of the 72nd Session of the National Assembly elected Kinley Wangdi, the Wangdiphodrang Dzongkhag candidate, to the vacant seat in the Royal Advisory Council through secret ballot. Kinley Wangdi was awarded the scarf of office by His Majesty the King on 14th July, 1993, following which he joined the ranks of the other Councillors for the same term of office in the Royal Advisory Council.

IV. PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT ON THE NATIONAL BUDGET

Following the distribution of the Report on the National Budget to the members of the National Assembly on 9th July, 1993, the Finance Minister made his presentation of the report on 12th July, 1993.

The Finance Minister reported that in keeping with the important national policy of self-reliance, one of the most important objectives of the Finance Ministry was to ensure that the Royal Government could meet all its recurrent expenditure from its internal revenue. In this regard, he said he was happy to report that although a shortfall of Nu.180 million for the 1992-93 recurrent expenditure had been projected by the Finance Ministry during the 71st Session of the National Assembly, there was actually a surplus of Nu.56 million when the fiscal year ended. He said that in order to verify that the projections for the 1992-93 fiscal year were sound and realistic, a joint review exercise had been carried out by the Royal Advisory Council and the Royal Audit Authority on the command of His Majesty the King. The surplus in the current expenditure budget had been confirmed by this joint review, the Finance Minister said. He summarised the 1992-93 budget as follows.

Outlay

Current Expenditure	-	Nu. 1,306 million	
Capital Expenditure	-	Nu. 1,423 million	
Others	-	Nu. 599 million	
			Total :
		Nu. 3,328 million	

Sources of Finance

Internal Revenue	-	Nu. 1,472 million	
Other receipts	-	Nu. 181 million	
External Grants	-	Nu. 1,592 million	
Borrowings	-	Nu. 139 million	
			Total :
		Nu. 3,384 million	

The Finance Minister said that although the current expenditure had reached Nu.1,306 million, the internal revenue projected earlier at Nu.1,325 million had increased to Nu.1,472 million. He also reported that on the command of His Majesty the King, a special reserve fund had been kept aside to meet any emergency requirement arising out of the ngolop problem in southern Bhutan. He was, however, happy to report that it had not been necessary to use this fund as the security forces were able to cope with the ngolop problem without any additional burden on the national budget in the 1992-93 fiscal year. He also reported that all external assistance as well as internal resources meant for development purposes had been used solely for the development projects and programmes for which they were budgeted.

The Finance Minister said that the trimming of government expenditure had not been an easy task as the Royal Government was committed to improving the quality of essential services for the benefit of the general public. Increasing the domestic revenue had been an equally difficult task as the government had to ensure that the burden of additional taxes did not fall upon the common people. In fact, the government reduced sales tax on several essential commodities in order to keep the prices of such items within reach of the common people. Taxes and royalty on capital equipment and raw materials had also been kept low in order to promote development of industries. Therefore, additional resources had to be mobilised through increase in tax rates on non-essential or luxury items and through improvements in the collection mechanism. He said that rural taxes in 1992-93 only amounted to Nu. 4 million. The business income tax from the private sector also only amounted to Nu.85 million, just 6 percent of the total revenue. Out of the total revenue of Nu.1,472 million, the total tax revenue was only Nu.447 million, the bulk of which was received from public sector corporations and indirect taxes. The rest of the domestic revenue was received from non-tax sources such as profits from corporations and capital receipts, said the Finance Minister.

The Minister informed the Assembly that the contribution of the general population to the national exchequer was very minimal and could not even cover a fraction of the cost of essential services provided free to all citizens. However, the provision of essential services on cost-free basis was considered very important in view of the government's objective of promoting universal primary education and health care.

He said that the Royal Government was fully committed to the expansion and improvement of all essential services for the people.

The Minister also reported that the entire cost of US \$ 25 million for the second aircraft for the Druk Air and its spare parts had been paid from the country's own hard currency reserves. Despite this heavy expenditure, the country's hard currency reserve stood at US \$ 90 million which was more than the outstanding foreign debt of US \$ 78 million taken over the years for development investments.

After giving a summary of the expenditure for the various sectors and departments for the first year of the Seventh Plan, the Finance Minister presented a summary of the 1993-94 budget as follows :-

Outlay

Current Expenditure	-	Nu. 1,427 million
Capital Expenditure	-	Nu. 1,779 million
Others	-	Nu. 504 million

Total :

Nu. 3,710 million

Expected sources of funding

Domestic Revenue	-	Nu. 1,500 million
Other Receipts	-	Nu. 99 million
International assistance	-	Nu. 1,915 million
Borrowings	-	Nu. 196 million

Total : Nu. 3,710 million

The

Finance Minister clarified that, as in the past, the projected budget figures may undergo some changes in the course of the year. He was, however, confident that the changes would be minimal as efforts at cost reduction and streamlining of government expenditure and strict financial control would continue. He was also confident that the domestic revenue could be increased to Nu. 1,500 million, as projected, thus enabling the Royal Government to once again meet its current expenditure which was estimated at Nu.1,427 million. The Finance Minister expressed satisfaction that the development projects and programmes finalised

jointly by the government and people for the first year of the Seventh Plan had been successfully implemented. He said that this had been possible mainly because of the wise leadership of His Majesty the King and his single minded dedication and commitment to the well being and prosperity of the people and the country. The success of the past year had also been possible because of the increased participation of the people to promote the important national goal of self-reliance. He expressed his hope that Bhutan would soon achieve its goal of economic self-reliance through even greater participation by the people and the continued support of the friendly donors extending development assistance.

In concluding his report, the Finance Minister expressed the sincere gratitude of the Royal Government and the people of Bhutan to the friendly donor countries and the United Nations and other international agencies for their generous technical and financial support. In particular, we are deeply grateful to the government and people of India, our largest donor, for their generous and unfailing assistance and support to Bhutan, said the Finance Minister.

The Royal Advisory Councillors and the people's representatives thanked the Finance Minister for his presentation of the report on the national budget. They expressed particular pride and satisfaction that the Royal Government had been able to meet its current expenditure from domestic revenue and still have a net balance of Nu.56 million. They were equally gratified that Bhutan was able to pay the full cost of the second Druk Air aircraft from its hard currency reserves and still have a reserve in excess of foreign loans taken for development investments. They expressed deep appreciation for the government's efforts to increase domestic revenue without levying additional taxes on the people, to keep prices stable for all essential commodities and ensure that the people would continue to enjoy free service facilities. It was also gratifying that despite the ngolop problem in the south, the programmes of the Seventh Plan were being successfully implemented. Going by the achievements of the past year and with the government and people continuing to work so closely together, the Councillors and Chimis expressed very high expectations that every year of the Seventh Plan would bring Bhutan closer to achieving the national goal of economic self-reliance.

The Planning Minister pointed out that unlike other countries which had embarked on the path of economic development many centuries ago, Bhutan had been taking

up development activities for the last 31 years only. Within that time Bhutan had made tremendous progress and was well on its way to becoming a true welfare state. All social service facilities were either subsidized or provided free of cost to the people, he said. And unlike in other developing countries, all these facilities were being provided by the government without recovering any of the establishment and maintenance costs for them through taxes levied on the people. Pointing out that one of the most important national objectives was to achieve economic self-reliance, the Planning Minister expressed his confidence that this objective would be achieved with the active participation of the people and their total commitment to implementing the programmes of the Seventh Five-Year Plan. He told the members that with the generous assistance obtained from donor countries, the government was making every effort to build essential infrastructure and implement the programmes finalised for the development of the country during the Seventh Plan. He, therefore, called upon the people to work together with the government and strive with even greater vigour and commitment to ensure the development and prosperity of the country.

The people's representatives said that the bond between the government and the people was like the bond between parents and children. It was because of this abiding bond of love and trust between the government and the people that the country had successfully implemented the previous Five-Year Plans. The Chimis said that the people were fully committed to fulfilling the far-sighted policies of the government and had pledged to work whole-heartedly to implement the Seventh Plan programmes and achieve economic self-reliance for the country.

The National Assembly expressed its appreciation for the Report on the National Budget which had been distributed to the members and was clearly presented by the Finance Minister. The Assembly also expressed its wish to be similarly apprised of all future annual budgets. It called on the people and the government to work together with full commitment and cooperation to achieve even greater economic growth and prosperity and fulfil the national goal of self-reliance.

On behalf of the National Assembly, the Speaker moved a vote of thanks for the generous assistance the government and people of Bhutan were receiving for the Seventh Plan from the government and people of India and from other friendly countries and international organisations like the United Nations. N.B. The full

details of the 1992-93 budget and the projected budget for 1993-94 is contained in the "Report on the National Budget" which was distributed to all the members on 9th July, 1993.

V. MISCELLANEOUS POINTS RELATED TO THE NGOLOP PROBLEM

1. Admission of Lhotshampa students in northern schools

The people's representative of Shongphu and Radhi Gewogs in Tashigang Dzongkhag pointed out that the ngolops had destroyed many schools and development and service facilities in southern Bhutan. This had been followed by Lhotshampas sending many of their children to schools in northern Bhutan which had made it difficult for many children in the northern Dzongkhags to gain admission in the schools in their areas. This was not at all fair, the Chimi said, as even before the ngolop problem a number of seats had always been reserved for Lhotshampa students in the schools in the north. Moreover, although the government had provided the finances, the labour for school construction had been contributed by the people.

The schools in the north had been built mainly for the benefit of the children of the respective Dzongkhags and not for admitting students from the south, many of whom might be children of the anti-nationals who had destroyed the schools in their own Dzongkhags. The Chimi said that the people of Tashigang requested the National Assembly to direct the Education Department to thoroughly investigate the family background of every student seeking admission in schools in the northern Dzongkhags.

The Director General of Education said that he fully appreciated the points raised by the people's representative. He said that when the ngolop uprising took place in 1990, one of the main demands of the ngolops had been the closure of all schools in southern Bhutan. They had used threats, violence, arson and sabotage to achieve this objective. Till date they had blown up or burnt down and destroyed 29 schools in southern Bhutan. The most recent destruction of schools by the ngolops was in Sarbhang Dzongkhag earlier this year when they blew up the Thoembatar Primary School after stealing its CGI sheets. The Leopani Primary School was also damaged recently when the

ngolops set fire to it. Stationery, furniture and even WFP rations had been looted by the ngolops from many schools in the south.

During the ngolop uprising in 1990, students were warned by the ngolops not to attend school, and many teachers were beaten up and their lives threatened, said the Director General. It was a source of deep sadness and regret for the Education Department that many headmasters and senior teachers in the schools in the south were attacked and beaten up by their own students or the parents and immediate family members of the students. When His Majesty the King visited the schools in the south shortly before the ngolop uprising he had told the Lhotshampa students he was very sad to learn that many of them were thinking of joining the ngolops. Although, no one could stop them from leaving school if they decided to do so at this stage of their school life when they were able to make their own decisions, His Majesty had appealed to them to think carefully over what they wanted to do. Following His Majesty's visit, the Social Service Minister also visited the schools in the south and met with the students and parents. He spoke to them at length and explained to them why they should not join the ngolops. However, all efforts to dissuade them failed and thousands of Lhotshampa students refused to attend school and many of them left and took up anti-national activities, said the Director General.

With many students taking up anti-national activities and school attendance dropping below 30 percent, the Department of Education had no choice but to close down 76 schools in the south by the end of 1990. When the school semester began in 1991, thousands of students previously studying in schools in the south had to be admitted in schools in the north, causing major inconveniences and severe accommodation problems in these schools. As the ngolops had stolen school stationery which could be used to forge various school certificates, school transfer certificates had to be invalidated. In order to accommodate the thousands of deserving students, many of them Lhotshampas, who had been studying in the schools that had been forced to close down, and to screen out those Lhotshampa students who had taken up ngolop activities or whose parents had taken part in destroying the schools and attacking the teachers, the Department of Education made a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Police mandatory for school admission in 1991.

However, on the command of His Majesty the King, the requirement of an NOC was dropped from the 1992 school semester, said the Director General. Reminding the Department of Education that every child in Bhutan must be given an opportunity to receive education, His Majesty had commanded the Department to reopen as many schools as possible in the disturbed southern Dzongkhags. Accordingly, the Education Department had, till date, been able to open 64 schools in the south. Besides opening two more primary schools, one in Sarbhang and another in Samchi, several other primary schools were also expanded and improved this year. In keeping with His Majesty the King's command to provide education without discrimination to children all over Bhutan so that they could develop into productive citizens, admission in the 267 schools in the country included students from every part of the country. For example, out of the 12,000 students in the 24 schools in Thimphu Dzongkhag, only 20 percent of the students were from Thimphu. The rest were from other parts of Bhutan, a large number of them from the southern Dzongkhags. The Director General said that it was policy of the government, under His Majesty's guidance, that every child in Bhutan must receive an opportunity to attend school and develop into a useful and productive citizen. We must continue to be guided by this wise policy guideline laid down by His Majesty the King, said the Director General.

The people's representative raising the point thanked the Director General of Education for his clarification of the matter. The Assembly resolved that there should be no change in the education policy laid down by His Majesty the King and the Royal Government as the policy decreed equal education opportunities for all the children in Bhutan and was of great benefit for the people and the country.

2. Proper monitoring and identification of people moving to northern Dzongkhags and working under various organisations

The people's representative of Samkhar and Shongphu Gewogs in Tashigang Dzongkhag submitted that many Lhotshampas who had applied for emigration and had left their Dzongkhags were later found to be residing in northern Dzongkhags, most particularly in Thimphu. He said that it was the responsibility of the Gups and Chimis to ensure that no infiltration took place

in their respective villages. Similarly, the government should also investigate and identify such people who were living in the capital, Thimphu, and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry should take the responsibility for investigating and identifying such people working in the private sector. Such measures were necessary to ensure the security of the country.

The people's representative of Chirangdara in Chirang Dzongkhag also emphasized the need to monitor the movement of people who had applied to emigrate and also those who had joined the national workforce. He said that with many people having joined the national workforce to work with the Department of Roads and other projects and with ngolops and emigrants leaving Chirang, the village officials were finding it very difficult to keep track of people in their villages. Many emigrants and F-7 persons who had received Kidug Soilra and were supposed to have left the country were found living in Thimphu and other Dzongkhags. He said that such unchecked and free movement of people provided opportunities for anti-national elements to create problems and was, therefore, a threat to national security. He proposed that all Departments, Dzongkhag Administrations should take action to confirm the origin of persons in their jurisdiction by checking the census documents of the people concerned. Suitable action should be taken against people who failed to produce proper census documents. Before giving employment, government departments and private organisations should all get confirmation of the status of the concerned persons from the Dzongkhags.

The Home Minister acknowledged that the point raised by the Chimis of Samkhar and Shongphu Gewogs in Tashigang and Chirangdara in Chirang was very valid. A sample survey of Thimphu and several other towns had revealed the presence of many illegal residents. However, it had not been possible to carry out a proper census of these towns as the Department of Immigration and Census was presently engaged in carrying out the census of Chukha Dzongkhag. Due to shortage of census officials and staff, it was not possible to simultaneously carry out census in different places. He said that the detailed census of Thimphu would be carried out after the census in Chukha was completed.

The Home Minister pointed out that it was very difficult to distinguish non-nationals from genuine Bhutanese nationals when they wore the national dress. Illegal residents in Thimphu would wear foreign attires when they wished to appear as non-nationals and then switch to wearing the national dress when it suited them to pose as nationals. This was the case in some of the rural areas in the north also. Since these illegal residents could not be trusted to have loyalty and devotion to the country, their presence was a serious threat to the security of the nation, said the Home Minister. The Gups and Chimis in the villages and Gewogs must, therefore, be alert and look out for the presence of such people. After making verifications they should report all doubtful cases to the census and immigration offices in the respective Dzongkhags and investigate the matter. If they were not able to confirm the identity of the person or persons concerned, the matter should be reported to the Home Ministry.

As for the employment of non-nationals in the ministries, departments and the private sector, the Home Minister said that there were existing rules and regulations which were being followed strictly. However, if there were doubts that F-7 persons and emigrants may be working in the departments and private sector, the citizenship ID cards of such people should be scrutinized carefully. In case there was doubt about the authenticity of any of the ID cards, the matter should be reported to the Department of Immigration and Census so that further investigations could be carried out. The most important point to keep in mind for ensuring the security of the country, said the Home Minister, was for the ministries, departments, private sector and the people to all work together to ensure that the citizenship and immigration laws were strictly followed and implemented.

Some of the people's representatives said that they had been implementing the directive of the 71st Session of the National Assembly that the Gups and Chimis should help to identify illegal residents in the Gewogs and villages wherever it was not possible for the concerned government departments and agencies to do so. They had carried out investigations in their villages and Gewogs and had found many illegal residents who fell under the F-7 category. The Chimis expressed their alarm over the widespread presence of so many non-nationals who did not have any love or loyalty for the country. They pointed out that this unchecked presence of so many illegal residents posed a serious threat to the security of the country. The Chimis, therefore, called for a

thorough and strict investigation of such cases to be carried out before the problem grew out of control.

Other people's representatives pointed out that the ngolop uprising in southern Bhutan in 1990 was a result of the influx of large numbers of illegal Nepali immigrants into the southern Dzongkhags. It was, therefore, very necessary to prevent the infiltration of illegal immigrants into the northern Dzongkhags before it became too late. They said that illegal residents should not even be listed under any category, such as F-7, and allowed to stay in the country but instead should all be deported.

The Samdrupjongkhar Dzongda said that it was possible for emigrants and illegal residents under the F-7 category who had left after taking Kidug Soilra to re-enter the country without being detected because of the long and porous border in the south. It was impossible for the Department of Immigration and Census to monitor such a long and open border. He said that the responsibility for checking and identifying illegal residents should not be left to the Department of Immigration and Census alone. The Gups and Chimis should also be given the responsibility of monitoring their villages and Gewogs and detecting the presence of illegal residents. Such a step would contribute greatly towards the proper implementation of the citizenship rules and regulations.

Several Chimis suggested that the National Assembly should pass a resolution making it mandatory for all ministries, departments and the private sector to ensure that all non-nationals employed by them had proper identity cards.

Several other Chimis said that the Gups and Chimis were constantly checking to see that people who had announced they were leaving the country were not infiltrating into their villages and Gewogs. They pointed out that rather than the rural areas, it was far more necessary to check for the presence of such people in the private sector and in the capital Thimphu and other towns.

The Royal Advisory Councillors said that whenever census was carried out in the Dzongkhags and villages it was very important for the people involved in the census not to hesitate in reporting to the Immigration and Census Department on the presence of illegal residents detected by them. They should

not allow themselves to be influenced by the status or the Kidug of any persons concerned. This must be done as one of the most important responsibilities of government officials and people's representatives was to ensure the peace and security of the country. They said that if everyone thought as one and implemented the census rules and regulations faithfully and strictly there should be no problem or difficulty in identifying illegal residents. This would in turn benefit the security of the country.

His Majesty the King informed the members that the detailed census for Thimphu, which was already long overdue, would be carried out as soon as the Chukha Dzongkhag census was completed. He explained the problems and difficulties faced by the government in investigating and identifying the many illegal residents categorised as F-7 who had left Bhutan after taking Kidug Soilra but had infiltrated back and were working and residing in the country. One of the biggest problems was the time taken to carry out a thorough census. The shortest possible time required for completing the census of any Dzongkhag was four months. The cost involved was also very high. His Majesty said that the responsibility for carrying out census should not be left to the Home Ministry alone. It would be very beneficial for the government and the people if the Dzongdas and the DYT's and GYT's could take up the responsibility for census in their Dzongkhags until the government was in a position to send teams to carry out detailed census in all the Dzongkhags. His Majesty informed the members that apart from illegal residents there were large numbers of non-nationals working in Thimphu and in the other Dzongkhags. Besides this there were 20,000 officially listed non-national labourers working on development programmes and projects although the Home Ministry estimated the actual figure to be more than 30,000. His Majesty recalled that in 1988 there was a registered strength of 80,000 Nepalese labourers but the actual figure after investigation turned out to be 1,13,000.

The Dzongdas and Chimis reported that after the directive issued by the 71st Session of the National Assembly, the GYT's and the DYT's were taking full responsibility in identifying illegal residents in their Dzongkhags.

Several Chimis said that many persons investigated by them in the Dzongkhags were found to be carrying fake identity cards and documents. They said that something should be worked out to make it easy to detect such people.

The Home Minister said that since the Department of Immigration and Census could complete detailed census for only two Dzongkhags every year, it would not be possible to carry out the detailed census of all the 20 Dzongkhags within the 7th Plan. In light of this, he said that for the time being it would be very useful if the Dzongdas and Thrimpons together with the DYT's and GYT's took the responsibility of detecting the presence of illegal residents and emigrants who had re-entered the country and infiltrated into the Dzongkhags.

His Majesty the King enquired from the Dzongdas and Chimis whether there would be any problems for them in taking up this responsibility. They replied that they would have no problems in taking up this responsibility in their respective Dzongkhags. They, however, submitted that the government should take the responsibility of detecting the presence of emigrants and illegal residents who had returned and infiltrated into Thimphu and other towns and also those who had found work with the private sector.

The National Assembly resolved that until the Department of Immigration and Census completed the detailed census of all the Dzongkhags, the Dzongdas and Thrimpons together with the DYT's and GYT's should take the responsibility of detecting illegal residents and emigrants who had re-entered the country and infiltrated into their Dzongkhags. In the towns, this responsibility should be taken by the Thrimpons, the Gups of the towns and the offices of the Department of Immigration and Census together with the Dzongkhag Headquarters. As for the private sector, job applicants should be given employment only after thorough and proper verification of their ID cards.

3. Priority for the nation's security over development

The people's representatives of Pemagatshel Dzongkhag submitted that the security of the country was much more important than even its economic development. The people, therefore, proposed that development programmes should be kept on hold and the budget diverted to remove the ngolop problem and ensure the security of the country.

The Finance Minister said that as pointed out by the Pemagatshel Chimi, the security of the country was more important than its economic development as Bhutan had always been a sovereign, independent country. However, the proposal to divert development funds to remove the ngolop problem and ensure the country's security, had been repeatedly discussed in the 70th and 71st sessions of the National Assembly, and during these discussions His Majesty the King had commanded that the Seventh Plan had to be implemented successfully as it was the government's policy to ensure economic progress and balanced development throughout the country. He pointed out that in the first year of the Seventh Plan the Finance Ministry did not have to divert even one additional Chetrum on account of the ngolop problem. The utilisation of development funds had already been clearly shown in the reports submitted by the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission to the 71st Session of the National Assembly as well as during the current session. Since the ngolop uprising three years ago, there had been no need to divert any development fund for the ngolop problem as the security forces were able to manage with their own budgets. If there was a big problem and the security of the country was threatened, then as ultimately the government, people and the business community were all one and the same, the whole nation must come together and contribute everything from cash to manpower and work together closely to overcome any such national threat. There was, therefore, no need at all to divert development funds for security purposes, said the Finance Minister.

The Planning Minister expressed his appreciation for the deep concern shown by the Pemagatshel Chimi and the greater importance he attached to the security of the country than the implementation of development programmes. However, during the 71st Session of the National Assembly, 37 Gewogs from 10 Dzongkhags had submitted a request for diverting development funds for security purpose but His Majesty the King, pointing out that the Seventh Plan programmes had been finalised together with the people of all the 20 Dzongkhags, had commanded that the Seventh Plan must be implemented successfully in all the Dzongkhags, including the five southern Dzongkhags, so that there would be balanced development throughout the country. Accordingly, the Seventh Plan programmes were being implemented and the first year of the Plan had also been successfully completed without a single

Chetrum from the development funds having to be diverted for security purposes. His Majesty had also given strict and repeated commands that the funds allocated for development purposes must be spent on the programmes they were projected for and never used for any other purpose. The Planning Minister said that although the Finance Ministry had created a special reserve fund of Nu. 200 million on His Majesty's command to meet any emergency requirements arising from the ngolop problem, this fund had not been touched at all. He said that security expenditure should continue to be managed from the budgets of the security forces and there should, therefore, be no need for development funds to be diverted for security purposes. The Planning Minister said that in keeping with His Majesty the King's noble wish to ensure balanced development in all the 20 Dzongkhags in the country and bring economic prosperity to the people, every effort was being made, as in the previous Plan periods, to successfully implement the programmes of the Seventh Five-Year Plan.

Since the issue had already been conclusively debated in the 71st Session of the National Assembly, no separate resolution was adopted.

4. No human rights violations

The people's representative of Dagapela Dungkhag in Dagana Dzongkhag said the people of Dagapela wished to place on record that the allegation of human rights violations in southern Bhutan made by the ngolops was totally baseless. Human rights had always been respected in Bhutan and no one had been deprived of it. In fact, the Lhotshampas had been more privileged than other citizens of the country in all aspects of socio-economic benefits. The ngolops were raising the issue of human rights only to gain support from human rights organisations and international agencies. The people of Dagapela, therefore, requested those international agencies extending assistance to the ngolops to carefully assess whether the ngolops really deserved any support and assistance.

The people's representatives of Shelgana, Karbi and Lingbu Gewogs in Punakha Dzongkhag also pointed out that the allegations made by the ngolops about human rights violations by the government were totally baseless. They said that actually it was the ngolops who had been violating human rights

through their ruthless crimes against the people. Most of these baseless allegations were made by the people who had emigrated from the country in spite of repeated appeals by His Majesty the King not to leave the country. Totally ignoring the many crimes committed by themselves, the ngolops were making these false allegations against the government with the sole intention of disturbing Bhutan's good relations with friendly countries and to stop external assistance.

Many people's representatives got up one after the other to express their views on the state of human rights in Bhutan. They said that Bhutan was a country where Buddhism had flourished ever since Guru Rimpoche had blessed the land with his sacred presence in the eighth century. In the 17th century Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal had established the dual system of government, with a religious head and a secular head, which endured for over two centuries. In all these times there was no trace of any Nepalese in the country. Nor was there a single Nepali who was a Bhutanese citizen when Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck was installed as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan. It was only from the beginning of the present century that the Nepalese had started to come to the southern foothills of Bhutan looking for work as contractual forest labourers. Those who were later allowed to stay as tenant farmers on the land where the forest had been extracted were given Bhutanese Citizenship in 1958 when they pledged abiding loyalty to the King of Bhutan and had given an undertaking to adopt the traditions and customs of the country. Despite this solemn pledge made by them and the generosity shown to them by the government, ungrateful sections of the Lhotshampa population and the illegal Nepalese immigrants who had infiltrated into the country over the past 30 years attempted to overthrow the Tsa-Wa-Sum by organizing the ngolop uprising in 1990. It was these people who had been trying to subvert the country who were attempting to create misunderstanding between the Royal Government and friendly donor countries by spreading baseless allegations of human rights violations in Bhutan. The ngolops were doing this to stop foreign assistance to Bhutan and to gain sympathy and support for their subversive objectives.

The Chimis said that if necessary they would like to meet and talk with any international organisation or agency assisting the ngolops on account of their propaganda so that they could directly refute every malicious allegation made

against the Royal Government. They said that every citizen of Bhutan enjoyed many benefits provided by the government, such as free health and education facilities, assistance in agriculture and animal husbandry, as well as equal opportunities in business or employment. Success in government service or the private sector was dependent only on individual ability and hard work. It was in such a country that the ngolops had unleashed their wanton acts of terrorism. The Chimis said that those who were assisting the ngolops, like the Nepalese government and some of the international organisations, should be fully aware that it was the ngolops who were violating human rights in Bhutan.

The Home Minister said that the people who were making allegations of human rights violations in Bhutan were all located in Nepal and belonged to the ngolop organisations known as the BPP, BNDP, HUOB, PFHR, AHURA, SUB, Bhutan National Congress Party etc. They were maligning the Royal Government with baseless allegations in order to gain international sympathy and support for themselves. At the same time they were terrorising and looting the people in southern Bhutan to finance their anti-national activities. They were inducing ethnic Nepalese from southern Bhutan and the neighbouring areas of the region to come to the refugee camps in Nepal and claim to be Bhutanese refugees by promising them free rations, free health and education facilities and free housing all supplied by international agencies extending assistance to the camps in Nepal. Incidentally, this assistance was also bringing in hard currency to Nepal.

The Home Minister said that the ngolops had been spreading allegations of ethnic Nepalese being forcefully evicted from Bhutan in various newspapers and other publications. Many of these one-sided stories were written by sympathisers of the ngolops who had never even been to Bhutan but wrote as if they had personally witnessed the distorted stories churned out by them. As everyone in Bhutan was fully aware, it was the ngolops who were terrorising the Lhotshampa people and violating their human rights. Uptil now they had kidnapped 211 people, raped 42 women, carried out 596 robberies and attacked and injured 495 people, destroyed 29 schools and 12 BHUs, and burnt or destroyed 61 houses in the villages in southern Bhutan. They had also sent constant threat letters to the Gups and Chimis for working with the government in the administration of the villages and Gewogs. The Home Minister wondered whether this disruption of the peace and tranquility enjoyed

by the people and inflicting untold suffering on them was the ngolops' interpretation of promoting human rights. They had not only disturbed the peace in southern Bhutan but had been extending their terrorist activities to northern Dzongkhags also, he said. The real violators of human rights in southern Bhutan were the ngolops who were blatantly making baseless allegations against the Royal Government.

The Samdrupjongkhar Dzongda informed the Assembly that in order to discourage Lhotshampas from emigrating, His Majesty had commanded the Dzongdas not to accept applications for emigration directly but to first get the Gups and Chimis to enquire thoroughly as to why the applicants wished to leave the country and whether they genuinely wanted to emigrate. After confirming that the applicants genuinely wished to emigrate, the applications were put up to the DYT and the applicants were personally called to the DYT where in keeping with government instructions the members would try to dissuade them from emigrating. It was only after the applicants re-confirmed their wish to emigrate that their applications were witnessed by the DYT members and forwarded to the District Court for processing in keeping with the prescribed legal procedures for emigration. Only after all these procedures were completed would the applications of the emigrants be finally accepted by the Dzongkhag Administration. Even though they no longer wished to remain as citizens, those emigrants who were not able to sell their land were given a special Kidug Soilra commanded by His Majesty the King.

The Samdrupjongkhar Dzongda said that in keeping with His Majesty's command, the Dzongkhag Administration and the DYT members always tried their best to dissuade the applicants from emigrating. But many applicants would come straight to the Dzongkhag office and demand that their applications be processed immediately. They would even demand that the government buy their land. Some of them would leave without waiting for their applications to be processed. Although some of the applicants would withdraw their applications after repeated persuading by the Gups, Chimis, DYT members, and the Dungpa and Dzongda, they would change their minds and again apply for emigration. There have been applicants who have withdrawn their applications and re-applied as many as seven times, said the Dzongda. He said that it was these people who had no desire to remain as

loyal Bhutanese citizens who were making all the false allegations of human rights violations in Bhutan after they had left the country.

The Sarbhang Dzongda said that in the past 10 months alone the ngolops had carried out more than 200 acts of terrorism in Sarbhang Dzongkhag. In March this year 40 ngolop terrorists even raided Dhamkhar village in Eidhi under neighbouring Shemgang Dzongkhag. They gang raped the women in front of the men who were beaten and tied up, while the children who were frightened and crying were threatened with khukuries. The ngolops desecrated the private chapels of the people, destroyed the images and scriptures and robbed the people of all their valuables which could be carried away while destroying what they did not want to take. There could not be any worse violation of human rights than this kind of suffering inflicted by the ngolops on simple and innocent villagers, he said. The Dzongda told the members that he had personally seen the trauma and humiliation suffered by these innocent victims as he had led an investigation team from Geylegphug to find out the details of this terrorist raid. In the course of the investigation all 40 terrorists were identified and it was found out that 12 of these terrorists had been sent from the so-called refugee camps in Nepal, the Dzongda said. He said that everyone in Sarbhang Dzongkhag knew that the ngolops were making their baseless allegations to hide their own crimes.

The Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission said that human rights basically meant that all people should be able to live without fear or insecurity and have the freedom and opportunity to do what they desired within established norms and laws. In Bhutan, till the ngolop uprising in southern Bhutan in 1990, all Bhutanese had enjoyed peace and prosperity for many years. The ngolops destroyed this peace and tranquility, disrupted socio-economic progress and endangered the security of the country. While claiming to fight for the human rights of the Lhotshampas, they had been actually inflicting untold sufferings on the people of southern Bhutan through their wanton acts of terrorism against the very people whose rights they professed to be championing. The ngolops after killing, kidnapping, robbing and assaulting many Lhotshampas had been blaming the ethnic Nepalese and lawless elements in Assam, Kalimpong and Darjeeling for these acts. However, as the saying goes that “a theft is carried out by a thief who knows the victim,” only

those who are familiar with the villages in southern Bhutan and know which villagers had large savings of gold, silver and cash could successfully carry out the many robberies and terrorist raids in southern Bhutan, said the Secretary. That was why all international organisations that had been assisting the ngolop organisations and the Lhotshampa emigrants on the basis of the ngolop propaganda should study and assess more carefully whether these people really deserved their assistance and support.

The Foreign Minister informed the National Assembly that human rights was considered an important issue by the rich and powerful countries of the world. As such, the ngolops were accusing the Royal Government of committing human rights violations in southern Bhutan with the aim of winning the sympathy and support of these countries. He said that, firstly, the dissidents wanted substantial financial assistance which they were getting. Secondly, the dissidents were trying to persuade donor countries to stop aid to Bhutan. He said that with the blessings of the Guardian Deities, His Majesty the King's wise and dedicated leadership and the good fortune of the Bhutanese people, the ngolops had not succeeded in their objective. International assistance to Bhutan continued to flow in undiminished because Bhutan had a good record of proper aid utilization. In fact, some new donors had also started extending aid to Bhutan. Thirdly, the dissidents were trying to garner the support of the international community to repatriate to Bhutan all the people in the camps in Nepal. They had obtained the support of political parties in Nepal to send to Bhutan all the people in the Nepal camps regardless of their real status.

The Foreign Minister informed the Assembly that the dissidents were carrying out a disinformation campaign against the Royal Government. He mentioned that during the recently concluded United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the capital of Austria, a number of ngolop leaders were in Vienna trying to tarnish the Royal Government's image, but they were unsuccessful in their efforts, and in fact Bhutan was elected as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Conference. The Foreign Minister said that the objective of the dissidents was to establish a multi-party democracy in Bhutan and also increase the representation of the Southern Bhutanese in the National Assembly to 40 percent. He said that besides being a small country, Bhutan had a tiny population of about 450,000 Northern Bhutanese while Nepal had a population of over 20,000,000 and India about 10,000,000 people of Nepali

origin, which means that for every Bhutanese there were about 70 Nepalese. The Foreign Minister said that the ultimate aim of the dissidents was to transform Bhutan into a Nepali-dominated state and their accusations against the Royal Government of human rights violations had from the very beginning been a mere pretext to gain the attention and support of the international community.

The Minister of Trade and Industry said everyone now knew that the ngolops were raising the slogans of human rights and democracy merely to gain international sympathy and support. The state of human rights in Bhutan was well known to everyone in the country including the international community stationed here. As such, he said, there was no need to even bother refuting the baseless allegations made about human rights violations in Bhutan. What was most important was for all Bhutanese people to think as one and be firmly united under the dedicated and wise leadership of His Majesty the King.

The people's representative of Daifam in Samdrupjongkhar said that ever since the ngolop problem began, the people of southern Bhutan had been living in tension and fear, not knowing what would happen to them from sunrise to sunset or from dusk to dawn. This state of tension and fear was all due to the terrorist activities unleashed on the people by the ngolops. Concerned over the suffering of the people and wishing to see what steps were being taken by the Dzongdas, Dungpas, Chimis, Gups and DYT members to improve the welfare of the people, His Majesty the King, without any concern for his own security, had visited the southern Dzongkhags many times, he said. Meeting and talking with the Lhotshampa people, His Majesty had explained that when the country was going through a difficult time, people should not emigrate and leave. However, many people had emigrated, rejecting the love and magnanimity of their King, renouncing their status as Bhutanese citizens, disregarding the precepts of their gods and goddesses and leaving behind their country. After emigrating and leaving the country these people had been maligning the government policies, the citizenship laws and the traditions and customs of the country so viciously that it caused deep anguish in the hearts of the loyal Lhotshampas. As the saying goes that "during evil times the good will face difficulties while the bad will have an easy time," the people who had created great hardships and difficulties in the country and left were enjoying

the benefits of free rations, education, health and other benefits from various organisations in the camps in Nepal. Out to blame the crimes they had committed on others the ngolops were maligning our country, he said. These people had burnt and blown up schools that were built for the benefit of their own children, destroyed BHUs, bridges and roads and attacked and robbed countless numbers of families of all their savings. It was the ngolops who were violating human rights in southern Bhutan and inflicting untold suffering on the Lhotshampas, said the Chimi.

The people's representative of Samchi said that the Lhotshampa people had been living in peace and happiness and enjoying the benefits of progress and development provided by the government when the ngolops rebelled against the country, carried out terrorist activities and destroyed many service facilities. After committing these crimes they left the country and started making baseless allegations of human rights violations against the government. However, it was these ngolops who were violating human rights through their continued terrorist raids on the people of southern Bhutan, many of them directed from the camps in Nepal. The international organisations extending assistance to the people in the camps in Nepal should carefully review whether there were really any grounds at all for extending assistance to these people.

The people's representatives of Chang Gewog in Thimphu Dzongkhag, Choekhor Gewog in Bumthang and Drametsi Gewog in Mongar Dzongkhag pointed out that everyone in Bhutan was equal regardless of wealth or status. Employment and business opportunities were based entirely on experience and ability and a person's desire and capacity to work hard and succeed. Everyone from a simple villager to a minister could speak and act as they wished and were equal before the law. They said that the international media should be given frequent information and reminders of the true state of affairs in Bhutan and the true nature of the ngolops and their activities.

The people's representative of Dorokha said that the people could all vouch that the Royal Government of Bhutan had always upheld and promoted human rights and had never done anything that violated such rights. It was the ngolops who, while making false allegations against the government, had been

carrying out terrorists activities including murder and inflicting untold suffering on the Lhotshampa people. All the Lhotshampa people were aware that it was the ngolops who were violating human rights in southern Bhutan. He said that he had been the Chimi for less than a year and he had already received two threat letters from the ngolops. They demanded Nu.20,000 from me and threatened that if I did not send the money I would be made six inches shorter when they came back to Bhutan, he said. These letters had been handed over by him to the Dzongkhag Headquarters. He cited an incident some time back in April this year when a group of terrorists raided the house of one Birkha Bahadur Rai in Sibichang Village in Dorokha. Birkha Bahadur was beaten up and seriously injured while his family was tied up by the terrorists who took away all the valuables in the house. The persons responsible for this crime were Birkha Bahadur's own relatives who had earlier left the country. Although it was they who were inflicting untold sufferings on the people, the ngolops were making blatantly false accusations that the government, Dzongkhag officials, security forces and the Gups and Chimis were terrorising the people and evicting them from the country. He said that the international organisations extending assistance to the ngolops should realise that the malicious allegations against the government were being made by the ngolops to gain their sympathy, support and assistance.

The people's representatives of Tsangkhar in Dagana Dzongkhag and Samchi in Samchi Dzongkhag said that His Majesty the King and the Royal Government had always looked after the Kidug and welfare of the people. It was the ngolops who had been inflicting suffering and hardship on the Lhotshampa people through their constant terrorist attacks and raids. It was the ngolops who had been violating human rights in southern Bhutan. As all the people knew, the government had never violated human rights in any way. The ngolops were making false allegations against the government to hide their own crimes.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan said that the ngolops had a very strange and bizarre interpretation of human rights and who was really violating these values. When the people of Bhutan were enjoying peace and prosperity, the ngolops shattered this idyllic state by kidnapping two innocent people from Ghumaoney, brutally murdering them and leaving their severed heads on the public thoroughfare in Gomtu town along with letters

warning the Lhotshampa people for supporting the government. Following this, the ngolops armed with guns, bombs and khukuries forced villagers in the southern Dzongkhags to join them in their rebellion against the government. In Samchi, these armed ngolops forced women, children and old people to act as a human shield as they marched towards the Dzongkhag Headquarters. The Dzongda met them at the bridge near Samchi and explained to them it was not proper to march on the Dzong with guns and bombs and that they should tell him their demands. He asked the leaders to come forward and talk with him and the Dzongkhag officials. The ngolops, however, responded by throwing a bomb at the Dzongda and almost killed him. The ngolops had no genuine grievances to voice. Their objective was clearly to find an excuse to attack the Dzongkhag officials and the Police and security personnel. If the Police and the security personnel had responded to the provocations of the ngolops, many people would have been killed. However, in view of the strict command issued by His Majesty the King that the Police and the security forces were not to fire their weapons under any circumstances, the security forces and the Police restrained themselves despite serious provocation from the ngolops and did not harm anyone. This was witnessed by all of us in Samchi that day, he said.

The Councillor narrated how the ngolops destroyed many service facilities, damaged electricity poles, destroyed bridges and terrorised and robbed people in the villages. The ngolops continue to inflict tremendous suffering on the people to this day through their terrorist activities, he said. It was the ngolops who had left the country who were violating human rights and causing untold suffering to the Lhotshampa people. He told the members how two persons from his village were murdered because the people in the village who were all Lepchas had refused to join the ngolops.

The National Assembly noted that when Bhutan was making great progress on the path of socio-economic development and the country was enjoying peace and tranquility, vested interests among the Lhotshampas instigated the ngolop activities which posed a serious threat to the peace, security and sovereignty of the country. The ngolop organisations through their acts of terrorism had brought darkness to southern Bhutan when the sun of prosperity was shining. The ngolop organisations such as the BPP, the BNDP and HUROB had been proclaiming themselves as champions of human rights in Bhutan when in

actual fact they had been resorting to terrorist activities ranging from robbery to the destruction of development and service facilities to kidnapping and murder, in the process inflicting untold suffering on the Lhotshampa people. Not only did the ngolops have no respect for human rights but they had been viciously maligning the Royal Government with baseless allegations while grossly violating human rights themselves. They had also been constantly trying to undermine the security and sovereignty of the country. The National Assembly passed a resolution strongly condemning the ngolop organisations for their subversive activities against the country and their inhuman crimes against the people.

5. Performance of Kurims

The representative of the Central Monk Body, speaking on behalf of the Dratshang and the Rabdeys, said that Bhutan which had received the blessings of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas and been visited and blessed by Guru Rimpoche, had inherited a tradition of sacred Kurims and Bumdeys performed by the Dratshang and the Rabdeys ever since Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal bequeathed the special legacy of the Palden Drukpa to the Bhutanese people. He said that the Dratshang, Rabdeys, Shaydras and Drubdras were performing these Kurims and Bumdeys without fail and they would spare no efforts to continue performing these Kurims and Bumdeys for the benefit of all sentient beings and the well-being and security of the country. He said that the monastic bodies had been deeply saddened by the ngolop uprising in the south three years ago which had disturbed the traditional peace and tranquility of the country. The Dratshang, Rabdeys, Shaydras and Drubdras were fully committed to ensuring the long life and well-being of His Majesty the King, the progress and happiness of the people and the security of the country through special Kurims which would also help to resolve the ngolop problem and bring peace and tranquility to the country.

The Home Minister thanked the Dratshang, Rabdeys and other monastic bodies for their commitment to performing Kurims with a view to help resolve the ngolop problem and promote the peace, security and well-being of the country.

The National Assembly recorded a vote of thanks to the monastic bodies.

6. Emigrants should not be asked to stay back

The people's representatives of Samchi Dzongkhag reported that because of free food and other free facilities in the camps in Nepal and because of inducements by the anti-national leaders, people, especially from Sibsoo and Dorokha, continued to emigrate to Nepal. They said that the Dzongda had been persuading these emigrants not to leave the country. The people and the DYT had, however, called on the Dzongda not to stop such people from emigrating since they had divided loyalty. The representatives said that they requested the government not to discourage or stop people applying to emigrate from leaving the country.

The Home Minister said that as per the laws of the land, any person wishing to emigrate and leave the country could do so by following the prescribed legal procedures for emigration. However, with many Lhotshampas applying to emigrate and leave the country when it was going through a difficult time, the government had been trying to find all possible ways and means to dissuade them from leaving the country. His Majesty the King issued a Kasho decreeing it a criminal offence to forcefully evict any citizen. Anyone who felt he was being forced to leave the country could bring the matter to the District Court, the High Court, the Home Ministry or report directly to His Majesty the King. His Majesty also waived Goongda Woola and rural taxes for all Lhotshampas for the year 1992 and also exempted tax on the sale of oranges and other cash crops for the Lhotshampas earlier this year. Hearing reports of large numbers of Lhotshampas emigrating, His Majesty met with 420 emigrants in Geylegphug in June 1992 and appealed to them not to leave the country. In February this year His Majesty visited all the villages in Daifam and Bhangtar Dungkhags to meet with the Lhotshampa emigrants and ask them to withdraw their applications. However, after His Majesty returned to Thimphu most of these emigrants left the country. The Home Minister said that the procedure for emigration had deliberately been made elaborate with applications first screened by the Gups and Chimis and then routed to the DYT before it was forwarded by the Dzongkhag Administration to the Dzongkhag Court for final processing as per the law. All the applications forwarded to the Dzongkhag Court had to be witnessed by the members of the DYT. This was being done with the hope that the delay in the procedure might lead to the

emigrants changing their minds and withdrawing their applications, said the Home Minister. He also said that according to the law, the land of people leaving the country reverted to the government and could not be sold. However, His Majesty the King had ruled that they should be allowed to sell their land, and in cases where they could not find buyers, the government should give them a Kidug Soilra (welfare grant). Because of this command the government had till date spent Nu.250 million on account of Kidug Soilras alone.

The Dzongdas of Samdrupjongkhar and Chirang informed the Assembly that the Kashos issued by His Majesty the King had been explained very clearly to every household in their Dzongkhags by the Dzongda, Thrimpon, Gup, Chimi and DYT members. They had also explained to every person applying to emigrate why they should not leave the country. Some of the applicants would withdraw their applications but they would again return within a short time to re-apply for emigration. Some applicants withdrew their applications and re-applied as many as 6 or 7 times. When the processing of the applications were deliberately delayed to discourage them from emigrating, the applicants would repeatedly press for their cases to be processed quickly. Some would sell their properties to people across the border and leave without waiting for their applications to be processed. Once the emigrants reached the camps in Nepal they would proclaim they had been forcefully evicted by the Dzongdas and the security forces.

The people's representatives of Chirang Dzongkhag also reported to the Assembly that every effort was being made to dissuade the emigrants from leaving the country. His Majesty's Kashos had been read and clearly explained to all the people. The Gups and Chimis had also been explaining and trying to persuade people from emigrating. Many emigrants, however, would respond by saying that the Gups and Chimis had no business to try and stop them as they had made up their minds to leave the country. Instead they would demand for their applications to be processed without further delay. Other applicants who were not so aggressive would tell the Gups and Chimis and DYT members that they were only going upto the border to reach their relatives who were emigrating and would themselves then leave the country. As all efforts to dissuade the emigrants from leaving had not been successful

so far, the Chimis requested the government to let the emigrants leave without making any more efforts to persuade them to stay back.

Many other people's representatives said that after all the special consideration given by the government for the economic progress of the Lhotshampa people, they were leaving the country. Far from responding to the appeals made by the Dzongdas, Gups and Chimis, the Lhotshampa emigrants would not even heed His Majesty the King's personal appeals to them when he visited their Dzongkhags and asked them not to leave after explaining the policies of the government and the problems faced by the country. They said that such people who had made up their minds to leave the country should be allowed to do so without any efforts at all being made to dissuade them. In fact, all those wishing to emigrate should be allowed to leave, and in strict accordance to the law, the government should not give them Kidug Soilra or allow them to sell their land.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors from southern Bhutan said that as reported by the people's representatives it was a useless and futile effort to try and find ways and means to dissuade the emigrants from leaving. In fact, efforts to keep back people who were bent on leaving the country could prove to be harmful to the Tsa-Wa-Sum in the long term, he said. After going to the camps in Nepal these people were coming back to carry out terrorist attacks on the loyal Lhotshampas in southern Bhutan and inflicting tremendous sufferings on them. He requested the National Assembly to resolve that no efforts should be made to dissuade or stop people applying to emigrate from leaving the country.

The Samchi Dzongda said that in March and April this year, 302 persons from 40 households in Maina Gewog in Dorokha Dungkhag had come to apply for emigration and camped near the Dzongkhag headquarters. Soon after their arrival, 17 other families from the same Gewog also joined them. On submitting the report of this large group of emigrants to the Home Ministry, the Dzongkhag Headquarters was instructed to explain the policies of the government and try to persuade these families not to leave the country. To this end, the Dzongkhag Administration paid Nu.5 per child and Nu.10 for adults as daily allowance rather than process their applications, and in the meanwhile

tried to persuade them to withdraw their applications and go back to their villages. However, all efforts to dissuade them failed and except for one family all of them left the country.

The Home Minister said that in keeping with His Majesty the King's command, the government had been making every effort to dissuade emigrants from leaving the country for the last two and a half years. He requested the National Assembly to resolve that henceforth also the same efforts should be continued.

Some of the Chimis said that as recorded in the 70th Session of the National Assembly the responsibility and prerogatives for resolving the ngolop problem had been reposed in His Majesty the King, and as such whatever steps were taken by His Majesty should not be questioned. However, the people could not stand the thought of emigrants taking Kidug Soilra from the government, going to another country and then trying to harm the Tsa-Wa-Sum. The Chimis requested for a clarification on the legal guidelines for emigration procedures.

The representative of the High Court said that as per Resolution No. 6 of the 22nd Session of the National Assembly in 1965, the property of any person who had rebelled against the Tsa-Wa-Sum and left the country was to be confiscated. As for people who wished to emigrate from the country, although Articles Ka 5-10, Ka 6-18 and Ka 6-19 of the Land Act decreed that such people were not entitled to sell their land, there was no conflict with the law if special Kidug Soilra was given to them on the command of His Majesty the King. As such it was all right to continue with the existing procedures for emigration, he said.

The National Assembly resolved that while the decision of persons applying to emigrate must be arrived at on their own free will and must be fully in keeping with the law, the existing procedure for processing the applications and the granting of Kidug Soilra in accordance with His Majesty the King's command should continue for the time being.

7. Shifting of the army training centre at Drugyel Dzong to southern Bhutan

The people's representative of Chentok Gewog in Paro Dzongkhag submitted that the continued location of the army training centre at Drugyel Dzong was likely to cause great inconveniences for the people of the area. Two schools and a market place were already located at Drugyel Dzong. He said that problems and inconveniences would be created if the army training centre continued to be located in the same area as Drugyel Dzong was now being developed as a service centre. The people, therefore, requested the government to shift the training centre from Drugyel Dzong to a suitable location in southern Bhutan for the benefit of the Lhotshampas. With the ngolop problem still continuing, relocating the training centre in the south would be of great benefit for the security of southern Bhutan.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) said that the training centre at Drugyel Dzong had been established in 1969 with much expenditure incurred by the army. Over the past 24 years the people had raised the matter of the training centre only once during the 51st Session of the National Assembly in 1980. As per the Assembly's directive, the RBA and the people discussed and sorted out the concerns raised by the people and there had been no further complaint upto now, he said. If the training centre was to be shifted to another location as proposed by the people it would result in heavy expenditure and cause serious problems for the RBA. The Chief Operations Officer suggested that the RBA and the people should discuss the matter in the DYT and assess the problems faced by the people before coming to any decision about re-locating the training centre. He also said that ever since the ngolop problem began, the RBA had been shouldering the full responsibility of ensuring the security of the southern Dzongkhags. As the members were aware, the 70th and 71st sessions of the National Assembly had directed the RBA to ensure the security of the southern Dzongkhags, and the RBA was doing its best to fulfil this responsibility.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors noted that although the people had requested for the training centre to be shifted because of problems faced by them it may not be convenient to relocate it in southern Bhutan. Because of the ngolop problem, the southern Dzongkhags were disturbed areas and the security forces were fully occupied in safeguarding the Lhotshampa people against the ngolops who were terrorising them and violating their human

rights. As shifting the training centre to southern Bhutan before the ngolop problem was resolved would be inconvenient and impractical, it would be better to retain it at Drugyel Dzong itself for the time being, he said.

The National Assembly decided that the RBA and the people of Drugyel Dzong should discuss the matter in the DYT and together resolve any problems faced by the people on account of the training centre.

8. Ngolop groups are terrorist organisations

The people's representative of Dagapela Dungkhag in Dagana Dzongkhag said that the people strongly condemned the ngolop organisations such as the BPP and the BNDP as terrorist organisations. He said that the ngolops had been carrying out large scale arson, looting, rape and murder in the southern region. Some of these ngolops who had been apprehended by the security forces and village volunteers had confessed that they had been sent from the refugee camps in Nepal to terrorise and rob the people. They had also confessed that the loot they took during their raids on the villages were taken to their camps in Nepal.

The people's representatives of Sarbhang Dzongkhag said that it had now been established that the terrorist attacks that had been taking place in their Dzongkhag and elsewhere in the country were being directed and organised from the ngolop camps in Nepal. In many instances where village volunteers had apprehended terrorists, they had confessed that they had come from the camps in Nepal. He said that the people believed that these activities were supported by the Nepalese Government. The people of Sarbhang, therefore, condemned the ngolop organisations such as the BPP and BNDP for all the sufferings and miseries they had been inflicting on the people of southern Bhutan, and the Nepalese Government for supporting these ngolop organisations.

The Home Minister agreed that the ngolop groups were indeed terrorist organisations. He said that till date the Lhotshampa village volunteers had by themselves apprehended 90 ngolop terrorists. These terrorists had confessed that they had been sent by the ngolop leaders from the camps in Nepal to raid and terrorise the villages in southern Bhutan. Their statements had further

confirmed that the robberies, murders, destructions of service facilities, rape and other terrorist activities inflicted on the people of southern Bhutan were being directed by the ngolop organisations like the BPP, BNDP, etc. As pointed out by the people's representatives of Dagapela and Sarbhang, the ngolop organisations were terrorist organisations that were violating the human rights of the Lhotshampa people, breaking the laws of the country and impeding the development and progress of southern Bhutan, said the Home Minister.

He said that due to the blessings of the Guardian Deities, the far-sighted leadership and dynamic personality of His Majesty the King and the good fortune of the people, the ngolops had not been able to subvert the country or harm its security and sovereignty. However, the ngolops were not letting up on their terrorist activities and had even started raiding villages in northern Dzongkhags. One such raid was carried out earlier this year by 40 ngolop terrorists on Damkhar Village under Shemgang Dzongkhag. Recently another raid was carried out by 12 ngolop terrorists on four houses in Khen Eidhi during which they raped two women. He said that the security forces and the village volunteers had to be even more alert for further terrorist attacks by the ngolops. In view of the continued terrorist activities directed by the ngolop groups, the Home Minister proposed that the National Assembly should strongly condemn them as terrorist organisations.

The National Assembly, taking note of the murders, kidnappings, robberies, hijackings, assaults, destructions of service facilities carried out by the ngolop groups, and the untold suffering inflicted by them on the Lhotshampa people, strongly condemned the ngolop groups, such as the BPP, BNDP, HUOB and SUB as terrorist organisations that had not only violated the laws of Bhutan but the laws and norms of all civilised countries.

9. Requirement of arms and ammunition

The people's representative of Tashiyangtse Gewog in Tashiyangtse Dzongkhag said that a motor road had been constructed from the Indian side upto the border with India in Tawang. He said that with the ngolop problem in southern Bhutan still continuing, there was no guarantee that the ngolops might not try to infiltrate from the remote area of the border between

Tashiyangtsi and Tawang. The people felt that it would be prudent to store adequate numbers of arms and ammunition in Tashiyangtsi Dzongkhag to meet any possible threats from ngolops infiltrating through Tawang.

The people's representative of Bongo, Geytak Gyeling and Gengu Gewogs under Chukha Dzongkhag submitted that the ngolop problem in southern Bhutan was not only continuing but the anti-nationals had even been infiltrating and raiding their villages. He said that without fire-arms it was difficult for the people to fight the armed ngolops. If possible, the people requested for fire-arms from the government. If there were not enough fire-arms in stock the government should request for arms and ammunition from friendly neighbours. If such assistance was not available, arrangements should be made to make fire-arms in our own country, the Chimi said. If that was not possible, then the government should import gun parts and assemble them in the country.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army said that although it was unlikely that the ngolops would make a long detour through Tawang when they could enter from anywhere over the open and porous border in the south, he fully appreciated the people's concern for the security of the country. He said that protecting the security of the country was the responsibility of the armed forces and he gave his full assurance that the armed forces would never fail in their duty.

As for making fire-arms in the country, although the Fire-arms and Ammunition Act forbid the making of fire-arms, people had been purchasing fire-arms on their own in the past. He also pointed out that the proliferation of guns among the people would not be good for law and order.

There were frequent cases of people violating the Fire-arms Act by lending their guns to others and in some cases irresponsibly brandishing them during social occasions. The Fire-arms and Ammunition Act had been passed after giving careful consideration to its relevance to the security of the country. He said that rather than import gun parts and assemble them in the country which was not economically viable, it would be far more useful to ensure that the Fire-arms and Ammunition Act was faithfully followed by everyone.

As the Chimis who had raised the point did not have any further views on the matter, the National Assembly decided that the Royal Bhutan Army which had been faithfully discharging its responsibility of looking after the country's security should also continue looking after all matters concerning fire-arms and decide on such matters in accordance with the policy on national security. As for the use of fire-arms, everyone must comply with the guidelines laid down in the Fire-arms and Ammunition Act. Anyone violating the Fire-arms and Ammunition Act should be punished in strict accordance with its rules and regulations.

VI. NO AMNESTY TO NGOLOPS

The people's representative of Talo and Tewang Gewogs in Punakha Dzongkhag raised the point that although His Majesty the King, out of his magnanimity and kindness, had been granting amnesty again and again to the ngolops who had been apprehended by the village volunteers, the police and the security forces, these people were never grateful and kept resuming their anti-national activities. He said that the people once again requested His Majesty the King not to grant any further amnesties to the ngolops.

The Home Minister said that regarding the point raised by the Chimi from Punakha on granting of amnesty, the matter had been thoroughly discussed during the 70th and 71st sessions of the National Assembly. He said that the Assembly had reposed in His Majesty the King the full responsibility and all the prerogatives of resolving the ngolop problem in the manner he deemed best. He said that there was no need to discuss this matter any further as everyone should abide by the decision taken during the previous two sessions of the National Assembly.

This intervention was supported by one of the people's representatives from Haa Dzongkhag who also pointed out that the responsibility and prerogative of resolving the ngolop problem had been fully reposed in His Majesty the King during the 70th Session of the National Assembly. As such, everyone should abide by this decision. Furthermore, every Bhutanese should be fully prepared, as always, to extend complete support, in terms of material or manpower requirements, to remove the ngolop problem.

The National Assembly decided that the punishment and granting of amnesties to ngolops was adequately covered by the resolutions adopted on the matter during the 70th and 71st sessions.

VII. EXTRADITION OF NGOLOPS

The people's representative of Gasey Tshogong, Nahi and Thetso Gewogs in Wangdiphodrang Dzongkhag sought clarification on the extradition of Bhim Subba, R. B. Basnet and others who had absconded from the country with large amounts of government funds. The extradition of these absconders through talks with the Nepalese Government so that they could be tried as per the laws of the land had been discussed thoroughly during the 70th and 71st sessions of the National Assembly. They said that the people would like to know the outcome of the talks with the Nepal Government on this matter.

The Foreign Minister informed the National Assembly that on the command of His Majesty the King he had raised the question of extraditing Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet to Bhutan in a meeting with the Nepalese delegation led by the Tourism Minister in Kathmandu in November, 1992. In response, the Nepalese Minister said that he had no mandate to discuss the matter. As such, the Foreign Minister said he raised the matter with the Nepalese Prime Minister who was informed that the National Assembly of Bhutan had time and again instructed him to discuss the extradition of Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet with the Government of Nepal. In response, the Nepalese Prime Minister said that the two governments should first settle the question of tens of thousands of persons in the refugee camps in Nepal and only thereafter, the question of extraditing Bhim Subba, R.B. Basnet and others could be discussed. The Foreign Minister further informed the National Assembly that extraditing persons from Nepal was difficult because of the lack of an extradition treaty between Bhutan and Nepal.

The people's representatives said that the position adopted by the Nepal Government to ask the Royal Government to take back all the people who had left Bhutan after failing to achieve their subversive objectives, but at the same time refuse to extradite Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet who had absconded with huge sums of government funds, hurt the sentiments of the Bhutanese people and was totally unacceptable. Since Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet were staying in Nepal and

had the support of political parties there, the people's representatives said that in future talks with Nepal, the Royal Government should first raise the question of extraditing the two of them and other ngolop leaders from Nepal to Bhutan so that they could be tried according to the laws of the land.

The Foreign Minister informed the National Assembly that in addition to the close ties of friendship, cooperation and understanding between Bhutan and India, there was also an extradition agreement between the two countries. As per the decision of the 70th Session of the National Assembly, a prima facie case against Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet was established in the High Court in Thimphu about a year ago and all the documents had been sent to the Government of India for extraditing these two persons. He said that the request for their extradition was being processed by the Government of India but the main problem was that these two persons were living in Nepal and were not setting foot in India.

Some of the people's representatives said that since Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet had left the country with huge sums of government funds and many others had followed them, Lhotshampas should not be employed in jobs which involved handling of money and sensitive matters.

The Royal Advisory Councillors and other people's representatives said that every effort should be made to extradite the ngolops who had embezzled huge sums of government money and try them according to law. They voiced concern that if these people were not brought to Bhutan and tried in the courts of law, there would be many similar cases in future. They said that in future talks with the Nepal Government about the people in the Nepal refugee camps, the Royal Government should, in keeping with the resolution of the 70th Session of the National Assembly, raise the question of extraditing Bhim Subba and R.B. Basnet and others who had left Bhutan with huge sums of government funds and assets.

His Majesty the King intervened and suggested that since a high-level Nepalese delegation led by their Home Minister was due to arrive in Thimphu that day for talks, it would be better if the matter was discussed after the outcome of the talks was reported to the Assembly on 22nd July, 1993.

The Assembly postponed discussions on this point until the report on the Bhutan-Nepal talks was submitted to the house.

Accordingly on 22nd July, 1993, the Home Minister submitted the report on the Bhutan-Nepal talks held on 17th and 18th July, 1993. While the members generally expressed their satisfaction on the outcome of the talks, they insisted that people who had absconded after stealing large amounts of government funds and property must be extradited.

The Assembly decided that the Foreign Ministry should continue to press for the extradition of Bhim Subba and R. B. Basnet so that they could be tried as per the law of the land.

VIII. MILITIA TRAINING AND MILITIA SERVICE

The people's representatives of 57 Gewogs from Tashigang, Samdrupjongkhar, Gasa, Shemgang, Bumthang, Punakha, Tongsa, Mongar, Paro, Haa, Sarbhang and Tashiyangtse Dzongkhags submitted 13 points requesting for militia training to be imparted to the people in their Dzongkhags.

They reported that the militia volunteers who had received militia training had been serving in the disturbed areas in the south on rotational basis. These volunteers had all gained a lot of experience in performing security duties. They were not only well disciplined and physically healthy but serving in the south had provided them with good employment and additional income for their families. The people now requested for militia training to be imparted to all those volunteers who had not yet received a chance to undergo military training and to depute them for security duty in the south. This would not only increase the reserve of trained personnel for any emergency requirements but would also provide loyal and dedicated citizens with an opportunity to serve their country.

Some of the Chimis said that training should now be imparted to those volunteers who were not trained because they were considered underaged two years ago. These young volunteers could replace those militias who were approaching the upper age limit and increase the pool of fit and trained militia volunteers to carry out security duty on a rotational basis. They pointed out that in the past also, the Pazzap system (traditional militia), which was developed when Shabdrung Rimpoche presided over Bhutan's destiny, had overcome all threats to the security of the country. As a result of the

Pazzab system, Bhutan had been handed over to successive generations of the Bhutanese people as a sovereign, independent country. In order to ensure the security and sovereignty of the country and to hand it over intact to posterity, it was necessary to provide training for all militia volunteers and create a reserve force for meeting any emergency security requirements.

Some of the Chimis said that it would be very useful if militia training could be conducted in the respective Dzongkhags as any emergency security requirement could be met by the Dzongkhags themselves. They asked only for fire-arms as all other expenditure would be met by the people themselves, and suggested that ex-servicemen in the various Dzongkhags be deputed as instructors to further save expenditure for the government. Imparting militia training this way would ensure that all volunteers received training.

The people's representative of Laya Gewog under Gasa Dzongkhag submitted that all Layap men from the age of 17 to 60 were keen to volunteer for militia service to protect the Palden Drukpa from the ngolop threat. However, none of the volunteers had received any training, he said. He requested that militia training be imparted as soon as possible to all the volunteers from Gasa Dzongkhag.

The people's representative of Ngangla Gewog in Shemgang Dzongkhag reported that the militia volunteers in Shemgang were very sad that they had not received any opportunity to undergo training and serve their country when many volunteers from other Dzongkhags had not only received militia training but were serving in the disturbed areas in the south. He pointed out that Shemgang was very near the disturbed areas in the south and requested for militia training to be imparted to all the volunteers in the Dzongkhag without further delay. On completing the training, even if they might not be required for security duties, the volunteers would be able to protect their own villages.

Some of the Chimis said that the ngolops had even raided villages in Shemgang and Tongsa Dzongkhags, raped the women, beat up the men and robbed the villagers. They requested for training to be imparted to all the militia volunteers who had submitted their names for militia service. This would enable the volunteers to carry out security duties in the south as well as to protect their own villages from the ngolops.

Other Chimis said that when militia volunteers who had undergone two months training came forward for security duties in the south, the RBA had been sending back all volunteers who were above 30 years of age. As the volunteers were meant to serve for a period of about 6 months only and not be permanently recruited in the army, the Chimis said that all trained militia volunteers upto the age of 40 should be allowed to serve with the security forces.

Most of the Chimis stressed the need to create a large reserve of trained militia volunteers to reinforce the regular armed forces and protect the security of the country in times of emergency. They proposed that in addition to the trained militia volunteers, militia training should be imparted in the respective Dzongkhags to government employees, teachers, businessmen and the general public between the age of 20 and 50, and to students studying in Class 10 and above. These volunteers would be able to maintain the security of their Dzongkhags and also provide a large reserve of trained volunteers who could be sent to reinforce the security in any part of the country if the need arose.

The people's representative of Sarbhang Dzongkhag said that for over two years, the people of Sarbhang had suffered the torments of terrorism by the ngolops. Several people had lost their lives while thousands had been assaulted, abused and robbed. Although village volunteers had been organised to resist the terrorist attacks, in most cases the village volunteers were helpless because the ngolops were well trained and fully armed. He said that the people of Sarbhang requested the government to impart training to the village volunteers and equip them with fire-arms. The Chimi also submitted that there was a need to adequately protect the Gups and Chimis as they faced the risk of being kidnapped or killed while performing their duties which involved frequent travelling in the Dzongkhag.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army, Goongloen Gongma Lam Dorji, expressed his deep appreciation to the people for their commitment to strengthen the security of the country as reflected in their repeated requests in the National Assembly for militia training to be imparted to all the militia volunteers. He also recalled how all the able-bodied men in all the Dzongkhags had come forward to volunteer for militia service in response to the ngolop uprising in 1990. When His Majesty the King visited the various Dzongkhags in the wake of the ngolop uprising, the people had spontaneously offered both material and physical support to remove the

ngolop threat and ensure the security of the country. Such commitment from the people had inspired the security forces and they were discharging their duty of protecting the security of the southern Dzongkhags with pride and dedication.

The Goongloen Gongma informed the Assembly that the RBA had trained 48 militia officers and 9,895 militia personnel by June 1991. Out of these, 47 militia officers had been serving actively, while a total of 3,617 militia volunteers had been serving in the south on rotational basis. Out of the 9,895 trained militia personnel, 874 had joined the regular armed forces. He reported that the dedication, discipline and loyalty with which the militia volunteers had been serving their country was highly commendable. He expressed his happiness that all men from the age of 17 to 60 were keen to undergo militia training. In view of the continued terrorist activities by the ngolops and the need to protect the lives and properties of the people, His Majesty the King had approved the proposal to increase the strength of the armed forces. He said that the recruitment and trainings of men for this proposed increase in strength would start from this year and be completed over the next three years. With the people extending their whole-hearted support, the RBA was fully committed to strengthening the armed forces and ensuring security of the country. He assured the members that there would be no additional expenditure for the government in increasing the strength of the army as all the expenditure involved would be met from the budget of the armed forces.

Regarding the training and deployment of militia volunteers, the Goongloen said that as there were so many volunteers who had come forward to serve their country, the RBA selected only those who were young and physically fit for carrying out security duties in the south. All those who had physical or domestic problems were released from any sort of militia duty. Although thousands of women and students had also volunteered for militia training and service, there was no plan to train or mobilise them, he said.

His Majesty the King informed the Assembly that in view of the keen desire expressed by the people in the 71st Session of the National Assembly for militia training to be imparted in their respective Gewogs or Dzongkhags at their own expenditure, apart from fire-arms and instructors, a feasibility study had been carried out by the RBA and the Home Ministry after the conclusion of the 71st Session on imparting militia training as requested by the people. It was, however, found that conducting training in the 196 Gewogs of the 20 Dzongkhags would pose serious logistic and administrative problems to the RBA. On the other hand, military training could be conducted effectively for large numbers of volunteers in the existing army Wings and Centres. It had, therefore,

been decided that all trainings would be conducted in the established army Centres and Wings.

The Goongloen Gongma informed the Assembly about the welfare facilities provided for the militia volunteers deployed on active duty. He said that in accordance with His Majesty the King's command, the militia volunteers were given full service pay and welfare benefits at par with regular soldiers of the RBA. They were entitled to free medical facilities including treatment in Bhutan or in India. In case of death, all funeral rites and pujas were being performed under the personal supervision of the volunteer's commanding officer and the entire cost borne by the RBA. A Kidug Soilra of Nu. 20,000 granted by His Majesty the King was also given to his next of kin.

The Director General of Education informed the Assembly that all the teachers and students were deeply concerned by the ngolop threat and were very keen to undergo militia training. He said that when the ngolop uprising took place in September 1990, over a thousand students from the High Schools, Sherubtse College and the tertiary institutes came forward and gave their names for militia service. Also, when His Majesty the King visited the various Dzongkhags to finalise the Seventh Plan with the people, and met the teachers of 76 schools and over 22,000 students, one of main requests made by them to His Majesty was to be given a chance to receive militia training so that they could protect the security of the Tsa-Wa-Sum. However, His Majesty the King, while expressing his deep appreciation for their strong sense of patriotism, told them that it was more important for them to complete their studies so that they could later serve their country with loyalty and dedication. The Director General reported to the Assembly that the teachers and students of the schools and institutes had all pledged their total commitment and determination to serve and protect the Tsa-Wa-Sum in times of difficulties and problems.

The National Assembly, noting the repeated requests for militia training by the people, resolved that based on the feasibility study conducted by the Home Ministry and the RBA, all military trainings would be carried out in the established army Centres and Wings.

IX. REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL SECURITY FORCES IN THE SOUTH

The people's representative of Ngangla Gewog in Shemgang Dzongkhag reported to the Assembly that as they shared a common border with India, many ngolops who were mixing and residing with the Nepalese across the border were crossing over to the Bhutanese side of the border to hunt the wild animals, fish in the rivers and steal valuable timber from the forests. They had been poaching animals and stealing timber from places like Karnamakar and Kukulung under the Manas Sanctuary, and had even raided the villages in Eidhi and Dhangkhar where they beat up the men, raped the women and desecrated the private shrines of the people. He said that the investigations carried out had revealed that these crimes had been perpetrated by Lhotshampa ngolops. The Chimi submitted that as there were no security personnel to protect the forest areas of Karnamakar and Kukulung, security personnel from the RBP or the RBA should be deputed to patrol these areas. He said that it would also be useful for government officials and the Police to maintain close relations with the officials across the border in Assam and if necessary ask for their help in dealing with the ngolops.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army said that since Karnamakar and Kukulung were close to the border, the ngolops had been carrying out terrorist attacks and raids in these areas. Being very concerned for the safety and well-being of the people, the security forces from Geylegphug had been carrying out frequent patrols in these areas. However, the ngolops always avoided the patrols and only carried out their acts of terrorism or stole timber when the security patrols had left the vicinity. He said that in light of this problem, the RBA and the Forest Department would be discussing ways and means to improve and strengthen security in Karnamakar. The Goongloen Gongma also assured the people's representative that civil officials, Police and security officials had excellent relations with their counterparts across the border and enjoyed close friendship and cooperation with them.

His Majesty the King, noting that the ngolops had raided Eidhi and Dhangkhar twice within the year and terrorised and robbed the people, said he understood the concerns of the people's representative that such raids might take place again. His Majesty said that although patrolling was being carried out not only in Karnamakar and Kukulung but also in Eidhi and Dhangkhar by security forces from Geylegphug, it was not very effective because the ngolops avoided the patrols and carried out their raids only after the security patrols had left the area. His Majesty said that since Karnamakar was a frequently used trading route for the people of Nangla Gewog, the Assembly should

decide on either the RBA establishing a security outpost or the Forest Department posting armed forest guards in Karnamakar.

The people's representatives of Samchi Dzongkhag reported that Samchi was the most vulnerable district in the south and the people were also very concerned by reports of guerilla training being given to the anti-nationals. They requested that to counter such threats, the RBA should increase the number of security personnel in Samchi Dzongkhag.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army, while acknowledging the concerns expressed by the people's representative, said that the RBA, in keeping with its responsibility of ensuring the security of the Dzongkhag had deployed adequate security personnel in different parts of Samchi after assessing the possible security threats. He assured the Assembly that the Army was constantly assessing the situation and would post additional security personnel as and when required. He said that he would like to assure the people of Samchi that the Army was fully committed to ensuring the security of their Dzongkhag.

The National Assembly resolved that regarding the deployment of security personnel in Karnamakar, as suggested by His Majesty the King, the RBA and the Forest Department should discuss and decide whether the RBA should establish a security outpost or whether the Forest Department should post armed Forest Guards in Karnamakar. As for increasing the number of security personnel in Samchi, the Assembly endorsed the policy of the Army to deploy security personnel on the basis of the problems and security risks faced by the people.

X. EMIGRANTS LEAVING THE COUNTRY

The people's representatives of Dalim, Bakuli, Samrang and Hastinapur Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag reported that earlier this year, on learning that many Lhotshampas in these four Gewogs had applied to emigrate, His Majesty the King, despite his many responsibilities of state, visited every village in these Gewogs. His Majesty met all the families that had applied to emigrate and personally appealed to them to reconsider their decision and stay back in the country. During the meetings, these families had assured His Majesty that they would withdraw their applications and stay back. However, shortly after His Majesty returned to Thimphu, they went back on their assurances to His Majesty and left the country. The representatives said that

although neither the Dzongkhag Administration, nor the police and security forces or the Gups, Chimis and the DYT had been telling anyone to leave the country, many Lhotshampas had been leaving the country. After leaving the country they had been spreading baseless allegations to malign the government. The representatives said that the faithlessness displayed by these people had brought great shame to all the loyal Lhotshampas in the four Gewogs. They said that the loyal Lhotshampas had no relations of any kind with these faithless people, and they requested His Majesty the King to kindly accept the pledges and assurances of the loyal Lhotshampas that they would never give any cause for His Majesty to be disappointed in them like the emigrants who went back on their own words and left the country.

The Home Minister said that he fully shared the deep regret expressed by the people's representatives of Dalim, Bakuli, Samrang and Hastinapur over the departure of so many emigrants from their Gewogs despite the appeals made by His Majesty the King who had come to Daifam and Bhangtar Dungkhags to meet the emigrants personally. Wondering how it was possible that so many people had emigrated, the Home Minister said that the reasons could be due to the presence of large numbers of anti-nationals in these two Dungkhags or because there were very few people who had genuine love and loyalty for the country. If there were people who cared and loved the country, they would have influenced those living in their villages and Gewogs and so many Lhotshampas would not have emigrated and left the country. He said that it was indeed a source of deep regret and disappointment for both the people and the government that so many emigrants had left from these two Dungkhags. The Home Minister, however, expressed his happiness that the Lhotshampas who had remained in the country were asking His Majesty the King and the Royal Government to accept their pledges of loyalty and dedication to the Tsa-Wa-Sum.

Speaking on the matter, the people's representative from Somboekha in Haa Dzongkhag drew the Assembly's attention to the Lhotshampa emigration from Maina Gewog in Dorokha Dungkhag. He said that Maina Gewog was a very beautiful and fertile place with productive paddy fields, orange gardens and cardamom fields. Yet the Lhotshampas in Maina Village had left the country earlier this year without anyone telling them to do so. As the people of Haa Somboekha and the Lhotshampas of Maina Gewog had close interaction with each other, the Chimi said that he had asked these people why they wanted to leave the country and whether they had any problems. Some of them responded by saying that they had no problems but were leaving because

they had, over the years, invested in land and property outside the country. Others said that they were leaving because their neighbours were leaving or had already left. The Chimi said that these emigrants from Maina completed whatever pending transactions or accounts they had with the people staying back and had left in very high spirits. However, these people should never have been trusted. Only a month before the Lhotshampas from Maina emigrated, absconders from the same area in Dorokha had attacked and robbed one Kinley of Haa Puduna on his cattle range. How could anyone look upon such people as neighbours or friends any more, he asked? Moreover, the Lhotshampas leaving the country had even refused to heed the appeals made by His Majesty the King who visited their Dzongkhags and Gewogs and spoke to them like a parent to his children. He said that such people were beyond anyone's capacity to change or reform, and it was time now for everyone to realise that it was not possible to live together with them.

The Samdrupjongkhar Dzongda said that in cases where the Dzongkhag Administration was aware that some of the emigrants had their immediate family members working in government service, he and the other Dzongkhag officials had been pointing out to the emigrants that their departure without consulting their children would be a cause of much inconvenience for everyone concerned. The emigrants, however, would refuse to pay any heed saying that parents, and not the children had every right to dispose the family property as they wished and they would accordingly dispose their land and house and refuse to withdraw their applications for emigration. Some of the emigrants would not even inform their children in government service about their decision to emigrate unless they happened to come on leave to the villages. The Dzongda said that there had been many cases where after the parents had left, the children who were in government service had come to the Dzongkhag Administration and demanded to know who had the authority to dispose of their land and house. He said that this sort of situation caused frequent problems for the Dzongkhag Administration and might even cause problems for the country. He requested the National Assembly to give due consideration to this matter.

The people's representative of Hastinapur Gewog in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag said that going by the behaviour of the emigrants, these people had no qualms in creating difficulties and inconveniences for their own children. Some of the emigrants would not even bother to consult their children who were working in government service in different parts of the country before putting in their applications for emigration. Some would insist they had consulted all the members of their family while others would point out that they had every right to dispose of their property as they wished and

decide to emigrate. Such cases had been causing problems for the Gups, Chimis and the Dzongkhag Administration. The representative pointed out that since the Land Act clearly decreed that the owners of the Thram had the right to sell, gift or bequeath the land listed in their Thrums, it was not possible for the Dzongkhag Administration and the DYT to question the right of the Thram owners to dispose of their property as they wished. There was nothing they could do for children or other immediate family members of emigrants who approached the Dzongkhag Administration on finding out that their parents had sold the family land and house and left the country. He cited the example of an RBA soldier, Phurpa Sherpa, who had come to his village on hearing that his father Dawa Sherpa was emigrating and found that his father had already left after selling all his property.

The Samchi Dzongda said that most of the emigrants from his Dzongkhag were people living in the villages, and not many government servants or businessmen had left the country. He said that the emigrants refused to give any of their land to those family members who did not wish to leave and had stayed back in the country. Even those who would part with some of the land would not give more than one acre or so although they may own 10 or 15 acres of land. He also said that the emigrants felt no shame in making false allegations against the government after they had left the country.

The National Assembly noted that as reported by the members, although the Royal Government had made every effort possible to dissuade the Lhotshampa emigrants from leaving, they had refused to change their minds and had been leaving the country. As such there was nothing that the Assembly could do except to express its deep regret. The Assembly acknowledged the pledge and assurances given by the Lhotshampas of the four Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar who had stayed back that, unlike those Lhotshampas who had been emigrating, they fully realised what was best for their own interests and would remain in the country with abiding loyalty and dedication.

XI. REQUEST FOR FIRE-ARMS BY VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS

The people's representatives of 33 Gewogs from Samdrupjongkhar, Wangdiphodrang, Tongsa, Dagana, Samchi and Chirang Dzongkhags submitted eight points requesting for fire-arms to be issued to village volunteers to protect their villages and ensure the security of the country.

The people's representative of Martsala Gewog in Samdrupjongkhar said that although Martsala was next to the disturbed areas in southern Bhutan, the people had been fortunate that no untoward incident had taken place in their Gewog so far. However, since the ngolop problem was still unresolved and terrorist activities continued to take place in the disturbed areas, there was a great threat that terrorist activities might be carried out against the people in Martsala Gewog also. In such an eventuality, it would be very difficult for the people to fight the armed ngolop terrorists due to lack of fire-arms. The people, therefore, requested the government for fire-arms so that they could effectively maintain the security of their villages against any terrorist attacks.

The peoples' representatives from Wangdiphodrang Dzongkhag said that the ngolops had been moving deeper into the north and had even raided villages in Shemgang, Tongsa and Chukha Dzongkhags. They had committed assault, robbery and rape in these villages, and also desecrated the Chortens, Lhakhangs and private shrines of the people. He said that just as the saying went, "perform pujas and take preventive measures before the epidemic spreads and build the canal before the waters come", the people requested the government to issue fire-arms to the militia volunteers to protect their respective villages against possible attacks by the ngolops.

The people's representative of Dalim, Bakuli and Samrang Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag said that ever since the anti-national activities in the south began in 1990, the ngolop groups such as the BPP, BNDP and HUOB had sent their members armed with guns to carry out raids inside the country and commit murder, extortion and other terrorist activities. Due to lack of fire-arms, the people had not been able to effectively fight the ngolops. He said that the people requested the government to issue fire-arms to enable them to fight the ngolops and maintain the security of their villages and the country.

The people's representative of Langthil and Korphu Gewogs in Tongsa Dzongkhag reported that on the 23rd day of the 12th month of the Bhutanese calendar, 25 armed ngolop terrorists had raided Ritee Village under Korphu Gewog. Since the people did not have fire-arms like the ngolops, they had no alternative but to surrender all their cash and belongings. He said that the people requested the government to issue fire-

arms so that ex-servicemen and militia volunteers in the villages near the distributed areas in the south could use them to fight the ngolops and protect lives and property.

The people's representative of Drugyelgang Gewog in Dagana Dzongkhag said that the ngolop terrorists had continued their raids on villages in their Dzongkhag. Although the people had been taking all possible precautions against terrorist raids, their patangs, spears and bows and arrows were of little use against the guns and bombs of the ngolops. The people, therefore, requested the government to issue adequate guns and ammunition for they would then be able to contain and stop the terrorist raids by the ngolops.

The people's representative of Samchi Dzongkhag reported that the village volunteers had played, and would continue to play, an active role in curbing the threats from the anti-nationals. He requested the government to provide fire-arms to the village volunteers to enable them to fight the ngolops more effectively.

The people's representatives of Hastinapur Gewog in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag and the representatives of Phuentenchu, Beteni, Patale, Tshokana, Chirangdara and Kikhothang Gewogs in Chirang Dzongkhag reported that due to the constant raids by the ngolop terrorists, the people had become very paranoid and desperate and had been driven to confront armed terrorists, and that village volunteers had managed to apprehend some of the terrorists and hand them over to the police. The Chimis said that if fire-arms were issued, the people would have no second thoughts in fighting the ngolop terrorists. The people, therefore, requested that fire-arms be issued to the village volunteer forces.

The people's representative from Chirang said that during the DYT meetings, the Chairman and the members had given full thought to the risks of issuing fire-arms as the terrorists might intensify their raids to snatch away these arms and use them against the country. At the same time, with 32 cases of armed robbery, rape and arson taking place in Chirang in 1992 alone, the people were facing great danger and difficulties from the terrorist raids. He said that if the government approved the issuing of fire-arms, the Gups, Tshoghpas and Dzongkhag authorities would take the responsibility of selecting only loyal and dedicated persons to be given the weapons. Written undertakings would be submitted to guarantee against any misuse of the fire-arms issued.

The Sarbhang Dzongda said that the ngolops carried out at least 15 to 20 terrorist raids a month on the villagers in his Dzongkhag. In the DYT meetings, the people had repeatedly been requesting for fire-arms to be granted by the government. Since the people would be able to protect themselves against the ngolops if they had fire-arms, he said that it would be very good for security if fire-arms could be issued to trustworthy and reliable members of the village volunteers.

The Kalikhola Chimi reported that since the Dungkhags and Gewogs under Sarbhang Dzongkhag were all very close or contiguous to the border, the ngolops had been constantly raiding the villages and inflicting untold suffering on the people through their acts of armed robbery and terrorism. Although village volunteers had been organised, due to lack of fire-arms they could not do much against terrorist attacks on their villages. He requested the government to issue fire-arms to the village volunteers.

The Samdrupjongkhar Dzongda pointed out that apart from the obvious risks and difficulties involved in issuing fire-arms to village volunteers, it would be difficult to find enough fire-arms to supply all the village volunteers in the various Gewogs. He said that the Lhotshampa people themselves could not trust each other, not knowing who were ngolop sympathisers and who might or might not leave and join the ngolops. There could be no guarantee that the arms issued might not be sold or given to the ngolops and used against the Tsa-Wa-Sum. As the saying went, “the stripes of the tiger is visible outside on its skin but the thoughts of people are not visible as they lie within,” it would be very difficult to assess the true intentions of the persons to whom the arms may be issued and say conclusively whether it would be useful or harmful to issue fire-arms to the village volunteers. He said that issuing arms even to the DYT members would have to be carefully considered. He proposed that, for the time being, no decision should be taken by the Assembly on the issuing of fire-arms to village volunteers.

Some of the people’s representatives said that in view of the constant terrorism unleashed on the Lhotshampa people since the ngolop uprising in 1990, the government should consider issuing fire-arms to village volunteers, if it was possible, so that the security of those Lhotshampas who had remained loyal to the Tsa-Wa-Sum could be looked after.

Other people's representatives said that if fire-arms were issued to village volunteers because the Lhotshampa villagers could not defend themselves against armed terrorists, in view of His Majesty the King's command to the security forces to avoid shooting to the extent possible even during encounters with armed ngolop terrorists, problems would arise from issuing fire-arms to village volunteers. Like the saying, "a person must be careful that he does not let the fire he lights singe his own beard," the implications of issuing arms to village volunteers must be carefully considered. They said that if the government wished to issue fire-arms, then it was the Gups and Chimis who worked as the bridge between the government and people who deserved to be given fire-arms to protect themselves from the ngolops.

The Home Minister said that in conformity with earlier resolutions of the National Assembly, the people should collectively look after the security of their villages in areas which could not be effectively covered by the security forces. Because of the constant terrorist raids by the ngolops, the people in the Lhotshampa villages had organised village volunteers to guard their villages. Although the government had not given any directive or permission for the creation of village volunteers, they had contributed greatly towards protecting life and property in their respective villages. Even though they did not have any proper weapons, the village volunteers had been quite effective in facing armed ngolop terrorists. In the course of defending their villages, the village volunteers had killed 5 ngolop terrorists and caught 90 others who they handed over to the Police. Many of these terrorists revealed that they were sent from the ngolop camps in Nepal to rob and terrorise the villages in southern Bhutan.

The Home Minister said that the government was deeply concerned by the many sufferings inflicted on the people of southern Bhutan by the ngolops through their terrorist activities. He said that he had already reported to the Assembly on the many crimes committed against the people by the ngolops during the deliberations on human rights. It was because of the constant acts of terrorism by the ngolops that the Lhotshampa Chimis were asking for fire-arms to be given to the village volunteers. The Home Minister informed the Assembly that there were 3,468 village volunteers in the five southern Dzongkhags. There were also many requests for fire-arms from the northern Dzongkhags. It would, therefore, be very difficult for the government to issue fire-arms as requested by the people, he said. Moreover, as most of the village volunteers were untrained they would not know how to handle fire-arms properly, and it may cause more harm than good to issue them fire-arms. There was also a risk that the fire-arms may be misused or stolen or even sold.

The Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army reported that the armed forces were discharging their responsibility of ensuring the security of the country with full loyalty and dedication. There was also a plan to increase the strength of the armed forces. He said that it would be extremely difficult to issue fire-arms to the village volunteer forces as the number of village volunteers was much more than the entire security force in the south and the requirement of fire-arms would, therefore, be very big. It would also call for training to be imparted to all those issued with fire-arms and there would be many people going around with fire-arms in their possession. He pointed out that the people in the south were divided into different groups which would lead to armed clashes and weapons could also be misused, thereby creating serious law and order problems. Security forces could also mistake village volunteers for armed terrorists. This would, therefore, be a source of constant difficulties and problems for the Police and the Civil Administration. The Goongloen Gongma said that it was not feasible to issue fire-arms to the village volunteer forces.

Some of the Lhotshampa Chimis recognising that it may not be possible to issue fire-arms to all the village volunteers, requested the government to consider issuing fire-arms to the Gups, Chimis and the DYT and GYT members as they were the elected representatives of the people, and if that was not possible then to issue fire-arms at least to the Gups and Chimis.

One of the people's representatives from Samchi Dzongkhag said that, as reported by the Home Minister and the Chief Operations Officer, it was true there were a lot of risks and problems in issuing fire-arms to village volunteers. However, the ngolops were constantly raiding the villagers despite the security outposts at various points along the border. The ngolops were able to bypass these posts and enter through various points along the open border to carry out their raids on villages, he said. As the people were finding it very difficult to defend themselves against these raids, he requested that fire-arms be issued to trustworthy persons identified jointly by the Dzongda and the Gups and Chimis.

The Planning Minister said that on careful consideration he felt that there were more disadvantages than advantages in issuing fire-arms to the village volunteers. Apart from the fact that the volunteers would not be able to handle the weapons very proficiently, there was every possibility of these arms falling into the hands of the ngolops during their raids. He said that rather than issue fire-arms, it was better to let the RBA increase the strength of the security forces as per the security needs and problems.

The representative of the High Court said that although the request for fire-arms by the Lhotshampas was genuine, it must be kept in mind that throughout the ngolop problem from 1990 till date, His Majesty the King had imposed strict restrictions on the use of fire-arms by the security forces even against armed terrorists. This was done with the view to create a suitable atmosphere for finding a lasting solution to the ngolop problem. He said that a decision to issue fire-arms to the village volunteers could create serious law and order problems. He, therefore, recommended against taking any decision at the moment to issue fire-arms to the village volunteer forces.

The National Assembly, noting that there were serious implications and problems in issuing fire-arms to the village volunteers, as reported by the Home Minister and the Chief Operations Officer of the RBA, decided that it was not feasible to issue fire-arms to them. As for issuing fire-arms to the Gups and Chimis in the southern Dzongkhags, the Assembly directed the Home Ministry, the RBA and the concerned Dzongkhag Administrations to discuss and decide on the matter after carefully assessing the need to issue fire-arms to Gups and Chimis.

XII. BAN ON RETURN OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY

The people's representatives of 80 Gewogs from Pemagatshel, Samdrupjongkhar, Wangdiphodrang, Dagana, Gasa, Thimphu, Sarbhang, Punakha, Samchi, Mongar, Chirang and Paro Dzongkhags and the representatives of the Dratshang and Rabdeys submitted 15 points calling for a ban, in accordance to the law, on the return of people who had left the country.

The people's representatives admitted that the issue of banning the return of Lhotshampas who had left the country after carrying out treacherous activities against the Tsa-Wa-Sum was thoroughly discussed during the 71st Session of the National Assembly. However, according to the news, it seemed that regardless of their true nationality and status, the Nepalese government wanted the Royal Government of Bhutan to take all the people in the camps in Nepal. It seems that the Nepalese think there are no laws in Bhutan governing such matters, the Chimis said. The ngolops had left the country of their own accord after carrying out treacherous activities against the Tsa-Wa-Sum and after causing untold sufferings for the Lhotshampa people and the people in the northern Dzongkhags that were close to the disturbed areas in the south.

The Chimis pointed out that besides those Lhotshampas who had left the country to escape the law, there were other Lhotshampas who had left on their own free will after applying to emigrate and disposing off their land and other property. The Chimis said that such people should never be accepted back as doing so would undermine the laws of the land.

The people's representative of Tshangkha Gewog in Dagana Dzongkhag said that the people of Tshangkha Gewog wished to put on record that the anti-nationals who had destroyed service facilities like medical centres, schools, agriculture and animal husbandry centres had absconded from the country to escape punishment for their crimes. As for the other Lhotshampas who had left the country, they had emigrated as per their own wish and they had not even left a needle unsold before leaving the country to join the ngolops. The Chimi recalled that in order to stop the people from emigrating, His Majesty the King had issued two Kashos in 1992 which had been read out and explained clearly to the public. In spite of this, large numbers of emigrants had insisted on leaving and had left the country. At the same time, it was a fact that family members from the same household who did not want to leave with the emigrants had been allowed to stay back and were all in the country, some serving in government service and some staying in the villages. The Chimi said that this clearly showed that no one was being forced to leave the country. There were talks that the emigrants and absconders who were staying in the camps in Nepal were now trying to come back to Bhutan. He said that the people of Tshangkha Gewog strongly opposed the return of these people to the country. The people felt very strongly that the laws of the country should be well guarded and implemented in all such matters and that those who had left the country should not be allowed to return under any circumstances or conditions.

Some of the people's representatives said that banning the return of such people was particularly necessary because most of the people in the refugee camps in Nepal who were claiming to be forcefully evicted from Bhutan were not even Bhutanese. As for those who had left Bhutan, none of them had ever been forced to leave by anyone. In fact, His Majesty the King had issued a Kasho and made it clear to everyone that in accordance with the Chathrim it is a punishable offence for anyone to force a citizen to leave the country. Even though His Majesty exempted all Lhotshampas from Goongda Woola and rural taxes and had also finalised extensive developmental programmes for the southern Dzongkhags during the Seventh Five-Year Plan, they had no sense of gratitude and appreciation and had left the country to join the ngolops in Nepal. The Chimis insisted that such people must never be allowed to return to the country.

The people's representative of Dalim, Bakuli and Samrang Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar said that everyone was aware that there was no eviction of Lhotshampas as alleged by the anti-national propaganda. Even the family members of anti-national leaders continued to reside in the country. For example, the wife of Suk Bahadur Subba, who joined the anti-nationals and was a leader of the anti-national organisation called HUROB, was not only in the country but continued to work as a teacher in the Education Department. As everyone was aware, no Lhotshampas in Forms 1 to 5 in the census record had been told to leave the country by the government or the people. All the Lhotshampas employed in government service were given equal treatment. He said that people had been emigrating on their own accord after submitting applications to leave the country, and had taken Kidug Soilra also from the government. They had been leaving despite repeated appeals to withdraw their applications. Even those who agreed to withdraw their applications for emigration would later change their mind, renounce their citizenship and leave the country with the other emigrants. All the raids, murders and extortion inflicted on the Lhotshampa people were being carried out by these people who had left the country but came back to carry out terrorist activities. The people of Dalim, Bakuli and Samrang, therefore, requested the government not to allow such people who had gone to the refugee camps in Nepal to return to the country.

Some of the people's representatives recalled that during the SAARC Summit in Dhaka, Bangladesh, His Majesty the King had told Prime Minister Koirala of Nepal that identification of the people in the camps in Nepal should be carried out in order to resolve the problem faced by the two countries on this issue. The insistence by the Nepalese Prime Minister on sending the people in the camps to Bhutan without indentifying them was not only unreasonable but violated all the norms of dialogue between countries trying to resolve a problem. He had taken this position because firstly, as he himself had proclaimed, he was one of the main persons involved in the uprising by the ethnic Nepalese in southern Bhutan in the early 1950s. Secondly, it was his policy to send as many ethnic Nepalese as possible to Bhutan to subvert the Kingdom.

Other Chimis said that as far as they were concerned, there was no reason why Bhutan should take back people who had left of their own free will and gone to Nepal which they considered their real country. They said that the question of these people coming

back should not even arise. They requested the government to never accept any such requests or proposals.

The people's representative of Sarbhang said that the people of Sarbhang Dzongkhag had earlier submitted that those who had left the country should not be allowed to return. He said that the people once again submitted that such a decision should never be considered by the government. Even if the government were to allow ngolops to return, he said that the people of Sarbhang were determined never to allow even a single one of them to step inside their villages. This we pledge earnestly with our heart and soul, said the Chimi.

The people's representatives of Beteni, Phuentenchu, Lamidara, Gairigoan, Dunglegang, Semzong and Tshokana Gewogs in Chirang Dzongkhag reported that the people were very angry and disgusted to hear the emigrants calling themselves refugees after leaving Bhutan and making allegations of atrocities inflicted by the government. The people of Chirang wished to report to the Assembly that the emigrants had been leaving the country according to their own wish after transferring their properties to their relatives or selling them off and taking Kidug Soilra from the government. The emigrants took away all the moveable properties with them including timber, bamboo and grains in trucks hired by them. The actions of these emigrants who refused to stay back and then claimed to be refugees and falsely accused the government of inflicting atrocities had brought much shame to the loyal and dedicated Lhotshampas of Chirang Dzongkhag. They requested His Majesty the King to kindly continue in his magnanimity and trust for the loyal Lhotshampas. They said that the people of Chirang Dzongkhag categorically declared that the emigrants who had left the country were not and could never be treated as refugees and the Royal Government also must never contemplate accepting them as such.

One of the Royal Advisory Councillors said that regarding the return of people who had left the country, every country had its own laws on such matters. If those who had left the country to escape punishment for crimes committed by them wished to come back, they should be prepared to face the law which prescribes varying degrees of punishment for common as well as treasonable crimes. As for the others who had emigrated, they had left the country despite repeated appeals by His Majesty the King not to leave. Such people could not be called refugees as they had left on their own free will after disposing their properties. As proposed by the people, the Royal Government

should not even consider the thought of allowing such people to come back, said the Councillor.

The people's representative of Dagapela in Dagana Dzongkhag said that the people of Dagapela believed strongly in upholding the laws of the country. As such, the people insisted that neither those who had emigrated nor those who had absconded to escape punishment for their crimes should be allowed to return to the country under any conditions.

The Home Minister observed that the people's representatives were repeatedly calling for a ban on the return of ngolops and emigrants because they were aware that it was the objective of the ngolops to subvert the Royal Government and turn Bhutan into a Nepali dominated country. He said that as per the law, any person who wished to emigrate and leave Bhutan had the right to do so but once he took that step he would automatically forfeit his citizenship. As for banning the return of such people, the matter was adequately covered by the law and the resolutions of the previous sessions of the National Assembly, he said.

Several people's representatives noted that the Lhotshampas had organised an uprising against the Royal Government in the early 1950s and now after the ngolop uprising in 1990, many of the Lhotshampas had gone to the camps in Nepal. They said it was clear that the reason for the Nepalese Prime Minister insisting on the repatriation to Bhutan of all the ethnic Nepalese in the Nepal camps was to ensure that after their return they could overthrow the government and take over power in Bhutan.

The Home Minister informed the members that during the talks between His Majesty the King and Prime Minister Koirala of Nepal in Dhaka in April this year, His Majesty had said that the Royal Government would assume full responsibility for any bonafide Bhutanese citizen in the Nepal camps if they have been forcefully evicted from Bhutan.

Some of the people's representatives said that although the question of people who had left the country not being allowed to return had been thoroughly discussed during the 71st Session of the National Assembly and a resolution had also been passed, the matter was being raised again because of the people's deep concern over the constant efforts of the ngolops to harm the Tsa-Wa-Sum in any way they could. As the saying went, "a trouble maker is never welcome in any society just as the bull that is always fighting is not wanted in any cattle pen", even if a few of these people were to return,

they would always be a source of trouble for the people of Bhutan. The Chimis called on the Assembly to pass a resolution forever banning the return of these people.

After an extended deliberation, the National Assembly decided that regarding the return of those who had absconded from the country to escape punishment for crimes they had committed or those who had emigrated and left of their own free will, the matter should be dealt with in accordance to the resolution passed on the matter during the 71st Session of the National Assembly. However, the case of any person in the refugee camps in Nepal who may have been forcibly evicted would be dealt with in accordance to His Majesty the King's edict declaring it a criminal offence to force any citizen to leave the country.

XIII. PROPOSALS FOR THE EVICTION OF NGOLOPS

The people's representatives of Samchi Dzongkhag submitted that although, in the previous sessions of the National Assembly, His Majesty the King had rejected proposals for the eviction of the relatives of ngolops, the people of Samchi continued to question the loyalty of such people. Their presence in the country posed great security risks as they would join the anti-nationals if the situation worsened. These people went frequently to Nepal to meet their relatives and pass information to them. As their presence in the various Gewogs was in itself a security problem, the people of Samchi once again requested for the eviction of all relatives of the ngolops.

The people's representative of Tangsibi Gewog in Tongsa Dzongkhag said that the people had heard that His Majesty the King and the Prime Minister of Nepal had met in April and discussed the issues relating to the ngolop problem. During the meeting, the Nepalese Prime Minister had insisted on the repatriation of all the people who had registered themselves as refugees in the camps in Nepal, including the ngolops who had absconded after committing criminal and terrorist activities. He said that the people felt very strongly that instead of agreeing to take back people who had committed terrorist activities or who had left to support the ngolops, the government should investigate and expel all Lhotshampas who were secretly helping the ngolops by passing information and guiding them during their raids on villages, and in identifying well-to-do families to be robbed and even participating in the raids by the ngolop terrorists. Such people

were also ngolops and all ngolops should be expelled from the country, said the Chimi from Tongsa.

Some of the people's representatives said that although the ngolops and other Lhotshampas had left, many of their close relatives were still living in the country. Keeping such people in the country was a constant security threat as it was like keeping a snake in one's house. They, therefore, proposed that all the relatives of ngolops should be sent out of the country.

The Home Minister agreed that the continued presence of the relatives of ngolops was a source of much doubt and concern for the rest of the people in the concerned villages and Gewogs. As their loyalty could not be really counted upon and they would leave or stay as it suited them, they were like people with one leg inside the country and the other outside. However, he reminded the members that people could not be evicted from the country on mere suspicion of disloyalty as this would be a violation of the law. Even if any person were to carry out activities harmful to the Tsa-Wa-Sum he would have to be dealt with in accordance to the Thrimshung Chhenpo. The laws of the land must be respected by everyone and all actions must be in keeping with the law. He said that if anyone came to know of or observed persons who were carrying out anti-national activities or were helping the ngolops in any way, he should report the matter to the Police or the Dzongkhag Administration. The Home Minister pointed out that the question of evicting ngolops had been discussed during the 71st Session of the National Assembly and any move to change the resolution which had been passed must be considered very carefully. He said that the matter should be dealt with in accordance to His Majesty's Kasho, the existing resolutions of the National Assembly and the laws of the land.

The National Assembly resolved that the question of evicting ngolops and their relatives had already been decided during the 71st Session of the National Assembly and that everyone should abide by the resolution passed by the 71st Session on this matter.

XIV. SCREENING FOR IMPORTANT AND SENSITIVE POSTS

The people's representatives of Tashiyangtshi Dzongkhag submitted that the issue of Lhotshampas being employed in important and sensitive posts in the armed forces and

government services was discussed thoroughly during the previous sessions of the National Assembly. However, as the Lhotshampas were still being given responsibilities and employed in financial institutions such as the banks, and since the Lhotshampas had failed to prove that they served the government faithfully at all times, the people once again requested that they should not be given any important or sensitive posts.

In his response, the Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission admitted that though the issue of removing Lhotshampas from important and sensitive posts had been discussed in the previous two sessions of the National Assembly, the Royal Government had continued to keep them in such posts as before. He also agreed that there were risks in having Lhotshampas in the civil service as many of them had absconded from the country with government money and property which had not only caused grave loss to the government but also been a source of much embarrassment. He informed the Assembly that being as concerned as the people on this matter, the RCSC had on three different occasions since 1991 decided to dismiss all immediate family members of the Lhotshampa ngolops and their leaders. However, His Majesty the King had over-ruled the decision on the ground that no civil servant should be dismissed unless he or she had violated the Civil Service Rules and Regulations. He also informed the members that in keeping with His Majesty the King's command, there had also been no discrimination of any kind against the Lhotshampas in new appointments, trainings and promotions. Since the ngolop uprising in 1990, the RCSC had appointed 757 Lhotshampas in the civil service, and 99 of them in the officer cadre (Grade 9 to 1) had been promoted. The Secretary also said that out of the 12,781 civil servants today, 3,077 were Lhotshampas, 7,546 were from northern Bhutan while the remaining 2,158 were non-nationals. He expressed his regret that the Lhotshampas had shown no appreciation for the Royal Government's generosity, tolerance and magnanimity. Although the government had been providing them with free education, trainings, jobs based on their qualifications and ability, and timely promotions, many of them had absconded from the country and joined the ngolops.

The RCSC Secretary pointed out that as everyone knew, R.B. Basnet and Bhim Subba, two of the main ngolop leaders presently based in Kathmandu, were not only educated by the Royal Government but had been sent abroad for higher studies. On their return they had been given good jobs and important posts. In return, they turned against the Tsa-Wa-Sum. R.B. Basnet absconded with over Nu. 50 million of government funds

while Bhim Subba absconded with over Nu. 30 million within a month of his promotion as Director General of the Power Department. Likewise another Lhotshampa, I.B. Chhetri, who was the head of the Bhutan Development Finance Corporation in Tongsa, absconded with Nu.535,000 of the Corporation's funds. Another Lhotshampa, Mani Kumar Rai, a cashier of the Bank of Bhutan absconded with Nu.110,000.

The RCSC Secretary said that the Lhotshampas civil servants who had absconded from the country had caused immeasurable losses to the nation. They had not only absconded with government funds but had also rendered useless the investment that the Royal Government had made in them by educating and training them at great cost. When Lhotshampas with good qualifications and job experiences left the country, the nation suffered big losses in terms of its manpower resources which in turn affected the policy of national self-reliance. That was why the RCSC also shared the concerns of the people's representatives regarding the employment of Lhotshampas in the civil service, the Secretary said. In view of their tendency to steal funds and abscond, the RCSC was facing many difficulties with regard to the employment of Lhotshampas as the heads of ministries and departments were very reluctant to employ Lhotshampas and even more hesitant to send Lhotshampas for training abroad. When the RCSC exerted pressure on the ministries and departments, they would agree to employ or send Lhotshampas for training only on the condition that the RCSC accepted all risk and responsibility.

The Secretary said that despite the many risks involved in employing Lhotshampas, the RCSC had been abiding by His Majesty the King's command not to remove Lhotshampas from the civil service or introduce any discriminatory measures against them. This magnanimous policy of His Majesty the King was a reflection of his abiding faith in the Lhotshampas and his noble aspiration to bring them into the national mainstream so that all Bhutanese citizens could live together like members of one happy and united family. The Secretary said that it was also the hope and prayer of all Bhutanese that the Lhotshampas would do their best to contribute towards resolving the present problem and work towards ensuring the well-being of the country. He said that if the Lhotshampas made a special effort to fulfil His Majesty the King's noble wishes and cherished dream of close unity and brotherhood among the Bhutanese people, the country would once again be blessed with peace and happiness.

As there were no other submissions by anyone, the National Assembly recorded the clarification made by the Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission and did not adopt a separate resolution.

XV. DISCONTINUATION OF NON-NATIONALS OF NEPALESE ORIGIN IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

The people's representative of Ngatshang Gewog in Mongar Dzongkhag reminded the Assembly that during the deliberations of the 71st Session of the National Assembly the people had requested that ethnic Nepalese who were not Bhutanese citizens should not be employed in the ministries, departments and public corporations but should instead be relieved from government service. If such people were kept in government service, they would later on say they should be given Bhutanese citizenship because they had worked and spent many years in the country. Such a situation would not only create problems for the country but the continued employment of these people would deprive Bhutanese citizens of jobs. As there were many non-Bhutanese ethnic Nepalese still employed in government service, the people requested the National Assembly to look into the matter so that all such persons could be terminated from service, said the Chimi from Mongar.

The Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission said that as all the members were aware, when planned development was started in 1961 with the launching of the First Five-Year Plan, a large number of qualified personnel had to be recruited from outside the country to manage the development programmes as there were only a few educated Bhutanese then. An even larger number of labourers had to be imported to implement the various programmes and projects. These labourers were recruited through a system known among the Nepalese labourers as the Baidar system. Under this system, which is prevalent even today, the Baidars (labour contractors) would take labour contracts and recruit large numbers of labourers from Nepal and bring them to Bhutan to execute the various development works.

The Secretary agreed with the people's representatives that there were indeed many risks and disadvantages in importing non-national labourers of Nepalese origin. These people had no intentions of returning to their country once they were in Bhutan. Moreover, it was very difficult to distinguish between a Nepalese from Nepal and the Lhotshampas of southern Bhutan as ethnically they were the same. As a result, it was

very difficult to detect the illegal infiltration of these labourers into Lhotshampa villages where large numbers of them had settled down and married members of the local population. He said that the importing of Nepalese labourers had definitely contributed to the present ngolop problem in southern Bhutan.

The Secretary said that as more and more students were completing their education and training every year, and the continued employment of non-nationals might deprive the educated Bhutanese youth of jobs, His Majesty the King had issued repeated commands that priority and preference must be given to the educated Bhutanese for all jobs available. Accordingly, it was the policy of the RCSC to provide employment to as many Bhutanese as possible both in government service and in the private sector. He informed the members that although many of the 2,158 non-nationals in the civil service today were of Nepalese origin, the Royal Government did not have any plans to revise its non-discriminatory employment policy and give employment on the basis of ethnicity or dismiss non-nationals civil servants of Nepalese ethnicity unless their contracts expired or they wished to resign. The Secretary also informed the Assembly that in order to develop the country's own human resources, a budget of Nu.1,738 million had been allotted for the Education Department and Nu.2,080 million for the RCSC's human resource development programmes during the Seventh Plan.

The Secretary informed the Assembly that His Majesty the King had expressed disappointment, when he met the business community on 31st May and 1st June, 1993, at the low number of Bhutanese nationals employed by the private sector. His Majesty commanded that the private sector should, henceforth, employ more Bhutanese nationals as many capable and qualified Bhutanese were graduating from schools, colleges and training institutes every year. The RCSC Secretary expressed his hope that the private sector would respond positively and employ more Bhutanese in their organizations. As for the RCSC, he said that, henceforth, the Commission would recruit and approve recruitment of non-nationals only in those areas where Bhutanese nationals were not available because of qualification or experience, and in such cases also, the recruiting would be done only after thorough screening and careful scrutiny.

The people's representatives emphasized that every effort should be made to reduce and stop the employment of non-nationals of Nepalese origin as soon as possible. They said that although there was a directive from His Majesty the King to employ as many Bhutanese nationals as possible in both government service and in the private sector,

seeing the large number of non-nationals of Nepalese origin employed in the industries, projects and the private sector, it appeared that the government policy was being ignored. Many parties seemed to be repeatedly renewing the work permits of these non-nationals and retaining them in the country for as long as they could. The Chimis pointed out that it was very important for the officials of the concerned government departments to thoroughly investigate such matters and deal with it in strict accordance to the policies of the government and the existing rules and regulations.

The Home Minister said that regarding the employment of non-nationals by the government and the private sector, there were clear cut rules and regulations that had been passed by the National Assembly. There would be no problem if everyone followed these rules and regulations. As there was a shortage of skilled workers in the country, it was necessary to recruit them from outside. Keeping in mind the security of the country, the need for importing non-national workers was carefully assessed and all necessary verifications were carried out before any recruitment of non-national workers was approved. Detailed information was called regarding the jobs for which the workers were required. Permits were issued for 12 months only. On the expiry of the permits, the workers had to be repatriated. However, the Home Minister expressed his concern that despite the efforts made by the Home Ministry and the Department of Immigration and Census, members of the private sector may be undermining the rules and regulations on labour import. He requested all government officials and the people to report to their Dzongkhags if they found any outside workers who were working illegally. He said that the government and the people must always work together to strengthen the security of the country.

Some of the people's representatives said that the reason for the present problem in the country was due to the employment of many non-national Nepalese by the government and the private sector. They suggested that, henceforth, if there was a need to employ any non-nationals, only people from Bhutan's close and friendly neighbour, India should be recruited while anyone of Nepalese origin should be avoided totally.

After a prolonged debate, His Majesty the King intervened and said that the policy for reducing the employment of non-national labourers already existed. Although the proposal by the members to discontinue employing non-nationals had its merits, according to the Home Ministry there were over 30,000 non-national labourers but there was still a shortage of manpower to implement development programmes and

projects. If a decision was taken to completely stop the import of non-national labourers as proposed, it would not be possible to implement the development programmes to the satisfaction of both the people and the government, and successfully complete the Seventh Plan. His Majesty said that during the Seventh Plan there were many important projects to be taken up such as power projects, road construction and maintenance, mining, establishment of industries etc. in different parts of the country. A lot of manpower would be required to implement these projects. His Majesty, therefore, suggested that the Home Ministry and the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the concerned departments, keeping in mind the need to implement the Seventh Plan successfully and also reduce the number of non-national labourers in the interest of national security, should together discuss and formulate a labour policy and submit it for approval to the 73rd Session of the National Assembly.

The National Assembly resolved that as suggested by His Majesty the King, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Home Ministry and the concerned departments shall discuss and formulate a labour policy, which while ensuring the smooth implementation of the Seventh Plan will at the same time reduce the importing of non-national labourers. The policy should be put up to the Lhengyel Shungtshog and after being approved should be distributed to all the Dzongkhags for the members of the Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs and the Gewog Yargye Tshogchungs to study and give their views. It should then be implemented immediately so that the work on important projects can be started without delay. If any serious problems arise regarding the policy, the matter will be discussed and finalised during the 73rd Session of the National Assembly.

XVI. ALLOTMENT OF LAND IN SOUTHERN BHUTAN TO THE LANDLESS PEOPLE

The people's representatives of 56 Gewogs from Tashigang, Bumthang, Samdrupongkhar, Wangdiphodrang, Samchi, Pemagatshel, Mongar, Paro, Shemgang, Sarbhang and Punakha Dzongkhags submitted 13 points calling for the allotment of land in southern Bhutan to landless people in the country.

The Chimis recalled that requests for land to be allotted to landless people had been made during previous sessions of the National Assembly also. Although more than 30 years had passed since the beginning of planned development, the

important goal of self-reliance had not been achieved. This was mainly due to the poor quality of soil and the rugged and inhospitable terrain in the mountainous northern Dzongkhags which rendered agricultural activity very unproductive, and also because there were many landless households in these Dzongkhags. Many families were totally dependent on Tseri Cultivation (slash and burn shifting cultivation). The Chimis said that if the landless people were given land and resettled in the south it would not only benefit them greatly but also promote food self-sufficiency for the country. Until now the tendency of the people in the south had always been to sell all their agricultural and animal husbandry produce across the border and to buy the produce they needed from outside. This trend would be reversed if the landless people in the north were re-settled on vacant land in the south. Agricultural and animal husbandry produce from the south would be sold to people in the north while produces from the north would be sold to the people in the south, thus promoting the national policy of self-reliance.

The people's representatives of Samchi Dzongkhag and Dalim, Bakuli, Samrang and Hastinapur Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar and Kalikhola Dungkhag in Sarbhang Dzongkhag said that the issuing of land in the south to landless people from the north had been discussed in previous sessions of the National Assembly also. They requested for re-settlement programmes in areas where there were vacant land such as Sibsoo, Nainital, Gumauney and Buka Tading in Samchi, and Dalim, Bakuli and Hastinapur in Samdrupjongkar with a view to enhance the security of the Lhotshampa people in these areas. This would prevent the vacant land in the south from turning into jungle, and the presence of more neighbours would be very beneficial for overall security against ngolop attacks.

The Home Minister observed that although the requests for the re-settlement of landless people had been discussed during the 71st Session of the National Assembly, the people were making the request this year again. As increased agricultural production would go a long way in promoting the policy of national self-reliance, it was first of all very important for everyone to look after and make optimum use of every small piece of land in his or her possession. He said that the Home Ministry was still receiving the lists of landless people and those who were dependent on Tseri cultivation. Some of these lists had been sent back to the Dzongkhags for verification. He also informed the Assembly that the Department of Survey and Land Records had not completed its nationwide survey of suitable

land for resettlement of landless people. Based on the report of the Survey Department, other departments would be drawing up their reports on the feasibility of establishing essential service facilities such as health centres, agriculture and animal husbandry service centres, schools and roads which were necessary to ensure the success of any resettlement programme. Proper plans and budget estimates had to be drawn up for all these works. Once the feasibility reports and individual programmes drawn up by the concerned ministries and departments were completed, the final plans would be drawn up for the resettlement of the landless people. The guidelines for drawing up these plans was already provided by the commands of His Majesty the King, the policy laid down by the Royal Government and the resolutions of the National Assembly which all emphasised that resettlement of landless people was the only effective way of taking care of the Kidug (alleviation of difficulties and problems) of landless people.

The Planning Minister submitted that first priority should be given to the resettlement of people who were dependent on Tseri cultivation. This is extremely important for the preservation of our environment, he said. Bhutan being a mountainous country with limited flat and arable land, many people had been resorting to Tseri cultivation to eke out a living. In this slash and burn system of cultivation, converting one acre of Tseri into cultivable land would often result in 7 to 8 acres of nearby forest being burnt down. The heavy toll inflicted on our forests by Tseri cultivation is well known to all of us, said the Planning Minister. Taking timely steps to do away with Tseri cultivation has become very essential for protecting our environment and preserving our rich and diverse flora and fauna, he emphasised.

The Planning Minister also pointed out that people practising Tseri cultivation had derived very minimal benefits from the last thirty years of planned development. The main reason for this was that the Tseri cultivators moved from place to place in remote and rugged terrain looking for new Tseri land to slash and burn. As a result it was never feasible for the government to provide them with cost effective service facilities and infrastructure. The only solution to stopping Tseri cultivation and also ensuring a better livelihood for these families was to resettle them in areas where there was productive land and where essential service facilities could be provided for them. This would not only be good for the

socio-economic benefit of these poor families but would also help to save our environment, he said.

The Planning Minister also informed the Assembly that an Environmental Trust Fund had been established for the protection of the environment in Bhutan. Specific environmental activities and programmes had been prepared in the last two years which would be funded from the proceeds of the Trust Fund. The interest accrued from the Fund of US \$ 20 million would be utilised for implementing various activities and programmes related to environmental conservation. Although only US \$ 12 million had been mobilised till date, the Fund had been operationalised. As a very important step in protecting Bhutan's fragile mountain ecosystem, the Planning Minister requested the National Assembly to resolve that first priority should be given to the re-settlement of Tseri cultivators in any re-settlement programme taken up by the government.

Government officials and the people's representatives observed that the people practicing Tseri cultivation were all landless people who had no other means of earning a livelihood. The returns from their slash and burn cultivation were very meagre, and very often the crops they sowed would be washed away by floods or destroyed by wild animals. As these families faced a hard life with barely enough food produced to feed themselves and their families, they had put in applications for resettlement. The members said that these people should be re-settled as soon as possible wherever suitable land could be found.

Several people's representatives said that those who were landless or had less than two acres of land and were tilling other people's land as sharecroppers should also be resettled in the south.

Other Chimis said that there were many people in high altitude areas who had little or no land, and many others who had to depend on Pangshi (high altitude dry land). All their names had been submitted to the government for land Kidug. The Chimis said that these people also should be granted land on any vacant land in the south.

His Majesty the King informed the Assembly that, over the years, thousands of landless people, including many Lhotshampas, had been granted land in all parts of the country and not just in southern Bhutan. Applicants for land Kidug

continued to be granted land from wherever there was suitable land. The reports received by the Home Ministry from the 20 Dzongkhags revealed that there were 25,126 households who were fully dependent on Tseri cultivation and were slashing and burning over 2,00,000 acres of Tseri and forest land to eke out a hand to mouth living. There were 2,156 households that had no land at all and 16,041 households that had less than two acres of land. In all, a total of 43,323 households were in acute need of productive agricultural land. However, it was not necessary that the allotment of the land to these people had to be from southern Bhutan alone. It should be all right if the government, after finding out the availability of arable and productive land in all the Dzongkhags, allotted land to these families from wherever it was available.

His Majesty explained to the representatives that it would neither be possible nor practical for the government to allot adequate land at one time to all the families that were dependent on Tseri cultivation as well as to all landless families and those households that had less than two acres of land. If that had to be done, even if the entire Seventh Plan Agriculture budget of Nu.1,041 million was spent on providing necessary service facilities for these families it would not be enough to bring any meaningful benefit to them. His Majesty told the members that the resettlement of these families would have to be carried out in phases. He said that adequate land should first be allotted to Tseri cultivators and landless families after the Agriculture Department had assessed the productivity of the land and the feasibility of establishing essential service centres in the areas identified for resettling these families. Emphasizing the importance of preventing environmental damage and the need to provide a good livelihood to Tseri cultivators and landless families, His Majesty suggested that the National Assembly should resolve that first priority should be given to the resettlement of Tseri cultivators and landless families and that Tseri cultivation should be banned by the end of the Seventh Plan.

The National Assembly resolved that the Home Ministry should coordinate with the concerned departments and identify suitable areas throughout the country for resettling all Tseri cultivators and landless families within the Seventh Plan period. The resettlement areas must have fertile and productive land with adequate water supply, and it should be feasible to establish all basic service facilities in all these areas. Taking into account the availability of funds and the

need to ensure that proper feasibility studies are done, the resettlement of these families must be carried out as soon as possible within the Seventh Plan. The Assembly also decided that Tseri cultivation must be stopped completely by the end of the Seventh Five-Year Plan, and accordingly passed a resolution banning Tseri cultivation in Bhutan by the end of the Seventh Plan in the interest of the people and the preservation and protection of the environment. The Assembly directed all concerned to ensure the speedy and faithful implementation of these two resolutions.

XVII. HIS MAJESTY THE KING'S SECURITY

The people's representatives of Mongar and Punakha submitted a request from the people in their Dzongkhags that security for His Majesty the King and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck must be strengthened. They pointed out that the main objective of the ngolops was to do away with Bhutan's cherished institution of hereditary monarchy and bring the Kingdom under Nepali rule. The Chimis said that His Majesty was like a parent and a precious gem to the people as well as the guardian of the country's security. They requested His Majesty not to make personal visits to southern Bhutan because of the high security risk. Even if it was necessary to visit the south to look after the welfare of the people, they recommended that ministers and senior officials should be sent as representatives of His Majesty. Citing the example of human bombs being used to assassinate two leaders in two neighbouring countries, the Chimis said that it could not be ruled out that the ngolops driven by their over-riding desire for power may not resort to similar means. The Chimis said that His Majesty's frequent visits to the south were a cause of deep concern to the people.

Similarly the representative of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry pointed out that the people of Bhutan could not afford to have anything untoward happen to His Majesty the King. We would then be like children without a father to guide them, he said. Moreover, without the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty the King it would not be possible to find a lasting solution to the ngolop problem. Although Bhutan had enjoyed peace and stability for many years, the country would be plunged into turmoil and the people would face great suffering without His Majesty to guide the nation. He said that since the security

of His Majesty was of such great concern and consequence to the whole nation, it was the earnest request of the people that His Majesty refrain from making personal visits to southern Bhutan. The situation and the needs of the people in southern Bhutan could be adequately looked into from the capital, Thimphu. If there were any necessity for personal visits, the concerned senior officials of the government should be sent.

Many people's representatives said that while they understood why His Majesty had been visiting southern Bhutan so frequently, particularly since the responsibility of resolving the ngolop problem had been reposed in him, they were convinced it was no longer safe to do so. Although many Lhotshampas had been repeatedly pledging their loyalty, these pledges were made with words while their real intentions and self-interests remained hidden in their minds. There was every possibility that some of these people may try to harm His Majesty, and if anything untoward was to happen it would be like bringing darkness to the people of Bhutan in the middle of a bright day. Quoting an old saying, "life is dear in the wheel of life and the King is dear to his loyal subjects," the Chimis earnestly requested His Majesty the King to stop visiting the disturbed areas in southern Bhutan in view of the great security risk involved.

In response, the Ministers and the Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army said that the government ministries and departments and the armed forces were even more concerned than the people regarding His Majesty's security. However, the impact of one visit by His Majesty to the disturbed areas was far greater than several visits by a team of ministers and senior officials. As everyone was aware, by visiting southern Bhutan many times since the ngolop uprising in 1990, and looking into the difficulties and problems faced by the people, the Dzongkhag Administrations and the security forces, His Majesty the King had been personally responsible for stabilising the situation in southern Bhutan.

The Goongloen Gongma informed the members that while the Royal Body Guards (RBG), in particular, was responsible for the security of His Majesty the King, the RBA and the RBP also had great concern for His Majesty's security and had accordingly been rendering unfailing service in keeping with their roles. He assured the Assembly that the RBG would continue to shoulder its

responsibility of looking after His Majesty's security with complete dedication and loyalty.

The Royal Advisory Councillors noted that the people had raised their deep concerns over His Majesty's security in the previous sessions of the National Assembly, and thorough discussions had been held regarding the strengthening of His Majesty's security. They pointed out that despite the magnanimity and kindness of His Majesty the King, the people of southern Bhutan remained indifferent to the many Kidugs granted to them. Seeing the many acts of terrorism committed by the ngolops, attempts by them to harm His Majesty the King could not be ruled out. The responsibility for His Majesty's security should not be left to the RBG or the armed forces only but every loyal Bhutanese, from ministers and officials to the rest of the people, should be equally concerned and serve their King with extra effort and attention. Similarly, the Councillors requested His Majesty to give due attention and importance to his security.

The representatives of the Monk Body, government officials and the people's representatives took the floor one after the other to express their concern for His Majesty's security. The Dratshang representative said that the flourishing of the Dharma in Bhutan was possible because of the peace and stability resulting from the wise leadership provided by His Majesty the King. However, it was a reality in today's world that there were many people who were prone to negative thoughts and driven to negative deeds. The possibility of the ngolops trying to harm His Majesty could, therefore, never be taken lightly. The members pointed out that it would be meaningless for the ministers and officials of the government and the people to stand as the outer protection wall of the country if there was to be no wish fulfilling gem inside to guide and fulfil the aspirations of the Bhutanese nation. As the saying "precautions are necessary to nullify the risk," the best precaution would be to send ministers and senior officials as representatives of His Majesty the King to visit southern Bhutan whenever such visits may be necessary. If there were situations when His Majesty's presence became absolutely necessary, full and adequate security measures must be taken by all concerned.

Other members pointed out that the security risk to His Majesty the King was not just in southern Bhutan only. While the intentions of the ngolops did not require

any forecasting, where and when they might try to fulfil their evil intentions could not be predicted. Therefore, the security of His Majesty the King must be strengthened in Thimphu as well as during His Majesty's visits to other places in Bhutan or outside the country.

The National Assembly expressed its appreciation to the RBG and the armed forces for taking full responsibility in looking after His Majesty the King's security, and reminded them to discharge this responsibility with even greater dedication and commitment. The security of His Majesty the King must be fully ensured as he was like the sun and the moon shared by all the people, and also the symbol and source of their unity and strength. As all the hopes, aspirations and confidence of the people were reposed in His Majesty the King, the National Assembly requested His Majesty to reduce the number of his visits to the disturbed areas in the south where there was high security risk. All government officials and the people must extend their full cooperation and support to the security personnel who in turn must always ensure that complete and reliable security arrangements are made for His Majesty the King.

The National Assembly resolved that the over-all security arrangement for His Majesty the King must be stepped up and strengthened. All necessary security facilities and equipment must be procured and proper training provided to all the security personnel to ensure that effective security is provided to His Majesty at all times.

XVIII. EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION FOR RE-OPENING OF SERVICE FACILITIES

The people's representative of Dalim, Bakuli and Samrang Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag reported that since the ngolop uprising in 1990, the anti-nationals had disrupted development activities in the south and destroyed many service facilities like schools, BHUs, bridges and offices which had been built for the benefit of the Lhotshampa people. However, the government had continued to look after the welfare of the people by strengthening security and re-opening schools and BHUs. He said that the people expressed their deep appreciation to the government for looking after their welfare.

Similarly, the people's representative of Kikothang Gewog in Chirang Dzongkhag said that despite the ngolop and terrorist activities in southern Bhutan

which had disrupted development activities, the government had not discriminated against the Lhotshampas. In fact, the government had re-opened schools and service centres which were closed down due to the threat and security risks caused by the ngolops. Training courses had been conducted for the people on Water Supply and Sanitation and Village Health Education which would help them immensely. The government officials and staff and the school teachers assigned to the southern Dzongkhags had all been working hard despite the danger to their lives from terrorists. He said that the people wished to express their deep gratitude to the government for looking after their welfare, and to the officials and civil servants in their Dzongkhag for their dedicated work.

Likewise, the people's representative of Hastinapur Gewog in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag said that in spite of the continuing anti-national activities, the government had resumed development activities and opened up service facilities. The construction of a national highway from Bhangtar to Daifam had been approved by the government. Security in the Dzongkhag had been strengthened for the people's benefit. And to prevent malaria, DDT spraying had been resumed which could not be done earlier because of security risks to the health workers. The people wished to express their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King and the government for resuming development activities and for looking after their welfare, said the Chimi.

The Minister of Social Services expressed his happiness that the Lhotshampa people were grateful for the resumption of development activities and the opening of service facilities that had been destroyed or damaged by the ngolops. He said that the government officials and staff serving in the south at great risk to their lives would also be happy to learn that their dedication and hard work were being appreciated. As everyone was aware, the main objective of the ngolops in destroying the schools, health and agriculture service centres, roads, bridges and drinking water facilities that had been established for the benefit of the people at great cost by the government was to bring development activities to a halt and bring hardship and suffering to the Lhotshampa people, and thereby create discontent and instability in the country. His Majesty the King, out of his concern for the people and his wish to ensure balanced development in the country, had commanded the ministries and departments to spare no efforts in resuming development activities and to open as many service facilities as possible,

Accordingly, service facilities had been opened and development activities and training programmes were being implemented. The Minister reminded the Lhotshampa Chimis that while he fully appreciated their expressions of gratitude for the resumption of development activities and the opening of service facilities, it was far more important for them to work hard to ensure the success of these activities and to take full responsibility for the maintenance and protection of these facilities than to merely express words of gratitude.

The Planning Minister said that although the process of planned development in Bhutan began only three decades ago, tremendous progress had been made within that period. Essential service facilities such as motor roads, schools, hospitals and agriculture and animal husbandry service centres had been established throughout the country. Progress had also been made in the development of trade and industries. With the help of friendly donor countries and good utilization of the assistance received, Bhutan had achieved a level of development that many countries had taken centuries to reach. He informed the members that the Royal Government had to meet huge costs from its own resources to maintain the service facilities that had been established. For instance, the Education Department would be spending an average of Nu.91 million every year during the Seventh Plan to maintain and run the existing schools and educational institutes. Similarly, the Health Department would be spending Nu.90 million every year for running its services and providing free medical services to the people. The Department of Roads would have to spend about Nu.139 million a year to maintain and improve the existing network of roads. Apart from other establishment costs, the Agriculture Department would have to repair about 508 kilometers of irrigation canals and drinking water supply lines every year out of the total of 1,500 kilometers of irrigation canals and drinking water supply lines established by the Department in the rural areas.

While emphasizing the importance of maintaining and protecting the development and service facilities that had been established at great cost for the benefit of the people, the Planning Minister pointed out that it would be impossible for the government to deploy security personnel throughout southern Bhutan for the protection of these facilities. Nor would it be possible to implement development activities under such conditions. He said that it was necessary for the people to ensure the safety of the service facilities and contribute towards their proper maintenance. He reminded them that during the

Dzongkhag meetings on the Seventh Plan programmes, His Majesty the King had told the DYT and GYT members that the people must take the responsibility of protecting the development and service facilities established in their Dzongkhags and also contribute to their maintenance. If this could not be done, then it would be very difficult to fulfil the national goal of self-reliance. The Planning Minister, therefore, called on the Lhotshampa people to ensure the security of the service facilities and development infrastructure in their Dzongkhags. He said it was very important for the government and the people to work together closely to ensure the success of all development programmes and activities.

The National Assembly recorded the votes of thanks expressed by the Lhotshampa Chimis on behalf of the Lhotshampa people for the resumption of development activities and the opening of service facilities that had been destroyed or damaged by the ngolops. While appreciating the vote of thanks, the Assembly noted that actions were more important than words and called upon the Lhotshampa people to serve the country with loyalty and dedication.

XIX. EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION AND PLEDGES OF SUPPORT

The people's representatives of 62 Gewogs from Dagana, Tashigang, Pemagatshel, Samdrupjongkhar, Lhuntsi, Samchi, Shemgang, Bumthang, Gasa, Paro, Haa and Punakha Dzongkhags expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the people for His Majesty's wise and farsighted leadership and pledged their total support for the Tsa-Wa-Sum and their unfailing commitment to ensuring the well being and security of the country.

The Chimis pointed out that Bhutan had remained a sovereign, independent country throughout the centuries, and over the past three decades had been achieving rapid progress in socio-economic development. The ngolop uprising in southern Bhutan in 1990, however, disrupted this progress and created a serious problem that threatened the security of the country. Almost three years had passed since the ngolop uprising in southern Bhutan, and throughout this period, His Majesty the King had adopted the right policies and taken the best actions possible to resolve the problem. It was due to the wise and benevolent leadership of His Majesty the King that despite the ngolop problem, the Bhutanese people were still able to live happily in the country like their forefathers. The people

expressed their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King for his wise and benevolent leadership.

The Chimis recalled that the National Assembly had reposed the full responsibility of resolving the ngolop problem in His Majesty the King during the previous session. The people had extended their full support to His Majesty in this regard and they deeply appreciated the actions and policies taken by His Majesty towards resolving the ngolop problem. The people would be happy with whatever policies and decisions His Majesty adopted to remove the ngolop problem and ensure the security of the nation. They pledged their abiding loyalty and total support to His Majesty the King and expressed their readiness to even sacrifice their lives to serve and protect the Tsa-Wa-Sum.

The people's representative of Samchi Dzongkhag reported that the people of Samchi once again pledged their loyalty and dedication to His Majesty the King and the country in line with the written Genja submitted to the 71st Session of the National Assembly. He said that as a result of His Majesty's frequent visits to the southern Dzongkhags to look into the welfare of the people and to give them an opportunity to approach him on any problems faced by them, the situation in the south had been stabilized to a great extent. He expressed the hope that the traditional peace and tranquillity of the country would soon be restored.

Many people's representatives pointed out that at a time when the Bhutanese people were enjoying peace and happiness, and when Bhutan was making tremendous progress under the far-sighted leadership of His Majesty the King and the nation was building on the legacy of a sovereign, independent country handed down by past generations, the ngolops in southern Bhutan had tried to overthrow the established system of government and subvert the country. However, due to the blessings of the Guardian Deities and the farsighted leadership of His Majesty the King, the ngolops had not been able to harm the country, and there had been no setback to the overall process of development and progress. Expressing their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King, the Chimis pledged their total support to all the policies and decisions taken by His Majesty towards resolving the ngolop problem. They said that it was the cherished wish and desire of the people to ensure that the Palden Drukpa would flourish and endure for ages to come.

The Chief Operations Officer said that like the Chimis, the security forces also were deeply grateful to His Majesty the King for the farsighted and dedicated leadership provided by His Majesty towards resolving the ngolop problem. Due to His Majesty's personal efforts, the situation in southern Bhutan had improved greatly. He said that the security forces had been able to successfully discharge their duty of protecting the security of the southern Dzongkhags because of the inspiration and guidance provided by His Majesty during his visits to the disturbed areas. The security forces had been adhering very strictly to His Majesty's commands and discharging their duty with dedication and discipline. He expressed his appreciation for the strong support and commitment pledged by the people towards resolving the ngolop problem and their willingness to even lay down their lives for the Tsa-Wa-Sum if necessary. This was a source of great encouragement and pride to the security forces, he said. It was of the utmost importance for everyone, from the Monastic Bodies and government officials to the people, to be fully united in their loyalty and dedication to the country, the Goongloen Gongma said. As for the armed forces, the Goongloen Gongma pledged that they would fulfil their responsibility of ensuring the security of the southern Dzongkhags with total loyalty and dedication.

The Home Minister also pointed out that the situation in southern Bhutan had improved because of the wise and farsighted leadership of His Majesty the King and his frequent visits to the disturbed areas despite the high security risk. He expressed his appreciation to the Chimis for re-affirming their pledges of loyalty and support and their readiness to even sacrifice their lives for the security and well-being of the country. He said that His Majesty had been working constantly to find a lasting solution to the ngolop problem in keeping with his pledge in the previous sessions of the National Assembly. The civil servants and the security forces also had all been carrying out their responsibilities with great dedication and commitment and in faithful accordance with His Majesty the King's commands and guidance. The Home Minister said that he would like to pledge on their behalf, their continued dedication and commitment to discharge their responsibilities in full accordance with His Majesty the King's policies and commands.

The Home Minister also expressed his appreciation for the pledges of loyalty and support reiterated by the Lhotshampa Chimis. Although many Lhotshampas had

emigrated after a Genja of loyalty and support had been submitted by them to the 71st Session of the National Assembly, the loyal Lhotshampas who had remained in the country need not be ashamed on their account. What was most important was for all loyal citizens to join hands together and serve the Tsa-Wa-Sum with complete faith, trust and loyalty. It would then be possible to remove the ngolop problem and ensure the peace, security and well being of the country. We must all work together to strengthen the legacy passed down to us by our forefathers and ensure that it is passed on intact and secure to our future generations, said the Home Minister.

The people's representatives expressed their deep appreciation to the government officials and the security forces for their pledges to serve the country with loyalty and dedication. On behalf of the people, they also reiterated their pledges of loyalty and support to His Majesty the King and the Tsa-Wa-Sum. The Chimis also expressed their happiness at the complete convergence of thought among the members of the Assembly and the unanimity and conviction behind the pledges of loyalty and dedication from the Dratshang, government officials, security forces and the people towards the Tsa-Wa-Sum. This was the highest form of Tendril (auspicious energy) in removing the ngolop problem and ensuring the security and well-being of the country.

The Speaker noted that although Bhutan was a small country, it stood out as a nation that was strongly united by the bond of complete trust and faith between the King, government and the people. He concluded the discussion by calling upon the Dratshang, government officials, security forces and the people to faithfully honour their pledges and strive together with dedication and loyalty to ensure both the present and future well being and security of the country.

XX. PLEDGE TO UPHOLD HEREDITARY MONARCHY

The people's representatives of Decheling, Norbugang and Orong Gewogs in Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag submitted that when the resolutions of the 71st Session of the National Assembly were made known to the people last year, they were deeply saddened and dismayed to learn that His Majesty the King had not accepted the new Genja proposed by the people to strengthen and re-affirm the Genja submitted by the people of Bhutan when hereditary monarchy was first

established in Bhutan. They said that the people of Decheling and Norbugang once again pledged their total loyalty and support to uphold the system of hereditary monarchy which was deeply cherished by the Bhutanese people.

Many Chimis pointed out that the institution of hereditary monarchy was cherished and valued by the Bhutanese people because it had brought peace, stability and progress to the country. Although Bhutan had never fallen under foreign rule and had always remained a sovereign, independent country, the people suffered from constant internal strife until Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck was elected by the Dratshang, Penlops and the people as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan and enthroned at Punakha in 1907. Under the wise and enlightened leadership of Bhutan's successive monarchs, the country and the people enjoyed peace, progress and happiness. This peace and progress was disrupted by the Lhotshampa uprising in 1990.

The Chimis pointed out that the Lhotshampas had first come from Nepal to the foothills of southern Bhutan as Tangyas or forest labourers in the early part of the 20th century. They were later allowed to stay as tenant farmers on the land from which the forest had been extracted. The government not only gave them citizenship in 1958 but extended far greater Kidugs and development facilities to them than to the original citizens of Bhutan. They were provided with land, and given education, trainings, jobs and important posts. Instead of being grateful for the many benefits they had received, the Lhotshampas had turned against the Tsa-Wa-Sum. The Chimis said that the people could not bring themselves to forgive such ingratitude and treachery, particularly when the main objective of these ngolops was to overthrow the cherished institution of hereditary monarchy and turn Bhutan into a Nepali dominated state. To overcome the threat from these ngolops it was extremely important to strengthen the institution of hereditary monarchy. They pointed out that monarchy was the symbol of Bhutan's identity and the source of its strength and unity as a Bhutanese nation. For the Bhutanese people there could be no country without the monarchy and the people were fully united in their loyalty, dedication and support for this cherished institution. The Chimis proposed that the representatives of the Dratshang, government officials and the people's representatives should, with one mind and one thought, submit a

Genja to re-inforce the Genja submitted in 1907 by the founding fathers of the cherished system of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan.

The Home Minister expressed his appreciation for the loyalty and love displayed by the people for His Majesty the King and the institution of hereditary monarchy. He said that in view of the many false allegations made by the ngolops against the Royal Government, it would be very useful to let the rest of the world know the closeness of the bond of trust, faith and affection between the Bhutanese people and their King, and the deep love and attachment the people had for the institution of monarchy in Bhutan. As everyone was aware, it was the objective of the ngolops to overthrow this cherished institution and introduce a multi-party system to enable them to turn Bhutan into a Nepali dominated state. The old saying, “without monarchy there will be anarchy,” was very relevant in this regard, said the Home Minister. He said it was gratifying to note the keen desire of the Chimis to submit a Genja of loyalty and support to strengthen the institution of monarchy in Bhutan.

Many Chimis took the floor to express their support for the submission of a new Genja to reinforce the 1907 Genja. They said that it was due to the institution of monarchy that Bhutan had enjoyed generations of peace and tranquility, and was well on the way to progress and prosperity. The Chimis reported that the people had been very sad and disappointed when they learnt that His Majesty had not accepted the Genja which the people had wanted to submit during the 71st Session of the National Assembly. The Chimis all insisted that during the 72nd Session of the National Assembly, the members must be given the opportunity to submit a Genja re-affirming the unwavering loyalty and dedication of the people to His Majesty the King and their desire and determination to ensure that the cherished system of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan would flourish and endure for all time to come.

The Speaker intervened and reminded the members that His Majesty the King was fully aware of the love, dedication and loyalty the people had for their King and the institution of hereditary monarchy, and that His Majesty also fully reciprocated these feelings towards the people. The relationship between the King and the people was like the bond of love, faith and trust between father and children. The Speaker reminded the members that during the 71st Session, His

Majesty the King had pointed out that since the bond between the people and the King was pure and strong it was not necessary to formalise it with a Genja. In respect of His Majesty's wishes, the Speaker concluded the deliberations by stating that there was no need to continue discussions on the proposal to submit a Genja of loyalty and support by the people as it had been thoroughly discussed during the 71st Session.

XXI. BHUTAN-NEPAL TALKS ON THE NGOLOP PROBLEM

The people's representative of Lhuntsi Dzongkhag called the attention of the Assembly to the talks between His Majesty the King and the Prime Minister of Nepal during the SAARC Summit in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Although His Majesty had proposed the establishment of a Joint Committee to identify the different categories of people in the refugee camps in Nepal, Prime Minister Koirala had rejected it and instead insisted on sending all the people in the refugee camps to Bhutan without even identifying them. It was quite obvious from this attitude that the intention was to convert Bhutan into a Nepal dominated state. It was unfortunate that Bhutan-Nepal relations were deteriorating as the two neighbouring countries had otherwise been enjoying friendly relations since early times. In this regard, it was significant that Prime Minister Koirala was one of the leaders involved in the ngolop uprising in the south in the early 1950s. It seemed that he was also involved in the present ngolop uprising in southern Bhutan, said the Chimi.

The people's representative of Khilpa and Lajab Gewogs in Dagana Dzongkhag also expressed displeasure over the attitude of the Nepalese Government on the ngolop issue. He said that His Majesty the King had proposed the identification of the different categories of people in the camps so as to find out whether they had been forcefully evicted from Bhutan, whether they had absconded after committing criminal offences, whether they had emigrated despite repeated appeals by the government not to leave the country, whether those who were claiming to be Bhutanese were actually Bhutanese or ethnic Nepalis from neighbouring areas, including even Nepal itself, or whether they were illegal residents who had left Bhutan and were claiming to be Bhutanese because they may have worked in Bhutan. Going by the way the Nepalese Prime Minister rejected His Majesty's proposal and the behaviour and attitude of the ngolops, it seems that they do not consider Bhutan to be a sovereign, independent country or that we also have laws, said the Chimi. However, Bhutan had not only remained a sovereign, independent

country throughout its history but was also a member of the United Nations, and the Kingdom had its own laws, culture and traditions like other sovereign countries. The Chimi reported that the people in his Gewog expressed their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King for his efforts to find a solution to the ngolop problem through dialogue with Nepal and the establishment of a Joint Committee to identify the different categories of people in the camps in Nepal.

One of the people's representative from Haa Dzongkhag said that the people of Haa recalled the Nepalese Prime Minister's admission in a radio interview that he had organised the ngolop uprising by ethnic Nepalese in the south in the early 1950s, and that he was giving full moral support to the present ngolop uprising by the Lhotshampas. The Chimi said that everyone was now aware that the objective of the ngolops in bringing as many ethnic Nepalese as possible to the camps in Nepal was to declare them as refugees in order to get assistance from the UNHCR and other organisations. A Joint Committee to identify the people in the camps was, indeed, very necessary as there simply could not be 1,00,000 refugees from Bhutan as claimed by the Nepalese, he said. Although the Lhotshampas had submitted a Genja of Allegiance to the Tsa-Wa-Sum during the 71st Session of the National Assembly, they had shown no hesitation in emigrating and leaving the country. The Chimis pointed out that there was no reason why there should even be any talk of allowing such people to return to the country.

Some of the people's representatives declared that Bhutan, as a land of Buddhist values, had remained a sovereign, independent country throughout the centuries because of the protection of the Guardian Deities, the blessings of Guru Rimpoche and Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the prayers of the Dratshang and the wise and farsighted leadership of its enlightened monarchs. The ngolop problem which had been going on for almost three years now was posing a serious threat to the security of the country. While pledging their full support to His Majesty the King and the Royal Government, the Chimis requested that the people be informed before hand of any talks held by the government at the bilateral or the international level.

The Home Minister submitted his report on the recently concluded Bhutan-Nepal talks held in Tashichhodzong. He said that a five member delegation led by Nepal's Home Minister had arrived in Thimphu on 15th July, 1993. They were granted a long audience by His Majesty the King on the following day. The official talks

between the delegations of the two countries led by their Home Ministers were held on 17th and 18th July, 1993 in a very friendly and cordial atmosphere. A Joint Communique which will form the basis for further deliberations on the issue of the people in the refugee camps in Nepal was signed by the two Home Ministers. The Joint Communique reproduced below was read out by the Secretary of the National Assembly at the request of the Home Minister.

“The Home Ministers of the Kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan met in Thimphu on July 17 and 18, 1993. His Excellency, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, the Home Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal and his delegation were accorded a warm welcome by Lyonpo Dago Tshering, the Bhutanese Home Minister who expressed the desire of the Royal Government to further strengthen the traditionally close and friendly relations between the peoples and governments of the two countries. He expressed his extreme happiness with the visit of the high level delegation from Nepal to hold discussions on the problem confronting the two countries at present. The Home Minister of Nepal and his delegation were received in audience by His Majesty the King at Tashichhodzong.

The Nepalese Home Minister conveyed his appreciation for the warm welcome and reciprocated his country's desire to strengthen the existing ties of friendship and cooperation. The talks were held in a warm and cordial atmosphere.

The two Ministers expressed their firm resolve and keen determination to bring about a speedy and durable solution to the problem of the people in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal. In this regard, both the ministers agreed to establish a ministerial Joint Committee comprising three persons from each side to resolve the problem. With a view to ensure that such a committee will be able to carry out its work effectively, the two Ministers agreed that this high level committee will fulfill the following mandate before undertaking any other activity :

- a) To determine the different categories of people claiming to have come from Bhutan in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal.
- b) To specify the positions of the two governments on each of these categories.

- c) To arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement on each of these categories, which will provide the basis for the resolution of the problem.

Both sides will communicate to each other the names of the members of the Joint Committee through the normal diplomatic channel. The Joint Committee shall begin its work as expeditiously as possible.

The first meeting of the Joint Committee will be held in Kathmandu as early as possible on mutually acceptable dates which will be decided through normal diplomatic channel.

The Home Ministers of Bhutan and Nepal reiterated the importance of close and friendly relations between the two countries and they expressed the conviction that the Joint Committee will find a durable solution to the problem which is causing great concern to both the countries.”

The Speaker expressed his appreciation for the successful outcome of the recently concluded Bhutan-Nepal talks on the problem of the people in the refugee camps in Nepal. He hoped that the talks would contribute towards clearing whatever doubts may have arisen between the peoples of the two neighbouring countries over this problem. As it was very important for all the National Assembly members to be fully aware of the details and outcome of the talks, the Speaker asked them to seek clarification on any aspect of the talks on which they had doubts or questions.

The people’s representatives said they were very happy that, in keeping with the traditionally close relations between Nepal and Bhutan, the talks led by the two Home Ministers on the current problem faced by the two countries had been concluded successfully. The representatives expressed their hope that further progress would also be made. At the same time, they cautioned against carelessness and complacency. Recalling the saying that, “losing one’s way will only delay the journey but making wrong plans and decisions will have much more disastrous consequences,” the representatives said that every effort must be made in the very beginning itself that no oversights or mistakes are committed in laying the groundwork for further dialogue between the two countries.

Other Chimis expressed concern that a Joint Committee was being established to prepare grounds for further talks on the question of repatriating ngolops who had left the country after disrupting its peace and tranquility and causing great suffering for the people. They said that when the Joint Committee started its work of identifying the different categories of people in the Nepal camps, it must first establish whether any of these people had been forcibly evicted from Bhutan or whether they had left after applying to emigrate. The Committee must also investigate and identify those who had held responsible posts in Bhutan and had left after stealing public funds and property. Although there was no extradition treaty between Bhutan and Nepal, the Committee must discuss and facilitate the extradition of those persons who had absconded with large amounts of stolen funds and property. Recalling a traditional saying that “if the parents work hard today their children will reap the benefits tomorrow,” the Chimis expressed their confidence that the government would always have the present interest as well as the future well-being and security of the country at heart. However, in view of the great importance of any talks related to the ngolop problem, the Chimis requested the government to consult the National Assembly before the commencement of any further talks. This would inspire greater confidence in the Assembly members and remove the doubts and concerns of the people.

The Minister of Trade and Industry said that it was important to keep certain points in mind while holding talks with Nepal. He pointed out that there was a vast difference between the slogans voiced by the ngolop leaders based in Nepal and the actual deeds carried out by them. As everyone was aware, the ngolops claimed to be working for the human rights of the Lhotshampa people, but were in actual fact responsible for inflicting untold sufferings on many innocent people through the terrorism they unleashed in southern Bhutan. They were also responsible for the destruction of many service facilities like schools and health centres established by the government for the benefit of the Lhotshampas. Their actions were purely self-motivated as was evident from the report of the ngolop leaders quarrelling and fighting among themselves over who should occupy what portfolio or post if they succeeded in returning to Bhutan with international support and overthrowing the Royal Government. Such behaviour clearly revealed that they were not at all interested in human rights but only in attaining political power for themselves through any means possible. They had absolutely no compunctions in inflicting sufferings on the people. Knowing that the objective of the ngolops was to

overthrow the Royal Government and take over political power it was very important for the loyal Bhutanese in Bhutan to always keep in mind the well-being and security of their country. Although the Bhutan-Nepal talks were very important, as far as the question of repatriation was concerned, the ngolops must be asked why they left Bhutan in the first place and what was their objective in leaving. This was a very important question to be kept in mind. At the same time, it was very important for the Bhutanese people to stand strongly behind Bhutan's cherished system of hereditary monarchy and uphold the Kingdom's rich traditional and cultural heritage. We must be prepared to sacrifice our lives if necessary to safeguard our cherished system and values, the Minister said. The aspirations and objectives of the Bhutanese in Bhutan and the aspirations and objectives of the ngolops were opposite and irreconcilable. No matter how the talks may be held, if these people were to come back they would always be a a process of identification was undertaken to identify those who had left the country after committing criminal and terrorist activities and those who had emigrated and left of their own free will, they saw no reason why these people should ever be allowed to come back to Bhutan.

His Majesty the King explained to the Chimis that the subject of the recently concluded Bhutan-Nepal talks was the identification of the people in the camps in Nepal. No discussions had been held on repatriating anyone. The Chimis need not have any misgivings as the understanding reached between the two governments was to first determine the different categories of people in the refugee camps in Nepal who were claiming to be Bhutanese refugees and to clarify the positions of the two governments on each of the categories, and then arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement on each of the categories. His Majesty assured the Chimis that if the government had to take any important decisions, it would be done so in consultation with the National Assembly members as laid down in the resolution passed during the 71st Session.

The people's representatives expressed their deep gratitude to His Majesty the King for explaining and clarifying the reasons and backgrounds for the establishment of a Joint Committee as agreed during the Bhutan-Nepal talks.

The National Assembly expressed the hope and expectation that the outcome of the recently concluded talks led by the Bhutanese and Nepalese Home Ministers would

contribute towards removing whatever doubts may have arisen between the peoples of the two countries on account of the ngolop problem. Expressing satisfaction on the talks, the National Assembly hoped that future talks would also be successful and contribute towards strengthening the traditionally close and friendly ties between Bhutan and Nepal. It was resolved that the government should keep in mind all the relevant resolutions of the past sessions of the National Assembly and act accordingly while holding further talks on the ngolop problem.

XXII. DISCUSSION AND ENACTMENT OF THE “RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE ROYAL ADVISORY COUNCIL.”

The Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council with 15 additional draft clauses were distributed to the National Assembly members on 8th July, 1993. During the commencement of discussions on this matter on 26th July, 1993, the Speaker reminded the members that amendments of laws and rules were necessary to meet the needs that arose with the changes in time. The Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council, 1989 enacted by the 68th Session of the National Assembly, while comprehensive then, did not adequately cover all aspects of the norms and procedures for the election of Councillors. This became apparent when one Royal Advisory Councillor elected during the 71st Session of the National Assembly had to be disqualified on discovering that he had resorted to improper means to secure his election.

The Speaker informed the members that His Majesty the King had issued a Kasho commanding the Speaker of the National Assembly to consult with the Royal Advisory Councillors and suitably update, revise and amend the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council enacted in 1989, and submit the Draft Amendments to the 72nd Session of the National Assembly. The Royal Advisory Council and the National Assembly Secretariat prepared additional clauses as Draft Amendments to these Rules and Regulations. These Draft Amendments were submitted to the Lhengyel Shungtshog which met three times to discuss and approve the Drafts for submission to the National Assembly. Accordingly, the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council along with the Draft Amendments had been submitted to the National Assembly for enactment. The Speaker told the members that the discussion should focus on the Draft Amendments. The Kasho issued by His Majesty the King emphasizing the need to

update the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council was also read out to the Assembly. The Speaker then began the discussions on each clause of the Draft Amendments of the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council.

Many of the people's representatives expressed the view that the system of electing Royal Advisory Councillors by secret ballot was alien to the Bhutanese psyche which was steeped in the high values and cherished traditions of the Buddhist way of life in Bhutan. The main drawback to the system of secret ballot was that it would encourage unethical trends such as attempts to secure votes through bribery, misuse of position and status, and self-motivated lobbying. They said that the traditional practice of Tagril (drawing lots) to decide the choice of candidates would be the best system in the Bhutanese context. Since the best candidates would already be elected at the Gewog and Dzongkhag levels, the choice of the final candidates should be decided in the National Assembly through the traditionally accepted system of Tagril.

Several government officials and Chimis supported this proposal. They said that the procedure of casting secret ballot could lead to the forming of different parties and lobby groups in the National Assembly itself. Although the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council were very specific and clear, election by secret ballot may not lead to the best candidate being elected due to some of the candidates and their lobby groups resorting to misuse of position or status, bribery or other behind the scene machinations to secure votes. They felt that it would be better if the candidates were elected through the Tagril system.

Several government officials and Chimis pointed out that the Royal Advisory Council was a very important body vested with the responsibility to maintain harmonious relations between the government and the people, and to advise His Majesty the King and the Royal Government on all matters of national importance and concern. The Councillors were also given the responsibility to bring to the notice of His Majesty the King and the National Assembly, the actions of any person, including His Majesty the King himself, if the actions were found to be harmful to the interest of the people and the country. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance that the best candidates in terms of experience, ability and integrity were elected as Royal Advisory Councillors. They pointed out that

the casting of secret ballot had been in existence from the day the Royal Advisory Council was established and the first Councillors were elected. The system of electing Royal Advisory Councillors by secret ballot should, therefore, be retained.

Intervening in the debate, the Speaker said that the august body of the National Assembly was established in 1953 by His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third Druk Gyalpo. Thereafter, in order to maintain and strengthen the present and future security and well-being of the country and to further involve the people in the decision making process through their views and advice on issues of national concern, His Majesty the third Druk Gyalpo established the Royal Advisory Council in 1965. In order to elect the most capable persons from among the people so that they would play an effective role in decision making at the highest level, the system of electing the Councillors through secret ballot was introduced. The Rules and Regulations for the Royal Advisory Council were improved and further strengthened by enacting various amendments during the 68th Session of the National Assembly in 1989. However, even with the rules and regulations expanded and strengthened, there have been some incidences of misuse of status and position and resorting to other improper means to secure votes at the Gewog, Dzongkhag and national levels, said the Speaker. The solution to this, however, was not to do away with election by secret ballot and to replace it with the Tagril system, particularly as the Tagril system, which though traditionally acceptable, would not meet the important requirement of electing the best candidate on the basis of merit. Leaving matters to chance in the National Assembly was not the way to fulfil the aspirations of the people who had elected the best candidates from their Dzongkhags to represent them in one of the highest official bodies in the country. It would be best to strengthen the Rules and Regulations by enacting the Draft Amendments and continue with the system of electing the Councillors by secret ballot, the Speaker said.

Speaking on behalf of the Royal Advisory Council, one of the Councillors pointed out that although the Tagril system would leave no room for bias, misuse of status or bribery in the election of candidates, its very nature of leaving matters to chance would increase the risk of the best candidates not being elected. Since the 15 clauses of the Draft Amendments, which had been framed to strengthen the existing Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council, 1989, were

additional clauses and all existing clauses were retained, the procedure for election through secret ballot which was part of the existing Rules and Regulations should also be retained.

A few Chimis said that the lower age limit of 30 years for eligibility to stand for election as a Councillor was too low. They also pointed out that an upper age limit was necessary to rule out the possibility of candidates who were infirm or of poor health being elected. Some Chimis expressed the view that government employees should not be eligible to stand for election as a Councillor. Since other members of the Assembly did not express any views on these two points, the discussions focussed on the Draft Amendments of the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council. After thoroughly discussing the Amendments one by one, the members expressed their satisfaction with the 15 additional clauses. The Chimis expressed their appreciation for the initiative taken by the Royal Government to strengthen the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council.

The National Assembly endorsed the Draft Amendments and formally adopted the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Advisory Council, 1993.

XXIII. DISCUSSION AND ENACTMENT OF THE 'RAPE ACT'

Addressing the Assembly during the discussions on the Draft Rape Act which had been distributed to the members on 8th July, 1993, the representative of the High Court explained that the Draft Act had been drawn up to meet the need for a set of comprehensive laws on this crime. As with everything else, the behaviour of people also underwent changes with the process of modernisation and the changes in time. Although rape was not a common crime in Bhutan, incidences of this crime had been taking place and could not be ignored. Apart from general incidences of rape, between 1969 and 1992, the Courts received 21 cases involving the rape of minor girls between the ages of 8 and 15. Out of these 21 cases, the charges were proven in 13 cases and the rapists were convicted of their crimes. In 8 cases, the charges were proven false and the plaintiffs were awarded punishment for false allegations and defamation under clause Na 1-1 of the Thrimshung Chhenpo.

The representative of the High Court said that although laws pertaining to rape were incorporated in Clauses Kha 8-9, Kha 8-10, Kha 8-11, Kha 8-12 and Kha 8-13 of the Marriage Act, these clauses could not adequately cover several important issues related to rape. Hence, on the command of His Majesty the King, the Draft Rape Act containing 16 clauses was framed by the High Court. These clauses were discussed and approved by the Lhengyel Shungtshog and duly submitted to the National Assembly for discussion and enactment.

The representative reminded the Assembly that Bhutan was a land of peace and tranquility because it was steeped in Buddhist values and traditions, and because it was a society based on the rule of law. As the saying went, “while people desire peace and harmony, it requires good laws to ensure a peaceful society,” he reminded the members that all problems in society arose when laws were inadequate. Quoting another saying, “if evil deeds are not punished then evil will spread like weeds left unchecked,” he said that the laws of a country must be reviewed and updated from time to time to ensure they are adequate to fulfil the needs of changing times. He requested the National Assembly to endorse the Draft Rape Act.

The Speaker sought the views of the members on each and every clause of the Draft Rape Act. Apart from a few general comments, none of the members expressed any reservations on adopting the Draft Rape Act.

The National Assembly duly approved and enacted the Rape Act, 1993 with effect from 1st August, 1993.

XXIV. DISCUSSION AND ENACTMENT OF THE “PLANT QUARANTINE ACT”

The Director General of the Department of Agriculture briefed the National Assembly on the Draft Plant Quarantine Act of Bhutan. He explained that plant quarantine measures were being implemented all over the world and that for Bhutan such measures were very important since 90 percent of the population was dependent on agriculture. The primary aim of the Plant Quarantine Act was to prevent the introduction of plant pests into Bhutan through the import of infected seed, seedlings and fertilizers. The Act was also aimed at controlling and eradicating the diseases and pests already in the country, and to facilitate the

import and export of disease-free plants and plant products to promote agricultural exports. He informed the Assembly that agricultural produce worth over Nu.300 million was exported in 1992 and the volume of agriculture export trade was increasing every year. It was, therefore, very important to ensure that disease-free agricultural produce were exported in order to secure and sustain potential markets. He informed the members that phytosanitary certificates required as per international norms for export of seed items such as potato and vegetable seeds could now be issued under the provisions of this Act.

The Director General said that the work on framing the Plant Quarantine Act had been started by the Department of Agriculture in 1986 with the help of international consultants. Subsequently, the High Court and all the concerned ministries and departments were consulted to ensure that the Act was in conformity with the Thrimshung Chhenpo and the rules and regulations of other government organisations. The plant quarantine acts of neighbouring countries with which Bhutan had trade relations were studied, and the International Plant Protection Convention (FAO) and the Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission were also consulted. The Draft Act was submitted to the Lhengyel Shungtshog which studied and endorsed the Draft for submission to the National Assembly.

The Director General said that the Ministry of Agriculture would be responsible for the enforcement of the Plant Quarantine Act. This responsibility would be discharged in close coordination with other concerned departments and organisations such as the Department of Revenue and Customs, Civil Aviation, and Post and Telegraph, and the concerned organisations and agencies of neighbouring countries with which Bhutan had close trade relations. Submitting that the Plant Quarantine Act of Bhutan would be of great benefit to the development of agriculture and the overall economy of the country, the Director General requested the National Assembly to approve the Draft Act.

Following the briefing by the Director General of the Department of Agriculture, the National Assembly went through the Draft Act clause by clause.

The Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission expressed the view that the penalty of Nu.5,000 and 6 months imprisonment for violations of the Plant Quarantine Act, as laid down in Chapter 8 of the Act, was very light in view of

the damages that could be caused by the introduction of plant diseases. He also said that it was not necessary to have a penalty clause for redress against assaults or bodily harm being inflicted on employees of the Ministry of Agriculture in the execution of the Act as such offences were covered by the Thrimshung Chhenpo.

In response, the Director General of Agriculture said that the Act had been prepared in consultation with the High Court and the penalties laid down in this Act would be in keeping with the Thrimshung Chhenpo. However, he agreed that there should be no differences or redundancies with rules and laws governing similar cases in other ministries and departments.

His Majesty the King explained to the Assembly that preventing the import of plant diseases and pests was very important for the country. For example if a potato or apple disease was imported, it would not only damage the entire crop in the country but would have an adverse effect on its economy. According to plant experts, many plant diseases could not be eradicated once they entered the country. His Majesty also expressed the view that the penalty of Nu.5,000 was inadequate in relation to the extent of damage that could be inflicted to the country by violations of the Plant Quarantine Act. He instructed the High Court and the Ministry of Agriculture to review the clause and increase the fine.

The National Assembly resolved that the Ministry of Agriculture and the High Court should finalise the increase of fine for violations of the Plant Quarantine Act. The penalties laid down in Chapter 8 of the Draft Act for assault or causing bodily harm to any duly authorised employee of the Ministry of Agriculture in the execution of this Act would be deleted as such offences were adequately covered by the Thrimshung Chhenpo.

The Plant Quarantine Act of Bhutan, 1993 was formally enacted by the National Assembly for implementation with effect from 1st August, 1993.

XXV. DISCUSSION AND ENACTMENT OF THE 'REGULATIONS RELATING TO THE POSSESSION OF ASSET AND PROPERTIES OUTSIDE BHUTAN BY BHUTANESE NATIONALS'

Presenting the Regulations Relating to the Possession of Assets and Properties Outside Bhutan by Bhutanese Citizens, the Finance Minister informed the members that these new rules were an update of the existing rule passed by the 52nd Session of the National Assembly held in June 1980, that no Bhutanese

national was allowed to own property or assets outside the country. While the existing rule forbid any form of investment, acquiring of property or maintenance of accounts outside Bhutan, the new regulations do not forbid such investments or transactions so long as prior permission is sought from the Ministry of Finance, said the Minister. He explained that the existing rule was too rigid and changes had to be introduced to maintain flexibility in the management of a modern economy and in interacting with other nations for trade and financial transactions. The Finance Minister said that the Draft Regulations on the Possession of Assets and Properties Outside Bhutan by Bhutanese Citizens had been prepared after taking the above points into consideration. The Draft had been discussed in the Lhengyel Shungtshog and approved for submission to the National Assembly for its endorsement.

The Minister informed the Assembly that since the ngolop problem began in the south, the accounts of the financial institutions indicated that many people were withdrawing money which was probably being deposited outside the country. He said that this was a matter of deep concern and disappointment to the government as it showed a lack of attachment to the country on the part of these people. Instead of coming forward at this moment of national crisis and offering their full support to the government, some of the people seemed to be moving their assets out of the country, he said. Such an attitude showed that these people were sitting on the fence and were living with one foot in the country and the other outside. The Minister said that it was not right for members of the private sector to make money within the country by taking full advantage of service facilities, loans, low taxation and the many opportunities provided by the government and then take the benefits out of the country.

The Finance Minister said that during the meeting held with the Business Community on 31st May and 1st June, 1993 in Thimphu, His Majesty the King had informed them that regulations relating to the possession of assets and properties outside the country by Bhutanese citizens were being framed and would be submitted to the National Assembly for its approval and enactment. The Minister requested the Assembly to approve and enact these Regulations for the convenience of the government and the people, and the over-all interest of the country.

During the discussions, several members expressed regret that the rule on the ownership of assets and properties outside the country which had been passed by the 52nd Session of the National Assembly had not been properly enforced by the government. They pointed out that it was important to ensure that rules passed by the National Assembly were properly enforced.

Several officials and Chimis expressed the view that the penalties for contravention of the Regulations Relating to the Possession of Assets and Properties Outside Bhutan as laid down in clause 6 of the Draft were not severe enough and should be increased. Other members said that if any problems were observed after implementing the Regulations for a few years and if certain changes or amendments were found to be necessary, additional clauses or amendments could then be submitted to the National Assembly for approval.

The National Assembly approved the Draft Regulations and formally enacted the Regulations Relating to the Possession of Assets and Properties Outside Bhutan by Bhutanese Citizens, 1993.

XXVI. CONCLUDING CEREMONY

In his concluding address, the Speaker expressed deep satisfaction that the 72nd Session of the National Assembly had concluded very successfully. He thanked His Majesty the King for gracing the Session with his presence and being a constant source of inspiration to the members who had benefited greatly from His Majesty's wisdom and clarity of thought. The Speaker also thanked the representatives of the Central Monk Body and Rabdeys, the ministers and officials representing the Royal Government and the representatives of the people for participating actively in the deliberations. The cooperation of all the members and the frank exchanges of views during the extensive discussions on many issues of national importance and concern had contributed to the success of the 72nd Session of the National Assembly, he said.

The Speaker reminded the members that it was their duty to see that the decisions taken by the 72nd Session were properly and faithfully implemented. Every representative must clearly apprise the people of all the points discussed in the Assembly and the resolutions adopted on many issues of great national

importance. They must submit a report to the Assembly Secretariat after duly apprising the people in their Gewogs on these points.

The Speaker also expressed his appreciation to the outgoing Chimis, who would be retiring this year after completing their term, for discharging their responsibilities with sincerity and enhancing the close cooperation and interaction between the government and the people. He extended his best wishes and Tashi Delek to them and expressed his confidence that they would always strive to contribute to the progress and well-being of the nation as they had gained much experience and knowledge on matters of national concern and interest.

The Speaker reminded the Assembly that Bhutan had enjoyed peace, progress and stability over many years because of the protection of the Guardian Deities, the in-built merits of the cherished institution of hereditary monarchy and the wise leadership of His Majesty the King. He said that it should be the cherished aspiration as well as the sacred duty of the Dratshang and Rabdeys, the ministers and officials representing the government and the representatives of the people, to uphold the institution of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan and to serve with loyalty and dedication to ensure a long and glorious reign for His Majesty the King so that peace, progress and prosperity would flourish naturally and permanently in Bhutan like the rays of the sun and the beauty of the moon. Thinking as one and with unwavering commitment, all of us must work together to fulfill the wishes and aspirations, reflected in the sacred Tashi Menlom prayer, for bringing peace, prosperity and happiness to the people and ensuring the security and well being of the Bhutanese nation for all times to come, said the Speaker.

The 72nd Session of the National Assembly was concluded with the members taking part in the solemn and auspicious Tashi Menlom ceremony.

Date : 30th July, 1993

Sd/-

(Passang Dorji)

Speaker

National Assembly of Bhutan

