



TSHOGDU

News

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Greetings from the National Assembly for a Happy and Prosperous 2011

The Speaker, Members and the Secretariat of the National Assembly would like to express our heartfelt greetings for a Prosperous and Happy New Year 2011. We take this opportunity to offer our deepest prayers for the burgeoning of socio economic development and continued peace and harmony under the wise and selfless leadership of our benevolent Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. We pray that the New Year bring great achievements and success to the nation with a paradigm shift towards the fulfillment of Gross National Happiness.



12 Bills tabled in the 6th Session

The 6th Session of the 1st Parliament commenced from 19th November to 10th December, 2010. His Majesty the King graced the Inaugural Ceremony witnessed by the Members of Royal Family, Representatives of the International Organizations, Civil servants, Head of the Armed Forces and students. Amongst the guests, also present was the former Speaker of Lok Sabha, Mr. Purno Agitok Sangma. In his Royal

address, His Majesty the King highlighted on his recent royal visit to India and further strengthening of Indo-Bhutan relations. His Majesty also expressed appreciation to all those who significantly contributed towards the restoration works for the people who were affected by fire disaster in Bumthang. The Members of Parliament also expressed appreciation to His Majesty the King for the royal initiatives taken for the welfare of the country. During the last session, the House extensively deliberated on 3 new Bills and 9 Amendment Bills. However, only Income Tax (Amendment) Bill has been duly endorsed in both the Houses. With regard to the other Bills, despite having been adequately deliberated in both the Houses during the 5th and 6th sessions, it has been deferred to be endorsed in the next session due to differences on some provisions of the Bills. In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, the House, during the last session, endorsed to establish Druk Gyalpo's Relief Fund which would immensely benefit to address the *kidu* of the people during urgent and unforeseen humanitarian relief.

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Hon Speaker presiding over the Session

Education for GNH

On 30th January, 2010, the Hon Speaker graced the inaugural function of the second round of Education for GNH workshop which was held at the Paro college of Education. Besides more than 200 school principals and educationists, the Education Minister, Vice Chancellor of RUB and other officials from various agencies attended the occasion. In his welcome address, the Education Minister said that when the world was after materialism, the youngest monarch in the world choose a unique path of Gross National Happiness which is a call to the basic and authentic.



Hon Speaker addressing the inaugural ceremony

Addressing to the stately gathering of educationists, the Hon Speaker said that the farsighted vision of GNH propounded by His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo is unprecedented philosophy in the world and it is serving as the medium to propagate peace and tranquility to the entire humanity. The Hon Speaker also presented a copy of the Constitution each for the school libraries and urged the Education Ministry to incorporate relevant sections of the Constitution in the school curriculum for better understanding of fundamental rights and duties.

Human Rights in the limelight of law enforcing agencies

On 10th February, 2010, the Human Rights Committee of National Assembly conducted a one day workshop on human rights awareness in the conference hall of the National Assembly. The workshop was graced by the Hon Speaker who participated with representatives from RBP, ACC and other law enforcing agencies. In his welcome address, the chairman of Human Rights Committee MP Damchhoe Dorji said that ‘democracy is mother of all

human rights’ further stating that we should be receptive to our mistakes and accessible to corrections in promoting the rights of our people. Presentations were made by RBP, ACC, Office of the Attorney General, Judiciary and Mr. Sudarshan from UNDP Bangkok who talked on international human rights from UN perspective and UN milestones achieved on human rights.

Following the presentations on arrest, investigation, rights of the accused & prisoners, management of prisons and persecution of suspects, the participants also discussed on issues such as lack of coordination between relevant agencies and budget constraints.



Participants during the Workshop

MPs convey the concerns of people to RICBL

The plans and policies and various schemes of RICBL were presented to the Members of Parliament in the conference hall of the National Assembly on 17th March, 2010. Led by the CEO of RICBL, the presentations were made on health insurance, motor insurance, householder's insurance and others. The CEO said that RICBL plans to set up micro offices around the country to facilitate the services to people's reach at a larger extent. He also added that the rural house insurance will be redesigned considering last year's disasters in the east.

The Members of Parliament also highlighted various concerns of people regarding the insurance schemes. Some of the Members informed that in rural areas, the insurance money was not being delivered through proper channel without receipts and other important procedures which needed some reconsideration. Questions were also raised on premium, eligibility to claim insurance and other insurance policies. The CEO said that the RICBL will take note of the recommendations and reconsider the policies.

Legislative oversight moves to new height

Beginning 10th May, 2010, the Public Accounts Committee of Bhutan conducted its first ever public hearings with Government agencies, Corporation and NGOs to review the unresolved audit reports of the year 2006, 2007 and 2008. The main objective of the PAC hearings was to submit a report to the Parliament for deliberations and Parliamentary directives.

Bhutan hosts the first ever SAARC Public Accounts Committees' meet

On 11th and 12th May, 2010, the Public Accounts Committee of Bhutan hosted the first ever SAARC level PACs' seminar to address the issues of 1) Strengthening PAC Secretariat within SAARC region, 2) drafting of the constitution and formation of South East regional PAC Association and 3) deciding the location of South Asian Regional Association for Public Accounts Committees (SARAPAC) Secretariat. The seminar was also attended by delegations from Tanzania and Canada which was sponsored by the World Bank.



Participants during the South Asian Association for Regional Public Accounts Committees' meet

"DHI functions as per the directives of the Government" says DHI Chairman

On 19th May, 2010, a presentation was made by the Druk Holding and Investment (DHI) to the Hon Members of Parliament in the conference hall of the National Assembly. The presentation made by the Chairman and the CEO of DHI included 1. DHI projects with the Ministries 2. Performance of DHI companies 3. Predictable &

increasing revenues of MoF 4. Implementing RGoB goals and 5. Projects under consideration by DHI.

Issues such as sitting fees for the DHI companies, recent recruitment of pilots by the Druk Air and others were also discussed. Discussing the co-relation between the Government and DHI, the chairman of DHI said that DHI is functioning as per the directives of the Government.

The Speaker of Lok Sabha visits Bhutan

A high level Indian Parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker of the Indian Parliament, Shrimati Meira Kumar visited Bhutan from 26th to 29th May 2010. The delegation also comprised of Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, Leader of Opposition, Members of Parliament and Lok Sabha Secretariat officials. She also attended the inaugural ceremony of 5th Session.



H.E. Shrimati Meira Kumar being received by Hon Speaker Jigme Tshultim at the Paro International Airport

During the inaugural ceremony of the 5th Session of the Parliament, the Hon Speaker said that it was a historic visit, expressing his gratitude to the people and the Government of India for the success of Parliamentary democracy in Bhutan. Addressing the Parliament, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Shrimati Meira Kumar said that Bhutan has always been a good friend of India and the two countries have created an unparalleled bond of friendship, collaboration and cooperation in the region. She also congratulated Bhutan for hosting the Sixteenth SAARC Summit which most appropriately focused on Climate Change and said that India applaud Bhutan's unique concept of 'Gross National Happiness'.



Shrimati Meira Kumar, Speaker of Lok Sabha addressing the Joint Sitting of the Parliament

Human Rights Committee presents its Annual Report to the Parliament

Issues ranging from overcrowding of the prisons to lack of toilet facilities and from need of distance education for the prisoners to the need for a central forensic lab was discussed when the Human Rights committee of the National Assembly presented its report to the Fifth Session of the Parliament. The Chairman of the committee, Hon Member Damcho Dorji said that despite Bhutan's late arrival on international arena, it has made tremendous progress in the protection & promotion of human rights along with other developments under the successive monarchs and particularly under the noble and wise leadership of His Majesty the King and the Four Druk Gyalpo.

The report included the observations and the recommendations of the Human Rights Committee based on the visits to the detention centre and jails in and around Thimphu. Issues like lack of proper accommodation for prison guards, problem of medical treatment of prisoners, need for information materials like TVs, more outdoor games for inmates and distance education for school dropout convicts were also reflected in the report. Concluding the deliberation, the House directed the Cabinet to improve the prison conditions and the progress to be presented by the Human Rights committee in its next annual report.

Laws enacted

In the 5th Session of the First Parliament, the Parliament endorsed the Tobacco Control Act of Bhutan, Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan Act, Service Conditions Act for the Holders of the Constitutional Offices of Bhutan and Bhutan Standards Act. The Parliament also endorsed the Civil Service Bill of Bhutan which has been put up

for the Royal assent. Similarly, the National Assembly endorsed the Financial Services Bill of Bhutan, Water Bill of Bhutan and Personal Income Tax (Amendment) Bill which were transmitted to the National Council. The National Assembly also ratified and transmitted Convention on Anti-Doping in Sports and SAARC Convention on Cooperation on Environment to the National Council.

MPs briefed on Census and immigration issues

The issues on security clearance certificate (SCC), census and immigration were discussed during the presentation by the Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs on 10th June, 2010 in the conference hall of the National Assembly. The Cabinet Ministers, Leader of Opposition, Members of Parliament, Chief of Police and other officials attended the presentations.

Following the presentation, queries were asked by the Hon Members on preventive measures in place to protect the online SCC computer software from cyber crimes and requirement of SCC for availing loan which is creating difficulties for the farmers. Regarding the preventive measures to protect the SCC computer software, the Director of Bureau for Law & Order said that the system was developed in collaboration with the experts from Department of Information & Technology considering the issue. The Minister for Home & Cultural Affairs said that the Ministry will take note and look in to the issue regarding the requirement of SCC for availing loans.

In addition, the Hon Members set forth on the need to intimate the Dzongkhags on the progress of the census work done in the head office for the public welfare. The issue on the difficulties in obtaining the marriage certificate while the husband was serving prison term affecting the admission of children in schools was also discussed.

The presentation on immigration included the achievements which indicated strengthening of ICT sector, strengthening of check points, opening immigration office at royal consulate in Kolkata and others. The plans & programmes of the department of Immigration included the introduction of biometric system to facilitate the information on foreigners, formulate immigration rules & regulations, develop standard operating procedures and introduce visa online for tourists.

Hon Speaker attends the 3rd World Conference of Speakers

His Excellency Tshogpon Jigme Tshultim, Speaker of the Parliament attended the 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held in Geneva, Switzerland

from 19th to 21st July 2010. He was accompanied by Hon Sonam Kinga, Dy. Chairperson of National Council and Hon Lhatu, Member of the National Assembly.



Hon Speaker and the delegation during the 3rd World Conference of Speakers

Tshogpon Jigme Tshultim addressed the Conference in the morning of 21st July 2010. In his statement, he informed the distinguished gathering of Bhutan's peaceful transition to Parliamentary Democracy and the adoption of the first written Constitution. He also said that the Conference provided an excellent opportunity to the elected officials, serving at the highest legislative bodies to reflect, deliberate and strengthen the accountability of the Parliaments and the Governments to their people, in a world that is increasingly plagued by various kinds of crisis.

The theme of the Conference was "Parliaments in a world of crisis: Securing global democratic accountability for the common good." It was organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of Parliaments.

Dzongkha Development finds Parliament's support

On 10th August, 2010, led by Dasho Sherub Gyeltshen, secretary, Dzongkhag Development Commission (DDC), a presentation was made to the Hon Members and the NA secretariat staff in the conference hall of the National Assembly. The presentation included the background and status of Dzongkha language in the country. The DDC secretary said that Dzongkha was merely considered as a language and not a basis for other learning. He also added that recognition and consideration for Dzongkha was less and job opportunities for Dzongkha

needs to be created. In addition, he also presented the plans and objectives of the DDC in a bid to promote the national language.

Following the presentation, the participants discussed on the preservation and promotion of the national language. The Hon Members said that the Parliament will consider the points presented by DDC in the process of enacting laws. While the Dzongkha has drastically improved among the children, some problems still existed in its application. The Hon Members urged that any new Dzongkha word developed should be informed to the people at the earliest. They also said that DDC should take immediate action in rectifying the words used which were totally non existent.

By and large, the participants recognized the significance of Dzongkha as the national language and expressed full support for its promotion.

National Assembly Members embark on consultative meetings with Local Government

In a bid to review the developmental activities for the last two years of the FYP, the Members of the National Assembly visited 18 Dzongkhags in teams beginning September 1st, 2010. During the visit, the Hon Members held meetings with the Dzongkhag administration, Gups and other officials of the Local Government to understand their problems and difficulties faced in implementation of planned programmes.



Hon Members in a Consultative Meeting with the People of Dagana

The visits were in accordance with article 10 (2) of the Constitution which reads "Parliament shall ensure the Government safeguards the interests of the nation and fulfil the aspirations of the people through public review

of policies and issues, Bills and other legislations and scrutiny of State functions”.

The visits further strengthened the working relationship between National Assembly Members, Local Government and Dzongkhag Administration in promoting good governance. The first consultative meetings were held in Lhuentse and Trashiyangtse Dzongkhags in April this year.

Bhutan observes International Democracy Day

Coinciding with the international democracy day on 15th September, 2010, the Hon Members of Parliament and officials from various agencies attended a two day seminar on Democracy and Good governance at the NRDCL hall, Thimphu.



Participants during the seminar on Democracy and Good Governance

The Seminar was organized to enhance the knowledge of the participants on roles of Parliament, Parliamentary committees and other subjects of Parliamentary interest.

The seminar was jointly organized by the National Assembly, National Council and the Institute for Management Studies (IMS) funded by UNDP, Bhutan.

The Pakistani Ambassador, Mr. Ashraf Qureshi calls on the Hon Speaker

On 22nd of April, 2010, the new Pakistani Ambassador, Mr. Ashraf Qureshi called on the Hon Speaker. The Hon Speaker said that Bhutan and Pakistan share very good relations as members of SAARC family and expressed that relations would further deepen during Mr. Ambassador's tenure. Mr. Qureshi said that many experiences could be shared among the members of SAARC instead of going for expertise from other regions and expressed appreciation for Bhutan's environmental policy. He also emphasized

on improving the intra regional trade amongst SAARC members since SAARC was lacking behind in comparison to other regional organizations.

Successor to Mr. Alamgir Babar, Mr Ashraf Querishi was in the country to present his credentials to His Majesty the King.



Hon Speaker with Ambassador Ashraf Qureshi

Delegation from the Thai Senate visits the National Assembly

A high level delegation from the Senate of the Kingdom of Thailand called on the Hon Speaker Jigme Tshultim and the members of the National Assembly on 22nd October, 2010. The 14 member delegation was led by H.E Prof Prasobook Boondech, chairperson of the Thai Senate.

Welcoming the delegation, the Speaker emphasized on the friendly relations between the two Kingdoms and said that it has always been good to learn from Thailand given Bhutan's new Parliament and adoption of constitution. He also expressed that the visit of the Thai Senators will further strengthen and deepen the relations between the two Parliaments. He further added that Bhutan appreciates and thanks the generous assistance of Thailand especially in the field of education with growing number of Bhutanese students pursuing their studies in Thai Universities.

H.E Prof Prasobook Boondech also expressed that Thailand is very keen to strengthen its bilateral relation with Bhutan particularly in the field of Parliamentary exchanges and said that Thailand can learn from Bhutan as well. The delegation discussed on the Parliamentary practices such as frequency of joint sittings, composition of the Parliament Houses, constituency visits, origination of Bills and election of members with their Bhutanese counterparts.

The delegation was in the country on a five day visit on the invitation of the Hon Chairperson, National Council of Bhutan.



Thai delegates with their Bhutanese counterparts

Australian Parliamentary delegation calls on the Hon Speaker

The Australian Parliamentary delegation led by Senator Annette Hurley called on the Hon Speaker on 12 July, 2010. The Hon Speaker extended a warm welcome to the delegation and emphasized on the friendly relations between the two countries. He said that Australia was one of the first countries to render assistance to Bhutan and also expressed appreciation for Australia's cooperation in human resource development and other fields of training.

The delegation expressed that they have come to Bhutan with a great level of happiness and said that Bhutan emphasizing on happiness is a good message to be carried back to Australia.



Australian Parliamentary delegation with the Hon Speaker

Other foreign delegations who called on the Hon Speaker in the year 2010

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Delegation</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Ambassador Abdul Azeez Yoosuf of Maldives	08/02/2010
2	Ambassador Peter N Varghese of Australia	11/02/2010
3	Outgoing Thai Ambassador Chalernpol Thanchitt	11/02/2010
4	UNESCO delegation led by Director A Parsuramen	12/02/2010
5	Swiss Delegation led by Mr. Mario Fehr, Member of Swiss Parliament	16/02/2010
6	Mr. Rajendra S Pawar, The Chairman of the National Institute of Information & Technology (NIIT)	26/02/2010
7	ADB mission led by Mr. Bruno Carrasco, Director for Country coordination and Regional Cooperation Division	25/05/2010
8	Delegation led by Mr. Panthep Klanarongran, president of the National Anti Corruption Commission of the Kingdom of Thailand	26/05/2010
9	French Ambassador to India, HE Mr. Jerome Bonnafont	04/06/2010
10	Mr. Shamsul Huda, the chief election commissioner of Bangladesh	24/06/2010
11	Australian Parliamentary delegation led by Senator Annette Hurley	12/07/2010
12	Congressman Brian Baird from the US House of Representatives	05/08/2010
13	The outgoing Bangladeshi Ambassador to Bhutan, Mr. AKM Majibur Rahman Bhuiyan	06/08/2010
14	The Ambassador of Finland, H.E Ms. Terhi Hakala	28/09/2010
15	HE Mark Sofer, the Ambassador of Israel to India	13/10/2010

Secretariat related news

Secretary Generals attend Parliament Officers' Study Program

The Secretary Generals of the National Assembly and National Council of Bhutan attended the Parliament Officers' program which was held from April 18 to 29, 2010 in Ottawa, Canada organized by the Parliament of Canada. The study program was mainly aimed for senior Parliamentary staff to learn about the functioning of the Canadian Parliament and in turn, to reflect on their own practices. It also created a platform to exchange ideas with the colleagues from other Legislatures.

Delegation leaves for Sri Lanka

Led by the Secretary General, a five member delegation from the NA Secretariat left for Sri Lanka on 3rd May, 2010 on the invitation from the Parliament of Sri Lanka.. The delegation was in Sri Lanka from 4th to 8th May, 2010. The visit was as part of the Parliamentary exchange programme between Bhutan and Sri Lanka. The delegation from the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Sri Lanka visited the National Assembly of Bhutan in December last year.

Friends who joined us

In July, 2010, Mr. Ngawang Thinley joined the Secretariat as an IT Associate and similarly Mr. Tashi Rabten, Ms. Chimi Lhaden and Ms. Kinzang Choden joined the Secretariat as Legal Assistants upon completion of their course from the Royal Institute of Management.

Research Officers attend a training course on Research Methodology

In the month of April, a team of 6 Research Officers from the the National Assembly Secretariat underwent a 10 day training course on Research Methodology organized by Sripatum University in Bangkok. The course was designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of the participants on social science researches techniques focusing on parliamentary works.

In the course of the training, the participants were also trained in general principles of research methodology, research planning, analyzing and reporting results. Case studies and field visits were organized as well to exchange their views on various aspects and issues related to Parliament and politics.

Contributions of articles

To enable the Secretariat to produce the Newsletter on a regular basis, we would like to encourage the Honourable Members to contribute news and articles about their respective constituencies and other issues relating to the National Assembly.



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