

## **Address by Hon Speaker during the closing ceremony of First Session First Parliament**

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome His Majesty the King, the Royal Family Members, representatives from the armed forces, senior government officials, representatives from the donor agencies, foreign dignitaries, media personnel and other guests to this auspicious occasion of the closing ceremony of the First Session of the First Parliament on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2008.

2. This First Session of the First Parliament which was successfully held from May 8 to July 29, 2008 shall formally conclude today with the administering of Tashi Moenlam prayer.

3. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan which was propounded by our most grateful parent, His Majesty the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck was deliberated at length in the joint sitting of the parliament from May 9 to May 29, 2008 and is endorsed with negligible amendments.

4. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan was formalized with the signing of the Constitution by His Majesty the King and the Members of Parliament in the Kuenrey of Tashichho-dzong before the statue of Lord Buddha on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008 in the presence of His Majesty the Fourth King, the Royal Family Members, Central Monk Body and representatives of international agencies.

5. Both the Houses of Parliament have successfully deliberated on six important Bills consisting of the National Assembly Bill, National Council Bill, Election Bill of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Public Election Fund Bill of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Parliamentary Entitlements Bill, and the National Referendum Bill. The two Houses have also deliberated on the Annual Budget Report for the Fiscal Year 2008-09 besides ratifying the conventions on establishment of South Asian Medical College and South Asian Food Buffer Zone.

6. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008, the National Assembly formally established 14 Committees of the National Assembly. All the committees are expected to scrutinize and make amendments of all the past laws, Bills and Acts in line with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan in the interest of the people and country. In addition, the committees are expected to study and finalize all Acts and Bills that are proposed to be tabled and discussed in the coming second session of the first Parliament. The existing acts requiring urgent attention and review are the Local Government Acts, Cabinet Act and the Municipality Act while the Royal Civil Service Bill, the Royal Bhutan Police Bill, Prison Bill and the Water Bill need further review by the committee.

The committees may also look into the problems and progress of implementation of the national policies relating to ban on smoking, import of meat during auspicious days, use of plastics and import of chicken and poultry products.

7. It was a historic moment for all Bhutanese when Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India paid a state visit to our Kingdom on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2008. He was also the first foreign dignitary to address the joint session of the newly constituted First Parliament of Bhutan. Being one of the largest and the oldest democracies in the world, it was indeed a great honour to welcome His Excellency the Prime Minister of India to address our Parliament and enrich ourselves with his vast experience and advice. The visit further cemented the already existing strong relationship that exists between our two countries. As everybody is well aware, India is the most reliable and biggest development partner of Bhutan. During the visit, His Excellency the Prime Minister of India committed to extend a financial grant of Nu.100 billion to the new government. This commitment came at an appropriate time and will have far reaching effects in the socioeconomic development of the country particularly the 10<sup>th</sup> FY Plan and strengthening the relationship between the two countries at the political level.

8. On the invitation of the Government of India, Lyonchhen Jigmi Yoedzer Thinley, the Prime Minister of Bhutan accompanied by government officials, private representatives and media personnel visited India from 14<sup>th</sup> July to 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The visit was very fruitful not only in terms of strengthening the already existing strong relationship but also in terms of mobilization of financial assistance from the Government of India. Besides consenting to finance mega projects and developmental programmes in the 10<sup>th</sup> FY Plan, the Government of India has also agreed to finance eight hydro power projects in fulfilling the proposed ten thousand mega watts of electricity production by 2020. The people would like to extend their deepest appreciation to the Government of India for the generous assistance including the assistance provided for the smooth election in the country and the desire of the Government of India for further strengthening the relationship between the two nations. The continued and substantial assistance so kindly committed to us would not only benefit the country economically but would play a big role in strengthening the newly established democracy in the country.

9. It was exactly 100 years back when the people of Bhutan ceremoniously elected Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck as the first hereditary King of Bhutan which laid the foundation for the establishment of the Wangchuck dynasty in the country. During this period, the people have witnessed unprecedented peace, happiness and prosperity in their lives with the sovereignty and national security remaining intact. After 100 years of reign by the hereditary monarchs, the power of governance of the country is handed over to the people by His Majesty the Fourth King with full faith and confidence. It is through the initiatives of His Majesty the Fourth King that the Constitution has been drafted and conducted smooth parliamentary elections that led to the

formation of the first democratically elected government. Therefore, it is the mandate of the new government to shoulder greater responsibilities and work towards fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the King and the people in bringing peace, prosperity and happiness more than ever before.

10. I, on behalf of all the members of Parliament and on my own behalf, would like to express my deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King for the trust and confidence reposed on us. His Majesty the King has reiterated that being educated and competent and elected by the people, we should shoulder greater responsibilities in the interest of the country and the people.

11. The government takes great pride in having elected to run the government for the first time and the opportunity to serve the nation with equity and justice. The government will spare no efforts in the protection and promotion of natural resources and our traditional and cultural heritage. Continued endeavour would be made to strengthen the economic base of the country and the development activities will be carried out effectively and efficiently so that the people will witness higher economic growth. The new government should work hard to promote peace, bring better economic growth and happiness to the Bhutanese people and thus, fulfilling the philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

12. As the government consists of the executive, legislative and the judiciary, it is important to complete the process of appointments to the constitutional posts with the assent of the Druk Gyalpo for submission to the winter session of the parliament as per Section 19 of Article 2 of the Constitution of Bhutan. One example is to render the Royal Bhutan Police under the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs as per Section 3 of Article 28 of the In addition, it is also mandatory to submit the annual audit report to the Parliament by the Royal Audit Authority as per Section 5 of Article 25 and similarly the Anti-Corruption Commission is required to submit its annual report on its policies and performances to the Parliament as per Section 4 of Article 27 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

13. Although there were no issues pertaining to developmental activities for deliberation during the Session, I would like to urge all the Members to visit their respective constituencies and disseminate the contents of the Constitution and other Bills approved by the Parliament to the people.

14. I urge you all to submit issues that are raised by the public during the constituency visit to the National Assembly Secretariat before one month. The next Session is tentatively scheduled to begin from 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008 coinciding with the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Earth Rat Year.

15. The First Session of the First Parliament has concluded in a fruitful note and the credit goes to the enlightened directives and guidance of His Majesty the King and the support and assistance of the members. The members have actively participated on important national issues having immense bearings on the life of the people. I would like to express my deep appreciation to His Majesty the King and all the members of the Parliament.

16. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Chief Justice, Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye and the members of the Constitution Drafting Committee for the hard work and commitment that they have put in to come up with this finest Constitution in line with the directives and guidance of His Majesty the Fourth King.

17. I would like to thank the Royal Bhutan Police for making adequate security arrangements during the session and extend our appreciation to the media including TV and Radio stations for the live broadcast of the proceedings of the parliament. Through the media, the public availed the opportunity to witness the parliamentary session and were able to clearly understand their constitutional rights and responsibilities and the policies and programmes of the government.

Lastly, the First Session of the First Parliament shall conclude today with the offering of our prayers to our protective Guardian Deities in general and to the wise and farsighted leadership of His Majesty the King. It is through the immense hard work and selfless leadership of the hereditary Kings that we are able to live in unprecedented peace, happiness and prosperity and therefore, we pray for greater achievements under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty the King.