

**Speech delivered by H.E. the Speaker of the National Assembly of
Bhutan during the opening ceremony of the 2nd Session of the
Parliament of Bhutan**

(December 24, 2008)

1. At the outset, on behalf of the Parliament of Bhutan and on my own behalf, I would like to extend a warm welcome to His Majesty the King, Members of Royal Family, Prime Minister, Chairman of the National Council, Opposition Leader, Cabinet Ministers, members of both the Houses, senior government officials, foreign dignitaries, representatives of various organizations, other guests who have come to witness the session, media personnel and all those who are witnessing the session live on TV and Radio to the opening ceremony of second session of the parliament on this auspicious day of 24th December 2008 coinciding with 17th Day of 10th Month of Male Earth Rat Year.
2. On behalf of all the Members of the Houses and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to express our happiness for having enthroned His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck as the Fifth Hereditary King of Bhutan on 6th November 2008 after receiving Dhar Ney Nga as a symbol of empowerment as the Head of State from Machen at Puna Dewa Chenmoi Phodrang on 1st November 2008. It is our privilege to re-dedicate ourselves and offer our prayers for long life of His Majesty the King.
3. Bhutan and its people have always been blessed with peace and prosperity with enhanced socio-economic development and strengthened religious and cultural heritage under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty the King. We, the members of Parliament, bearing the command and guidance of His Majesty, would like to pledge to serve the country with outmost dedication and loyalty.
4. The celebration of 100 years of Monarchy has been a great success by the grace of His Majesty the King and His Majesty the Fourth King, blessings of our protecting deities, and the dedication of all the Bhutanese people. All the elaborate arrangements and programmes were well coordinated depicting the hard work and

unity at hearts of all the Bhutanese people that contributed to the success of the celebration in a unique way. On behalf of all the members and on my behalf, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this historic celebration.

5. We also would like to thank all the State Guests from different countries who have consented to be our Guests of Honour for the celebration of the Enthronement of His Majesty the Fifth King with particular thank to Hon'ble Pratibha Patil, President of our best friend and development partner, India, Hon'ble Sonia Gandhi, President of Congress Party, and her family members who have taken time to grace the auspicious occasion.
6. In addition, it is our pleasure to inform the house that coronation celebration of our Fifth King has been a great success, which was possible due to unequivocal efforts, put in by the Central Monk Body under the benevolent leadership of His Holiness the Je Khenpo Truelku Jigme Choeda and five Lopons. The success of the celebration is attributable to the strong leadership of the Prime Minister, who steered the celebration committee under the dynamic leadership and guidance of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.
7. We would like to offer our heartfelt felicitations to His Holiness Je Khen Thrizur and Her Royal Grand Mother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck for having received the highest medal "Order of the King" from His Majesty the King on 15th November 2008.

The Parliament would like to congratulate Prime Minister Jigme Y. Thinley and Chief Justice for receiving the Druk Wangyel medals and Dasho Kunzang Wangdi, Chief Election Commissioner, Aum Neten Zangmo, Chairperson, Anti-Corruption Commission, Dasho Pema Wangchuk, Secretary, International Boundaries and Dasho Pema Wangchen, Secretray to Fourth Durk Gyalpo for receiving the Druk Thuksey medals on December 17, 2008 coinciding with the National Day.

8. Acknowledging the additional responsibilities placed on the members of both the Houses, His Majesty the King has issued command for the members to wear *Patang* on 5th December 2008. On the day, His Majesty has commanded that the *Patang* is

granted to remind all the members on the responsibilities they should bear and not as an additional power. Therefore, I am hopeful that all the members will bear in mind the Royal Command in discharging their duties.

9. In the national address on the coronation day, His Majesty the King has emphasized on the importance of Equity and Justice which is one of the main goals of the governing party, *Druk Phuentsum Tshogpa*. In order to live up to the expectations of His Majesty the King and for peace, prosperity and happiness of our people, the Executive, Judiciary and Legislative branches of the government have to work towards fulfilling the aforesaid goal of Equity and Justice.

The legislative body will work hard in line with the Articles enshrined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and it is important for the legislative body to study the problems faced by the executive branch while delivering public services.

10. Reduction of un-employment and poverty level should be given top priority in the Tenth Plan for achieving Gross National Happiness.
11. There are two main areas where we have to work hard to build strong economy for our country. One is to harness our hydro-power capacity as discussed during the visit of Power Minister of the Government of India to generate 10,000 Megawatt in the Tenth Five Year Plan and the other is to promote and strengthen tourism industry.
12. Among many important goals of our party in the Tenth Five Year Plan, construction of road network in all the geog centres, supply of electricity to all the villages of the country and setting up of One Stop Service centres are considered highly important by our people, and we all should work towards achieving concrete results within the plan period.
13. The legislative body would like to extend full support and cooperation to the Prime Minister's initiative of zero tolerance towards corruption and act in accordance with Article 7 of the Constitution of Kingdom of Bhutan and due process of law.

14. Bhutan is new on the path to democracy and it is important for us to learn from others who have been in the system for decades. In order to gain first hand experiences, some of the members have had the opportunity to visit both the upper and lower Houses of the Indian Parliament including myself as the head of the delegation right after the first Session. We also visited the Parliament of Denmark through our Parliamentary Twinning Programme in order to acquaint ourselves with the democratic procedures and parliamentary systems.

I would also like to add that some of our members have been to different countries to attend seminars and workshops related to parliament and democracy, which would highly benefit in strengthening the system and function of democracy in our country.

15. I am hopeful that all the members of Parliament must be more aware of the needs and aspirations of the people in your respective constituencies during your recent visit to the constituencies.
16. As most of the agendas submitted by the Members and those from the Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdues are of development related issues, the agendas have been sorted out and sent to respective line ministries as per the preliminary round of discussion on the agendas. It is, therefore, important for the ministries to take immediate action on them.
17. In order to mitigate social problems associated with economic growth and for promotion of equity and justice in the society in the face of drastic changes in socio-economic phenomenon of the country, it is crucial to have proper rules and regulations in place to tackle these un-desirable problems. Therefore, we have the following bills to be discussed and endorsed during the current session:
 - a) Royal Bhutan Police Bill
 - b) Prison Bill of the Kingdom of Bhutan
 - c) Waste Prevention and Management Bill of the Kingdom of Bhutan

All these bills have been handed over to the Legislative Committee for preliminary study and I am hopeful that ground works must have been done for smooth discussion and endorsement in the session.

Similarly, we will also deliberate and endorse on the following Regional agreements:

- a) Agreement on the establishment of the South Asian Regional Standards Organization
 - b) Protocol of Accession of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)
 - c) SAARC Fund Charter
18. We the Members of Parliament, as the representatives of the people must bear the responsibility of looking into the problems faced by the people in our constituencies and work for their benefit. It is also our responsibility to formulate new laws, conduct timely review of the past legislations and oversee whether these laws are being implemented by relevant organizations. As we are viewed as leaders of our community, it is crucial to protect the rights and powers of our people.
 19. Although, the 1st Session of the First Parliament took long time, besides adopting the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, it also endorsed few bills. The 1st Session was a grand success primarily due to the cooperation and support of all the Members of Parliament.
 20. I hope to receive full cooperation and support of all the Members for the successful conclusion of the present Session.
 21. Lastly, on behalf of all the members of Parliament and on my own behalf, I would like to thank His Majesty the King, Members of the Royal Family, senior government officials, representatives of international community and other guests for sparing precious time to attend the opening ceremony of the 2nd Session of Parliament.

TASHI DELEK!