

Address of Tshogpon Jigme Zangpo at the Opening Ceremony of the Ninth Session of the Second Parliament of Bhutan

1. Today, on behalf of the Members of Parliament and on my own behalf, I would like to humbly welcome His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo to the opening ceremony of the Ninth Session of the Second Parliament. We would like to express our gratitude to His Majesty for gracing the occasion despite numerous royal engagements to attend.

I would also like to welcome the Members of the Royal Family, representatives of the Central Monastic Body, senior government officials, representatives of the international community and all the people who have come to witness the occasion.

2. I would like to inform that the following agenda will be deliberated in this session:

- 1) Five Disputed Clauses of the Customs Bill of Bhutan in the Joint Sitting

- 2) 15 disputed clauses on the Motor Vehicle Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personnel and Cargo Vehicular Traffic between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal submitted by the National Council

- 3) Performance Audit Report of the Royal Audit Authority

Furthermore, the Prime Minister will present the Annual Report on the State of the Nation, including Legislative Plans and Annual Plans and Priorities of the Government in this session.

3. The National Assembly in general will deliberate on:

- 1) Adoption of Annual National Budget for the Financial Year 2017-2018
- 2) Report of the Third Pay Commission
- 3) Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Bill 2017
- 4) Bhutan Information, Communication and Media Bill 2016
- 5) Marriage Bill of Bhutan
- 6) Report of the Anti-Corruption Commission

4. Likewise, there will be deliberations on Multilateral Agreement for the establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Countries and on the implementation of past resolutions. Motions from the members will also be deliberated in the session.

5. The National Assembly had received several petitions from three Dzongkhags to be deliberated in the Ninth Session. These petitions have been extensively deliberated in the Preliminary Meeting on April 21 and forwarded to the relevant ministries for appropriate actions. It is therefore imperative for the Ministries to take appropriate actions without further delay.

As some of the petitions have been previously deliberated, the resolution thereof of the deliberation will be forwarded to concerned Dzongkhags.

6. I would also like to inform the gathering that:

- 1) On behalf of the Parliament, I had led delegations to attend the Asian Parliamentary Assembly meetings in Pakistan, Vietnam and

Cambodia with participations from 42 member countries and 12 observer countries.

During these meetings, the member countries had proposed Bhutan to host the next meeting of the Social and Culture committee of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly. Subsequently, the National Assembly and the National Council have jointly finalized to hold three-day summit at the end of August and in the first week of September this year.

- 2) I had also led a delegation and attended the South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Indore, India. At the end of the summit, the South Asian Speakers resolved that hereafter one day will be allotted for debating on SDGs during the parliamentary sessions in respective countries.
 - 3) Similarly, some members led by the Chairperson of the National Council have attended the 136th IPU and related meetings in Dhaka, Bangladesh and came up with successful outcomes.
7. His Majesty had personally visited to oversee the affected places during the times of natural disasters in the country. His Majesty has recently visited wind storm affected sites in Punakha and granted invaluable guidance of consolation and support to the victims. The Parliament therefore would like to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty.
 8. The Parliament would also like to thank His Holiness the Je Khenpo, five Venerable Lopens and the Central Monastic Body for conducting prayers for world peace, and *Kurims* across *Dratshangs*, *Dzongs*, *Lhakhangs* and *Goendeys* for the well-being of the Bhutanese people.

9. We would like to express our gratitude to Her Majesty the Gyaltshen who is the patron of the Ability Bhutan Society (ABS) for gracing the inauguration of the International Conference on Autism and Neuro-developmental Disorders in Thimphu last month.

The Parliament would also like to express our gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen Mothers, Royal Highnesses and other Members of the Royal Family for taking various initiatives for the welfare of the people. Furthermore, we would like to express gratitude to Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, the goodwill ambassador of UNFPA for her high level advocacy tour in the Dzongkhags and promoting awareness on important public health and social issues to the people and youth.

10. The Government has constantly strived on the economic development and achieved successful outcomes. Similarly, the Monastic Body has rendered continued support towards renovating *Dzongs*, *Lhakhangs* and *Goendeys*. The Parliament therefore would like to express its appreciation to the Government and the Monastic Body.

11. Upon the invitation of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh paid a State Visit to Bhutan from 18-20 April 2017. The visit to Bhutan by H.E. Sheikh Hasina is highly significant as it reinforces the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries and had strengthened the friendship between the two countries.

Such high level visits to each other's country have not only reaffirmed the relations between the two nations but had also further strengthened the areas

of trade and commerce, tourism and education. Today, the two countries have signed six memorandum of understanding including two agreements during the last visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

A total area of 1.5 acres of land has been gifted for the construction of the Bangladesh Embassy in Thimphu. An agreement on the allotment of User Right of land was signed by the two countries and the deed for the User Right of land was also signed at the event. It is also a historic outcome having unveiled the foundation stone for the Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh graced by His Majesty and the Prime Ministers of both the countries. Thus, the Parliament would like to express its appreciation to the governments of two nations.

12. The 13th Round Table Meeting was held from 15-16 April 2017. During the meeting, the donor partners and agencies expressed their commitment for continued support for the 12th Five Year Plan. The Parliament of Bhutan would like to thus thank all donor countries, agencies and financial institutions for their commitment of continued support to Bhutan.

13. Under the wise leadership of His Majesty, the three armed forces of the nation have been shouldering the responsibility for the security of the people and the country through out the clock. The members of the armed forces had also been rendering their support in times of natural calamities in the country. Similarly, the Dessups have always voluntarily rendered their service in times of huge public gatherings and disasters. Thus, on behalf of the Parliament, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the armed forces and the Dessung.

14. The Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) secretariat and President of Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) Dasho Karma Ura made presentations on the 12th FYP Guidelines and research survey findings to the Hon'ble Members of the National Assembly. It would help the National Assembly in proper planning and disseminating of information related to the next five year plan. Therefore, we would like to thank the coordinators for the programme.

15. I would also like to take this opportunity to speak few words on Teachers' Day which we celebrated yesterday. His late Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo provided free education and established numerous schools across the country for the benefit of the people during his reign. Since then, the quality of education has come a long way in Bhutan. Yesterday, we paid tribute to His late Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo and to around 9,000 teachers who are working hard to educate over 171,000 students in 600 schools across the country. The Parliament would like to therefore express its appreciation to all the people for their tributes on an important day.

16. Recently, the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) had conducted Local Government election for the vacant posts of local leaders in Gewogs and Thromdes. Therefore, the Parliament would like to extend appreciation and congratulate all the elected leaders, Thromde representatives, Tshogpas and Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) for the successful elections. It is hoped that the elected leaders will serve the Tsa Wa Sum with utmost dedication and loyalty.

17. Lastly, with the grace of Triple Gem and guardian deities, benevolent guidance of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, prayers of the monastic body,

collective merits of the people of Bhutan and support from the Members of Parliament, I am hopeful that the Ninth Session of the Second Parliament of Bhutan would be very successful.

THANK YOU
