

**Inaugural Address of the Tshogpon Jigme Zangpo at the Opening  
Ceremony of the Tenth Session of the Second Parliament of Bhutan  
15 November, 2017**

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1. The Tenth Session of the Second Parliament commences today on this auspicious day graced by the kind presence of our beloved His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo.

On behalf of the Members of Parliament and on my own behalf, I would like to offer gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for gracing the Opening Ceremony leaving aside numerous Royal engagements to attend for the welfare of the country.

2. I would also like to welcome Her Majesty the Gyaltshuen, Members of the Royal Family, representatives of the Central Monastic Body, foreign dignitaries, senior government officials and armed forces, members of the parliament and all the people who have come to witness the occasion.
3. His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo has undertaken numerous Royal initiatives in the interest of the nation. His Majesty personally visited Haa, Samtse, Bumthang, Chukha and Gasa Dzongkhags and granted *kidu* to the needy people. His Majesty met with people of 1,157 households and granted 433.57 acres of land *kidu* to the people under Gasa Dzongkhag, which will benefit the people in achieving their self sufficiency pursuits.

His Majesty had also met with the people in the areas affected by natural disasters and granted *soelrey* and *kidu* to the affected families.

The Parliament would like to express gratitude to His Majesty the King.

4. Coinciding with the Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Her Majesty The Gyalsuen formally launched the "Bhutan for Life" initiative, which is a joint initiative of the Royal Government of Bhutan, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and other development partners. It is a strategic and long-term solution to provide a sustained flow of finance to maintain Bhutan's protected areas and biological corridors for perpetuity. The initiative draws on the exceptional success story of Bhutan in conservation, guided by the farsighted vision of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, and strengthened by the continued efforts of His Majesty the King.

Her Majesty the Gyalsuen as the United Nations Environment Programme Ozone Ambassador has bolstered our endeavour of protecting the ozone layer. During the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Montreal Protocol held in Thimphu, Her Majesty the Gyalsuen declared and inaugurated the Ozone Park in Motithang recently.

The Parliament would like to express our gratitude to His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo for gifting this great vision, His Majesty the King for strengthening this great vision for Bhutan and the world, and Her Majesty the Gyalsuen for patronizing these noble initiatives.

5. His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Gyalsuen visited Thailand in October 2016 to offer respects to His Late Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej who passed away on 13 October, 2016. Their Majesties accompanied by His Royal Highness the Gyalsey also visited Thailand from 25 - 27 October 2017 to offer last respects and prayers to His Late

Majesty during the Royal Cremation Ceremony. His Majesty conveyed messages of condolence and prayers of prosperity for Thailand to His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn. The visits symbolize existing close ties between Bhutan and Thailand and further deepens our relations to newer heights.

Recognizing the deep admiration for His Late Majesty the King in Bhutan, His Majesty also commanded to organize a ceremony to offer prayers and light thousand butter lamps across the nation. A grand prayer ceremony with lighting of thousand butter lamps was held before the Buddha Dordenma statue at Kuensel Phodrang in Thimphu, presided over by His Holiness the Je Khenpo, and attended by the Royal Family Members, Senior Government Officials, Diplomatic corps, parliamentarians and Thai community living in Thimphu. On behalf of the Parliament, we would like to express our gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo and His Holiness the Je Khenpo for the noble initiative.

6. On the invitation of the Prime Minister of India, His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, accompanied by Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen and His Royal Highness the Gyalsey visited New Delhi, India from 31 October - 3 November, 2017. The Royal visit of Their Majesties is in keeping with the long standing tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries. The Royal visit provided an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation, including befitting celebrations for the golden jubilee of Bhutan and India's diplomatic relations in 2018, and to advance the special bilateral ties of friendship and cooperation. For this, we would like to offer our gratitude to Their Majesties and His Royal Highness the Gyalsey.

7. His Majesty the King has further strengthened the friendly relations between the Government of India and Bhutan, which was established in 1958. To showcase strong bilateral ties between the two nations, His Majesty has commanded to commemorate the celebrations of the golden jubilee of Indo-Bhutan diplomatic relations, and also established a high level committee under the Chairmanship of former Chief Justice Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye. The Parliament would like to express our words of appreciations to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo.

We are hopeful that the Chairman and the members of the committee will effectively carry out the preparatory works for the successful celebration of the event as commanded by His Majesty.

The Government of India has been supporting our development plans and we look forward for the continued support. The Parliament would like to express appreciation to the Government of India and its people for their continued support.

8. His Holiness the Je Khenpo has been presiding over the oral transmission of *Kanjur* before Buddha Dordenmaat Kuensel Phodrang in Thimphu from 2 August to 3 November, 2017. The event was organized for the benefit of all sentient beings, continued flourishing of Buddha Dharma and for the peace and prosperity of the country. The oral transmission commenced from 6:30 a.m. till 6:30 p.m daily for 12 long hours and was held for three long months which concluded successfully. The Parliament on behalf of all people would like to extend our deepest gratitude to His Holiness the Je Khenpo.

More than 15,000 devotees gathered at Kuensel Phodrang everyday. People from Ladakh and Nepal also visited Bhutan to offer *Ku Sung*

*Thug Ten Mendrel* to His Holiness the Je Khenpo, which truly signifies an eternal flourishing of Buddha Dharma.

Similarly, we would like to offer our sincere gratitude to His Holiness for presiding over the Annual *Moenlam Chenmo* of Thimphu Dzongkhag right after the oral transmission of *Kanjur*. His Holiness the Je Khenpo made a generous contribution Nu. 10,000,000.00 (Ngultrum Ten Million) to Bhutan Health Trust Fund with blessings and prayers for the good health of all Bhutanese.

Similarly, the Parliament also would like to thank the religious masters and *Khentruels* from Zhung Dratshang and various religious centres, Royal Bhutan Police, Desuups, voluntary groups and devoted sponsors for their support and coordination.

9. Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck, as the UNFPA goodwill Ambassador, made high-level advocacy visits to 19 Dzongkhags promoting public awareness on priority public health and social issues like mother and child health, mental health, domestic and gender-based violence. Furthermore, under Her Majesty's patronage, the Royal Textile Academy initiated various exhibitions and competitions for promotion of textiles in the country.

On behalf of the Parliament, I would like to express our deep gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck and HRH Princess Euphelma Choden Wangchuck for gracing the 16th National Design and Art Competition held last month at RTA.

10. Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck visited Japan for one week in October 2017. During the commemoration of the 60 years of friendly relations between Bhutan and Kyoto University, Her

Royal Highness delivered an Address and also met with the Japanese imperial family. Such meeting will not only strengthen close ties between two nations, and the Royal Families, but also deepen lasting friendship and facilitate support and assistance to the country. The Parliament would like to extend appreciation to Her Royal Highness. Similarly, we would like to thank the Government of Japan for their continued support and assistance to our country.

11. His Royal Highness Prince Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck has taken numerous initiatives within a short period of time, after taking over the responsibility as the President of the Bhutan Olympic Committee. His Royal Highness has established numerous multi-purpose halls, football grounds and committee offices. The laying of artificial turfs has encouraged many Bhutanese youths to develop enthusiasm for football.

Among numerous initiatives, there have been huge achievements in the field of archery, taekwondo and body building. Our athletes bagged many gold and silver medals for the country. Additionally, the standard of football has been significantly improved as well.

Moreover, such skills have immensely benefitted our youth thereby strengthening the cooperation and friendship among various countries. Therefore, the Parliament would like to extend our gratitude to His Royal Highness for the initiatives.

It is hopeful that the youths of Bhutan will increasingly participate in the Olympic Games with much enthusiasm and spirits in future.

12. I would like to report to the House that with the blessings of Triple Gem and benevolent leadership of His Majesty, we have successfully

hosted first ever Asian Parliamentary Assembly's Standing Committee Meeting on Social and Cultural Affairs in Bhutan.

More than 100 parliamentarians from 20 countries, including Bhutan participated and unanimously adopted the 10 resolutions. The 10 resolutions covered a wide range of issues of mutual interest such as strengthening democracy based on Gross National Happiness, measures to Promote Cultural Diversity and Protect Cultural Heritage in Asia and achieving 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Resolutions on Asian Parliamentarians against Corruption, APA Women Parliamentarians, Promoting Inter-faith Dialogue and Harmony among World Religions were also successfully deliberated and adopted.

13. On September 22, Lyonchen Dasho Tshering Tobgay along with 193 other world leaders attended the General Debate of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. Lyonchen reaffirmed our commitment for fighting climate change, counter terrorism, eradicating poverty and maintaining global peace and security. Lyonchen also highlighted on the system of Good Governance passed down by our visionary monarchs to our people. We would like to thank the Prime Minister for representing the country in an extraordinary manner.

Additionally, Lyonchen visited 20 Dzongkhags and **195** Gewogs out of 205 Gewogs in the country, thereby providing opportunities to hear concerns and aspirations of the people, exchange opinions with the people, and create awareness regarding the government's accountability and people's responsibilities. Such initiatives have benefitted people a lot and thus, we would like to offer appreciation to Lyonchen for such initiatives.

14. A group of delegation led by Dasho (Dr.) Sonam Kinga, Chairperson of the National Council attended the First Executive Council Meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and also attended the 137<sup>th</sup> IPU meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia. We would like to thank the Chairperson for the fruitful parliamentary exchange and coming up with successful outcomes.
15. Similarly, I attended the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians (ASSP) in Sri Lanka, and also visited Brussels upon the special invitation of the President of the European Union. The European Union besides, assuring EU support for the capacity building of the Parliament of Bhutan, had also affirmed the continued support, in huge amount, to our country beyond 12 FYP cycle. The Parliament of Bhutan would like to thank the European Parliament for its development assistance in the past years and for assuring continued assistance in the coming years. Besides that, the visit also saw the exchanges of opinions among the parliaments and consultative deliberations on fostering relationships and ties, which concluded fruitfully.
16. Envisioning peace and prosperity in the country, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo has propounded the visionary philosophy of Gross National Happiness as the national development philosophy since 1970s. The philosophy of GNH has thus been recognized and widespread in the world by 2012. Furthermore, recognizing its significance in 2015, the philosophy has therefore been based in one of the 17 goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Accordingly, the Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) has organized 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Gross National Happiness: "GNH of Business" for three days in Thimphu.



The conference saw an attendance of almost 400 participants including 177 experts from 30 other countries and 200 experts from Bhutan. The conference was held to execute government's plans, GNH of business and GNH in corporate governance and, for the exchange and sharing of experience and best practices among the countries. Moreover, the conference has benefitted in recognizing the national identity of the countries and further held deliberations on strengthening the cooperation and development of ties among the people and the countries, which reached fruitful conclusion. Therefore, the Parliament would like to express appreciation to Dasho Karma Ura, President of Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research for successfully conducting the conference.

17. The following bills and agreements will be deliberated in the Tenth Session:

The National Assembly will deliberate on the following:

- 1) Audit Bill of Bhutan 2017;
- 2) Tax Bill 2017;
- 3) Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Substance Abuse (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan;
- 4) Agreement Between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes of Income;
- 5) Others include Report of the Economic Development and Private Sector Committee, petitions from local government, question hours, motions and implementation reports of the resolutions.

18. Likewise, report by the Social and Cultural Committee on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), deliberation on the Joint Sittings deliberation on the Annual Audit Reports, Performance Audit Reports and Review Reports will also be deliberated in this session.
19. Lastly, with the blessings of the Triple Gem, noble guidance of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, prayers from the Monastic Body, collective merits of the Bhutanese people and the support from the Members of the Parliament, I am hopeful that the Tenth Session will conclude successfully.

**THANK YOU**