

CONCLUDING ADDRESS BY THE HON SPEAKER DURING THE 7TH SESSION OF THE FIRST PARLIAMENT

Kuzuk Zangpo!

The historic 7th session of the First Parliament of Bhutan concludes on this very auspicious day.

I, on behalf of the Hon Members of Parliament and on my own behalf, would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our benevolent His Majesty for gracing the concluding ceremony.

Similarly, we would like to welcome Members of the Royal Family, Senior Government Officials from three branches of Government, Officials of the Armed Forces, Ambassadors of India, Bangladesh and Kuwait, Diplomats, Media Personnel and Distinguished Guests. We would also like to express our greetings to all the Bhutanese people in different parts of the country who are witnessing this session through television and listening through radio.

The following Bills which could not draw consensus between the two Houses during the 5th and 6th Sessions on some of the provisions were tabled and endorsed in the Joint Sitting by means of voting as per the command of His Majesty in accordance to the provision of the Constitution;

1. Penal Code (Amendment) Bill
2. Civil and Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill
3. Financial Services Bill
4. Anti Corruption (Amendment) Bill
5. Child Care and Protection Bill
6. Water Bill
7. Legislative Procedure, 2011

As the King endear subjects, subjects aspire peace and happiness and as law is the basis of all peace and happiness, the above bills were accorded paramount importance and passed as Acts after extensive deliberation.

Although the law implementing agencies particularly the Royal Bhutan Police and the Judiciary have been carrying out their responsibilities as per the rule of law, however, Members expressed their concerns about the complaints raised by the people regarding the non compliance of due process of the law, delayed cases and award of different verdicts.

In addition, the House also ratified SAARC Convention on Environment and Convention on Anti Doping in Sports which were extensively deliberated in the 6th Session by both Houses.

Bhutan Institute of Medical Sciences Bill has been deliberated by the National Assembly and is transmitted to the National Council. The Adoption Bill which could not draw consensus between the two Houses is submitted to His Majesty by the National Council.

The Sales Tax, Customs and Excise (Amendment) Bill, Election (Amendment) Bill and Public Finance (Amendment) Bill which were discussed by the National Assembly in its 6th Session and transmitted to the National Council were re-deliberated during the current session. Since there were disagreements on some provisions, it has been therefore resolved to be submitted to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo in line with the provision of the Constitution.

In line with the annual report of the Finance Minister, the National Assembly endorsed the following Bills and received recommendations thereof from the National Council;

- a) Supplementary Bill for the FY 2010-2011 amounting to Nu. 2,649.00 million
- b) National Budget for FY 2011-2012 amounting to Nu. 42,174.740 million (Current Budget Nu. 17, 185.309 and Capital Budget Nu. 24,989.431 million)
- c) Tax Revision Bill, 2011. These Money Bills are submitted to His Majesty for Royal Assent.

As the alcohol causes lots of health and social problems and in order to control the negative impact of alcohol, the tax on alcohol products has been nominally raised. Likewise, the taxes on import of vehicles have been raised to reduce air pollution and control the vehicle number, vehicle accidents and traffic congestion. It is hoped that these raise in taxes would benefit the economic development of the country.

As the presentation of Report on the State of the Nation by Hon Lyonchhen to the Parliament was broadcast live through television and radio, it is hoped that the people would be appreciative of achievements of economic development activities by the government within the span of one year. The most significant achievement was the reduction of poverty level to 23 percent from 32 percent.

With the granting of Kidu by His Majesty the King to the genuinely deserving people the poverty level had been greatly reduced and His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's vision of Gross National Happiness has been fully realized entailing peace and happiness to all the Bhutanese people.

The Hon Lyonchhen while presenting the Report on the State of the Nation said that the democratic system has been running smoothly under the wise leadership of His Majesty the King since its inception. However, it is important for the Members and Bhutanese people to consider State Funding to Political parties for strong and sustained democratic system and to build strong foundation of the political parties without corruption.

The House engaged in extensive deliberation on the Annual Anti Corruption Report and Annual Audit Report. The Members opined that if the civil servants and leaders shoulder their responsibility and accountability with added sense of duty and vigor, the instances of fraud, corruption and embezzlements would not occur besides timely achievement of economic developments.

Among the several measures, it was resolved to strictly enforce the fixation of accountability and oversight responsibility in compliance to the Section 182 and 183 of the Public Finance Act. The Members also submitted that the Judiciary should acknowledge and award timely verdicts on the cases forwarded through Office of Attorney General.

It was only after three years that the Local Government election could be held. However, there few problems related to political party affiliation and census issues, which were resolved due to the timely direction and guidance provided by His Majesty the King.

On behalf of the Parliament, I would like to express appreciation for the successful conduct of Local Government elections through the participation of thousands of civil servants and defense personnel under the aegis of Election Commission of Bhutan.

However, while there was 79 percent of voter turnout during the 2008 parliamentary elections, the voter turnout during the recent Local Government Elections was only 56 percent. Therefore, it is a cause of small concern as to whether one was able to fully exercise ones voting rights and assert individual's needs in the election of a suitable leader.

In the last July, I, along with three Members attended the 3rd World Speakers' Conference at Geneva. This has fostered very strong sense of friendship and co-operation among the Members of the Parliaments.

Likewise, this year, on the invitation extended by the Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, I led a delegation to Bangladesh. The visit not only provided opportunity for us to meet with their Prime Minister, Speaker, Leader of Opposition and their Parliamentarians but was also beneficial for further strengthening our bilateral relations between the two countries.

On our way back from Bangladesh we visited industrial sites and Tamal Bil the new trade route established between the two countries which would

immensely benefit the business community of the eastern Bhutan in expanding their business. We also met with the Governor and Members of the State Legislative Assembly of the Shillong, Meghalaya and further deepened our relations.

Similarly, I am leading five Member parliamentary delegation tomorrow to attend the 5th Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians at New Delhi. As we will be meeting with the Speakers and Parliamentarians from eight member countries, it is hoped that our relations would be further strengthened.

During the inaugural ceremony of the current session, His Majesty the King announced about the Royal Wedding for the continuity of the Wangchuck dynasty. To this, the Parliament, with great joy and pride pledged full support for the Royal Wedding. We offer our prayers and hopes for this historic occasion to be a grand success with the excellent arrangements made by the government as per the wishes of His Majesty the King.

Although the 7th Session has been lengthy, it successfully concludes today which is chiefly attributable to the blessings of triple gem, advice and guidance of His Majesty the King, support of the Hon Lyonchhen and Members, and the merit of the Bhutanese people.

Lastly, let us together offer Tashi Moenlam for the good health and long life of His Majesty the King, Members of the Royal Family and pray for the continued peace and prosperity of the Bhutanese people. ***(8th Day of the 5th Month of the Iron Female Rabbit Year 8th July, 2011)***

Kadinche!

