

**Speech of the Speaker Jigme Zangpo at the Closing Ceremony of the Eighth  
Session of the Second Parliament of Bhutan  
(December 9, 2016)**

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1. Today, on behalf of the Members of Parliament and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome and express our gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for gracing the Closing Ceremony of the Eighth Session despite having numerous Royal engagements for the welfare of the people and the country.
2. I would also like to welcome Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen, 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.
3. The Closing Ceremony of the Eighth Session is indeed an extraordinary day as it exactly coincides with the tenth year of His Majesty's reign on the Golden Throne. Therefore, it is a very opportune and a historic moment to have the Closing Ceremony on this day.
4. His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo has undertaken numerous initiatives in the interest of the nation like conservation of environment, promoting peace and happiness and making the people self sufficient through economic growth. His Majesty had also formulated noble policies ensuring preservation of culture, granting citizenships, addressing land issues through *Kidu* and granting scholarships. Ever since the enthronement of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty has continued these noble initiatives of His

Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo with great enthusiasm. Time is indeed inadequate, if I am to make a comprehensive submission on the royal initiatives.

During the 86<sup>th</sup> session of the erstwhile National Assembly, His Majesty had commanded that there shall be no individual in between the King and the people. This was one of the important commands of His Majesty. Moreover, during the coronation in 2008, His Majesty said that throughout his reign, he will never rule as a king but protect the people as a parent, care as a brother and serve as a son. All that the King asks is the support from the Government and the people. Accordingly, His Majesty had visited all the remote areas and met with the people of 205 Gewogs in Twenty Dzongkhags thereby granting land, plots and addressing census issues. His Majesty had also personally visited the areas affected by natural disasters and met with the people granting *kidu* to the victims.

In an effort to ensure the security of the nation and continued peace for the people, His Majesty had visited numerous establishments of the armed forces and strengthened the institutions of armed forces. As a form of rendering support to the armed forces, the *Desuung* programme has been initiated by His Majesty. His Majesty has also sent service men and women from the Royal Bhutan Armed Forces to the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions. Furthermore, His Majesty had initiated scout programmes so that the youth could receive wholesome education and skills. His Majesty had also visited numerous schools and granted words of wisdom to the teachers and students.

His Majesty had granted audience to the civil servants and imparted valuable advice in serving the Tsa-Wa-Sum. In order to maintain our peaceful society and justice system in the country, His Majesty had established the Supreme Court. Besides His Majesty's continued initiatives for the sustainable socio-economic development, medals of appreciation have been awarded to those in civil service and other sections of the society reinforcing their commitment and dedication to serve.

Similarly, religious bodies have carried out renovation and new construction works for Dratshangs, Lhakhangs, Chortens, Goendeys and Dzongs complimenting the magnanimity of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo. His Majesty had visited numerous foreign countries and met with the leaders further strengthening Bhutan's relations. Under the noble leadership of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the Constitution of Bhutan was adopted and two Parliamentary elections and two Local Government elections have been successfully conducted.

Therefore, on behalf of the Parliament, we would like to offer our immense gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo as these are the fruitful results of His Majesty's noble leadership, invaluable advice and continued guidance.

5. Under the glorious reign of our monarchs, Bhutan has been recognized as a country rich in environment, culture and Gross National Happiness. In order to further promote our country's reputation as a clean country, His Majesty had granted the 9<sup>th</sup> of December as a Nation Wide Cleaning Campaign Day. Therefore, we would like to express our gratitude to His Majesty.

6. The auspicious birth of His Royal Highness Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck is a precious gift from Their Majesties to the people as we observe three extremely significant occasions in the country. The Royal birth will espouse the perpetuity of the Wangchuck dynasty, has fulfilled the aspiration of the people and will benefit the security of the nation, people's happiness and peace. It has further provided an opportunity for the people to pay our tribute to the successive monarchs.

Thus, we would like to offer our heartfelt gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo and Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen.

7. Our great monarchs have always taken noble initiative to conserve the natural environment which has been exemplary to the rest of the world. In the same context, with the objective to conserve environment and reduce global temperature, the Paris Agreement was signed on behalf of the government of Bhutan by the Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations in New York. Subsequently, the National Assembly had extensively deliberated and ratified the Paris Agreement. We are hopeful that the agreement will benefit efforts in dealing with climate change and environmental conservation.
8. Likewise, Bhutan Red Cross Society Bill has been adopted. The Bill was adopted mainly because it would facilitate efforts in times of natural disasters by generating funds and drawing in voluntary contributions from civil society organizations. On behalf of the Parliament, we would like to offer our gratitude to Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen for being the patron of Bhutan Red Cross Society and carrying out such noble initiative.

9. Furthermore, the Trade, Commerce and Transit Agreement between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India has been adopted. The tradition of friendly relations shared by a small country like Bhutan and a big country like India has been exemplary to the rest of the world. The unrestricted trade agreement between the two countries was first signed in 1972 by Paro Poenlop, His Royal Highness the Prince Namgyel Wangchuck and Ambassador of India to Bhutan Shri. B.S. Das. The agreement since then has been revised four times.

Moreover, the signing of trade agreement by the Economic Affairs Minister of Bhutan, Leki Dorji, and Commerce and Industry Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2016, will greatly benefit in further enhancing the unrestricted trade between the two countries. Thus, the Parliament of Bhutan would like to thank the government and the people of India.

10. The Prime Minister of Bhutan Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay was conferred “*Lungmar Kabney*” on 17<sup>th</sup> of December, 2014 by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for fervently serving the government and people of Bhutan with dedication and in a humble manner. The Prime Minister has visited 20 Dzongkhags and 121 Gewogs thus far addressing the problems of rural people. He has also visited various foreign countries strengthening Bhutan’s diplomatic relations.

11. Similarly, our Prime Minister was ranked among the top 50 leaders in the world following his remarkable speech at the Ted Talk which is renowned for intellectual speeches, in Vancouver, Canada.

12. This year, the Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay had also received “German Sustainability Award 2016” albeit Bhutan being a small nation.

Receiving such coveted award by the Prime Minister will further add to the popularity and reputation of the country and thus people of Bhutan are truly proud and happy. In addition, this would also enhance the sovereignty, security, diplomatic relations and the economy of the country. We would like to therefore express our appreciation and congratulate the Prime Minister.

Such awards received by the Prime Minister are mainly attributable to the farsighted leadership of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo and the royal guidance in formulating noble policies and strategies such as good governance.

The Parliament would like to therefore extend our heartfelt gratitude to the father of the Nation, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, and His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo.

13. We, the Parliament would like to thank His Holiness the Je Khenpo and venerable Lopens of the Central Monastic Body for initiating and conducting rituals for the well-being of the people, and to avert and curtail misfortunes in the country.

14. Under the patronage of Her Royal Highness, Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck, Bhutan National Legal Institute has initiated numerous activities. One such activity included the conduct of training on 'Internal dispute mediation' to the officials working in the Judiciary, local leaders of 20 Dzongkhags and men and women totaling 1,053 people till June 2016. This is in view of fulfilling the aspirations of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo in providing timely justice to the people. Subsequent to such training and guidance, between June 2012 and June 2015, a total of 15,316 cases were resolved through internal dispute mediation of the total 36,250 registered cases.

The Parliament would like to express our gratitude to Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck for coming up with such initiative which is greatly benefiting the society and reducing the number of cases referred to the courts.

15. His Royal Highness Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the representative of His Majesty in the east had initiated and graced the ground breaking ceremony for the construction of Integrated Agro Processing Plant at Limithang in Mongar on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The plant once completed will not only benefit the people depending on agriculture but would also create employment opportunities.

On behalf of the parliament, I would like to express our gratitude to His Royal Highness Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.

16.I am pleased to inform the general public that the Members of the National Assembly had made a three day official visit to Mangdechhu and Tangsibji Hydro Power Projects from 1<sup>st</sup> December to 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2016.

En route to Mangdechhu Hydro Power Project, the Managing Director of Punatsangchhu Hydro Power Project informed us that the 1,200 megawatt Punatsangchhu Hydro Power Project I with the estimated budget outlay of Nu. 35.150 billion in 2006 has been revised to an estimated cost of Nu. 93.756 billion. The project would be completed in July 2019. While the 1,020 megawatt Punatsangchhu Hydro Power Project II would be completed by 2020, the cost of the project has been revised to Nu. 72.906 billion from Nu. 37.780 billion in 2009.

Similarly, the survey and Detailed Project Report for the Tangsibji Hydro Power Project was done by the Druk Green Power Corporation. Most of the construction works for the project is being carried out by the Bhutanese people. Considering the impressive progress, the 118 megawatt Hydro Power Project, with the budget outlay of Nu. 11,964.59 million would be completed on time.

17.Likewise, the estimated cost for the Mangdechhu Hydro Power Project which was estimated at Nu.28.963 billion as reflected in the Detail Project Report has been revised to Nu.40.206 billion. A total of Nu. 3,225.55 million from the amount of Nu.3646.78 million received by the government has been spent so far bearing good results. It is hoped that the 720 megawatt project would be completed by March 2017 despite slight delay in the works.

There are 90 percent Bhutanese and 10 percent Indians working in the project. This would greatly benefit us in creating more employment opportunities and help the Bhutanese people gain experience and skills in executing similar projects in the future.

We, the Parliament would like to thank the Managing Directors, Director Generals, officers and staff of the Punatsangchhu Hydro Power Project, Tangsibji Hydro Power Project and Mangdechhu Hydro Power Project for clearly guiding us through project sites and progress made by the projects.

18. Meanwhile, the parliamentarians also visited Trongsa Dzong and the Royal Heritage Museum which gave us an opportunity to lay our sights on personal effects of the successive monarchs and sculptures of our forefathers.

Since 2008, entrance fees amounting to Nu. 91 lakhs has been collected from visitors visiting the Royal Heritage Museum and has been deposited in the government treasury.

19. Similarly, all the works for the renovation of Trongsa Dzong were carried out by Bhutanese people. Such expression of interest and enthusiasm by the Bhutanese people will go a long way in preserving our heritage and securing job opportunities for skilled people.

20. I would like to inform that with the emphasis of the government, the road widening works for the East-West Highway is progressing well. To cite an example, over 80% of the highway between Thimphu and

Wangduephodrang has been blacktopped. The plan for road widening works between Wangduephodrang and Trongsa has been formulated well but small problems resulting from weather conditions were faced.

However, the Ministry of Works & Human Settlement, engineers and contractors are working hard day in and day out as per the plans of the government. I would like to thus express our appreciation to them.

20. In this Eighth Session, the National Assembly has adopted two Bills and two international conventions. Consensus could not be reached between the National Assembly and the National Council on the Customs Bill of Bhutan and Motor Vehicle Agreement between Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Therefore, as per the legislative procedure, the agreement and the Bill has been submitted to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for the Royal Assent to be deliberated in the joint sitting.

The House deliberated on the audit reports, report and recommendations submitted by the Public Accounts Committee and reached fruitful resolutions. Besides, in order to exempt taxes on fixed deposits and enhance the banking service, the Income Tax Act of 2001 has been amended. The budget of Nu. 617.743 million was allocated to the Ministry of Labor & Human Resources for the financial year 2016-17 has been inadequate to address unemployment issues. Therefore, supplementary budget amounting to Nu. 262.808 million was approved by the House. The amount for the supplementary budget was generated from interest received on account of the subordinated debt instruments under the Economic Stimulus Plan. It is hoped that the supplementary budget approved would help address the unemployment issues.

21. The Eighth Session concludes today successfully with the blessings of the Triple Gem, and noble guidance under the leadership of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo. During the deliberations, the Members of Parliament have refrained from their personal interest and have been mindful of laws and policies. Deliberations also focused on ensuring check and balance with the support and cooperation of the Members of Parliament.

Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to His Majesty and the Members of Parliament for making this session fruitful.

22. On behalf of the Members, we would like to thank the chairpersons and the members of the committees for having carried out productive review tasks, presenting quality reports and providing clarifications and opinions to the House. We would also like to thank the Secretary General and the staffs of the National Assembly Secretariat for their tireless efforts in bringing out the resolutions of the House on time.

23. Lastly, before the Golden Throne, we would like to offer our prayers for the good health and long life of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo and the Members of the Royal Family. We would also like to offer our prayers for the good health and long life of His Holiness the Je Khenpo and all other noble beings. Furthermore, we would like to offer our prayers for the peace and happiness of the people of Bhutan and the world at large.

**THANK YOU!**

