

**Inaugural Address by Tshogpoen Wangchuk Namgyel at the
Opening Ceremony of the Fifth Session of the Third Parliament
(27th May, 2021)**

1. The Fifth Session of the Third Parliament commences on this auspicious day in the presence of the sacred Golden Throne.
2. On behalf of all Members of Parliament and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome and express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King for gracing the Opening Ceremony.
3. I would also like to welcome Her Majesty the Queen, Members of the Royal Family (If it pleases Her Majesty and the Royal Family to grace the occasion), senior government officials, and foreign diplomats and dignitaries to the opening ceremony.
4. The Covid-19 pandemic has created havoc around the world. Amid this pandemic, His Majesty the King has always shown great love and compassion to the people. His Majesty has tirelessly visited southern borders to ensure peace, tranquility and happiness for the people.

Furthermore, Her Majesty the Queen, Her Majesty the Queen Mothers, and Their Highnesses the Prince have made tireless visits across the country meeting people and college students imparting wisdom and guidance. Parliament would like to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen and the Members of the Royal Family.

5. It must be tiring to be constantly reminded of the Covid pandemic. However, I feel it is important to remind ourselves from time to time. While we enjoy safety and are free from worries with our beloved families and loved ones, His Majesty the King has been working endless days and nights and sacrificing rests and meals. His Majesty has been constantly monitoring the situation, providing strategic directions and counsels on the prevention and overcoming the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic to the Covid-19 Task Force and to our people.

His Majesty the King has provided free medical services to the people affected by the pandemic and provided free vaccines to the people. These love and care are possible only with the exemplary leadership of His Majesty the King. The Parliament, therefore, would like to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King.

6. Under the farsighted vision of His Majesty the King, *Desuung* programme has been initiated in the country. The programme has benefitted numerous civil servants, public servants, and the youths across the country with useful skills and experiences. The programme has provided a good opportunity to support the army and police personnels, employment for the youths, and improvement of livelihood for the people of rural areas through rural water service projects.

Furthermore, His Majesty the King granted approval to continue providing financial support to the individuals affected by the global pandemic for 15 months through His Majesty's monetary and financial relief programme. This benevolence is beyond our imagination. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King.

7. Similarly, the monastic body led by His Holiness the Je Khenpo and other religious masters have been performing numerous prayers and religious activities for the prevention of the global pandemic and during the time of nationwide covid-19 vaccine campaign in the country. The Parliament would like to offer sincere gratitude to His Holiness the Je Khenpo and the religious institutions.

Under His Majesty's command, the monastic bodies and religious institutions commemorated the Silver Jubilee of His Holiness the Je Khenpo. The Parliament would like to thank the religious institutions for the successful conduct of the celebration. Furthermore, Parliament would like to offer prayers for the long life of His Holiness the Je Khenpo.

8. The Government has been providing various measures for the prevention of this pandemic. The first nationwide Covid-19 vaccine campaign has been exceedingly a successful and an exemplary one. Therefore, the Parliament would like to thank the Government, and extend wishes for the similar fruitful outcome during the second phase of vaccine campaign, and for the continued support hereafter.
9. Due to the good relationship between the leaders, and strong bilateral ties between the two nations, Bhutan received free dosages of Covid-19 vaccines from the Government of India. It is also to be noted that such generosity has been extended when India herself needed the vaccine much more. Therefore, the Parliament would like to express sincere gratitude to the Government of India. At the same time, we would like to extend our huge condolences to the people of India who are affected by the pandemic.

10. The Parliament would like to share sympathy to Dasho Sherub Gyeltshen from Mongar Constituency and also former Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs on his resignation as Member of Parliament after his two and half years of service. Similarly, the Parliament deeply mourns and shares our deepest sympathy on the untimely demise of Honorable Choida Jamtsho, who was a Member of Parliament from Nganglam Constituency.

11. Besides the normal Legislative and parliamentary functions, I would also like to take the opportunity to share some of the important agenda items that will be deliberated during this session:

- Annual Budget for FY 2021-2022;
- Royal Bhutan Police (Amendment) Bill 2021;
- Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2021;
- Biodiversity Bill of Bhutan 2021;
- Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill 2021;
- The Customs (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2021;
- Third Reading of the Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2019.

The House will also ratify the following conventions:

- Ratification of the Preferential Trade Agreement between the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) and Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh;
- United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) (Amendment) Bill of 2021; along with the Annual Anti-Corruption

Commission Review Report 2019, and deliberation on the Implementation Report on the Resolutions of the previous Sessions.

The Joint Sitting of the Parliament will deliberate the following:

- Five Performance Audit Report of the Public Accounts Committee;
- Deliberation of the Disputed Clauses between the two Houses on the Mines and Minerals Bill of Bhutan 2020, and Lhengye Zhungtshog Bill of Bhutan 2020.

12. Lastly, under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty the King and the Members of the Royal Family, prayers from His Holiness the Je Khenpo and monastic bodies, collective merits of the Bhutanese people, and support from the Members of the Parliament, I would like to offer prayers for fruitful deliberation and successful conclusion of the Fifth Session.

Thank You.