

**Address of the Tshogpon Jigme Zangpo at the Closing Ceremony of
the Tenth Session of Second Parliament of Bhutan on 8th December,
2017**

1. The Tenth Session of Second Parliament concludes today on this auspicious day graced by the kind presence of our beloved His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo.
2. On behalf of the Members of Parliament, I would like to welcome and express gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for gracing the Closing Ceremony, leaving aside numerous Royal engagements. From the Golden Throne, His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo has bestowed invaluable words of wisdom on the foundation of our democratic system, peace and security and sovereignty of the country. Furthermore, His Majesty has showered us with His profound vision for happiness and well-being of the people, economic development of the nation and responsibility and accountability of each individual in the country.

I would also like to welcome Her Majesty the Gyaltshen, Members of the Royal Family, representatives of the Central Monastic Body, foreign dignitaries, senior government officials and armed forces, and all the guests who have come to witness this occasion.

3. His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo has always worked tirelessly for the peace and security of the people, promoting economic development, and granting *kidu* to the needy people. Therefore, the Parliament would like to express utmost gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo.

The Parliament would like to offer sincere gratitude to Her Majesty the Gyaltshen, Their Majesties the Gyalyum, His Royal Highnesses and the Royal Family for taking various initiatives for the welfare of the country.

4. His Holiness the Je Khenpo has carried out numerous initiatives for the promotion of Buddha Dharma in the country, and accumulating merits for the Bhutanese people. Moreover, His Holiness had presided

over the *Moенlam Chenmo* in Punakha, and performed numerous religious transmissions of *Ka Choe Wang Sum* in various Dzongkhags. Therefore, the Parliament would like to express gratitude to His Holiness the Je Khenpo.

Many *Khentruels* have been conducting numerous *Kurims* in the country for the peace and prosperity in the country. Therefore, the Parliament would like to offer gratitude to all *Khentruels* for the initiatives.

5. In an effort to ensure the security of the nation and continued peace for the people, three Armed Forces have been serving tirelessly across the nation. We would like to extend appreciation to all Armed Forces personnel in the country.
6. The Government has formulated Five Year Plan to realizing the community development in the country; in the ministries, agencies, dzongkhags and gewogs. In addition, fifty two Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were registered which have also helped in the development of community to a great extent. For example, the Tarayana Foundation, Youth Development Fund, Bhutan Kidney Foundation, Loden Foundation, Clean Bhutan, Bhutan Toilet Organization, RENEW, Bhutan Media Foundation had been benefiting the community in big ways by improving skills and also generating employment opportunities for thousand of youth. Hence, the Parliament would like to express admiration to all registered NGOs for playing complementary roles in the unreached rural areas.
7. For kind information of the people of Bhutan, Members of the National Council and the National Assembly as entrusted representatives of the people indeed worked together harmoniously for last five years under the guidance of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo. It was our collective merits of the past deeds to have availed this opportunity to serve Tsa-Wa-Sum together as members of this apex legislative body.

I would also like to inform the House that as the continuous House of Review, the term of the Members of the National Council will be over by 9th May 2018 and reconstituted on 10th May 2018.

The Chairperson and Members of the National Council served with full dedication and most diligently carried out legislative and review functions in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

The Two Houses held ten fruitful sessions sharing high level of mutual respect and cooperation. The sessions were successful due to the extensive review of policies and legislations by the National Council. On behalf of the National Assembly, we would like to extend deep appreciation to the Chairperson and Members of the National Council. We would also like to extend our good wishes for the Members aspiring for the next election and for further successful endeavors in times to come. We are also hopeful that the Members would continue to serve Tsa-Wa-Sum as exemplary leaders in the community having attained immense experiences as Members of esteemed Parliament.

8. As part of the annual Parliamentary program of the National Assembly, I have led a Parliamentary delegation comprising of cabinet ministers and Members of the National Assembly to Phuentsholing from 1 - 3rd December, 2017 to oversee the status of various industrial entities in Pasakha, Mini Dry Port construction, special housing project and auction yard in Phuentsholing.

During the visit, the delegation met with proprietors and employees of the industries. It was learnt that as per the vision of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the government had established industries in 1986 with a budget of Nu. 2.6 billion to boost economic development, promote self sufficiency and generate job opportunities. Widening of access roads and construction of bridges in Pasakha are being contracted out. The annual revenue accrued to government in 2016 from industries amounted to Nu.528.906 million, which is about 1.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

It was also learnt that about 3,500 employees are Bhutanese and 500 are foreign workers, thereby promoting job opportunities for Bhutanese. Minor problems pertaining to electricity, business and customs issues were successfully resolved through mutual

understanding between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the State of West Bengal.

The National Assembly would like to extend gratitude to the President, General Secretary and proprietors of industries in Pasakha for warm reception and hospitality, and for arranging visits to industrial sites.

9. Similarly, a Nine-Storied Lhakhang named Sangay Mingyur Ling Mila Tower depicting the life of Jetsun Milarepa is under construction in Phuentsholing. It is for the benefit of Buddha Dharma and wellbeing of the people. The construction is 50% completed. Hence, the Parliament would like to thank Lam Kezang Tshulthrim for his noble initiative.
10. Phuentsholing Thromde has received a total amount of US \$10.82 million, out of which US \$9.56 million as grant and US \$ 1.26 million as concessional loan from Asian Development Bank for development of basic infrastructure like Mini Dry Port, northern bypass road and two bridges.

In addition, with GOI financing of Nu.100 million and RGoB financing of Nu.140 million, construction of vegetable market and multi-storied car park is under progress. The National Assembly was pleased to observe that the cleanliness of the town has improved.

Therefore, on the behalf of the Parliament and the residents of Phuentsholing Thromde, it is our pleasure to sincerely thank Asian Development Bank and the Government of India for their continued assistance.

11. As per the command of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the government had provided Nu.890 million for construction of 506 units of quarters for the benefit of people who are currently residing across the border in Phuentsholing. 10 contractors are currently engaged under the technical supervision of NHDCL and the project is expected to be completed by June 2018.

The project implementation is accelerated due to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo's great concern and frequent visits to the sites. In addition, Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers have also visited the sites to monitor the progress.

Upon the completion of the special housing project, 500 Bhutanese families who are facing housing problems will be solved. Therefore, Parliament of Bhutan would like to thank the Board Members and staff of National Housing Development Corporation Ltd. for carrying out the command works on time.

12. The parliamentary delegation from National Assembly also paid a short visit to the auction yard and met with sellers, buyers and FCBL. This year (2017) only, a total of 24,865.90 MT of potatoes and 4,103.69 MT of vegetables were sold, earning a total revenue collection of Nu.351.52 million and Nu. 115.85 million, respectively.

It was learnt that people were not willing to sell their potatoes in farm shops constructed by government. On the other hand, there was limited space in auction yards for storage of potatoes. With financial support of Nu.100 million provided by the government, people were able to receive sale proceeds on time.

13. The 10th Session of the National Assembly has adopted the following Bills for the benefit of the country and people:
 - a. The Information, Communication and Media Bill of Bhutan 2017;
 - b. The Anti- Money Laundering and Countering of Financing of Terrorism Bill of Bhutan 2017;
 - c. The Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Substance Abuse (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2017;
 - d. The Tourism Levy Exemption Bill of Bhutan 2017 (Money Bill).

After thorough deliberations, the above mentioned Bills were adopted to be submitted to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for the Royal Assent.

14. Similarly, the 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 on Income was also ratified. In addition, the National Assembly had also deliberated on the important report on “Active and Healthy Ageing” submitted by the Social and Cultural Committee.

As commanded by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, Royal Society for Senior Citizens was established to maintain close bond and respects between senior citizens and younger generations based on the age-old values and traditions of *Tha-dam-tshe Lay-Judrey*.

About 50 percent of our country’s population comprise of youth and children. The Government has been providing free education, healthcare and nutritional diets, because of which, the life expectancy of our people have now increased to 68 years in 2017 from 47.5 years in 1985. According to the National Statistics Bureau, the number of senior citizens above 60 years of age increased from 56,827 in 2016 to 58,804 in 2017, out of the total estimated population of 6,65,423.

The Government has provided pension and provident fund benefits to the retired civil servants, public servants and armed forces personnel.

There is a high concern of breaking down the culture of extended family and children looking after their old aged parents. In order to prevent vanishing of family support norms, the Parliament has allotted one-day session for deliberating on SDGs. Accordingly, the National Assembly has resolved that the children should look after their parents and the Government should formulate policies and plans on this matter.

15. The deliberation on the Annual Audit Report and Performance Audit Reports of the Royal Audit Authority submitted by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was also deliberated successfully.

The successful deliberation was possible mainly because of the whole-hearted supports and cooperation received by PAC during public hearings and consultations with the relevant stakeholders. Hence, the Parliament would like to thank the Chairperson and the Members of the PAC, Royal Audit Authority and all stakeholders.

16. The Parliament would like to thank Royal Bhutan Police, medical doctors, civil servants and other public servants involved in the business and security of the Parliament. The Parliament would like to thank all media houses for disseminating information of the House's proceedings to the people. The Parliament would also like to thank the Secretary General and the staff of the National Assembly Secretariat for their continued professional support and making the Tenth Session successful.

17. Lastly, with the blessings of the Triple Gem, mighty grace of the local deities, noble guidance and wise leadership of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the Parliament would like to offer prayers for the everlasting peace and prosperity of the people, and continued flourishing of the Buddha Dharma. The Parliament offer its deep prayers for the long lives of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, Members of the Royal Family, all religious masters led by His Holiness the Je Khenpo and the People of Bhutan.

THANK YOU