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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BHUTAN



Date: 30.06.2021

[Translated Text]

PRESS RELEASE

RE: Fifth Session of the Third Parliament

In the Fifth Session, the Royal Bhutan Police (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2021 was introduced and referred to the Social and Cultural Committee whereas the Biodiversity Bill of Bhutan 2021 was introduced and referred to the Environment and Climate Change Committee. The Committees will further review the Bills and submit their review report to the House in the upcoming Session.

The Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2020 was adopted and is now presented to the National Council of Bhutan. The Amendment now allows any frozen, seized or confiscated moveable or immovable property to use, operate, or lease pending the outcome of the investigation with approval from the Court.

Due to the requirement for more detailed research and consultations especially with the local leaders and general public, the Local Government (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2021 was withdrawn from deliberation in this Session.

The three Money Bills; Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2021, Customs Duty Bill of Bhutan 2021, and the Tax Bill of Bhutan 2021 were also adopted. While the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax was deferred till the 1st of July 2022, the Customs Duty for the import of most commodities are revised to 10%. And the sales tax on tobacco is revised from 100% to 0% under the Tax Bill till the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax.

In the midst of the Session, the Government in response to the rampant rise in black marketing and risk of spreading Covid-19 virus in the country when the national borders are closed to combat the current pandemic, requested the Parliament to incorporate the Tobacco Control (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2021 as an agenda for the on-going Session and sought the leave of the House to consider it as an Urgent Bill. The Tobacco Control (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan was then adopted after having it incorporated in the Session's agenda and being declared as an Urgent Bill owing to its urgency in combating the spread of Covid-19 virus in the country. With the Amendment, now the ban on sell or distribution, buying, possession, and transport of tobacco or tobacco products are lifted.

The Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the People's Republic Of Bangladesh and the United Nations Convention against Corruption



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(UNCAC) Amendment was also ratified by the House and is being referred to the National Council. Additionally the National Assembly ratified the Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Green Climate Fund on the Privileges and Immunities of the Green Climate Fund through re-deliberation after incorporating all the recommendations received from the National Council of Bhutan.

The National Assembly also adopted the Budget Appropriation Bill for the Financial Year 2021-2022 for a sum not exceeding Nu. 80,483.150 million including a current expenditure of Nu. 35,598.664 million, Nu. 38,320.671 million capital expenditure, Nu. 5,654.415 million for repayment, and Nu. 909.400 million for on-lending. The House also adopted the Supplementary Budget Appropriation Bill for the Financial Year 2020-2021 for a sum not exceeding Nu.2,783.703 million upon the already approved budget of a sum not exceeding Nu. 73,989.881 million totalling up to a sum not exceeding Nu.76,773.584 million.

The House also deliberated on the Good Governance Committee's Review Report on the Annual Anti-Corruption Commission Report 2019. After the adoption of the 5 recommendations from the Committee on the Report, the relevant institutions and agencies were directed to implement the recommendations.

The Joint Sitting of the Parliament adopted the Lhengye Zhungtshog Bill of Bhutan 2020 after deliberating on the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Lhengye Zhungtshog Bill of Bhutan 2020 on the 7 disputed clauses of the Bill. With the Amendment, a new Prime Minister's Office may be established within the Cabinet Secretariat.

The Mines and Minerals Bill of Bhutan 2020 reported lots of disputed clauses and the Joint Committee on the Mines and Minerals Bill of Bhutan reported that the Joint Committee could not arrive at a consensus even on the principle of the Bill. In view of it, the Joint Committee recommended deferment of deliberation on the Mines and Minerals Bill of Bhutan 2020 and the House deferred the Bill as per Section 59A (2) of the Legislative Rules of Procedure (LRoP) 2017.

The Public Accounts Committee's Review Report on the five Performance Audit Reports and its 18 recommendations were deliberated and adopted in the Joint Sitting of the Parliament. The resolution has been further referred to the relevant Ministries and agencies for implementation. The House also declared the Annual Audit Report 2020, the Performance Audit Report on Ex-Country Travels (Short-Term Trainings), and the Performance Audit Report on implementation and management of National Broadband Fiber Network as a public document and directed the Public Accounts Committee to review the reports and report to the House during the Winter Session.



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Additionally, in line with the Legislative Procedure, a follow-up implementation from the 2nd Session, a motion and two rounds of Question Hour inclusive of 54 Oral Questions and 12 Written Questions were also deliberated in this Session. The Fifth Session of the Third Parliament which was conducted from 27th May, 2021 to 30th June 2021, for 25 working days concluded successfully.

The Bills passed by both the Houses, are in preparation for submission to the Druk Gyalpo for Royal Assent. The ordinary Bills passed by Parliament shall come into force upon Assent of the Druk Gyalpo.

The Resolution of the Fifth Session of the Third Parliament will be available online very soon.