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Cover

Nu Geldscheine als Titelfoto, passend zu dem Thema „Wirtschaft“?

Siehe auch Artikel „Bhutan bald bargeldlos?“ in der Rubrik „Kultur und Geschichte“





Thunlam

Ausgabe 2022

Fokus: Die Wirtschaft Bhutans und das Bruttonationalglück

**Newsletter der
Deutschen Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft e.V. mit
Nachrichten und Berichten aus dem Königreich
Bhutan**

Thunlam wird von der Deutschen Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft e.V. herausgegeben.

Mit Beiträgen von: Dr. Irmela Harz (ih), Sven Kaun-Feederle (skf), Herbert Küster (hk), Dr. Henriette Madaus (hm), Manfred Rippich und Reinhard Wolf (rw)

IMPRESSUM

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Ehrenpräsidenten: Dr. Manfred Kulesa, Prof. Manfred Gerner

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Editorial

- Kurzer Überblick über Aktivitäten, an denen die DBHG beteiligt ist, und ggfls. über sonstige wichtige Themen
- Hinweis auf unseren nächsten Bhutntag und das Wochenend-Seminar

Aktivitäten der Deutsche Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft e.V.

Bhutantag 2022

Am Samstag, den 14. Mai 2022 fand im Haus des Handwerks in Frankfurt der Bhutantag der DBHG statt. Als Thema wählten wir „Handwerksausbildung in Bhutan: Herausforderungen und Chancen“.

Zu Beginn der Veranstaltung begrüßten Reinhard Wolf / DBHG und Dr. Christof Riess, Hauptgeschäftsführer der HWK FRM die Gäste und Seine Exzellenz Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor, Botschafter des Königreichs Bhutan / Brüssel gab einen Überblick über die aktuelle Situation in Bhutan und berichtete über seinen Besuch beim Bundespräsidenten Steinmeier anlässlich der **Überreichung der Akkreditierung**. Außerdem stellte sich der neue deutsche Honorarkonsul, Prof. Dr. Erhard Meyer-Galow vor und DBHG Ehrenpräsident Prof. Manfred Gerner hielt einen reichhaltig illustrierten Vortrag über, Bazams, die traditionellen Brücken im Himalaya. Zu diesem Thema hat Prof. Gerner ein lesenswertes Buch publiziert (wir berichteten darüber im letzten Thunlam).

Aus Bhutan zugeschaltet waren Frau Tashi Wangmo, Staatssekretärin im Arbeitsministerium und ihr Kollege Herr Norbu Wangchuk. Sie gaben einen umfassenden Überblick über den Stand der Handwerksausbildung in Bhutan.

Anschließend berichtete Herr Erik Ruh von der Handwerkskammer Frankfurt - Rhein - Main (HWK FRM) über die Handwerksausbildung in Deutschland und Möglichkeiten einer Kooperation mit Bhutan. Herr Markus Eicher, ebenfalls von der HWK FRM beschrieb die Ausbildung zum „Internationalen Meister“, die dazu dient, erfahrene deutsche Handwerksmeister für einen internationalen Einsatz auszubilden. Als nächstes berichteten die Handwerksmeister Johann Reif und Tobias Fuchs über ihren Einsatz in Bhutan. Abschließend diskutierten die TeilnehmerInnen über mögliche deutsch-bhutanische Kooperationen in der Handwerksausbildung.

Dem Bhutantag vorgeschaltet war die ordentliche Mitgliederversammlung der DBHG. Beide Veranstaltungen konnten auch online verfolgt werden.





Seine Exzellenz Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor, Botschafter des Königreichs Bhutan / Brüssel gibt einen Überblick über die aktuelle Situation in Bhutan Bhutan und berichtete über seinen Besuch beim Bundespräsidenten Steinmeier anlässlich der **Überreichung der Akkreditierung**



Die Handwerksmeister Johann Reif und Tobias Fuchs berichten über ihren Einsatz in Bhutan



Das Mittagessen wurde bei schönem Wetter auf der Dachterrasse mit Blick auf die Frankfurter Skyline eingenommen.



Und abends gab es noch ein gemütliches Beisammensein in einem traditionellen Frankfurter Restaurant. Mit dabei: Studierende aus Bhutan, die derzeit in Deutschland ihr Studium absolvieren.

Treffen der europäischen Bhutangesellschaften in Budapest

Zwei Jahre lang musste das Treffen, das bereits für 2020 geplant war, aufgrund der Covid-19 Pandemie verschoben werden. Von 14. – 18. September 2022 trafen sich schließlich Vertreter*innen aus 13 europäischen Ländern und aus Bhutan auf Einladung des Präsidenten der [Ungarischen Freundschaftsgesellschaft](#), Zoltan Valcsicsak, und seinem Team. Die DBHG war durch Reinhard & Sabine Wolf, Prof. Manfred Gerner, Brigitte Eisenack, Sven Kaun-Feederle und Silke Kamps vertreten.

Mit dem Botschafter Bhutans in Brüssel, S.E.Tshering Gyeltshen Penjor, wurden vor allem aktuelle Themen und Entwicklungen in Bhutan diskutiert. Dabei standen die neue Tourismuspolitik und die stark angehobene Sustainable Development Fee von 200 USD im Mittelpunkt. Auch die zunehmende Migration gut ausgebildeter Bhutaner*innen vor allem nach Australien und mögliche Folgen für das Land wurden thematisiert.

Der Nachmittag der Tagung war dann thematisch buddhistisch – sozialethischen und kulturellen Themen mit Referent*innen aus Wirtschaft/Entrepreneurship, Erziehung/Bildung und Sport/Bogenschießen gewidmet. An den folgenden 4 Tagen standen Besichtigungen in Budapest und ein Aufenthalt in der Region rund um den Plattensee auf dem Programm.



©Zoltan Valcsicsak



Tshering Choden, olympische Goldmedaillengewinnerin im Bogenschießen, berichtet über ihren außergewöhnlichen Werdegang, da ©Zoltan Valcsicsak

Der private Sektor wird für Bhutans Wirtschaft immer wichtiger - Online-Veranstaltung der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung

21.12.2022, Dr. Carsten Klein, <https://www.freiheit.org/node/36085>

Weitere Artikel zum Webinar:

- [Kuensel Online](#)
- [Business Bhutan](#)
- [Economy Next](#)

Als bislang einziges Land der Welt misst das kleine Königreich Bhutan im Himalaya das Bruttonationalglück. Es beruht auf vier Säulen: ökologischer Nachhaltigkeit, nachhaltiger und gerechter wirtschaftlicher Entwicklung, guter Regierungsführung und Gleichheit vor dem Gesetz sowie Förderung eines freien und resilienten Kulturlebens. Nur langsam hat das Land mit seinen gerade mal knapp 780.000 Einwohnern die selbst-auferlegte Isolation beendet und sich für die Außenwelt geöffnet. Auf einer Online-Veranstaltung der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF) Ende November 2022 beleuchteten Expertinnen und Experten die Entwicklung des privaten Sektors, der künftig entscheidend zum Wachstum des südasiatischen Himalayastaates beitragen soll. Der private Sektor erwirtschaftet Devisen durch Exporte und Dienstleistungen, kreiert neue Märkte, fördert die Effizienz der Produktion durch neue Technologien und innovative Prozesse und schafft neue Arbeitsplätze. Heute beschäftigen rund 14.000 überwiegend kleine Unternehmen etwa 74.000 Mitarbeitende.

Zum Auftakt des Webinars wies Reinhard Wolf, Präsident der Deutschen Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft e.V., darauf hin, dass in der Vergangenheit die Landwirtschaft die stärkste Säule der Wirtschaft gewesen sei und immer noch zu den größten Arbeitgebern zähle. Auf dem Weg von einem „Least Developed Country“ (am wenigsten entwickeltes Land) zu einem Land mit mittlerem Einkommen werde jedoch der private Sektor eine entscheidende Rolle spielen. Dieser könnte auch von den vergleichsweise niedrigen Energiekosten des Landes profitieren, das bei der Versorgung stark auf Wasserkraft setzt. Soll der Aufstieg gelingen, brauche Bhutan jedoch eine Diversifizierung seiner Wirtschaft sowie

Innovationen. Problematisch sei zudem, dass viele junge gut ausgebildete Menschen aktuell Bhutan verließen, etwa nach Australien. Um die Jugend zu halten, müsse das Land adäquate Jobs anbieten können.



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SPEAKERS



SINGYE NAMGYAL
President of SAARC
Youth Entrepreneurs
Forum (SEF) & Joint MD
of RSA Pvt. Ltd.



**CHENCHO
TSHERING**
Managing Director,
Wangchuk Group of
Companies Pvt. Ltd.



SONAM CHOPHEL
CEO, CSI Markets and
Consultant



SUNIL RASAILY
Private Sector Analyst
and Advisor to BCCI and
Managing Partner of
Mehro Datta
Consultancy Services

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Ankündigung des Webinars und Medienecho

Moderator Sunil Rasaily, der unter anderem den privaten Sektor Bhutans analysiert, erläuterte, dass die Wirtschaft Bhutans nach starkem Wachstum mit Raten von rund 9% während der Coronapandemie um 4% eingebrochen sei. Eine Stärkung des privaten Sektors sei nicht zuletzt wichtig, um Jobs für die junge Bevölkerung Bhutans bereitstellen zu können, sagte Rasaily, der auch die Bhutanesishe Industrie- und Handelskammer berät und eine Consultingfirma leitet. Das Land, das flächenmäßig so groß ist wie die Schweiz, hat immerhin das zweithöchste Pro-Kopf-Einkommen in Südasien.

Chencho Tshering, Geschäftsführerin der Tourismuskette Wangchuk Group of Companies Pvt. Ltd., unterstrich, dass Bhutan immer der Versuchung widerstanden habe, Massentourismus zu betreiben und stattdessen großen Wert auf Nachhaltigkeit lege. Die Kosten für dieses Konzept würden jedoch zu einem großen Teil von den Hotels getragen. Deren Auslastung liege gerade mal bei rund 45 %, wirtschaftlich notwendig seien aber mehr als 60 %. Zudem habe die im Juni 2022 deutlich erhöhte Tourismusabgabe von 65 auf 200 US-Dollar pro Person pro Tag die Ankünfte einbrechen lassen. Die Abgabe nutzt Bhutan für die nachhaltige Gestaltung der touristischen Infrastruktur, den Erhalt lokaler Traditionen, den Umweltschutz sowie die Bezahlung fairer Gehälter. Um das starke Ungleichgewicht von der Nachfrage der Touristen sowie Angebot an Hotelkapazitäten besser auszubalancieren, müsste der Staat den Bau neuer Hotels regulieren. Chencho Tshering wies zudem darauf hin, dass es an Fachkräften mangle. Unter anderem sollte die Regierung die Mindestlöhne erhöhen, um das Abwandern einzudämmen. Auch müssten Aus- und Weiterbildung attraktiver gemacht werden.

Sonam Chopel, CEO von CSI Markets, dem größten Marktplatz für Produkte made in Bhutan, die – auch international – stationär und online vertreiben werden, unterstrich die Bedeutung der Kleinstbetriebe (cottage and small industries) in Bhutan als Rückgrat der Ökonomie. Mit 500 dieser Kleinstbetriebe arbeitet Chopel zusammen. Ihr Potenzial könnten diese Betriebe nur entfalten, wenn zahlreiche Hürden wie ein leichter Zugang zu Kapital, Abbau von Handelshemmnissen und eine bessere Ausbildung ermöglicht würden. Chopel schätzt, dass rund 40 % der Kleinstbetriebe von Frauen geleitet würden.

Singye Namgyal, Präsident der South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Youth Entrepreneurs Forum (SEF) und Mitgeschäftsführer der Rohstofffirma RSA Pvt. Ltd., unterstrich die Bedeutung von produzierenden Unternehmen, die zahlreiche Arbeitsplätze schaffen könnten und Chancen für Exporte böten. Aktuell ist das benachbarte Indien der bei weitem größte Handelspartner des Landes. Dazu müssten größere Industrieeinheiten gefördert werden. Noch dominieren kleine Betriebe. Zu den Restriktionen zählte Namgyal den Mangel an Robotern, die nicht frei konvertierbare Währung, sehr hohe Logistikkosten wegen der teils mangelhaften Infrastruktur sowie eine zu starke Regulierung. Zu den Vorteilen zählte er die günstigen Energiepreise in Bhutan.

Als so genanntes „Least Developed Country“ habe Bhutan zu wenig die Vorteile der von der EU gewährten Handelspräferenzen genutzt, sagte Namgyal. Die „Everything but Arms Handelspräferenzen“ (EBA) der Europäischen Union unterstützen die am wenigsten entwickelten Länder wirtschaftlich. Als Grund nannte Namgyal, dass es an Produkten gemangelt habe. Das ändere sich jetzt. Künftig könnten weitere Handelspräferenzen die Exporte fördern. Unter dem von der EU gewährten Status GSP+ (Generalised System of Preferences) können Begünstigte Waren zu einem niedrigeren Zollsatz oder sogar gänzlich zollbefreit in die EU liefern. Um den Status zu erhalten, müssen Staaten allerdings bestimmte Bedingungen erfüllen wie soziale Arbeitsbedingungen, Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau oder Schutz der Kinder.

Dr. Carsten Klein, Leiter des Regionalbüros Südasien der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit, unterstrich abschließend, dass Bhutan regional und international ein wichtiger Akteur sei. Das Beispiel Bhutan zeige, wie stark kleine und mittlere Unternehmen das Rückgrat einer Wirtschaft seien. Diese böten Perspektiven für eine große Anzahl von Beschäftigten. Wichtig sei, dass die Abwanderung junger Talente gestoppt werde. Klein kündigte an, dass die Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit ihre Webinare fortsetzen und **im Jahr 2023 eine internationale Konferenz zu dem Thema in Bhutan ausrichten werde.**

Sangay Zangmo, bhutanische Studentin an der Universität Kassel

Sangay Zangmo hält sich derzeit für ein Masterstudium in Deutschland auf. Sie hat auch am Bhutantag im Mai 2022 in Frankfurt teilgenommen. Wir haben sie gefragt, ob sie für den Thunlam etwas über sich erzählen könnte. Hier ist ihre Geschichte:

Hallo an alle Leser,

Ich bin Sangay Zangmo.

In dem Dorf Zhebrak, in Bhutan, in dem ich aufgewachsen bin, werde ich "Yudonmo" genannt. Zudem habe ich noch zwei jüngere Schwestern. Meine Mutter ist alleinerziehend und von Beruf Bäuerin. Sie hat mich mit der Landwirtschaft und dem Haushalt vertraut gemacht. Mit 7 Jahren bin ich zur Schule gegangen, damit war ich die erste Person, in meiner Familie, die eine formale Ausbildung absolviert hat.

Ich besuchte die Tang Central School bis zur 8. Klasse und die Jakar Higher Secondary School bis zur 12. Klasse.

Nach dem Abschluss der Oberstufe konnte ich mich leider nicht für ein höheres Studium qualifizieren und meine Mutter konnte es sich nicht leisten, mich auf eine private Universität zu schicken, da diese sehr teuer war. Um meiner Familie finanziell zu helfen, begann ich im Gästehaus (Kaila Guest House) zu arbeiten, wo ich meinen deutschen Sponsor, Alexander Prinz, der auf einer buddhistischen Pilgerreise unterwegs war, kennenlernte.

Er hat mir angeboten, mein Bachelorstudium (BA. Wirtschafts- und Umweltstudien) am Royal Thimphu College zu finanzieren. Ich habe den Studiengang vor allem deshalb gewählt, weil die Kurskombinationen interessant waren und ich mich schon immer für Wirtschaft und Umwelt engagieren wollte.

Nach dem Bachelor-Abschluss wollte ich noch ein Masterstudium absolvieren, um mich weiterzuentwickeln. Ich wollte mehr lernen und aus meiner Komfortzone herauskommen.

Alexander hat mir sofort angeboten, für das Masterstudium nach Deutschland zu kommen, auch um meine beruflichen Chancen in der Zukunft zu verbessern.

In Deutschland habe ich alle Familienmitglieder von Alexander kennengelernt. Von ihnen wurde ich herzlich aufgenommen und wurde ein Teil ihrer Familie. Durch sie bekam ich eine bessere Plattform zum Austausch von Kultur und persönlicher Entwicklung.

Zuerst habe ich ein Jahr lang einen Deutschkurs bis zum B2-Niveau gemacht und danach habe ich im Jahr 2020 ein Masterstudium (Master in Economic Behavior and Governance) an der Universität Kassel begonnen.

Jetzt bin ich froh, dass ich mein Masterstudium fast abgeschlossen habe und inzwischen ein Praktikum bei der United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in Bonn, in der Abteilung Transparency im Referat BUR absolviere.

Nach Abschluss meines Studiums möchte ich gerne für einige Jahre in Deutschland arbeiten, mit dem Schwerpunkt auf Verwaltung und Management in Verbindung mit Umweltschutz und Nachhaltigkeit.

Abschließend möchte ich mich bei meiner Gastfamilie für alles bedanken. Ebenfalls möchte ich mich bei der Deutschen Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft, dass er mir eine Plattform geboten hat, um meine bisherigen Erfahrungen zu teilen.

Projekte der DBHG

Internationales Symposium "BIODIVERSITÄT und NATURAUSSTATTUNG im HIMALAYA" in Erfurt

Hinweis: Ich werde noch einen Tagungsbericht und Photos von Rinchen Dorji anfragen

Das Naturkundemuseum Erfurt war vom 23.-25. September 2022 Ausrichter des 7. internationalen und interdisziplinären Symposiums "BIODIVERSITÄT und NATURAUSSTATTUNG im HIMALAYA". Seitens des Naturkundemuseums wurde die DBHG angefragt, ob wir die Teilnahme von Rinchen Dorji, einem bhutanischen Wissenschaftler vom National Biodiversity Centre, finanziell unterstützen könnten. Diesen Antrag hat der Vorstand der DBHG genehmigt und einen Beitrag von ca. 2.600 Euro für die Reisekosten zur Verfügung gestellt.

On the bike to Lunana and back

Chhimi Dema, September 10th, 2022, Post Views: 225, <https://kuenselonline.com/on-the-bike-to-lunana-and-back/>



Sunspots on his face haven't gone away yet but his tired eyes brighten as he speaks about his journey to Lunana.

Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk, 40, from Thimphu, is on a journey unlike any other. He wants to share with the world the impacts of climate change and call everyone to take urgent action. His recent travel to Lunana was the beginning of this journey for a project campaign he calls "The Messenger-Ride for Action". In a picture, a filmmaker, actor and environment advocate, Jamyang sits on a rock next to his bicycle overlooking the snow-capped mountains of Lunana. At the base of the mountains are Thorthomi and Rapstreng, the two lakes that pose a serious risk of glacial lake outburst flood in the country. "I had this idea [of the project] since the

pandemic,” Jamyang says. It was April 2020. Jamyang was attending a leadership workshop in New York. The place where he was living then was the epicentre of the pandemic and he was exposed to the virus. “It was a scary moment. I thought the virus might kill me. During those moments, I was reflecting a lot and I asked myself what is my life’s purpose. I did not have any answer,” he says. He pondered about his passion and what he loved. “Out of this question came this campaign. This campaign combines everything I love – film, travel, environment, and sports,” Jamyang says. Jamyang planned to start the campaign in 2020 but it was delayed owing to a series of lockdowns in the country. During his campaign, he rides his bicycle. In places where he cannot ride, he carries it on his back. He visits schools and talks to the young about climate and the need for urgent action. He inspires the youth to take action and do something with their lives in whatever sphere they want to be in. “I want to inspire them to give their best.” The campaign has three key messages: plant trees and take care of them, transition immediately to renewable energy, and include climate studies in the school curriculum. The 40-year-old returned from Lunana and brought with him a bottle he found on the way filled with water from Thorthomi. According to Jamyang, the bottle stands for plastic pollution that is rampant in the world and the glacier water represents the melting glaciers. “The bottle as a whole is symbolic of climate action.” It took 13 days for him to go and return from Lunana. He walked for at least eight hours for seven days to reach Thorthomi lake. Despite the training that he received, Jamyang says that nothing can prepare one for the natural elements. “Each day it was getting tougher. It was life-threatening, especially carrying and balancing a bicycle on the back.” Starting September 24, Jamyang is starting another campaign from Pemagatshel. Pemagatshel is a dzongkhag dear to him. It was in Pemagatshel that he was introduced to film and his love for nature was nurtured. “My father [a former dzongdag] on his tours would visit the villages through forests and I used to accompany him. That is when my love for nature grew. To pay homage, I want to start from Pemagatshel, a place where it all began.” Jamyang travels with a camera and soundman. His journey will be documented. Each episode will tackle different environmental angles in each district. Jamyang and his team are partnering with Shangreela, an over-the-top platform in the country. The project will cover 15 dzongkhags and he will reach Thimphu on October 24. It has been challenging to raise funds for the project because of Covid-19, Jamyang says. “We have raised money enough to cover only 15 districts.” The project will continue until 2030. Jamyang says: “It is an ambitious project but I am confident, although sometimes it is overwhelming. But I will be able to do it with the right support from partners and friends.” The team is also partnering with hotels and homestays for the travels. The project also aims to help promote the country as an eco-tourism destination.

The Messenger: Ride for Action (aus dem Newsletter der österr. Bhutangesellschaft)



Von 1. – 31. Oktober 2022 radelte der in Bhutan sehr bekannte Filmemacher, Schauspieler und Klimaaktivist Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk von Pemagatshel im Osten Bhutans bis nach Thimphu im Westen. Mit seiner Kampagne möchte er zu einem stärkeren Bewusstsein über die Auswirkungen des Klimawandels in Bhutan beitragen und zum Schutz der Umwelt und der Kulturgüter des Landes aufrufen. Auf seiner Tour durch 14 Distrikte Bhutans machte er in Schulen und Colleges halt, um auch darüber zu sprechen, wie alle zu einem verantwortlichen, klimasensitiven Handeln beitragen können. Der Verein der Freunde Bhutans unterstützte die Klimakampagne finanziell gemeinsam mit der Schweizer-Bhutan Gesellschaft und der Deutschen Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft.

Mit Wasser aus dem Gletschersee unterwegs



Jamyang am Lake Thorthomi

Jamyangs Klimatour nahm in Lunana, auf 4.428 m über dem Meeresspiegel, am Gletschersee Lake Thorthomi seinen Ausgang. Dort füllte er eine gebrauchte, am Weg gefundene Plastikflasche mit dem Wasser des Gletschersees und trug sie als Symbol für die Gefahren des Klimawandels während seiner gesamten Tour mit sich. Die Gletscher im Norden Bhutans ziehen sich jedes Jahr aufgrund der steigenden Temperaturen um rund 30 m zurück. Die Schmelze der Gletsche stellt eine der größten Gefahren dar. Wenn der Wasserspiegel der Gletscherseen steigt und die Muränendämme brechen, stürzen Geröll und Wasser in die Täler, in denen ein Großteil der bhutanischen Bevölkerung lebt.

Bhutans Klima-Herausforderungen

Bhutan liegt im fragilen Ökosystem des östlichen Himalaya.. Der Klimawandel stellt für das Land nicht nur eine ökologische Herausforderung, sondern eine Bedrohung für die nachhaltige Entwicklung des Landes insgesamt dar. Bhutans Entwicklung ist größten Teils von klimasensitiven Sektoren abhängig: von Landwirtschaft, Wasserkraft und Forstwirtschaft.



SDG 13: Maßnahmen zum Klimaschutz

Bereits jetzt sind extreme Wetterbedingungen zu beobachten, einerseits trocknen Wasserquellen aus, im Sommer aber nehmen heftige Niederschläge zu, die der Boden nicht aufnehmen kann. Sturzfluten und Erdbeben sind die Folge. Und obwohl Bhutans Wälder noch immer mehr CO₂ aufnehmen als im Land ausgestoßen wird, hat auch Bhutan Verantwortung zu tragen, dass diese positive Klimabilanz sich nicht ins Gegenteil verkehrt.

Denn auch in Bhutans Gesellschaft gibt es klimaschädliches Verhalten. Der steigende Import von fossil betriebenen Fahrzeugen, die zunehmende Versiegelung von Flächen in den Städten, die Zerstörung der Biodiversität durch große Wasserkraftprojekte, das enorme Anwachsen des Mülls und das unbewältigte Problem seiner Entsorgung, die Verschwendung von Energie und die mangelnde Energieeffizienz im Bausektor sind nur einige Bereiche, in denen Bhutan großen Nachholbedarf bei klimabewusstem Handeln hat.

Die drei Schlüsselbotschaften

- Abholzung verhindern, Bäume pflanzen, alte Wälder aufforsten
- Rascher Umstieg zu erneuerbaren Energien
- Einführung einer Klimaerziehung in das Schulcurriculum

Mit der Kampagne verfolgt Jamyang das Ziel, Jugendliche und Erwachsene zur aktiven Beteiligung an Umwelt- und Klimaschutzmaßnahmen zu motivieren. Nur so kann Bhutan seinen Status als CO₂ neutrales Land beibehalten und festigen.

14 Stationen – 14 Kurzdokumentationen

Besuch in der Schule in Lunana

Jamyang wurde von einer kleinen Filmcrew in einem Elektroauto begleitet. Abgesehen von seinen Besuchen in Schulen, wurde an jeder seiner 14 Stationen zu einem klimarelevanten Thema gedreht. So etwa über einen Zeugen des Gletscherseeausbruchs in Punakha im Jahr 1994, über die Erfahrungen mit dem Klimawandel der Yakhirten in Haa und über die ersten Windräder und die Solarfarm in Wangdue. Eine Folge wird sich auch dem Müllproblem in Thimphu widmen. Aus dem Filmmaterial werden 14 Kurzdokumentationen sowie eine Gesamtdokumentation der Klimatour produziert.

Der Filmemacher und Klimaaktivist



Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk ist ein in Bhutan sehr bekannter Schauspieler und Regisseur. Bekannt wurde er 1997 in jungen Jahren in der Rolle des jungen Dalai Lama im Film „Sieben Jahre in Tibet“. Nach seiner Ausbildung an der Busan Asian Film School in Südkorea wurde er in Bhutan auch mit eigenen Spielfilmen bekannt. In Österreich war Jamyang 2014 anlässlich der Bhutan Filmtage mit seinem Spielfilm „Gyalsey: Legacy of a Prince“ zu Gast.

Projektdaten

Projektname: The Messenger. Ride for Action

Finanzierung: Verein der Freunde Bhutans, Österreich 3.000 Euro (davon 2.000 Euro PaN Unterstützungspreis)

Projektpartner: **Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk**

Projektphase: 1. Oktober – 31. Oktober 2022

Thematischer Schwerpunkt: Klima

SDG Tracker: **SDG 13 Maßnahmen zum Klimaschutz**

Neues aus und über Bhutan

Politik



Kutshab Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor presented his Letters of Credence to Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan](#)

Kutshab Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor presented his Letters of Credence to Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany at Schloss Bellevue in Berlin on 5 May 2022, accrediting him as the First Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Kutshab Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor conveyed the greetings of His Majesty the King, the people, and the Royal Government of Bhutan to the Federal President and the German people. He conveyed the appreciation of the Royal Government for the generous support that Bhutan has received from Germany, bilaterally and multilaterally, in the past few decades.

He expressed the hope to further strengthen the bilateral relations and enhance the existing cooperation in new spheres of the private sector, and trade and investment partnerships.

The Federal President welcomed Kutshab's appointment as the First Ambassador of Bhutan to Germany and expressed the hope that the friendly relations between the two countries would be further strengthened.

During the visit, Kutshab Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor met with the officials of the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action, and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses among other agencies.

Formal diplomatic relations between Bhutan and Germany were established in November 2020. However, cooperation between the two countries dates back to the early 1970s.

Kutshab Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor is the resident Ambassador to Belgium and the European Union with concurrent accreditation to Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden.

Der neue deutsche Botschafter für Indien und Bhutan, Herr Dr. Philipp Ackermann

Deutsche Botschaft Neu Delhi - Auswärtiges Amt (diplo.de)

<https://india.diplo.de/in-de/vertretungen/neudelhi>

Philipp Ackermann (geb. 1965 in [Miltenberg am Main](#)) ist ein deutscher [Diplomat](#). Er leitet seit 2022 die Botschaft Neu Delhi als außerordentlicher und bevollmächtigter [Botschafter](#) in [Indien](#) mit Nebenakkreditierung im [Königreich Bhutan](#).^{[1][2]}

Leben[\[Bearbeiten\]](#) | [Quelltext bearbeiten](#)

Nach seinem Abitur in Miltenberg und anschließendem Wehrdienst studierte Philipp Ackermann [Kunstgeschichte](#), Wirtschaftswissenschaften und Geschichte an den [Universitäten Bonn](#), [Heidelberg](#) und [Utrecht](#). Nach dem Magister schloss er eine [Doktorarbeit zu niederländischer Druckgraphik des 17. Jahrhunderts](#) an. 1993 wurde er promoviert. Ebenfalls 1993 trat er ins Auswärtige Amt ein. Stationen seiner Karriere im Auswärtigen Dienst schließen einen Aufenthalt am niederländischen Außenministerium als Austauschdiplomate, eine dreijährige Tätigkeit als Presse- und Politikreferent an der Botschaft in [Rabat](#), Marokko, und drei Jahre an der politischen Abteilung der Ständigen Vertretung Deutschlands bei den Vereinten Nationen in [New York](#) ein.

2002 berief ihn Außenminister [Joschka Fischer](#) als [Redenschreiber](#) in sein Ministerbüro. In dieser Position blieb er auch im ersten Jahr von Außenminister [Frank-Walter Steinmeier](#). Ab Sommer 2006 leitete Philipp Ackermann das [Provincial Construction Team in Kundus](#) (Afghanistan). 2007–2010 war er der Leiter der politischen Abteilung der deutschen Botschaft in [Neu-Delhi](#). Anschließend wurde er in die Zentrale zurückversetzt. Bis 2014 war er Leiter des Arbeitsstabs Afghanistan/Pakistan im Auswärtigen Amt und gleichzeitig Stellvertreter des Sonderbeauftragten der Bundesregierung für Afghanistan/Pakistan.

Von 2014 bis 2016 arbeitete Ackermann als Gesandter und stellvertretender Botschafter an der [Botschaft Washington](#).^[3] 2016 wurde er Beauftragter für Nah- und Mittelost und Nordafrika im Auswärtigen Amt und Berlin, 2017 wurde er zunächst kommissarisch, 2018 dann endgültig Leiter der politischen Abteilung 3.^[4]

Philipp Ackermann war 2001 einer der Mitgründer der *International Legal Foundation* in New York, einer NRO, die sich der Pflichtverteidigung für Mittellose in Post-Konfliktstaaten annimmt. Er war 15 Jahre im Vorstand dieser Organisation, u. a. als stellvertretender Vorsitzender.^[5]

!!! His Majesty's address to the nation at the opening ceremony of the 8th session of the Third Parliament

Mehr in # 44



Recently, I met a 27-year-old woman who has a four-year-old son. She works in a café, and makes Nu. 12,500 a month. Her house rent is Nu. 7,750. She is her family's sole breadwinner. I was dismayed to hear about her struggles supporting her family and trying to make ends meet.

Thimphu is seen as a place of opportunities for our youth. But the young people I met in Thimphu face many challenges. They work long hours, six days a week. But they make less than the average monthly rent for an apartment. They live with roommates and pool their incomes just to get by.

When we have a fever and sore throat, we know that we are sick. Similarly, when our youth are struggling to make ends meet, this is a symptom that our country is unwell.

We have been well-aware of our problems for a while now. A lot of work has gone into trying to address them. We have drawn up strategies, plans and policies. We have sent our best Bhutanese to top Universities abroad, and our officials on study tours to bring in fresh ideas and solutions. We have even recruited foreign and local consultants. We have set up commissions and departments, and held meeting after meeting to try to crack the issues we face. Despite all our hard work, we have failed to produce results. This is a matter of grave concern.

However, the ongoing national efforts for transformation gives me hope. For the first time since I became King 16 years ago, I see a new dawn over the horizon. There is a perceptible difference in our efforts this time. There has been a shift in attitudes towards work, and a greater sense of concern, seriousness and urgency, even as we tackle the increasing volume of work.

I want to thank the members of the National Assembly and National Council for supporting this national endeavour.

I also want to express my appreciation to the Opposition Party, who has not only stood in solidarity with the government during the pandemic to keep our country safe, but also continues to support the ongoing transformation efforts. This shows that our Opposition Party understands the importance of the task at hand,

and prioritises the wellbeing of our country and people over any political mileage that they could gain. This augurs well for the future of our democracy.

Our civil servants have put in tremendous time and effort to battle the pandemic. In the transformation process, the focus is once again on them. With increasing workload and having to adjust to many changes, they have been under more stress. They have shouldered their responsibilities admirably, placing the welfare of the nation above self-interest. I appreciate their dedication and service.

It is difficult for elected governments to introduce change, even if they are beneficial for the country. Whereas a new, finished bridge is welcomed by the people, not everyone is willing to contribute, participate and make sacrifices during construction. Our government, led by the Prime Minister, has been fearless and firm in their resolve to carry out the transformation process, which we all deeply appreciate.

This monumental transformation taking place in the country today would not have been possible without our people's understanding and support. Moreover, the ongoing work stems from the aspirations of our people, who are well aware of our problems, as well as the steps needed to course-correct for our present and future.

As a nation, we are at an inflection point. Our actions today will determine the course of our future, and put us either in the path of success or failure. There will not be any more opportunities, and we have no choice but to work with the greatest sense of urgency.

In the past, Bhutan relied heavily on income from hydropower to drive national development and growth. This is no longer the case. Major projects like Punatshangchu 1 and Kholongchu have cost us heavy losses and increased national debt. They remain incomplete even after more than a decade. Progress in the energy sector has made electricity cheaper in India, which means the hydropower we produce is becoming less and less competitive.

Socio-economic development, to improve the lives of our people, requires capital investments. Bhutan has relied mainly on foreign grants and loans, which makes us extremely vulnerable.

We may look to trade to support economic growth. But today our balance of trade is in deficit. We import far more than we export. Just like a person whose expenses exceed income remains poor, a country with more imports than exports grows poorer. Our weak economy, low productivity and negligible levels of technological adoption creates an environment that suppresses opportunities for learning and growth.

It is impossible to drastically raise wages in such a situation, unless the country irresponsibly borrows large amounts of money to distribute freely to supplement incomes.

Our youth are left with no choice but to seek opportunities elsewhere. While Australia has become emblematic of this trend, we know that there are Bhutanese working in almost 100 countries across the world. We can only expect more of them to leave in the coming years, if our situation does not improve.

Maybe we accept this for the present, expecting that our children will surely be better off later on. For our children to succeed, they must receive a good education. The reality is that the education we are giving them today falls short of global standards. By failing to equip them with the skills and competencies needed for the 21st century, we are putting their futures at risk.

As a small country with a small population, it should have been easier for Bhutan to achieve our goals. But we have some major administration and management issues. Our operating costs and the cost of delivering services are high. Our operational efficiency is low. There are systemic weaknesses, gaps, and inefficiencies, leading to huge wastage. There is little accountability. The amount of resources, time and effort spent does not produce corresponding results. It takes four people to do one person's job, costs two or three times more, and takes two or three times longer. I am deeply concerned that we will not progress further at the rate we are going.

There is no need to be embarrassed, upset, distressed, or alarmed. But we must be deeply concerned. There is no shame in acknowledging past mistakes. But we cannot continue making the same mistakes going forward. We may have failed once, but we cannot afford to fail again. Our task ahead is to bring about change and transformation, and radically improve the lives of our people. This is not the time to shift the responsibility to someone else. It is important that our people identify the nature and extent of our problems,

and recognise that now is the time to take ownership to fix them. As we undertake this monumental task, some people may ask if we are ready.

If we start with doubt and hesitation, we will never be ready. I am confident that Bhutan is ready for change, and that we must accomplish it as soon as possible. Others, who understand the importance of our endeavour, may still advocate for a slower and less disruptive pace of change.

The fact remains that **our situation has never been more critical**. We have numerous challenges and a tremendous amount of work, and time is running out. If we are in the middle of a great river, and our only option is to swim ashore, we cannot expect to emerge dry and comfortable. I firmly believe that we must act as swiftly as possible to address all our problems, and avert the risks that threaten our very future.

Some people may wonder if transformation and change means that our national objectives have changed. Our national goals and objectives as a country will never change. Our goals remain the same- to fulfill the aspirations of our people, by strengthening national sovereignty and security, and ensuring the wellbeing and happiness of our people now and in the future. It is our manner and approach to work that is changing. If we continue working in the same manner as before, we will fail to achieve our objectives, and bring suffering upon our people. This will be a great moral transgression on our part. On the other hand, our greatest achievement will be bringing about the right changes and successfully averting a bleak future.

Some of you may ask, will we succeed? Yes, we will succeed because we must succeed. Failure is not an option. Why? Ask yourself, what is the purpose of undertaking transformation and change? Is it for me? Is it for you? No. It is for us- for all the people of Bhutan, and for future generations.

We are working for a noble purpose. The Bhutanese are a people of great integrity and strength. We are a united people. If we are firm in our resolve, we will surely succeed. We need strong and able leaders for this task. Even though our population is small, we have many capable and dependable people to lead the way. I do not mean success will be automatic or easy. If we work hand-in-hand and pledge ourselves in the service of the nation, we will succeed.

It is only when all our people are genuinely invested in our future, take ownership, shoulder responsibility, and hold ourselves and one another accountable and to higher standards, that we will accomplish what we have set out to do.

Consider the increasing amount of litter in our cities and towns. From time to time, we see volunteers from different sections of society carrying out cleaning campaigns, toiling outside to clean up public spaces, driven by a genuine sense of service to the community. **At the same time, we also have many people who litter thoughtlessly. If one hand picks up litter but the other hand keeps throwing it, we will always have a problem. Which group do you belong to?**

This equally applies to all that we are doing to pursue our national objectives. If one hand is used to undo the other hand's work, we will not move forward. As a society, it is time for us to join hands, and work with a common purpose.

Next, you may ask, what might impede transformation?

First, we need money. While adequate funds will make our task easier, insufficient funds will hamper progress.

Second, while it is easy to make changes, it is much harder to sustain them. Any improvements that have been introduced must be institutionalised. They must be enduring and ubiquitous. Taking the example of a thermometer— applying heat will raise the mercury and give us a higher reading, but it will return to zero as soon as the heat is removed. Unlike a thermometer, our work should be built on progress, and not be reversed as soon as we ease our efforts.

Finally, change must extend to our people, if they are to be readied for the future. As a Buddhist Kingdom, Bhutanese are a compassionate people, with a strong moral compass and sense of community. These are admirable qualities. However, we also need to have the skills, abilities and professionalism necessary to thrive in the 21st century. Our mindset and approach to work must reflect the demands of the 21st century. By and large we are unacquainted with such an outlook, and this is where we have to prepare our people for change.

It is far easier to make structural and administrative changes than to change mindsets. This is a difficult and challenging but nevertheless necessary task.

When will we see the results of our efforts?

We will see results in three stages.

We are already beginning to see some results. There are structural changes in the civil service to bring greater clarity to an agency's goals, roles and responsibilities. More importantly, there is a visible change in our civil servants' attitude and approach to work. There is a greater focus on accountability and attention to detail. There are higher expectations and lower tolerance for lapses and oversight.

For example, it was reported that the **Bank of Bhutan (BoB) was penalised by the Royal Monetary Authority (RMA)** for a system failure that shutdown BoB for 3 days. In the past, such lapses that caused a great deal of inconvenience to the public would have gone unnoticed. At most, the bank would have gotten a slap on the wrist and be asked to submit a letter of explanation.

This reflects a much larger change in mindset and attitude within the bureaucracy. In this instance, RMA not only levied a substantial fine, but also required BOB to submit a business continuity plan to be prepared for any contingencies in the future. This is an extremely good sign for things to come. We are starting to see things through from start to end. We are acknowledging problems, taking others to task, and ensuring lapses are corrected.

Another example is from the **Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB). 15 years after we introduced democracy in Bhutan, we see that the ECB has raised the bar for being elected into office.** Democracy was introduced in Bhutan by His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, with the wish that we build a strong democracy that will always live up to the expectations of the people, by being the bedrock of integrity, trust and dependability. With many failed democracies the world over, our forefathers laid out a vision for an exemplary democracy with service to people always at the forefront. This means consistently raising our expectations from elected officials. The ECB's new standards reflects a changed mindset within the organization, and shows that they have internalized the spirit of the transformation, and understood their responsibility with greater clarity.

Conversely, we often see things remain in a **state of inertia for decades.** For example, when the Sustainable Development Fee for Tourism was raised for the first time in over 30 years, it came as a shock. This happened because the SDF had not been revisited at all in that period. **We must not allow democracy to stagnate in the same manner. Rather, we must constantly seek to raise the bar.**

We see many new faces in positions of leadership and responsibility. Some may think that this means younger people are being given the opportunity for leadership roles. I would say that competence is being given more weightage. We are making good progress in building a meritocratic system.

I am reassured to see these changes in mindset and approach.

We will begin to see results from the structural, legal, policy, and economic changes in the next 2-3 years. This is the second phase.

The third phase is continuity. This is not a one-time exercise. Rather, change is the only constant. Maintaining this momentum of change means continued assessments, reviews, tracking and monitoring.

Now when we talk about holding agencies and individuals accountable, it does not mean that we want to create a system driven by punishment and fear. We have to ask ourselves, whom do we serve? Not any agency or individual. But the people. Those in leadership positions and responsible for public service delivery must be held accountable. That is the only way to ensure the wellbeing of our people and our continued progress as a country.

There may be some who ask, aren't these goals we have outlined far too ambitious and idealistic for a small country like ours?

We believe that Bhutan is extraordinary- the land of Pelden Drukpa, blessed by Guru Rinpoche and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. If we want to remain exceptional, our efforts should also be exceptional. As a small, developing country sandwiched between two giant neighbours, in an ever-changing world, our only option is

to be extraordinary. We must focus all our current efforts to build strong foundations of an extraordinary nation.

As King, I have pledged my life and service for the wellbeing of our country and people. If I had the slightest doubt that our goals were far beyond our reach, I would not encourage our people to pursue them. I am fully confident in the capabilities of our people. I believe that we can achieve everything we set out to do.

At the start, I shared the story of a young mother of a four-year-old child. Her name is Karma Dechen, and she is from Pemagatshel. Maybe Karma Dechen is watching television now, or she will later. If asked, she might say that I spoke about the importance of transformation and change, how we have failed in the past but must succeed now, and that we will succeed if we all shoulder responsibility and work as a united people. I said this is for the benefit of our country and people. Maybe she will wonder how this will affect her, Karma Dechen, at a direct and personal level. Karma Dechen, rest assured that we will do our best to bring about the transformation that our country urgently needs. Your circumstances trouble us just as much, and we are determined to succeed in resolving them. You have a four-year-old son. If nothing changes, your son's future will be uncertain. This endeavour is so that he will get a good education in Bhutan, and grow up to be a capable young man, a proud Bhutanese who can succeed anywhere in the world.

Today, you are struggling financially. If things don't change, your circumstances will not have improved even when you have grown old. This transformation is so that you will have your own home, money, and the ability to leave your children an inheritance.

In the meantime, the State must do everything it can to empower you. Today you are 27. In 10 years, you will still be only 37. If things don't change now, those 10 years would have passed by in a flash, still leaving you vulnerable and struggling to make ends meet. Empowering you means giving you the opportunity to gain new skills and move on to higher paying jobs, or maybe even hold multiple jobs. It means that you can financially stand on your own feet. It means enabling your husband to get a good job to supplement your household income, and give your son a better life.

Our efforts are geared towards making our country prosperous, so that wages can rise, and you and your peers can afford a better life. When I met you, you had tears in your eyes. Those were tears of uncertainty, hardship, and the weight of your responsibilities as a mother who wants to give her son a better life. The purpose of our endeavours is to erase the cause of your tears, to give you security, happiness and peace of mind.

All our efforts are for you. Someday you may decide to have more children. Our efforts are also for them. With our small population, every child is a national treasure. Our objective here is to build a strong foundation and pave the way for your unborn children.

In this journey of nation building, just as the State has to play its part, I know that you too will do so.



Truth is said to be the oldest of all virtues; the bed rock of greatness and a powerful asset. We also talk about wisdom, which many say is the application of knowledge at the right time. It is a potent treasure. Compassion is another virtue espoused as the lotus in the pond. We then have words, churned in the cauldron of energy and power, which can heal and harm. Today, we witnessed all the above and more, converge and blend in His Majesty's address during the opening session of the Third Parliament's Eight Session. Truth was articulated mixed with compassion, and wisdom exhibited. Words only the world's best wordsmiths can chisel were heard. The combinations of the above reached every nook and corner of the country. Emotions were evoked and self-reflections and contemplations began.

The story of Karma Dechen, with which His Majesty began addressing the nation is truth in its purest form; the fact that we have erred somewhere along the road of development, leading to issues that we currently confront and the emergence of the likes of problems Karma Dechen is plagued with. And the concerns are mammoth for a country our size, which still depend on donors for capital investments.

Another truth is that we have basked for long as an extraordinary country. But as said by His Majesty, if we are an extraordinary country, the works that we do should also be extraordinary. And finding such a work done would almost be like looking for a needle in a haystack. His Majesty also highlighted several aspects of truth that is bitter – low productivity, low technological innovation, high operational costs, lack of accountability and others. His Majesty also cautioned that we are at the inflection point. However, we witnessed another virtue that is synonymous with His Majesty – compassion. Notwithstanding the challenges we confront, His Majesty expressed faith in us, his subjects, the people of Bhutan and their abilities. Within the sacred hall of the National Assembly, His Majesty thanked everyone for rising up when the nation needed them, especially during the pandemic. Speaking about the transformation, His Majesty said that though results are already visible, yet this is not enough. “We must raise the bar.” Discipline, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness should be augmented. The way we work should change, for today’s tools cannot be used tomorrow. Another truth mentioned concerned what most of us always say – “what will I get?” We should instead be asking, “What will I not get?” A little unconditional commitment from everyone of us can reduce the number of people who are in the same shoes like Karma Dechen. We can secure the futures of ourselves and our children. We will not need to beg for support. We can proudly say that we are an extraordinary country. And of all, we can lighten the concerns of His Majesty, our beloved King. What more do we need?

TB_Knowing where we truly stand and what to do about it

Tenzing Lamsang 3 days ago [HEADLINE STORIES](#) [Leave a comment](#) 717 Views

His Majesty The King’s Royal Address at the opening of the recent Parliament session is the most honest assessment to date of our nation’s situation.

The frank views from the very top coupled with the Transformation Reforms should make every Bhutanese do an honest reassessment of where we truly are as a nation and people, and what we can do individually and collectively to improve our lot.

For a long time, the conventional wisdom has been that Bhutan's location between the two giants of China and India is a security threat, but a great commercial opportunity that our industries, agriculture and other sectors can take advantage of.

The commercial opportunity logic came from the two billion plus market size of India and China, and how we can utilize opportunities there.

However, if we do a proper reassessment, it should be clear by now that our location is not a commercial opportunity, but a major commercial disadvantage or even threat to us.

The reason being that both countries can manufacture and make everything cheaper and even better than us.

Forget about electronics and consumer goods, but our traditional *Gho* and *Kira* is manufactured in Indian factories and imported into Bhutan.

Bigger and faster Power and Hydropower in India

Our main export was supposed to be hydropower with 10,000 MW by 2020, but a handful of large Indian private companies and Public Sector Undertaking companies generated enough power within less than a decade to make India self-sufficient in power.

When you look at the list of top 10 Indian power generation companies, each of them generate far more power (including hydro) than the whole of Bhutan combined with most generating several times over.

Even though hydropower had become one of the cornerstones of the relationship between the two countries and was both an economic and strategic project, we never had a chance as any Indian government will always give preference to its private companies.

Bhutan can also never compete with the sway that these companies have over their government.

We wanted to export power to Bangladesh as a trilateral project by aiming to get India's permission to use existing power lines or building new ones, but again a major private power generator in India stepped in to offer the power to Bangladesh. As a result, our proposal for a trilateral project to export power to Bangladesh will likely go nowhere.

The commercial interests of even a single major Indian corporate house will have much more importance and lobbying power in Delhi than Bhutan will ever have.

So like everything else, even when it comes to hydropower, which was our sole trading advantage with India, their companies can do it faster and bigger.

Industries and Agriculture

When it comes to factories and industries, the imposition of the GST taxes in India has made our exports uncompetitive as they face higher taxes than before in India.

Earlier, Bhutanese companies had to only pay Excise Duty which was lesser, and so we enjoyed a narrow tax advantage as opposed to our higher labour and transportation costs, but this tax advantage is now gone.

This will not be a problem for a manufacturing powerhouse like China with its scale, monopoly and competitive prices and their exports to India are only going up.

However, it is a disaster for a country like Bhutan which only had a wafer thin advantage riding on tax differences and power prices.

Our other great export hope was agricultural products, but after the formalization of trade at the border even that is suffering with all kinds of impediments and barriers, and trade is often carried out based on requests and exemptions, and even that does not work for certain items.

For mass agriculture, we simply do not have the landscape for it with only limited arable land. This is why we still can't even feed ourselves.

Even exports like boulders get hampered regularly due to official and non-official issues, including non-tariff barriers.

When we cannot compete with India, trying to compete with the products of the factory of world, which is China, will be an even more distant dream.

Location disadvantage

In terms of Geographical location our another well known disadvantage is that we are landlocked and so not in a position to be a center of even sub-regional trade, forget about regional or global trade.

Forget about Phuentsholing, Gelephu or Samdrupjongkhar becoming sub-regional trading hubs, but instead the old Indian villages across these towns have turned into overnight commercial centers largely due to the customers from Bhutan.

This is not because Bhutanese business people are particularly bad at business, but what happens when goods and services flow from India to Bhutan.

With our borders in the north being closed due to an unresolved boundary issue, our traditional trading opportunities available to Bhutan since centuries is not there.

Australia and failing Entrepreneurs

Bhutanese people have an innate and practical natural intelligence and seeing the writing on the wall many young Bhutanese are moving in droves to Australia, Canada, Middle-East etc.

They know in the current economic set up **there is no way they can build a future or wealth for themselves in Bhutan.**

The domestic market is too small to support their dreams, and when it comes to exports we cannot compete with our biggest trading partner.

A trail of mostly failed or struggling domestic entrepreneurs is proof as their products get out priced, out marketed and out competed by foreign imports. The common refrain from most of them from farmers to manufacturing units is government subsidy or support to even survive.

A large country bureaucracy

The bureaucracy in Bhutan is **based on the Indian model which in turn is based on the colonial bureaucracy of the British interested in control, security and establishment of authority, and not so much the welfare of the local natives.**

The other problem with our bureaucracy is that since it is based on the Indian model, it has adopted the mentality and culture of a large country bureaucracy which is totally unfit for a small country.

The bureaucracy in India can afford to be slow, revel in red tape, make mistakes, be corrupt and be inefficient, but given its size and scale, India can absorb these issues and still grow and thrive. The popular saying about the Indian economy is that it grows in spite of the government.

Bhutan as a small country cannot afford this as our bureaucracy has to be much more agile, efficient and practical and be able to adapt quickly to situations on the ground.

However, our large and bloated bureaucracy, which consumes far more resources than the goods and services it delivers, is not suited to the realities and needs of a small and vulnerable country and a fast changing world.

Our options

So when everything looks so bleak, what are our options? There are a range of them in different fields like digital economy, getting better prices for our power, having real free trade with India, playing to our strengths in agriculture and industries, getting more assistance and having a more informed and engaged bureaucracy. We will explore each of them below.

The Digital Economy

While we cannot compete with India or China in terms of manufacturing, agriculture, etc the one area where competition is possible is in the field of the digital economy.

Here you do not require a large population, huge resources and physical accessibility like sea ports etc, but only a small number of high quality IT workers and an economy and system that supports a digital economy in Bhutan.

The early possibilities are already there with some Bhutanese digital workers in Thimphu, instead of rushing to Australia, are working online from their home for IT companies across the world and making handsome amounts.

We have to work very hard on His Majesty's vision of a digital Bhutan, digital economy, fin tech, AI, machine learning etc for Bhutan so that we can build a talented and skilled manpower base that can become a global talent pool, and also build an IT industry of the future in Bhutan generating quality jobs and large revenues.

The future of Bhutan will have to follow this path in other areas too where we leverage on quality and niche and compete at the global level.

The step towards this is already afoot with the various transformation reforms and we will need changes in our education sector too.

Fair Hydropower competition

Since it is clear that India is power self sufficient with the capacity to scale up more, the future of the Bhutanese power sector is in convincing India to allow our small hydropower sector to compete in its energy trading markets where the prices are more competitive.

This way, Bhutan can build small or even medium sized projects on a commercial basis and it can compete in the power market in India.

We must also pursue the power deal with Bangladesh under the SAARC or BIMSTEC umbrella with Indian cooperation.

The tariff of projects like Tala and Chukha are among the lowest in the world, and so here, given the failure of the 10,000 MW by 2020 commitment, if some leeway can be given for power from these projects to also compete in the commercial market.

Otherwise, it will make better commercial sense for Bhutan to consume this cheap power internally than export it.

If Bhutan and India want to do future mega projects, then it must be under a much more efficient and accountable model than the ones that led to lapses in Punatsangchu-1.

Free Trade with India

Bhutan is one of the very few countries with which India has a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), however, on the ground, Bhutan is almost treated like any other normal trading partner of India when it comes to our imports and exports.

This is visible in all our export sectors like industries, agriculture, boulders etc where there are both tariff and even non tariff barriers.

It is time that our staff in the Foreign Ministry and the Economic Affairs Ministry work on this along with the political leadership to realize the full understanding and potential of such a free trade agreement.

A blanket understanding and agreement at the higher levels would mean Bhutan would not have to keep running to seek exemptions or requests for individual items or when issues crop up.

Agriculture and Industries

In agriculture, there is no hope in competing in the already very competitive mass Indian or other markets.

Our only hope to see real money is niche products that can get higher returns not only in India, but across the world.

We know our potatoes, chilli, rice and other products are higher quality, but we end up selling them dirt cheap across the border and sometimes not even that.

For this, instead of selling at Jaigaon, we should actively explore markets further afield in West Bengal, other Indian states and abroad.

On the domestic front, in the longer run, a richer population of Bhutanese can also pay more for higher end Bhutanese agricultural products.

For Industries, we have to work with India and Bangladesh to reduce transportation prices by securing rail and river links, then make it easier for both skilled and unskilled labour to come and work in Bhutan's industries, and then secure access to loans for big projects that our banks may not be able to finance.

Our industries should also be scaled up and built in areas where we have the advantage like access to raw materials and lower power cost like in Ferro Silicone with potential in Dolomite and Gypsum.

From aid to trade

In the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) the Nu 45 in grant assistance Bhutan took from India representing 13.5% of the plan was the same as the Nu 45 bn Bhutan took in the 11th FYP representing 23% of the plan.

This was a major policy reversal as the past practice was to take increasing amounts of grant with each successive FYP, even though it reduced percentage wise as a part of the total plan.

This reversal in the 12th FYP was done to strengthen our self sufficiency and sovereignty as it was assumed more aid would mean more strings attached. This was done with full knowledge of delays in the P I and P II projects.

This was also in line with our new line of from 'aid to trade.' A strong underlying assumption here was that as our 10,000 MW by 2020 comes to some fruition we would get enough money from trade to not take aid. It was also hoped that our economy overall would get stronger.

This, however, has not played out as P II will be the last mega project that India will do with Bhutan with 10,000 MW by 2020 given a quite burial due to power self sufficiency in India.

It is partly due to this reduced grant we took in the 12th FYP combined with decreased revenue flows and the pandemic that the government has run record fiscal deficits and has had to carry out tough austerity measures.

From 'aid to trade' is fine as long as there are things to trade and provisions have been made to ensure smooth trade.

However, our biggest item of trade which is hydropower went belly up while even existing things like industries, agriculture, boulders etc got hit by overnight trade barriers and tax changes.

Under the current circumstances and in the short term, Bhutan may have to re-examine and even postpone the 'aid to trade' concept.

India provides us grant assistance not only due to our friendly ties or as altruism, but also due our geo strategic location which seems to be the only real advantage we seem to have as far as our location is concerned.

So this is not a *Kidu*, *Soelra* or favour for Bhutan, but a practical understanding benefiting both sides that has worked until now.

After the failure of hydropower or 10,000 MW by 2020 commitments, Bhutan should look at asking for much higher and also more flexible grants for the 13th Plan.

This is of course without giving more concessions or any additional strings.

The money should also be taken with a strategic view to push our development and economy to the next level.

This money, instead of only building more farm roads to nowhere, should be used for smart and innovative projects in priority areas to strengthen our national capacity, human resources and economy.

The money should be used to buy us some time in the interim with the failure of hydro projects, while the long term aim should continue to be self sufficiency.

A more informed and active India Desk

It took this newspaper to find out a simple fact that Bhutan is paying more for oil than Nepal from the same PSU suppliers in India.

When it comes to export of agricultural products we did not even know about the laws in India and various requirements.

On hydropower we had little to no clue on the developments in the Indian power market and how it would impact us.

We seem to have no clue how domestic political and economic moves and even legislations in India will impact Bhutan.

We still don't really know why India has not moved on the Third Internet Gateway despite three governments requesting for it.

We are unable to convince a neighbouring state government of West Bengal that a Rail link will benefit Bhutan and her state's residents along the border.

We are clueless on why our proposal for a trilateral power project is gathering dust.

Our officialdom only seems to know when the train has left the station.

Here we need to add much more attention, research and an unwavering eye on how our interests are playing out in India at all levels, and what can we do to make things go our way or if that is not possible then to prepare for what is coming.

As part of our reforms we need to put much more manpower, resources and effort in this direction.

Enabling Bureaucracy

On the domestic front our bureaucracy and system should realize how tough things are for Bhutan internally and externally on the economic front, including for the private sector, and it should work hard to make things happen instead of just stopping things.

It should be an enabler for doing business and not a roadblock at every turn.

The Performance Management System and the Performance Based Incentives should not reward processes or even efforts, but actual outcomes and results on the ground in both services and growth.

The whole bureaucratic culture and thinking should change to creating solutions.

Some may wonder why there are so many India references above, but this is only to state the obvious given our geographical location and reality, trading statistics and others. A look at the regional map may also help.

Our neighbourhood and large neighbours need not be a commercial impediment for us, but we can work to convert it into a real opportunity provided we now where we are at, what is happening around us and if we are ready to make the right moves at the right time.

Dasho Kinley Dorji: From painful realities to exciting solutions

November 9th, 2022 **Contributed by Dasho Kinley Dorji**

Most of us think of history as a period of times gone by... of events described in books. On November 4, as we listened to the Royal address from the Golden Throne, we came to understand that such a phenomenon is not just timeless – and it is not academic. It is very real. It is now. It is very personal.

His Majesty looks at the bare truth of Bhutanese life and translates personal observations into national vision. The predicament of a 27-year old mother raising a four-year old son in Thimphu, and of youth drawn by the prospects of urban Bhutan pooling everything they earn to make ends meet are painfully real. And yet they are mere symptoms of a society suffering the consequences of a limited horizon. His Majesty The King advises us to ask important questions, confront realities, and dare to be different today.

The Royal address provides a perspective of the Bhutanese narrative. Why the urgency of the “transformation” process to find new direction and pace in nation building? Because an entire system of governance, from the functioning of its structure, its planning and activities, and outcome, is failing. While a population of 700,000 people should be easier to govern with efficiency we are reminded of the ineptitude of committees, commissions, boards, the inadequacy of education, futility of training and exposure, and a work culture marked by complacency and malaise.

One resounding message in the Royal address was that we must confront reality and face the truth. For example, our national economy is not flourishing. The expectations of abundant revenue from hydropower – what was once perceived as white gold – feels like a broken promise. With major projects stalled, after massive investments, the hydro power potential has deteriorated into a huge debt burden.

And the rhetoric, “the private sector will drive the economy”. Some of us expected that trade will spur growth. But the magnitude of trade in Bhutan is limited to the import of consumer goods, including essentials, from the region for sale in the domestic market. With low productivity in agriculture and industry, our exports are non-competitive so Bhutan has become an import driven consumer economy with a negative balance of trade.

A weak economy does not accommodate vibrant technology or encourage higher skills development. This suppresses opportunity and growth because there is no demand from the economy to support higher learning and skills. Therefore wages, instead of rising with the times, are low, and Bhutanese youth are seeking livelihood in more than 100 countries.

His Majesty has reminded parliament, government, and Bhutanese people that capital investments – infrastructure for people’s development – are funded with loans and grants. If Bhutan remains a donor dependent and debt-ridden country we will continue to be vulnerable and fragile.

The Point of Inflection

Bhutan is at a point of inflection, more out of necessity than choice. And the time is now. Decisions and action cannot be left for the future.

We know what is wrong. Yet we need to be reminded that the Bhutanese system has a major problem with operating efficiency, with significant resource wastage and leakage. His Majesty pointed out that it takes five people to do one person’s work, it costs two or three times as much, and takes two or three times longer than it should. If this inertia is not radically transformed the future, our children, are at risk.

It is disturbing and embarrassing for officialdom, entrusted with governance, to receive such reminders from the Throne. Although His Majesty advised that there is no need for shame and regret, we cannot take comfort in the fact that we are still in a better space than countries where people do not even worry or care, where they do not take ownership, where they hesitate to raise issues – thereby leaving problems unaddressed.

As Bhutanese, we claim to be different. The times are different and we face new problems, with greater risks. We need to deal with circumstances that are changing every day. On this crossroad, we cannot afford to take the wrong turn. Just as a small decision in the right direction will take us a long way, a small mistake will be a major disaster.

We acknowledge that we have tried and failed. We learn from the past and try again. This time, we do so with the condition that **failure is not an option**. We need to muster the clarity and momentum to identify our challenges and solutions. We must understand the nature and magnitude of our task. Our national goals have not changed. The objective is to fulfill the aspirations of our people – to ensure a sovereign and secure nation with a prosperous and happy population.

Are we ready? Of course, we are. If we do not have the confidence, we will never be ready. There are people who prefer to avoid risks, to adopt a gradual and comfortable pace. But that does not work when we take on reform on this scale. We are talking about transforming a nation.

Will we succeed? Of course, we will succeed. We will succeed because we are not following a blind path. We are asking, why are we doing it? What is our goal and vision? What is the purpose? Who is it for?

We are revolutionising the system to improve lives and future for our children. They will not survive without the skills and competencies necessary for the 21st century. We must elevate the competency and salaries of

our work force to global standards. This is the opportunity to correct our course with a new approach. Such opportunities will not come again and that is why the current transformation process is a serious commitment to our children and to the future.

Are we being too idealistic? No. In fact, we are not being ambitious enough. A small landlocked mountainous country sandwiched between India and China – with incalculable change sweeping the world – can only survive and thrive if we attain our goal of being exceptional. The intention is noble. The goal is high. The resolve is earnest. Our achievements must be as extraordinary as we claim to be.

The Era

His Majesty outlined three conditions for transformation to succeed: adequate funding and resources; sustained efforts to transform and institutionalise good governance practices; and changing behaviour and mindset of the people, this being the most difficult.

This new era emerges 16 years after His Majesty The King ascended the Throne. We have ignored guidance and been deaf to advice that we have heard year after year. The inertia is now being reversed with initiatives to reform and transform the system through a focus driven effort and strategic direction. Transition does not just happen, and transformation is never easy. It is a difficult decision to initiate a process which is guaranteed to invite both supporters and skeptics.

That's why the importance of solidarity and leadership. His Majesty commended the government's fearless and wholehearted service through the Covid-19 pandemic and the process of transformation. While democratically elected governments are known to postpone unpopular decisions when elections are around the corner, our government has recognised the importance and urgency of transformation. The National Assembly members took ownership, the National Council provided valuable inputs, and the opposition shared solidarity through the two and half years of the crisis. The bureaucracy, with its influence and reach, worked without rest through a period when all of us felt the turbulence, alarm, and stress.

His Majesty The King places his trust, most of all, on the people who have the mandate of being responsible citizens of a democracy. The Bhutanese people have exceptional spirituality, compassion, kindness but the future demands that we work harder, be alert, and exceptionally skillful. For this we draw on the Bhutanese strength in *damtshi*, the filial piety and fidelity of a closely knit society.

The Transformation

On the timeline of the transformation process, there are three contexts. **What is already visible is the RCSC reforms** pushing focus, concern, responsibility, accountability. Timely interventions are aimed at making the bureaucracy transparent and efficient. Civil servants are more conscious, showing concern. There are new faces emerging in the bureaucracy. His Majesty clarified that the purpose is not to just replace older public servants with younger people, but to prioritise merit and competence over seniority. We know only too well that seniority is too often interpreted as age and years of service, thereby appointing wrong people in wrong positions.

As examples of a new work culture, we see the Election Commission of Bhutan setting **higher standards for elected officials.** His Majesty Drukgyal Zhipa had commanded that we build a strong democracy to serve our people far into the future. Fifteen years later, the ECB is showing the spirit of the transformation process. The Royal Monetary Authority penalised the Bank of Bhutan for going offline, another sign of accountability being taken seriously. BOB is also required to draw up a business continuity plan. It goes without saying that ECB and RMA are themselves expected to function with the same integrity.

These remind us of the tourism industry's **Sustainable Development Fee**, which was not revised for 30 years, and now forces the government to grapple with complications that could have been avoided with more thoughtful and consistent attention in the past.

At another level, His Majesty pointed out that the impact of cultural, structural, and economic changes will take longer to emerge. But again, we do not wait for changes to take place. This is the mandate for today's generation of Bhutanese. Short term goals by politicians and the complacency of the bureaucracy have been leading us astray. Let us not waste the healthy jolt that public servants are being given with the reform process.

But overall, today's transformation is not a process of change that will come to an end. Transformation is the constant motion of showing resilience, switching gears, being nimble, advancing forward. Change does not happen once every decade or two – change is a perpetual motion to keep us ahead – to keep us safe and secure so that our people enjoy the best quality of life. In that sense we do not transform to reach a stage called GNH and stop. Transformation itself is a goal. But we have known all this. Why will it work this time?

His Majesty The King called out directly to 27-year old Karma Dechen, a mother living in modern Bhutan. Karma Dechen's real and practical dilemma is ubiquitous to all Bhutanese citizens, particularly youth in the early stages of their careers. We all heard and felt the call. His Majesty assured Karma Dechen – and therefore all Bhutanese citizens – that our problems are not unknown.

The State and government will do their part to provide opportunities and incentives. The people must do their part by making use of these opportunities and becoming exceptionally capable citizens. The vital change from our past attitudes is that we do not sit and wait for *kidu*. We roll up our sleeves and get to work.

It is profoundly reassuring. It is intimately personal. And it is deeply emotional. It is a call for all of us to Believe.

!!! Dasho Kinley Dorji: Bhutan Moves into the Future

June 18th, 202 Post Views: 336, Contributed by Dasho Kinley Dorji, former editor-in-chief of Kuensel and the former secretary of the Ministry of Information and Communications.

Bhutan has entered a new chapter of history, an era drawn from the wisdom that cultivated the Bhutanese system over the centuries. As the Covid-19 catastrophe battered societies and derailed economies around the world, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck assumed the role of a protector of the nation. Soon after January, 2020, when the news of the Coronavirus broke worldwide, His Majesty laid out the mandate of the State to protect Bhutan and Bhutanese society even as millions of people succumbed to Covid-19 around the world: "The interventions by the State should be swift, effective, comprehensive, and inclusive. The measures must be immediate and substantial."

Instead of being cowed down by a debilitating pandemic, His Majesty The King shifted the country into new gear. His Majesty reminded Bhutanese leaders that nation building is a dynamic process and the reality of a changing world means new challenges and opportunities. Bhutan is moving into new times with fresh perspectives and ideas to emerge better and stronger from the pandemic.

Nation Building

A State comprises the country and people. Nation building, therefore, means the reformation of government and reformation of society, a phenomenon that we see unfolding by the day. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed our vulnerabilities, shaken Bhutan from a stupor, and provided our generation with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to re-shape a country that is strong, resilient, and future-ready. As Bhutanese society emerges from the worst of this pandemic, there is a new vision being translated into national policy, legislation, and action.

It is a demanding vision. But the basis for hope and optimism is a trusted leadership that is illustrating clarity by the day. Over the past one and a half decades the sense of urgency of the Royal guidance has grown. In 2020, His Majesty granted *Royal Kashos* for the fundamental rethinking and restructuring of the Bhutanese education system and the civil service. Last year, His Majesty made it crystal clear that complacency and misplaced compassion should not be tolerated in public service.

On Governance

The landscape of governance is being transformed, starting with a much-needed and far-sighted reform of the civil service. The government is being restructured, the plans and programmes reprioritised. Public service organisations and institutions are being reorganised. The administration system is being refined for a population that is more educated, skilled, and globalised than in the past.

With the emphasis that a higher level of prosperity is vital for the security and well-being of a nation and people, economic development is being overhauled with the ambitious goal of becoming a high-income country. The focus is on sustainable and equitable economy to ensure the overall health of the nation.

The new economic vision expands national policies to reach sparse communities over rugged terrain. Bhutan is an agrarian nation and agriculture in the 21st century must be characterised by technology and information management, in policies and action. Decentralised governance will be a major contributing factor to rural development, focused on higher productivity for self-reliance.

Bhutan's pristine natural resources must be conserved to maintain intergenerational equity. It has become imperative that the hydropower and tourism and mining sectors are revamped to ensure a good quality of life for all the people as part of the vision to establish a progressive and prosperous country. In the energy sector, Bhutan's commitment to clean energy is being stepped up and hydropower supplemented by solar power and bio energies.

The decline in high-end tourism to mass tourism is being reversed to rescue an industry heading in the wrong direction. The mines and minerals policy aims at benefiting the nation rather than a few people.

Pragmatic wisdom for the 21st century places Bhutan in the geo-strategic context of the region and the world – for example, the fourth industrial revolution. The wisdom of GNH requires that Bhutan learns from a world that uses technological prowess for better governance, to monitor the environment, promote sustainable development, and stimulate the economy. In implementing policies, government ministries and institutions, parliamentary bodies, and public agencies with their specific mandates, have been repeatedly advised by the Throne to work together, not in competition or in isolation.

On Society

Bhutanese have survived as a populace, and Bhutan as a nation, because of the distinct identity of the people. The threat perception of 700,000 landlocked people in a region which is home to two-fifths of mankind has required that Bhutan find its strength in a unique identity grounded in the country's history, tradition, culture, and value system. Today, Bhutanese are forced to contemplate the situation and ask some important questions. Have the phenomenal achievements of our forefathers lulled the transitional generation into a sense of false comfort and malaise?

The country's strength being the people, it is a Royal aspiration that Bhutan must not tolerate mediocrity. The Royal vision conveys, loud and clear, that Bhutanese society needs a new mindset and work culture, from ingrained complacency and indifference to action-oriented work ethics. How can Bhutan build and nurture the people to implement the plans and fulfil our goals? How do we empower and equip a generation in transition, youth coming out of schools and colleges with skills and opportunities for productive careers and lives? "It is no longer enough to say 'I am the best in Bhutan'. I expect you to be the best wherever you go in the world."

The education system is seeing a fundamental rethinking and reform, as a vision and as a system. The past measure of progress in education by increasing school enrolment is being replaced by an emphasis on quality and skills that will nurture Bhutanese youth to be the best among the best anywhere in the world. The De-Suung Skilling Programme was initiated by His Majesty The King to train youth.

A historic Royal initiative will be the Gyalsung – National Service. The vision is to prepare all Bhutanese youth for the future. One of the foremost objectives of Gyalsung is to forge a shared national identity that transcends social, economic, regional, ethnic and linguistic differences. Bhutanese youth should know their history and culture and understand national circumstances and concerns, goals and objectives. As youth from all 20 dzongkhags and 205 gewogs go through this rite of passage together, their shared experience will help build inextricable bonds of friendship. Gyalsung aims to help youth identify their own life-goals, enhance their capability and skills, foster their self-confidence and autonomy, and strengthen their emotional positivity and psychological maturity so that they not only realise their own aspirations, but also serve the Tsawa-Sum as capable citizens.

A Just and Harmonious Society

The Royal vision is that the present generation of Bhutanese, with a unity of aspirations and values as human beings, focused on science and technology as well as the lessons of history, will rethink and redefine the true

purpose of growth. This would require a fundamental change of thought, a social revolution that will change the way to pursue growth that is truly sustainable.

The image of a future Bhutan is that within the sovereign, peaceful, and prosperous nation will exist a “just and harmonious society”. Such a vision is as pragmatic as it is wise as it is lofty, with universal appeal and relevance. GNH as a development goal, and Bhutan’s historic transition to democracy, are both vital elements of a just and harmonious society.

The concept of a just and harmonious society does not come from a specific body of political thought or social theory but is what every human society pursues. It is a vision shared by intellectual giants of the past and prophets of the future. For Bhutan, it implies a transformation of a deeply traditional populace into a contemporary society which is a balance of cutting-edge technology and a progressive work culture with a value system that is deeply humane.

The vision calls for difficult decisions made with clarity and courage to build the Bhutanese legacy for all time. The goal is not just to increase per capita income, but to distribute the improvement of the country’s economy more justly, more satisfactorily, among the population so that the resources of society should be distributed to all, those most deserving first.

Covid-19 has reminded us that the world will always remain vulnerable to unforeseen events that we have no control over – pandemics, natural calamities, economic downturns, and political volatility that affect all countries and far-flung communities. Bhutan needs to be bold, creative, and farsighted as it relaxes pandemic protocols today, albeit with the caution that has enabled the country to survive and thrive as a unique nation.

Keeping Tourism on Track

Today, every industry needs to change because Bhutan is changing... the world is changing. How we emerge from this pandemic, the bold decisions Bhutan takes and the sacrifices we make today, will redefine what it means to be Bhutanese. We owe this to the future generation.

For the tourism industry, as for all industries, Bhutan symbolises a brand of the highest quality. The mandate of this generation of Bhutanese is to live up to what Bhutan represents as a regenerative approach to the heart of a unique destination. And for tourism, the proposed policy is not a new concept because, early in Bhutan’s development, the industry was established with the vision of being a high value, low volume destination. It is now time to think deeper about travel that enriches, rather than dilutes, the quality of life of the Bhutanese people. High value, low volume tourism policy was crafted to preserve Bhutan’s socio-cultural identity and environmental sustainability even as we leverage economic gains. The vision of a just and harmonious society requires that Bhutan’s approach to growth must be inclusive and equitable. It is a reminder that **tourism, in the past, has made a few people wealthy and neglected the wider population. The question now is how will this exciting and complex industry, which represents 10 % of the global GDP, benefit the people of Bhutan, especially the future generations?**

Why now?

The unsettling and transformative times brought on by human conflict, climate change, and other factors including the Covid-19 pandemic, are forcing countries across the world to rethink and revise economic initiatives, starting with travel procedures. Global tourism organisations like World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) now acknowledge the need for a new direction to “build back better”.

Bhutan too must think honestly, boldly, and creatively to ensure the sustainability of an exciting and potentially disruptive industry in a small, landlocked country with a large youth population. The most notable and perturbing trend in Bhutan’s tourism is the descent of a high-end aspiration into the lowest common denominator in the form of mass tourism. This mirrors a world grappling with **unsustainable travel and over-tourism that has sidelined local communities, damaged local environments, and overtaken local cultures.** Where did we go wrong? How did we aim high end but accomplish low end?

The first step is to understand and acknowledge the neglect in the governance of the tourism industry. The **Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB)** was established with a vision that was appreciated, even admired, by the global tourism industry. TCB was steered by prime ministers and senior ministers, advised by highly paid and

experienced consultants, and the secretariat headed by veteran bureaucrats. So why such an enormous blindspot?

The Decline

The mandate was stretched across numerous organisations which were not coordinated: Cabinet, ministries, Tourism Council of Bhutan, thromdes (municipality), Road Safety and Transport Authority, banks, tour operators, hoteliers, dzongkhags, transporters. The lack of clear direction and limited professionalism was exacerbated by economic turbulence like a Rupee crisis. At the same time, there was pressure from the industry, politicians, and external interest groups. And Bhutanese tour operators and hotels collaborated with foreign agents to bring in more tourists who pay less.

In a decade and a half there was an upsurge of service providers, explosion of cheap hotels, Air BnBs and home stays, all enabled by policy, tax waivers, easy loans, and lax regulation. Monasteries became crowded, footpaths and scenic viewpoints congested, roads and trails to spiritual sites were disrupted by loud music and unruly behaviour. Corruption began, with agents undercutting prices, operators avoiding rules and evading taxes, Bhutanese fronting for foreign agents and hotels.

Bhutan is the only carbon negative country, with more than 70 % of forest cover and new species of flora and fauna being discovered regularly. Yet, the country is losing the battle against glacial recession, growing carbon footprint, pollution of water sources and poor waste management. Bhutan's tourism industry had privatised profits and socialised losses.

Bhutan as a “global hotspot” tourist destination became a broken promise. High value visitors started to abandon Bhutan. A resounding message came from an agent who had brought tourists to Bhutan for many years: “Goodbye,” he said, after a visit to Taktshang in May, 2019. “Bhutan is no more a high-end destination”.

The implication of mass tourism is about much more than just tourist numbers. It is the impact that affects the quality of lives. Bhutanese life and culture have been disrupted. Grocery stores in towns are being replaced by handicraft shops and cafes. The path to Chime Lhakhang is crowded with shops selling more gimmicks than handicrafts. The spiritual journey to Taktshang has given way to rushing ponies, blaring music, and cheap artefacts from India and Nepal. At monasteries, tourists jostle with pilgrims trying to make their offerings and prostrations. Peaceful Dochula is jammed with an uncontrolled flow of vehicles and tourists. The Bhutanese populace is starting to resent this.

Moving Forward

A glaring dilemma is that the industry deteriorated even as Bhutan knows exactly what needs to be done. To return to high end tourism we must define the roles of key tourism stakeholders, streamline government taxes, and outline pricing mechanisms to avoid over-tourism. Domestic and foreign vehicle traffic has to be regulated and streamlined.

Seasonal and geographical spread of tourism, long discussed but never implemented, should target performance-based incentives and investment. Long existing ideas include at least one alternate international airport and updated technology to prevent revenue leakage and misuse of payment systems as well as transparent and convenient transactions. This is all underlined with improved services and facilities.

Domestic tourism is an emerging and welcome trend. Increased spending power gives Bhutanese people the opportunity to travel, particularly on pilgrimage. Royal initiatives like the highland festivals and the Trans Bhutan Trail promise healthy, enjoyable, and educative journeys into Bhutanese culture, history, and nature. Home stays are available in most dzongkhags, a modern expression of the traditional system of “seeking hospitality”.

Managing Tourism

Bhutan needs sensitive and intelligent stewardship to manage tourism. The responsibility has fallen on today's leadership to return to the concept that less is more – quality rather than quantity. Officials have the mandate to do what is best for the community. **The challenge is to resist the temptations to harness quick fortunes**

from mass tourism. Bhutan must not be pressured into wrong decisions. The priority is not marketing Bhutan but managing the quality of the travel experience for both visitors and hosts.

It is the government that decides policy and makes decisions, not the industry. The industry must not be hijacked by a few influential people whose motives are purely commercial and interests short term. Hoteliers and tour operators must resist temporary profits at the cost of long term benefits. The private sector is the driver of the economy, but it must not drive the country in the wrong direction. It is not the fault of budget tour operators and hoteliers who went into the hospitality business but it is not right that they decide the policies by pressuring the politicians. The regulated cannot be the regulator.

The country must find solutions for those affected to support their livelihood and urge all politicians and bureaucrats to make decisions for the greater good. Bhutan is elevating the experience of tourism. The high value, low volume policy aims to welcome discerning visitors who are appreciative of and sensitive to the values that promote culture and the environment. Apart from cultural festivals and trekking based itineraries concentrated around specific seasons and places, the tourism industry has not been able to tap the full potential of Bhutan's vast natural, cultural, and social assets.

Visitors are willing to pay a premium to experience the Bhutanese-ness of Bhutan, meaning an uncontrived, authentic, and experiential travel experience to a unique land. Only smaller numbers of such premium visitors under a more liberalised tourism model can ensure maximum value and experience for everyone – from the visitor being able to enjoy a unique experience to the Bhutanese sharing their daily lives and sacred spaces and the country reaping economic benefits. The industry must be able to provide world class services, personal care, and genuine experiences.

Elsewhere

Bhutan is not the first and will not be the last to opt for responsible tourism over mass tourism. In Kerala, India, the state government has established a “responsible tourism mission” to ensure that local communities share the benefits. New Zealand announced a post covid goal to attract the global 1% richest as visitors. Venice laments the dwindling of local residents from 150,000 to about 50,000 persons in 2019 because of tourism pressures that included pollution of the waterways in the city. Tourist havens like Thailand and Nepal have expressed regret at not adopting more of a Bhutanese model. Many countries are introducing tourist taxes to ensure sustainable tourism. The list goes on.

Revamping tourism is not about visitor numbers but about sustainability and the quality of experience for both the visitors and the host. Bhutan's attempt to re-manage its tourist arrivals will contribute to the sustainability of its natural environment and culture and, in fact, the nation's survival.

Beneficiaries

Tourism is a strategic asset of the nation. Therefore, all Bhutanese citizens are key stakeholders as enshrined in the Constitution. **In the past, tourism enriched a few and neglected the majority; farmers who comprise over 50% of the population received just crumbs.**

The renewed vision for the tourism sector consciously and deliberately places considerations for the future generation at the forefront. This is because the economic makeup of the country will be redefined by exciting new drivers of growth. Reforms in education and skilling, and emphasis on STEM, for example, will help engage youth in high skill industries with the dexterity to navigate and excel in a rapidly-changing technology-driven world.

Tourism is not a panacea for unemployment as governments often believe. Government planners attempted to justify mass tourism as an employment opportunity for Bhutanese. But that does not carry weight in the long run because high-end hotels employ much higher room-to-person ratio and their employees enjoy a higher standard of living. The relatively smaller number of youth who choose to be engaged in tourism must be highly skilled and well paid. Youth must have a diversity of choices and the skills to be engaged in a variety of high-tech industries.

The answer is a return to the vision of high value, low volume tourism with a **liberalised pricing model and a bold review of the Sustainable Development Fee.** The world is realising that responsible tourism is about managing, not marketing. **Tourism must serve Bhutan, not Bhutan serving tourism.** Tourism must better the

lives of all Bhutanese people. It should strengthen the sovereignty of the nation. Bhutan owes this to the future generations. The trends and forecasts tell us that it is now or never.

Historic Gyalsung Bill passed in both Houses. The law will apply to all youth who turn 18 in 2024 and beyond **Mehr in Woche 45**

November 9th, 2022, **Nima Wangdi**

A Bhutanese attaining 18 years, **irrespective of where they live, should return to the country for Gyalsung**, the national service programme according to the Gyalsung Bill 2022 which the National Council unanimously adopted yesterday. All 24 members present voted Yes.

The one-year programme, which will start in 2024, includes three months of basic military training followed by skills specialisation programmes.

Dasho Sonam Kinga (PhD), who leads the National Service Core Working Group, said that those who have not gone to school or have dropped out should compulsorily participate in the programme upon attaining 18 years. However, the students will get an automatic deferment as they have to complete class 12 or equivalent qualification.

“This means, some could be 19 or 20 by the time they complete class 12 but they will still get to take part in the programme,” Dasho Sonam Kinga said. In the future, children will have completed class 12 when they turn 18 given the present school enrollment age unless they fail or have to take a break due to health problems.

The Bill states that a person who attains at least 18 years has to enlist for Gyalsung training. “A person below the age of eighteen years and six months may volunteer for early registration for Gyalsung training with the consent of the parents or the legal guardian.”

According to the Bill, the governing council, as a one-time measure, shall determine the eligibility criteria for the first batch of Gyalsung cadets. A person deemed medically unfit by the medical board shall be exempted from Gyalsung training. Monks are also exempted from the training. The council may also exempt any other person from the training in accordance with the rules and regulations.

The governing council may defer the obligation for Gyalsung training of a person for such period as it may consider appropriate in accordance with the rules and regulations but the person has to enlist for the training after the deferment period.

Those who are still serving prison terms of a third and fourth-degree felony during the time they attain 18 will miss the opportunity.

Gyalsung headquarters would issue notices to eligible persons to register for the Gyalsung programme. The eligible person has to complete registration formalities within 90 days after the notice is served. Failure to register after getting notice will result in a penalty amounting to the daily national minimum wage rate of up to 90 days.

“A person who evades or deserts Gyalsung training commits an offence and shall be liable upon the conviction for the fourth-degree felony as per the penal code of Bhutan,” the Bill stated.

Introducing the Bill, Dasho Sonam Kinga said the consultation on the Gyalsung Bill was done in all 20 dzongkhags last year. Dzongkhags, drungkhags, religious institutions, and business communities were consulted. “We could not do in all the 204 gewogs due to the Covid-19 pandemic.”

He said the consultation programme had to be suspended due to the pandemic. However, Gyalsung office would resume it after the Bill becomes an Act with His Majesty’s assent.

Members also expressed their appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty The King for the historic initiative. This is the first time His Majesty has exercised His Royal prerogative to introduce a Bill in the Parliament.

The programme will have four special training sessions after the basic military training: cyber security, food security, home security, and country security.

Bumthang's MP Nima asked **how the trainees would be distributed to the five Gyalsung Academies**. He said that there is a need to explain the procedure clearly.

The academies are being built in Pemathang in Samdrupjongkhar, Khotokha in Wangdue, Bondeyma in Mongar, Tarethang in Sarpang, and Jamtsholing in Samtse.

Dasho Sonam Kinga said that the academies will have dedicated training programmes with a maximum of two programmes. It will depend on which training they want but career counsellors, teachers, and parents should play a vital role in guiding them in which training to choose.

Gasa MP Dorji Khandu asked if children outside school or those differently-abled will have equal opportunity. Dasho Sonam Kinga said that every Bhutanese youth will be given equal opportunity. He said that the national service core group had initially decided to exempt the differently-abled youth since they won't be able to perform military training and also follow military etiquette.

They are eligible for an exemption if the medical board considers but if they are determined to serve the country, they would have a customised training session given the importance of creating opportunities for all.

EU Parliamentary Delegation called on the Chairperson of the National Council

Royal Bhutanese Embassy, Brussels

2022-09-20

National Council of Bhutan

Today on 20th September 2022, nine-member Delegation from the European Parliamentary visited the National Council and met with H.E Tashi Dorji, the Chairperson of the National Council, Dy. Chairperson Honourable Jigme Wangchuk and Chairperson of different Committees.

His Excellency, Tashi Dorji, the Chairperson of the National Council welcomed the Parliamentary delegation of the European Parliament to Bhutan in general and specifically to the National Council, Bhutan. His excellency on behalf of the National Council thanked EU Parliamentary delegation for all the support and assistance rendered to the National Council through joint activities and projects.

Over the interactive session, the delegation asked on the functioning of Bhutan's Parliament in general and National Council in particular. The Honourable Chairperson and the Chairperson of the different Committees of National Council shared with the delegations on the functioning of the Parliament and National Council.

After the meeting, the Delegation visited the National Council Hall. The European Parliamentary Delegation was Led by Ms. Evelyn REGNER, Vice President of the European Parliament, S&D, Austria.







His Majesty confers dhar to the NLC secretary and two Dzongdags

November 24th, 2022, Post Views: 208





His Majesty The King granted dhar to appoint the new Secretary of the National Land Commission, as well as the dzongdag of Pemagatshel and Thimphu dzongkhags.

The new Secretary of the National Land Commission is Tshering Gyaltsen Penjor, who was previously serving as Ambassador at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Brussels.

The new Dzongdag of Pemagatshel is Tashi Dawa, who was serving as Director of the Road Safety and Transport Authority.

Phub Dorji, who was the Chief Executive Officer of Bhutan Development Bank Limited, was appointed Thimphu dzongdag.

BT_Reflections from the 115th National Day

EDITORIAL December 19, 2022 , bhutantimes

The historic 115th national day which was observed in the capital in full glory after almost two years of subdued celebrations due to the coronavirus pandemic was indeed a historic milestone which will go down the rich annals of our hallowed history.

As His Majesty stepped of the dais to address the nation, hundreds of thousands remained glued to the television screens throughout the country as a feeling of unity and nationhood grasped their hearts. Every

year the nation and the government take cues from His Majesty's visionary national day addresses which has become the sacred document that guides the country.

While reminding citizens of their fundamental duties, this year too His Majesty the King gave us thought-provoking insights into the overall affairs of the nation. His Majesty while thanking the government and civil servants of their unfailing duty towards the state, He also stated that the bedrock of Bhutan's unity and sovereignty lie in the fact that we are always united in our thoughts and efforts.

He said the government of the day has been unfailing in their duties, especially in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic which shook the conscience of the global community with some of the mightiest countries falling down on their knees as health care system collapsed and economies ruptured.

While our country too was visibly shaken, His Majesty said the collective will and prayers of the people, aided by an apt government, see us successfully sail through the predicament. However, His Majesty cautioned that the growing threat posed by the proliferation of drugs remained the single biggest threat facing our youth today, and which could turn out to be a scourge that will threaten our the wellbeing of our future generations.

The caution comes at a time when the youth of our nation are continually coming to wrong terms with law enforcing agencies including the police. In recent times, the number of youth and school children coming in conflict with the law has substantially increased. The main curse, as hinted by His Majesty, is the proliferation of drugs and contrabands into our streets and towns.

This should be a caution to us all, this it is time we tackle this evil before it takes over the conscience of our children. It is a well known fact that 99 % of these drugs and contrabands comes through the bordering towns of Phuentsholing, Gelephu and Samdrupjongkhar.

And without the law enforcers, especially the Royal Bhutan Police, being involved in the operation we think it is virtually impossible for these contrabands to seep into our towns and markets. It is a cautionary tale for us all to collectively fight this social malice, and while the RBP must up their ante, it is a role that can be played by our teacher, parents and responsible citizens that we must help fight this scourge once and for all.

It is time we take the issue of drugs seriously.

Bhutan's first UN Peacekeeping Contingent

Bhutan's first UN Peacekeeping Contingent boarded a special Drukair flight to the Central African Republic (CAR), today.

His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen graced the departure ceremony at Paro Airport. A Guard of Honour was presented at the Ceremony.

Bhutan's contingent, which comprises 180 Royal Bhutan Army Personnel, is part of the United Nations's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission for the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).









PM hints at recontesting in the 2023 elections

October 15, 2022



Replying to a question from the media during the virtual Meet the Press held yesterday (October 14, 2022), Prime Minister (PM) Dr Lotay Tshering indicated that he would re-contest in the 2023 parliamentary elections.

This comes in the backdrop of a statement that the PM made during the elections in 2018, where he had said during public debates and Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa's (DNT) convention to give him a term and that he would not re-contest.

The PM yesterday told the media that he cannot drop out amidst many reforms and ongoing works and also added that had it not been for the pandemic, his stand would be the same as before.

“But **my mindset has changed given the different situation**,” he said.

Speaking about the pandemic and the works left undone, the PM said that it wouldn't be fair to just leave in between.

Meanwhile, people that the paper spoke to said one need not stick to a statement made during a campaign. “The PM is definitely right. His government could not do much because of the pandemic and so he will have several things in mind. Whether his party will win or not is a different question, but he should re-contest as he has really matured as a politician and leader,” Tshering Dorji, a businessman based in Thimphu, said.

A former civil servant said the PM has had to make a lot of unpopular decisions. “The closure of drayangs, doing away with gyaldrungs, increase in the sustainable development fee (SDF), the civil service reforms and others has hit the people. While the PM explained the need to some extent, he hasn't done it properly and he can talk about it only if he re-contests,” he said. **“Moreover, I sincerely do not see anyone in DNT who can be the PM,”** he added.

“When he made the statement in 2018, nothing was certain. He has now become PM and as such has the moral responsibility to lead his party. Like the PM himself said, he just cannot leave at this juncture,” Tenzin, a private employee said, adding whether DNT would win or not is another question.

Nidup Lhamo from Thimphu

Post Views: 209

PM denies rumors of him withdrawing and says he will re-contest for the 2023 general elections

[Usha Drukpa](#) 5 days ago [DEMOCRACY IN ACTION](#) [Leave a comment](#) 6,017 Views



Lyongchen Dashi (Dr) Lotay Tshering

For some time now there have been rumors that the Prime Minister Dashi (Dr) Lotay Tshering may not seek a second term by stepping down in 2023. This rumor had been actively discussed among various other rival parties.

There were also some within the DNT who were starting to wonder as the PM did not speak on the issue for a while.

However, during the 47th Meet-The-Press, DASHO (Dr) Lotay Tshering quashed the rumors and said that he will be re-contesting his seat for the next 2023 General Elections since major reforms have been started, and leaving it halfway looks irresponsible.

The Prime Minister said it all started with the acceptance speech at the 2018 party convention when he accepted the presidency. The Prime Minister said as he said then he still strongly believes that if he is not able to fulfill his goals in five years then additional years can't make it happen and similarly, the goals cannot be fulfilled in another term as well so why come back.

"But now, deep down I personally feel that from the democratic point of view, it is not fair to not re-contest. I am not satisfied and, on that note, I am not saying, I must or I should but to leave just like that breaks my heart. Major reforms have been initiated and leaving it halfway might seem irresponsible or if I say I don't want to participate and later if I did then that will make me look irresponsible. So rather I choose to be less irresponsible," said the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a lot of things they couldn't do. However, he said it was also an opportunity to know His Majesty's outstanding leadership inside out.

"My mindset during the beginning of the governance versus now is changed entirely, as well as my approach to governance too," said the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said at the end of the day, everyone wishes for peace and satisfaction in life, "I am getting a lot of peace from the governance, and I am equally or more satisfied spending 16 to 18 hours a day in an operation theatre. I miss life in operation theatre getting but I am also getting to serve governance at this level."

"However, should there be a better person, I don't mind giving away the Prime Ministership for the remaining crucial one year to the person who is better than me," said the Prime Minister.

Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa elects president and vice president

Weitere Artikel in Nr. 34

Dechen Dolkar, May 4th, 2022, Post Views: 300



Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa elected Kinga Tshering as its president and Chenga Tshering (PhD) as its vice president during its first party convention held on May 2 in Paro.

During the convention, the party charter was also drawn and approved.

Kinga Tshering is the former north Thimphu's member of parliament (MP) of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT). He resigned in 2016 to pursue studies.

He said that he returned to politics with his expertise and specialisation in leadership and economic development.

The president said that people are disillusioned with the political race to the bottom with politicians pandering with "two faces", one before and another after the elections.

"People aspire for a fundamental shift in the political discourse in keeping with the exemplary leadership of our Kings," he said, adding that the people do not expect "freebies" but concrete plans and policies that will lead to overall national progress and prosperity. "Thuendrel is committed to breaking this vicious cycle through our motto that promises made are promises kept."

Kinga Tshering said the party is inspired by the Royal Address on December 17 last year, the tenets of the Constitution, and the aspirations of the people of Bhutan.

He said that in keeping with the pressing needs of the country and as spelt out by His Majesty The King, the party is geared towards not just guiding the country towards economic recovery, but ensuring sustained economic prosperity.

Chenga Tshering is the former candidate of DPT for Thrimshing-Kangpara constituency.

He said the party is a realisation of the wishes, hopes and aspirations of supporters across the country. "We stand to represent choice, change and trust."

According to the party, their ideology is in putting the nation first by making personal and collective sacrifices in pursuit of a progressive modern economy anchored in the timeless tradition of the gross national happiness (GNH) society under the visionary guidance of our monarchs.

"The vision of the party is a value-based party committed to the pursuit of GNH that promotes equitable development, economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, cultural diversity and social harmony," according to the party. "The mission of the party is to manifest thuendrel service to the Tsawa-Sum in Lue-Nga-Yi-Sum (body, speech and mind) with a relentless focus on efficient public service delivery through tenacity, discipline and ngar."

Meanwhile, the party claimed it has finalised 27 candidates, including three female candidates. The party is planning to register with the Election Commission within this month.

DTT party has unique features: President Kinga Tshering

May 5th, 2022, Post Views: 86, **MB Subba**

The newly launched political party, Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa (DTT), is expected to provide one more choice to the Bhutanese electorate in the next parliamentary elections.

However, DTT will be recognised as a political entity legally only if the election commission accepts its application for registration, which the party plans to do within a month.

The aspiring party is branding itself to be a better choice than the existing parties, all of which are expected to contest the upcoming elections. The party, DTT officials say, has learnt from the mistakes and weaknesses of the established parties.

The newly elected party president, Kinga Tshering, said one of the party's unique features would be that it would adopt a bottom-up approach in the decision-making process through consultation with the people.

Another unique component of the party's structure, he said, would be the formation of a parliamentary coordination committee that will comprise members who are not elected to Parliament.

The committee would monitor and evaluate the functions of the elected members and recommend action against non-performing members at the party's convention should the party form a government. "One of the

common complaints that we have come across is that non-elected members are left out without a role,” he said.

The committee, he said, would ensure the longevity of the party while putting pressure on the elected members to perform. He added that the party had carried out research on the issue and that implementation of the system would strengthen democratic values and practices.

The DTT’s vice president, Chenga Tshering (PhD), said the party was determined to contest the upcoming elections. He said that most of the candidates have been confirmed.

Some social media users criticised DTT as a splinter party as some of its members including its president and vice president were previously associated with the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT).

However, DTT officials say that the party had roped in candidates and coordinators from various political backgrounds. DTT officials also boast of having highly educated and experienced candidates some of whom they say are currently in countries like Australia, the USA and New Zealand.

A close observer of political developments said that it would be unfair to link DTT with the Opposition Party as the members have left their former party. “I think the party has come up with its own ideology and plans.”

He said that the entry of DTT would have some impact on the national political scenario. He reasoned that people who are not satisfied with the performance of existing parties were looking for better parties to vote for.

He added that the formation of DTT could also affect Opposition Party’s votes.

However, a DPT official said that genuine supporters of DPT generally would not support those who have left DPT to join new parties. “We are not very worried about our support base being shaken by the formation of DTT,” he said.

The Bhutanese voters have chosen three parties as the ruling party on as many occasions.

If the election commission accepts it as a political party, DTT will be the first registered party in about 10 years. Two interest groups had applied for registration with the election commission in 2017 but did not qualify as political parties.

DTT officials said they were confident to get the party registered with the election commission.

Chenga Tshering said Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa is a “realisation of the wishes, hopes and aspirations of supporters representing Bhutanese across the country”.

The party say that supporters and members will not only breathe new life into the country’s “battered economy today but weather with greater resistance in the face of any such calamity in future”.

Bhutan’s press freedom ranking improves but local journalists skeptical

Samten Dolkar, BBS; May 5, 2022

Bhutan has ranked 33 in the global press freedom rankings this year, a jump from last year’s position of 65. The report is published by Reporters Without Borders, a Paris-based international campaign group, which has been monitoring the level of freedom available to the media in 180 countries and territories for the past two decades. Meanwhile, journalists in the country say the step up could be due to more of what has happened elsewhere instead of the progress in the country. The report was published on Tuesday.

Reporters Without Borders defines press freedom as the effective possibility for journalists, as individuals and as groups, to select, produce and disseminate news and information in the public interest, independently from political, economic, legal and social interference, and without threats to their physical and mental safety.

The score is based on five indicators, which are political context, legal framework, economic context, socio-cultural context and safety.

Bhutan's ranking has been dragged down by legislative and social indicators this time. It means problems such as the appointment of members of media regulatory body directly by the government, difficulty in getting access to state-held information and self-censorship by journalists in the country are some the factors.

"I think this happened because in the preceding year, basically there was no kind of malicious move by the government to curtail press freedom. And at the same time what counts in the ranking is that in Bhutan, no journalists were injured or killed," said Tenzing Lamsang, from The Bhutanese.

However, he added there isn't much difference between the scores of this time and the previous which indicates there hasn't been much change.

"If you look at the scores more closely, in 2021 our scores were 71.14 and in 2022 it is 76.46. There is no huge movement in scores. So I suspect it is more to do with other countries not doing well which may explain why we are moving so high up the rankings," he added.

"With safety, we have a better environment to work here in Bhutan but then coming to flow of information, I am still skeptical about the flow of information," said Puran Gurung, an editor at Bhutan Today.

"If others look at it, it's very nice to hear about it. But because it is us who work in the field and we know how the situation is, I feel like this ranking is not valid. Last year, I have personally experienced so many problems while trying to access information," said Lhakpa, a reporter for Bhutan Times.

While the country's rankings had a big leap, journalists in the country say it could fall next year.

"Looking at the current situation, it is even worse. We do not get certain information that we used to before. Even getting access to simple data has become difficult," said Lhakpa.

"I think the challenge for journalists in Bhutan continues to be access to information, small market, small society and societal pressures. So we have a long way to go. We may be doing better than our neighbours but I think we have a long way to go," said Tenzing Lamsang.

This year's score means the country has a satisfactory media environment.

Meanwhile, Norway emerged as the top performer while North Korea is the worst-performing country on the World Press Freedom Index 2022.

!!! The Paradox of Bhutans Australian Dream

<https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/the-paradox-of-bhutans-australian-dream/>

Bhutan's brain drain speaks to a number of social issues facing the Himalayan nation, but even migrants remain deeply rooted in their Bhutanese identity. FEATURES | SOCIETY | SOUTH ASIA By Yedzin Tobgay October 19, 2022

The Bhutanese diaspora gathered to receive blessings from a renowned Buddhist teacher in Melbourne, Victoria. August 2022. Credit: Druk Melbourne Archery Association



When then Australian Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies invited the Royal Government of Bhutan to observe the Colombo Plan meeting in 1962, no one predicted the initiation of diplomatic connections between the two countries would lead to the eventual development of Bhutan's largest diaspora group. Fast forward four decades to 2022, and the first Bhutanese film to ever be nominated for an Academy Award was Pawo C. Dorji's "Lunana, A Yak in the Classroom." Pawo's story of a young, discontented Bhutanese teacher convinced of greener pastures Down Under was globally received with

praise and the usual hullabaloo lamenting the loss of traditional ways of life to the machine of modernity and globalization. Unfortunately, the reality is that the story of "Lunana" is far more daunting. While aspirations of mobility and building new lives in a foreign land are presumed to only afflict the youth, attrition and retention rates in critical sectors and industries in Bhutan tell a different story. Presently, more than 30,000 Bhutanese reside in Australia and since the opening of borders in 2022, the numbers have only continued to increase.

Although movement to Australia started with human resource development aid for Bhutanese civil servants in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Australia's growing brand as an international education destination has expanded the doors for any Bhutanese aspiring to migrate. Observers have also noted that several eminent members of Bhutan's current ruling government earned graduate degrees in Australian universities, signalling soft power returns for the Australian government. While the success stories of economic prosperity and mobility afforded to Bhutanese continue to fuel the domestic fervour of hopeful visa applicants, an unaccounted consequence that the Bhutanese state failed to anticipate is the unprecedented rates of attrition in its domestic medical, education, and civil service sectors. Over the last year, over 800 civil servants across various national agencies voluntarily resigned, with an average rate of 102 resignations every month. These numbers may seem insignificant, but for a small landlocked country with a population of 750,000, each resignation signals the slow disintegration of much-needed government and bureaucratic capacity. As a welfare state that mandates universal education and healthcare for all its citizens, Bhutan was already working with limited human capital means, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This issue has now been exacerbated by the mass exodus of its most productive demographic group. For instance, the World Health Organization recommends a doctor-population ratio of one to 1,000 people; in Bhutan, there is one doctor for every 5,000 citizens. Locally, plenty of apprehension and concerns attend this growing exodus. Almost every second day, there is a new story or editorial asking the same questions: Why are our youth leaving? Why are Bhutanese leaving their beautiful snow-capped mountains, their closeknit families and communities, and sometimes even leaving secure jobs or businesses to go work blue-collar jobs in a Western country? Isn't Bhutan the country of Gross National Happiness? Why are citizens leaving their utopian Shangri-La to slog, toil, and grease the machine of capitalism? The answer, many say, is simply "Gokap ra mindu!" ("There are no opportunities!") Youth disenfranchisement, unemployment, and migration are multifaceted issues that afflict every nation, but in Bhutan's case, these issues are perceived solely as consequences of economic shortcomings. The Bhutanese reports that 99 % of the potential migrants that it interviewed stated they sought to earn in dollars because of the rapid rate of economic mobility afforded in an economy with decent living wages. Over the years, it has not been uncommon to hear the sentiment that "rather than work in Bhutan my entire life, I'd better slog in Australia for four to five years. What I will earn in Australia in a few years, I won't make it in my entire life here." That refrain is mirrored by laments like "Our youth would rather serve the dollar over serving Tsa Wa Sum (king, country, and people)"; "Soon Bhutan will only be a country of the elderly and children"; "Nowadays we have more graduates registering or preparing for the International English Language Test (IELTS) than the Royal Civil Service Exams!" It is evident that the Bhutanese state and its citizens perceive the issue to be purely economic, and the government seems reluctant to mitigate this growing exodus based on the rationale that remittances compensate for the brain drain. It is past time for the Bhutanese state to reflect and reconfigure its approach and attitude toward its youth. Bhutan is undergoing an era of immense transformation, prompted by the fifth Wangchuck Monarch decreeing national civil service and education reform through royal edicts in 2021. The royal government of Bhutan has made lofty promises of more prosperous job markets with education, public and civil service reforms. But who are these reforms being made for, and how will the government ensure the sustainability of such reforms when it is currently struggling to manage the long-term implications of large-scale voluntary migration? In a recent open dialogue session organized by UNDP, Bhutan's Finance Secretary Dasho Kesang Deki made an unprecedented and authentic confession. In response to the question of why our youth are leaving in droves, she simply stated, "we have failed." The novelty of such a statement stems from the fact that the Bhutanese government and bureaucracy remain notorious for their lack of accountability, systemic inefficiency, and culture of corruption and nepotism centered around a small population of elite aristocrats in Thimphu. A lack of accountability and a culture of self-censorship feed one another in a vicious cycle due to reduced social distance between members of a small population in which everyone knows everyone else. Further, outliers that critique the state and the quality of its public service delivery are immediately scapegoated, as government offices have developed a shrewd strategy of conflating the state with the monarch, a sacred and beloved figure to Bhutanese citizens. To critique the government is thus equivalent to critiquing the King. Proponents for social improvements, societal gadflies, and concerned citizens resist making formal complaints or contrarian suggestions at the risk of being labeled a seditionist. Ironically, such a context of pervasive self-censorship impedes the incorporation of youth perspectives and expectations into government. The government's hostility toward those who question and critique it has led youth sentiments to be expressed in an

unexpected but burgeoning informal hip-hop music movement that primarily thrives on the music sharing platform SoundCloud. Glimpses into the lived experiences and attitudes of the youth convey much remorse. Take these lyrics from the song “Thimphu Wonderland” by Thrigyal, Norlha & Zhingkhram: Since the 1950s, Bhutan has experienced an unprecedented and accelerated period of modernization under the rule of the third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The waves of globalization have catalysed the creation of new class distinctions in recent decades. Bhutan is far from the idealized forbidden kingdom in the mountains where a vast wilderness is the only work for me in this city? Give me a chance, that’s all I need. I’m stressed out because the hardships keep on coming and now I’m on the verge of getting kicked out. With only some loose change in my pocket, I’m tired of not having enough. They said, “Come to the city!” I miss home and I regret coming here. With no choice but to steal, I stand outside somebody’s house. The rain starts falling and I can feel the cold. My mind is screaming, “Stop.” I don’t want to be a criminal, there must be something I can do here. I want to serve my country. If they can do it, so can I!... Here in the city, I’ve seen the palaces of the wealthy, and here I am, barely surviving on the scraps I’ve been given. With no other options I had to lie to survive. Waiting for opportunities to come while I sleep with my ghost... Dad, I wish I had stayed when you told me not to go. It’s funny how life unwinds. I came to the city after selling off my land with hope and now that I’m here, the city has no place for someone like me. The embarrassment I felt... agrarian society sits happily in their rice fields, content with subsistence farming, following the cyclical calendar of agriculture. Millennials and Generation Z youths belong to a digital era in which their cosmologies extend much further than that of their parents and grandparents. The youth of Bhutan are not all national zealots of a happy kingdom but are also prone to disenfranchisement and disenchantment due to inefficiency, corruption, and the state’s weak responses to such issues. But a common underlying sentiment that can be caught in these laments is one of disappointment and regret owed to the nation. These criticisms and complaints about the circumstances faced by Bhutan’s youths are not voiced in a seditious manner but are instead tinged with remorse: remorse over failing to succeed and contribute back to nation-building, remorse over an inability to rise as part of the fair and equitable society that they aspire for Bhutan to be. After all, remorse can only be felt if one truly cares about something. Understanding Himalayan Migration To leave one’s land is not an easy feat. Yet every day flights out of Paro International Airport are full of youths who migrate with their homes in their hearts and dried red chilies in their luggage. Anthropologists Dolly Kikon and Bengt Karlsson’s book “Leaving the Land” expounds on the collective experience of upland Himalayan indigenous migrants. Exploring the dilemma of being attached to one’s homeland and family, yet at the same time being drawn to migrate and be mobile, according to Kikon and Karlsson, brings our attention to the experiences of indigenous migrants and their lives in the 20th century. They note: Migration and mobility are global phenomena that cannot be evaded in today’s day and age; the Bhutanese state desperately needs to acknowledge the inevitability of migration. It is crucial to formulate strategies that proactively accommodate mobility and manage migration, because excluding those who leave would mean reducing Bhutanese identity to geography, and that simply cannot suffice in the 21st century. Anthropologists Kikon and Karlsson remind us that indigenous migration from the uplands of the Eastern Himalayas is not about cutting ties with one’s history, culture, and community. On a general level, one can say that people migrate to avail themselves of new possibilities elsewhere or to escape hardships like famine, war, or societal collapse. Yet, on the level of particular migrant situations or in the case of individual migrants, things become endlessly complex. Every migrant has his or her own story and hence, reasons to be on the move. Rather, it is important to consider these developments as a form of “stretching” indigenous life worlds to new places. Given the global trend of out-migration to urban areas, the Bhutanese state should refrain from conceiving of migration as a linear development and grant its people the opportunity to practice global citizenship. In an era where technology has reduced the impacts of geographical isolation, the Bhutanese diaspora has cultivated a thriving community that enacts intimate cultural practices such as cooking and eating traditional food, speaking Dzongkha and other local languages/dialects, and taking part in religious activities and festivals in a foreign land. During my own studies in Melbourne, I have rarely come across a fellow Bhutanese who does not intend to return to their place of origin once they have completed their studies or achieved financial security. In Buddhism, time is a circular construct and so is movement. Just as apprehensions and fears grow with the departure of youths, there will come a time when there will be concerns and fears regarding the effective integration of these returning migrants. For too long, the government and people have always turned to the monarch for solutions, but it is time that all members of Bhutanese society take responsibility for the future of the country. At its core,

accountability is an intimate exchange, one that cannot be honored if both parties do not maintain a mutual trust and commitment to grow together. Both generations, those in power who currently hold offices, and the youth who will eventually inherit these positions must take responsibility and hold each other accountable in building a prosperous future for Bhutan.

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Elderly Bhutanese women selling local produce in the Paro market. Photo by Yedzin W Tobgay.



The Haa mountain range and a rural household in Western Bhutan. Photo by Yedzin W Tobgay.



Participants getting traditional Bhutanese lunch at an archery tournament hosted by the Druk Melbourne Archery Association. Photo courtesy of Druk Melbourne Archery Association.



Bhutanese effigies during a religious ceremony conducted by the Druk Melbourne Association. Photo courtesy of the Druk Melbourne Archery Association.

What alternatives to Australia? (Editorial)

June 7th, 2022

"Gokap ra mindu!" (there are no opportunities). This is the blunt answer thousands of Bhutanese leaving or trying hard to leave for Australia say when asked why Australia? Before this article goes to press, there will be a dozen who either received their visa or thousands who sat for their English language test, the first hurdle to cross for Australia.

The English language test is not difficult to clear for Bhutanese who finished a free English- medium high school or higher secondary school. Hundred others are skilled people who taught English or had secure government jobs. There are no data, but rough estimates indicate that there are 50,000 Bhutanese vying to leave for the southern hemisphere.

The data is as sketchy as the government policy. The government is clear on one thing. Those leaving the country for better opportunities are compared to cattle looking for greener pastures. Australia, with 18 % of its total landmass as harsh desert is the green pasture. A policy to stop Bhutanese leaving for Australia is not necessary, according to the government. As long as it benefits the government- in terms of easing pressure on unemployment or increasing remittance, it is alright. We cannot or should not stop people from looking for better opportunities or 'greener pasture'. If the trend can benefit both Bhutan and the Bhutanese, there is

nothing wrong. The government should not stop people looking for better opportunities. As we know, most South Asian countries export labour- skilled and unskilled. The Bhutanese story, too, is encouraging so far.

However, given the number of people leaving, a policy may be necessary. It may not be to stop people leaving, but because of the repercussions it has on those staying back. It is not only unemployed youth or fresh university graduates leaving for Australia or other countries. There are people in critical posts whose services are indispensable. For instance, an immediate impact would be on our education as teachers, both young and experienced leave for Australia. There are civil servants trained and skilled at the cost of the government and then there are skilled people that Bhutan needs to retain. One school reportedly lost half a dozen teachers to Australia.

Unlike other South Asian countries, the average profile of Bhutanese leaving to work in foreign countries, whether as maids or cleaners, accountants or care givers or even professionals are schooled and trained to develop our human resource capacity. The Australian scholarships awarded to Bhutan is a policy to develop our human resources. It was never intended to lure Bhutanese for odd jobs. As long as there are no 'gokaps,' Bhutanese will leave for Australia or beyond. This we cannot stop. What we have to do is create 'gokaps'. And this should be a priority of successive governments. We cannot wash our hands off by saying that a cleaner or a care giver in Australia earns as much as a minister in Bhutan.

Understanding the Australia Rush and the ground realities there

Tenzing Lamsang, 23.7.22, 18,793 Views;

<https://thebhutanese.bt/understanding-the-australia-rush-and-the-ground-realities-there/>



Bhutanese community leaders meet and discuss in Perth; Pictures of religious, official and social gatherings of Bhutanese in Australia

The USA may have experienced the California Gold Rush in the mid 19th century, but Bhutan is experiencing its very own 'Australia Rush' that started as a trickle around a decade ago, but is now a mighty and roaring river.

The city of Perth, which has the most number of Bhutanese people, itself has around 10,000 to 12,000 Bhutanese and the number of Bhutanese in Canberra, which is the second largest settlement, would be around 2,000 plus. There are smaller numbers in other places like Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane etc. This means that the total number of Bhutanese in Australia would range from 12,000 to 15,000 and growing.

Australia is also the largest source of foreign currency remittance especially during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 which saw record remittances of Nu 8.269 bn and 8,062 bn total remittance respectively of which Australia made up Nu 5.343 bn in 2020 and Nu 4.029 bn in 2021.

Why Australia is so attractive

Bhutan's Ambassador to Australia, Sonam Tobgay, talking from the capital city Canberra said that most Bhutanese are coming to Australia as it is seen as a very favourable destination for study along with cheaper fees than those in the USA or Europe. "The other advantage, unlike USA and Europe, is that you can work

while studying and if you bring family (immediate) they can also work which is better than in other countries and that is why Australia is so attractive,” he said. The attraction does not stop there as for the self funded students they are usually allowed to work the same number of years as their course after graduation. So, if a student has done a two years Masters program then they usually get a visa for another two years after their graduation to use their skills in Australia. It still does not end here as then there is an opportunity to get a Permanent Resident (PR) status, which is not citizenship, but allows you to live and work in Australia.

The President of the Association of Bhutanese in Perth Incorporated (ABPI), Tshewang Rinzin, said that every six months to five years the Australian government lists hundreds of skills that are required in Australia and if one has those skills then one can apply for PR. Tsewang said the skills are in a variety of fields like engineering, community work, auto mechanic, health worker, restaurant manager etc. The PR aspect is important as there is an increasing trend of Bhutanese not going there just for studies and work, but also applying for PR to have a longer stay here or even settle there with family. One more advantage for Bhutanese getting PR there is that they do not have to pay higher stamp duties and other fees while buying property.

Explaining the trend of most Bhutanese staying in Perth, the Ambassador said that his own assumption is that the fees in the colleges in Perth are cheaper, including the living costs, compared to Sydney or Melbourne and the city is bigger than even the capital city of Canberra. He said in addition to this a Bhutanese community built up there over time. This makes sense as many Bhutanese traveling to Australia often rely on relatives or friends to help them out in the first few months.

How to prepare for initial expenses, place to stay and getting a job

The President of the Australia Bhutanese Association of Canberra (ABAC), Dorji Tshering, said that for youth and others coming to Australia, usually with all their savings, it is a big decision that they should think through.

He said in addition to the University fees, students should carry around three to four months of expenditure money which is around AUD 6,000 to 8,000. He said that rents will be around AUD 1,000 per month for a small unit and food and utilities will be another AUD 1,000. Dorji said once you get a hang of the place one can use real estate agents to look for places to stay who charge a commission of one week to two weeks to a month's rent. He said people can also use Google and websites to look for apartments. In terms of jobs, Dorji said that students are not allowed to work until they get enrolled in their University and start taking classes and the numbers of hours depends on the visa conditions. He said that one can get jobs either by word of mouth through Bhutanese there, or the other option to look up local job websites like seek.com.au and others like Jora, Gumntree, LinkedIn etc. A simple Google search for such sites will throw up many more options.

Tshewang of ABPI said that in 80 to 90 % of the cases Bhutanese get jobs in Australia through word of mouth. He said some friends may say how skilled a particular person they know is and then that person gets hired. He said at the same time people must spruce up and put their resumes out there and make an effort to get jobs.

Australia Reality check and challenges

On advice for Bhutanese wanting to come to Australia, Dorji struck a very somber note. “I think coming to Australia is a very big decision and don't go by some Facebook posts or pictures on social media. You need to be willing to work very hard and sweat it out and also need to have a lot of grit, determination and courage as you will be leaving behind your family, your wife and kids,” said Dorji. The Australia story is not all rosy as while many do well, there are those who struggle and some have even gone back to Bhutan unable to cope there. Contrary to the common perception in Bhutan, Bhutanese in Australia are engaged in a variety of professions which are from white collar ones like University Professors, Engineers, Architects, to those with their own businesses to those doing blue collar jobs. There is a growing trend of Bhutanese who graduate and actually put their qualifications to work, and some who come skilled from Bhutan and join white collar jobs after a few courses or internships to adapt themselves to the system in Australia. One of the major things that Bhutanese have to be prepared for is a major cultural shift. Dorji said that the work culture is very professional and one has to be on their toes and 9 to 5 means 9 to 5. “You have to dot your I's and cross your T's. The society is very good but different, and Bhutanese youngsters are able to adapt very quickly,” said Dorji. Dorji said that there are challenges too. “If you are a casual employee your company may require you to work 5 days a week but after 4 or 5 months you may get a call saying you are no longer needed. Then you wonder what you can do,” he said. The cost of living in Australia, which is already high compared to Bhutan, is

also going up as part of the global inflationary pressures. Dorji said that a challenge is also to balance work and studies, and one has to be able to juggle both these balls. He said those students not attending classes or being truant can be sent to the immigration department by the University. When asked if Bhutanese in Australia face racism in the context of a viral video a few years ago of an elderly Bhutanese man delivering food being sprayed with water, Dorji said that every society and country has its rotten apples be it in Australia, Bhutan, India or others, but he said the society in general is wonderful and generous. In terms of deportations anyone not complying with the visa conditions or those engaging in criminal activities can be deported.

On Bhutanese choosing to settle there, Dorji said that the driving factor is kids and their education and opportunities. He said while Australia has a lot of freedoms it also comes with a lot more responsibility with very strict laws, regulations and also unwritten codes and cultural expectations.

State of the Australian Economy and jobs

With so many Bhutanese going there and living there, one pertinent worry is the state of the Australian economy, especially with global uncertainty and slowing global growth rates. Dorji said that the Australian economy is doing very well as it is a very resilient economy. He said it has one of lowest unemployment rate in the last 40 years. However, here, Dorji said that what really matters are heart and determination and if a person is lazy or careless then they will still not do well. The Ambassador affirmed that the economy is doing well and there is a huge demand for both skilled and unskilled workers with a record low unemployment of 3.5 %. The Ambassador said that **Australia is looking for people with skills in the IT sector, engineers, health care and nursing, child care etc** which are all in big demand. He said Bhutanese do all sorts of jobs. When they come for the first time they **start with mainly blue collar jobs, but since Bhutanese have been coming here for a decade now they are in a whole range of jobs including highly qualified ones**. Tshewang said that for students starting out there are jobs as house keeping in hotels, age care, disability support and other areas.

There is a crisis of the lack of workers in Perth in almost every sector and so there are job opportunities.

It is always better to come with skills or acquire the skills. He said his friends started with hospitality industry jobs for three to four years and are now engineers in a major Australian company. Sharing his own experience as an electrical engineer, he said he had to do certificate courses and internship programs as not all his skills were relevant to Australia, and he now works as an Organizer in a major company.

Tshewang said that around **70 % of Bhutanese women in Perth have jobs in age care, disability care etc where the women got those jobs after undergoing local courses in Australia.**

Special treatment for Bhutanese?

One theory going around in Bhutan is that the reason why so many Bhutanese are able to go to Australia is due to geo-political factors of Bhutan being a friendlier country than certain other options.

However, Dorji said that this is not the case as the Australian Immigration regime is one of most robust regime in the world and every case there is based on merit, and not on geo-politics or nationality.

The Ambassador also debunked this and said that in fact Australia has not had many students coming in for the last two years due to the pandemic and now it has opened up and is welcoming students from countries across the world.

Getting help for students and Bhutanese in Australia

Tshewang Rinzin said that for those Bhutanese students coming to Perth, the Association is planning to have an induction course where volunteers will provide students with information. Students should also come to the social events of the association and the community like football tournaments etc to help network. Usually people coming already have friends and relatives taking care of them.

Another resource that students can use according to Tshewang is the consultants that the students come through as they would have local offices or focal people in Australia whom the students can also approach.

Any Bhutanese coming to Perth and having problems can always contact the association. He said he is yet to hear of any Bhutanese refusing to help another, and he himself has never refused to help any Bhutanese.

The Presidents of both the Perth and Canberra Associations said that while most Bhutanese coming in already have relatives and friends to guide them, they can approach the associations and its members for help and also use the facebook pages of these associations to seek help or information be it about renting places or looking for jobs. Dorji said that when Bhutanese in Australia face medical emergencies or other issues then the Bhutanese Associations and community is always ready to help. “We all get together and coming together in amazing ways,” he said.

Transport and housing

In terms of Transport Tshewang recommends that people buy a cheap second hand car at first as using public transportation will not suit doing part time jobs at odd hours like 7 am in the morning etc.

He said that in terms of housing compared to three years ago the housing situation in Perth has become more tight as a lot of people have moved into Perth, but this is a temporary problem and the situation is expected to improve once more supply comes in.

Better ease of doing business in Australia compared to Bhutan

He said a major difference between the two countries is the ease of doing business. He said as a Bhutanese citizen in Bhutan, it took him two years to get his education consultancy license, but as a foreigner in Australia he could get a license within 3 days. He also said that he took 6 to 7 months to get a construction license in Bhutan and the license requires one to have one’s own trucks and equipment when one can easily hire the same equipment and instead use the capital to improve the business. He said in Bhutan he would have to keep following up multiple times and the officials would usually be busy in meetings or out of office.

The youth unemployment factor pushing youth out of Bhutan

When asked why he thinks so many Bhutanese youths are heading to Australia, Tshewang said that during the pandemic around 18,000 Bhutanese across the world moved back to Bhutan and with youth employment already around 21 % this is another around 18,000 unemployed youth and so he said there are around 40,000 youth in the job market in Bhutan and so this is a major factor. He said people who also moved from Australia to Bhutan during the pandemic are also coming back.

Bhutanese will come back from Australia

However, Tshewang said that while Bhutanese moving to Australia looks like a one-way traffic now it will become an almost equal two-way traffic in another three to four years.

He said the trend of Bhutanese moving in large numbers to Australia began in 2017 but the visas issued there are only for around five to six years and once that runs out then people will have to come back. He said then there are Bhutanese like him who even though have got PR want to come back. “For any Bhutanese of my age (43) the heart is where the home is and this will be true for around 99.99 % of them. In the next 5 to 10 years around 90 % will be returning back. People are staying back right now mainly due to their kids who are yet to graduate or for their sake,” he said.

Tsewang said that he would like to come back and do business as there are a lot of opportunities in Bhutan, and perhaps more than in Australia. Tshewang said that instead of having a rigid civil service system the system should be made flexible to hire skilled Bhutanese coming back on contract for three to five years so that they can contribute.

When asked if he will not miss the better health system in Australia, Tshewang said that one’s health is in one’s hands by watching what one eats and does, and this is the same anywhere in the world. On the education front he said the education system in Bhutan will change for the better in the future. The Ambassador Sonam Tobgay said the intention of most Bhutanese is to work and return back to Bhutan and there is a great love for Bhutan with people sending back a lot of money to help family members and also invest in property. He said that Bhutanese are also buying houses and real estate in Australia, which is not only shelter, but also an investment that will appreciate in value and something that they can sell while coming back.

The Blunt Truth of the Australian Dream

Ca. 20-9-2022 [Developer](#) 2 weeks ago [OPINION](#) [Leave a comment](#) 20,523 Views

There is a blunt truth why people leave for Australia, America or Canada, and currently mostly to Australia.

While local research and data, news and noises tend to portray reasons for leaving like, workload, hierarchy, lack of amenities, work atmosphere, lack of incentives and recognition and other reasons -the hidden reason is the Dollar.

The blunt truth is that they who leave, leave to make better income. The calculations and comparisons are on money they earn in a week with what they earn in months here at home. I know several friends who have returned after their tryst in Australia, and I am compelled to envy them. They have life savings that I can't make in a decade or more. They have better cars bought without loans. They bought land without loan. They have flats and a house to go to even before retirement. They are living a more luxurious and secure life.

The rush to Australia is a short window to ensure a better earning. This is the blunt end of the truth we won't answer even in a data survey!

It's not workload. We know they work harder than they ever did while on the chair. They perform multiple works in a day, as cleaners for a time, taxi driver for another and harvesting grapes for yet another.

It's not hierarchy. We know, those who were leaders here work under less educated supervisors. If the quality of work pleases them they get to work with a sense of security.

It's not recognition or incentives. There is no huge recognition or rich incentive for menial works done, yet people work even at the oddest hours and in the riskiest places.

It is not working amenities. They aren't provided with iPads and cars, house and offices, yet everyone works zealously, second to second.

It is not for academic learning and upskilling. The priority is not to study, to get certified for Masters or a Doctoral degree. These degrees have no advantage in how much we earn at work. It is a way for one to work and another to study and work.

If we look at stories of how Bhutanese emigrants work in Australia day and night without hue and cry, and yet rejoice the beaches and city lights, we have been complacent while on our chairs here. We expect everything to be given as we desire even without sweating as much as we would in Australia. Bhutanese are proving to be reliable and capable muscles wherever they work outside Bhutan.

Bhutanese leaving to Australia may be a brain drain, but they also contribute towards Bhutan's economy. A report by *The Bhutanese* in 2021 said, 'As per the RMA's monthly statistical bulletin in 2020 of the total Nu 8.269 bn remittance to Bhutan, Bhutanese in Australia made up Nu 5.343 bn. A distant second was Bhutanese in USA sending in Nu 2.479 bn. This is incredible considering that just in 2018 Bhutanese in USA sent Nu 1.371 bn and those in Australia sent Nu 1.591 bn.

This indicates that more Bhutanese who are in Bhutan are able to own land and build houses and live healthier lives. When they return home, they live a humbler life, having experienced the harsh realities of work and money. If a family lives a better life, if children can be provided better education, this is also a long term national asset.

We know stories of how Bhutanese people bruise and burn at work. They suffer from back aches and head aches, but are resilient to keep working until their dues are paid and savings are made. Many are emotionally disturbed, homesick and lonely, but they thrive as a community, looking after each other as a family of Bhutanese. Life cannot be a bed of roses where thorns are natural outcomes of the risk we take. One of the most painful moments are to be away from our children and ageing parents. We cry, we work, we laugh, we bruise, we sing, and sunsets comes and goes.

If dollars have to be minted, we have to shed the pride of our titles. There is never an easy way wherever we are, whatever we do. My position and power will be unable to provide a better life for my children. If I have to

worry over it all the time on how to meet our ends, I cannot be as productive as I would if my bank balance is secure.

But by the position and power I am entrusted, I am able to contribute to nation building significantly, inspiring, transforming and making incremental differences in the lives of students and place I work.

People will leave, knowledge and skill will be drained. It will never be same again, but the machinery must keep running. It's not a political exodus, it is not a mass banishment. There is always an advantage. Someone will take over; someone will learn to run differently.

For the system to run for a new century, we will need to form and nurture our young population and those who remain loyal to their task. We must know that, not everyone will have the convenience and karma to take flight to Australia, and those who did cannot become Australian.

By Namgyal Tshering

The writer is the School Principal of the Dechentsemo Central School in Thinleygang, Punakha

More than 1,000 civil servants resign from Jan to Oct 2022

Text in Printausgabe TB 29-10-2022

GNH Commission officially dissolves

October 3, 2022

The Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) is officially dissolved. The move is part of the Royal Civil Service Commission's reorganisation of civil service agencies.

The former central coordinating agency had been tasked with the overall planning of the country's policies and programmes by incorporating the four pillars of GNH- Good Governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation and environmental conservation.

The GNHC's dissolution came into effect yesterday. The Prime Minister at the inaugural event of "Black Mountain Festival and Cycling Challenge" in Trongsa on Saturday said the Commission is better to be dissolved. "Since we have to assign other agencies with bigger responsibilities, we want to dissolve the Gross National Happiness Commission. So, some of its divisions will be merged with the Cabinet and others with the Finance Ministry," said Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering.

Two of its six divisions are integrated with the Office of Cabinet Affairs under the Cabinet Secretariat. They are Perspective Planning Division, and Research and Evaluation Division.

According to the officials from the Cabinet Secretariat, the office will carry out the role of developing long-term plans and policies of national interests.

The other four divisions are now clubbed with the Ministry of Finance.

The divisions are Development Cooperation Division, Local Development Division, Planning Monitoring Coordinating Division and Government Performance Management Division.

Henceforth, anything to do with research on GNH will be done by the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies.

Passang, Trongsa

44 executives being managed out for failing leadership assessment

Two executives demoted and one moved to specialised position

Phurpa Lhamo, March 25th, 2022

Forty-four executives of the 47 who failed the Royal Civil Service Commission's (RCSC) leadership assessment will vacate their offices by April this year. The commission issued a press release yesterday stating

that the 44 executives took a special retirement offer, which included their retirement benefits and additional salaries of the months remaining before they superannuate, which is capped at a maximum of 24 months.

The press release stated that two executives chose to be transferred to lower position levels and another moved to a specialist position level. It also stated that of the 47 executives who were not able to meet the assessment expectations, seven were secretaries, 22 were director-generals and 18 were directors.

Kuensel learnt that the executives were given a week's time to decide if they wished to take the special retirement offer or wait for six months to be appointed to a relevant position as and when it opened.

However, an executive said they were told that the appointment wasn't guaranteed and the special offer of 24 months salary benefit wouldn't be paid if they wait for six months. It was also learnt that those taking the special retirement offer should hand over their office in a week's time. An official from RCSC said there won't be an immediate replacement for managed out executives, but officiating heads should lead the offices.

The press release stated that agencies may be merged, positions made redundant, and others streamlined.

"Civil servants, regardless of seniority, who find themselves unable to keep pace with these changes and, therefore, unable to effectively serve citizens, may be managed out."

The RCSC official said that in the process of merging agencies, positions made redundant, and streamlining, it wasn't sure that 47 positions would still remain or if it will be further streamlined or made redundant. The press release also stated that going forward, executives would be given expanded roles. "The RCSC will continuously assess all executives. Our executives understand that meeting the high expectations of the leadership assessment conducted earlier this year in no way guarantees their place or progression in the civil service." It further stated that the transformation of the civil service would be driven by agencies that continuously innovate, use data and technology to deliver services, and work effectively and efficiently with one another more collaboratively. "We will redesign public service delivery and reorganise our agencies such that the wellbeing of our citizens and our future generations are front and centre. The civil service will strive harder to deliver economic prosperity, progress and wellbeing for all."

While some executives said that they were planning for early retirement and the managing out process was convenient, others felt that they had performed well until now and the "managing out" process was a bad memory at the end of their career.

RCSC leadership assessment raises eyebrows

The commission said it will continue to manage out underperforming civil servants regardless of seniority and position

[April 3, 2022 bhutantimes Latest News Social](#); LHAKPA TSHERING, Thimphu

Even as the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) implements a paradigm shift in leadership in the civil service, there continues to be debate as to how efficient these measures will be gauging their performance.

The RCSC may, on grounds of public interest, have a well-established mechanism to manage out persistent sub-standard performers from the service. But the debate relates to whether such a level of the evaluation procedure is appropriate to remove them.

For instance, the RCSC's process included assessments based on the executive's work plans, responses to realistic work-related scenarios, leadership feedback provided by their supervisors, peers, and subordinates, and performance during group and individual interviews.

In this connection, there appears to be deeply held views that such a procedure is not an honest reflection given that leadership feedback and performance assessment (Individual Work Plan) has been the root cause of problems among civil servants. It has been accused of being one individual's prerogative and thinks the rating is unjustified. Some even say that such performance assessments are complicated, which has deterred the management to yield expected results and has caused them to "turn a blind eye" on those underperformers thus affecting the overall performance of civil servants.

While the RCSC did not respond to this development, an official said that accountability is the main driving force to fundamentally reshape the civil service into an efficient and effective institution that delivers the national objectives. "The panel assessed the executives' personnel management instincts, their ability to

approach issues from a higher vantage point, collaborate with one another beyond their organizational boundaries. Among others, their drive and ability to deliver results, as well as their ability to prepare themselves, their teams and organizations for the future is also considered,” said the official.

However, the official added that these unprecedented leadership assessments have underscored the importance of having a system that continuously assesses the current performance and potential of civil servants, at all position levels, to effectively differentiate better performers from the underperformers.

Some say the assessments are not focused on the leadership of the candidates. They say some executives who got through the assessments are those who got the gift of the gab with bad leadership qualities while some being managed out are those who speak less but shouldered the most important qualities of a good leader.

In addition, while the RCSC assures securing a better future for children, past experiences reveal that there has been no culture, among elected or civil servants, whereby they have asked their subordinates what they expect of them as a leader.

Going forward, the official says the performance will be closely monitored to bring their performance up to the required standard. Under the system, good performers will be given due recognition and rewards, whereas underperformers will be managed out.

“Collectively, these initiatives represent the fundamental shift in the RCSC’s approach towards leadership selection and performance management,” the official said, adding that the current personnel management system is under review to shift the entire civil service to a more effective in supporting transformation.

Further, it is also a customary practice that the executives’ job is just to sign the papers while some do not even bother to read the papers before signing. Some heads of organizations don’t even know what is happening within their own organizations despite being well-informed and warranting urgent measures.

RCSC says it remains committed to ensuring that the civil service leadership has the necessary competencies and foresight to navigate the complex challenges that we are grappling with as a nation. “The decision to manage out the executives who did not meet expectations has been a difficult but necessary one to emphasize that performance and accountability start with the top leadership,” added the official.

Meanwhile, during the past couple of months, the country witnessed important reforms in civil service that had an impact on the role and position of senior and executive civil servants where they came under pressure.

While 40 % of executives at the Secretary, Director-General, and Director levels could not excel in the leadership assessment exercise, it was learned that some chiefs and senior officers have already submitted their voluntary resignations.

The assessment will manage out civil servants, regardless of seniority, who find themselves unable to keep pace with these changes and therefore unable to effectively serve the citizens.

Economy

Gyalpoizhing: A model riverside town

The small sleepy town has suddenly boomed bringing business and hope

August 11th, 2022, Tshering Namgyal | Gyalpoizhing



KUENSEL
August 11, 2022

A well-maintained park stretching for more than 16 acres, smooth roads divided by a line of flowers, a football ground in artificial turf, neatly maintained footpaths and many more have transformed Gyalpoizhing beyond recognition for visitors coming after a decade to the town.

Business is thriving with the once sleepy hot town becoming the preferred place for business, as more and more government institutions, regional offices of corporate bodies, and state-owned enterprises bring with them people, business and hope.

Once a mosquito and snake-infested place, Gyalpoizhing town, is poised to become the commercial hub of eastern Bhutan if it is not already. The town's growth began in the mid-1990s following the commencement of Kurichhu Hydropower Corporation Limited (KHPCL) in 1992. It is now not the town that many would have even imagined. And it has evolved over time.

The completion of the 77-km Gyalpoizhing-Nganglam highway has become the lifeline of the easterners cutting down travel time and distance by 220km between Mongar and the border town of Phuntsholing.

Residents attribute the transformation to His Royal Highness the Gyaltsab who chose Gyalpoizhing to establish the office of the Gyaltsab to administer kidu for the eastern region.

The coming of projects like the FDI company, Mountain Hazelnut, a subsidiary factory of the Bhutan Agro Limited besides regional offices for poultry and piggery breeding centre, regional office of department of road and Construction Development Corporation office at the adjoining Lingmethang town all added to the buzz of the town.

The latest on the list is the ongoing Gyalsung project at Bondeyma, one of the five national service centres in the country envisioned as a one-year integrated training programme for the youth. Each service center is expected to house about 2,600 youth, 300 non-commissioned officers and 32 officers.

"Where there are people, there is business," says one of the few early settlers of the town, Tsheten Dorji. He recalls the town area as a hot place where once paddy fields belonging to farmers of Drepong gewog were overgrown with thick undergrowth when he first came to settle down in 2000.

The 73-year-old said around five shops were run from makeshift huts in line at the current KHPC colony area. "Most of them had come to seize business opportunity after the project began." Tsheten Dorji, who was

among the first seven businessmen to come up with buildings when the government allotted plots in 2001, said almost all the businesses were small grocery shops, eateries and bars to cater to the project employees.

Another early settler, Seldon, said she had never imagined the town to become like what it is now. The 64 - year-old owner of Hotel Trashigang started a small restaurant when she followed her husband to *Gepshing* (as they call it) who was doing small contract work. “There was nothing. “We could all see trucks and foreign labourers employed at the project,” she recalls.

The hotelier is glad she stayed and believes that the future is even more promising. The early settlers identify themselves as Trashigangpa, Tsamangpa, Sherchupa etc.

Of the 57 private plots excluding institutional plots, there are around 20 buildings today and with the town’s population increasing there is even a housing crunch. Construction is booming. There are around nine three-storeyed buildings being constructed.

A land owner whose building is under construction said people are coming to check her building for both residential and business purposes. “I’m not promising anyone as of now,” she said. Land prices have also soared over the years. The price of a decimal of land has increased from about Nu 300,000 about five years ago to Nu 600,000 now.

Water shortage is no more an issue with the town connected to a proper water supply system and numerous roads crisscrossing the road. “Foreign *dabugila ai* (It is like in a foreign land),” says a resident appreciating the infrastructure.

There are more in the pipeline. There are plans to develop Gyalpoizhing into a lakeside model town with boat service over the river along the dam site.

With the artificial turf and an Olympic hall, Gyalpoizhing could be the winter sporting hub with a series of sports and games coaching and tournaments. The former soldiers of the three armed forces built a massive choeten (stupa) in the middle of the park, which could host religious programmes in the pleasant Gyalpoizhing winter.

Entering Gyalpoizhing will be a different experience too. The 7.3km highway between Kurizampa and Gyalpoizhing is being widened and improved under the DeSuung National Service project in collaboration with the Department of Roads.

Well established with businesses dealing in groceries, garments, hardware and services like hotels and restaurants, Gyalpoizhing town today caters to the people of Kengkhar, Jurmey, Silambi, Tsamang, Saling gewogs in the dzongkhag and some from Lhuentse, besides travellers along the Gyalpoizhing-Nganglam highway.

BB: Is Bhutan experiencing a K-shaped economy recovery?

See: BB; 2022-07-16

His Majesty Talks to Bhutan’s Youth

Dasho Kinley Dorji, August 13th, 2022, Post Views: 277

When His Majesty The King spoke to 700 graduates this week, he spoke to them as citizens and builders of a new era. It was a command to the entire generation of Bhutanese youth that theirs is not a mandate to just grow up and find a job; it is to help transform a nation.

The foundation for this task, the roots to anchor the vision for nation building, comes from within. His Majesty asks youth – in fact all Bhutanese – to contemplate on what is unique about Bhutan? How are we different from other countries? In many ways, the world has interpreted Bhutan’s own heritage and achievements into a future vision. This is the image of a spiritual, mystical, happy country that does everything right and of proud and compassionate people living clean organic lives. The game plan is to translate this somewhat magical dream into a pragmatic vision for nation building. His Majesty outlined the brand of a “dependable and trustworthy” country. At a time when talent and skills have become globally widespread this is a focus on

values. Being dependable and trustworthy is to make “our word our bond” – a society functioning on clear principles, validated by codified laws. The government has estimated that Bhutan needs to amend 45 laws to strengthen the regulatory environment and ensure that our children, and their children, will inherit the legacy of being the most dependable country in the world.

The Task

His Majesty emphasises the importance of understanding the enormity of this formidable undertaking. The magnitude of such a task cannot be undermined because it is of an unprecedented scale. There are no shortcuts and quick fixes towards the national vision. The only solution is to adapt to change with agility, resolve, and stamina, knowing that there is no achievement without effort, without sacrifice.

The current situation in Bhutan is riddled with limitations. Good jobs are scarce and wages are low. His Majesty has personally seen young Bhutanese struggle with inadequate incomes, conscious of higher wages and opportunities in other countries. But proposing a blind salary hike for all would be a naïve solution; it would be ignoring the laws of economics. Bhutan is a net importer with a drastic negative balance of trade. The capacity for exports is currently minimal and the ambitions for trade are limited to importing container loads of clothing and household items or some vegetable farming, retail shops, and restaurants.

Strategic Direction

His Majesty The King shares with Bhutanese youth a strategy already in motion. The past year has been a period of diagnostics. Bhutan needs to know, with surgical precision, the root cause of the problem. The country is following a changed vision – changed trajectory. To move forward Bhutan needs to call a spade, a spade. Pretending that things are going well will be a disaster.

The foundation on which Bhutan needs to build a future is infrastructure and education. Infrastructure means roads and bridges, electricity, internet, policy and laws, that supports the vision. His Majesty points out that Bhutanese engineers can’t even align roads, or build drainage systems. The digital culture is disabled by low bandwidth and no Internet redundancy. With regular power blackouts, ideas like data centres and medical hubs are out of the question.

How can Bhutan reform the education system – with 9,000 teachers, nearly 200,000 students, 600 schools as well as legacy issues? The Royal advice is, to start with, be grounded and humble enough to say that Bhutan is not in a good place.

While the government has always counted on hydro power, there are enormous setbacks. At this rate, electricity will become too expensive to be used domestically or to be exported. Another major concern for Bhutan is operating efficiency. The cost of delivering services is extremely high. We have institutions, workers, and intelligent people, but our policy and management system has gone wrong – is not working. If Bhutan remains static, it will be a race to the bottom.

There will be many challenges, setbacks, and disappointments, but His Majesty assured the youth that Bhutan will succeed. The Bhutanese system has been rejuvenated. The Prime Minister and the government leadership are not resorting to populist decisions. They truly understand where Bhutan is, where we need to go, and will brave unpopular decisions to go there. They are thinking about it and working hard – round the clock.

His Majesty notes that some people believe we cannot manage this rate of transformation. They are alarmed, in panic, that things will go wrong. Are we suffering from institutional inertia, ossification, or resisting change? His Majesty also shared the Royal view that it is good people to worry... We must not stop being concerned. Rather than being too entitled and expecting everything to be done free Bhutanese have to have confidence that we can get it done.

After studying the situation from every angle, His Majesty said that he is optimistic. Bhutanese people are intelligent and are fighters. They want a better future and are willing to work. The people are united, courageous, and have tremendous love and devotion for the dharma and for the country. Now is the time to bring out the spirit and fire and, in one or two years, reshape, redefine, recalibrate, upgrade, and strengthen the country.

To Bhutanese public servants, His Majesty said that Bhutan cannot miss this window of opportunity. There are no alternatives – if the country fails, the children will suffer for the current complacency and lack of courage – lack of intelligence. Would the Bhutanese people understand, at this juncture, where it is heading? This is the epitome of compassion.

The Path

People need strategic direction, a clear path. One preferable scenario is that Bhutanese professionals – architects, lawyers, IT engineers, travel agents, expand business outside the country. With Internet 3.0 everything is possible. We can even tap into talent from everywhere in a networked economy, anyone from everywhere. In this day and age – talent and skills are becoming easily affordable on a planet of eight billion people. Bhutanese can sit here and work and earn on a global scale. Today's professionals need to pave the way. His Majesty talked to Bhutanese youth, many with their lives and careers ahead of them. The Royal advice was to discover and follow their passion. Choose career paths that do not suppress or underestimate life-long learning and they would grow exponentially. Chase values that are helpful to others. Keep learning, up-skilling, investing in themselves and don't underestimate magnitude of the challenge ... the vicious cycle of finding their careers monotonous, repetitive, not challenging would stunt their growth. "I have a lot of faith," His Majesty told the 2022 graduates. "I'm counting on you all."

Jolted by Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan 'taking steps to strengthen economy', says FM Dorji

Bhutan Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji said while India is 'closest friend', its relationship with China is based on 'mutual respect, concern', even as border talks with Beijing continue.

NAYANIMA BASU, (Edited by Zinnia Ray Chaudhuri), 8 August, 2022



New Delhi: As economies in South Asia seem to be fast entering a vulnerable state — especially with Sri Lanka going bankrupt and Bangladesh knocking on World Bank's doors — Bhutan is taking several "steps" to build economic resilience, one of them being reopening the Himalayan Kingdom for full-fledged tourism, said Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister of Bhutan.

In an exclusive interview to ThePrint, Dorji said, Bhutan's economy, though "tiny" compared to other countries, was not spared the impact of Covid-19. Hence, since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, Thimphu implemented strict border containment measures and safety protocols that resulted in key economic sectors such as tourism, construction, and manufacturing being "severely affected".

Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister of Bhutan

Credit: Twitter, @tandidorji

"The tourism sector is the hardest hit, which gradually spilled over to its allied sectors such as transport, construction and manufacturing sectors.... Bhutan is taking all possible steps to build economic resilience," said Dorji. "Given the possibility of a recession in the global economy, we need to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Declining foreign currency reserves, increasing public debt and inflation are major concerns for the government." The negative impact on the tourism sector, the mainstay of Bhutan's economy, has also led to massive job losses. The increasing number of Bhutanese returning from overseas, displacement of employees, and growing numbers of new entrants in the job market further aggravated the unemployment scenario in the country, he added.

Unemployment in Bhutan peaked at 5 % in 2020, while youth unemployment reached 22.6 %, he pointed out.

"Though our foreign currency reserves are declining, we are in a comfortable position at this stage as Bhutan has been able to maintain reserves as per the constitutional requirement to meet the cost of not less than one year's essential import," said Dorji. He added that the country is also aggressively promoting the use of local products to reduce imports as much as possible.

According to Dorji, Thimphu is also concerned about the rapid appreciation of USD against the ngultrum (Bhutan's currency) that has led to inflation and increase in the cost of debt servicing. "The sustenance of the current economic situation would lead to macroeconomic instability which would result in the economy facing high inflation and frequent financial issues," he said.

Bhutan and India hydropower projects

Dorji said that while the country is staring at a difficult economic condition, it is getting support from India.

"The hydro power sector, the main source of revenue generation for the country, supported by the Government of India, provided the much-needed relief in offsetting the shortfall in the domestic revenue realisation," he stressed. However, he also spoke about the projects that are now stuck. During a recent visit to India by Bhutan's Minister of Economic Affairs Loknath Sharma last month, both sides discussed the state of hydropower cooperation between themselves and how they are being re-planned owing to market conditions and growing energy crisis. "On the Kholongchhu joint venture company, both sides agreed to work towards the closure of the JV Company as the JV mode of implementation has not delivered what was expected," Dorji said. He added, "The meeting between the power secretaries of two countries is expected to be held in Bhutan soon to discuss a suitable implementation modality for Kholongchhu and to review the overall hydropower cooperation." During his visit to Bhutan in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the 600 MW Kholongchhu hydroelectric project, a joint venture represented by SJVN Ltd from India and Druk Green Power Corporation from Bhutan. The Concession Agreement for the 600 MW Kholongchhu hydroelectric project was signed virtually on 29 June 2020. "On the Punatsangchhu-I Hydroelectric Project (HEP), the Bhutanese government is currently awaiting the findings of the Indian government's independent committee which is studying both the barrage and dam options," he said.

Indo-Bhutan hydropower cooperation began in 1961 with the signing of the Jaldhaka agreement.

The sale of hydropower accounts for the largest share of Bhutan's GDP. It is also the most important export item, contributing about 63 % of the country's total exports.

Relations with China, border talks

Last October, China and Bhutan signed an MoU to settle the longstanding border dispute between them based on a three-step roadmap, much to New Delhi's concern.

Declining to comment on the state of the talks at present, Minister Dorji said that since the negotiations are ongoing, he won't be able to give details on their progress, but said that both countries "enjoy warm and cordial relations" despite absence of diplomatic relations between them. "Bhutan and China engage closely on issues of mutual interest and concern. The two countries have also cooperated well in its fight against Covid-19 pandemic. In a show of goodwill and friendship and to support Bhutan's fight against Covid-19, the Chinese Government donated vaccines, PPE and other medical supplies," Dorji said.

Bhutan and China have been discussing the issue of settling the 477-km border between themselves since 1984 with 24 rounds of boundary talks and 10 rounds of meeting at the expert group level. The border talks between Beijing and Thimphu are a cause of concern for India due to Chinese claims over the Doklam region.

Bhutan, till now, has been able to keep the Chinese at bay and has done a balancing act between New Delhi and Beijing. Last month, Indian Army chief Manoj Pande visited Bhutan and called on Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and discussed bilateral issues.

Also read:

China may push Bhutan for 'definitive response' on border dispute: Ex-envoy Nambiar on MoU

China sees 'snub' to India in Bhutan agreement. And Chinese are mocking Ajay Devgn

No stop to China's building spree in Bhutan as new village springs up, satellite images show

Labour import and use made more liberal to help revive the economy

2022-06-01; Damchoe Pem 5 days ago THE NATION Leave a comment 3,897 Views

<https://thebhutanese.bt/labour-import-and-use-made-more-liberal-to-help-revive-the-economy/>



The flow of foreign laborers into the country has eased the struggle and difficulties in completing works in the construction sector. There are also certain changes in the system to revive the country's economy, and to ensure that the Bhutanese workers can learn from the foreign skilled workers.

Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR) Minister Karma Dorji said in the past there was no requirement to hire Bhutanese workers along with the foreign laborers in the construction sector, but now, the system has been changed to make it more dynamic,

using the dependency ratio.

Lyonpo Karma Dorji said, "If a contractor employs two to three Bhutanese workers, then they will get more foreign workers. The more they employ our own Bhutanese, the more they will get the foreign workers. We want to ensure that Bhutanese worker gets access to learning skills."

In addition, if a contractor wants to shorten their duration of construction, they can then employ more number of workers. MoLHR will support the contractors by giving them the feasibility of importation of more workers compared to the past, to save time, he said.

In the past, a building owner needed permits for 10 workers to complete a building in one year, but now, permits for additional foreign laborers are approved if anyone wants to complete a building in 6 months.

That way, Lyonpo said, it saves a lot of time, and that the remaining time can be used in economic developmental activities, which is most required at this point of time.

Likewise, "The standard of occupation for the laborers is also made flexible and dynamic. We now have a system of re-deployment, wherein the foreign laborers within the country can work in other firms after completing their existing project," Lyonpo added. Instead of foreign laborers exiting the country after the completion of their project, Lyonpo said, the re-deployment system can reduce the burden on the economy, given the pandemic situation. "The laborers can now be hired within the contractors. This process will not only ease the burden in importation of new foreign laborers, but it will save lots of time, and also reduce the costs on quarantine. The associated risks can also be prevented," Lyonpo added.

However, if the foreign laborers are in the country for complete three years, they will have to exit as per the immigration rules. Otherwise, they can choose to stay, if accepted by the local contractors.

The ministry's concern is to prioritize the completion of government projects awarded during the pandemic time, and help revive country's economy as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, Lyonpo said, "We have enough quarantine facilities, now that the quarantine system is lifted for the domestic travelers and the number of days in the quarantine for people coming from abroad is reduced to 5 days." MoLHR has imported more than 21,000 foreign laborers, and in just 4 months (February to May 2022), more than 7,000 foreign laborers have entered the country.

Bhutanese economy should move from resource-driven to productivity-driven

May 30th, 2022, Thukten Zangpo

With only hydropower dictating the economy of the country, Bhutanese economy is facing the risk of becoming a mono-line economy, according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' chief of Global Economic Monitoring, Hamid Rashid. "Productivity-led growth is a good hedge against volatile economic growth," said the chief who was a panellist at the Bhutan Democracy Forum which discussed "Equitable prosperity through inclusivity" last week.

The pandemic has adversely affected the economy, impacting all aspects of societal equality and the national debt of the country stands at 130.9 percent at Nu 247.68 billion of its gross domestic product (GDP) in first quarter of 2022. Hamid Rashid said that a resource-driven economy dictated by one or few resources tends to be volatile and vulnerable. "The productivity-led growth is more resilient, inclusive, and equitable which Bhutan needs to prioritise and pursue."

He claimed that productive growth can be stimulated by adding labour, capital, and more efficiency to the economy. Hamid Rashid said Bhutan should have policy and discussions to identify productivity-led sectors to achieve and sustain steady economic growth.

He said that Bhutan saw economic growth of 6 % on average over the last 30 years which is slow compared to countries of similar economic structure and size. "Bhutan's economic growth is volatile because having a standard deviation of growth over average growth, the volatility of 0.76 is significantly higher than other countries of the same economy size. "The swaying growth for a small economy is not a very stable economic growth." Bhutan's economy shrank by 10.1 % in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hamid Rashid said economy of least developed countries grew in 2020, while the South Asian economy contracted by 5.7 %, India by 7.5 %, and the global economy by 3 %, but Bhutan's contraction was by a large margin. Bhutan faced more global shocks because of the tourism and trade sector in 2020, he noted.

The high external debt, he said, is an additional source of vulnerability. According to him, if growth rate averages 5 % during the next decade, the debt to GDP ratio would exceed 200 % by 2030 and at that point it will slow the economic growth and sudden shocks will exacerbate debt sustainability risks. "There is a need for planning and policy considerations."

Hydropower export, Hamid Rashid said, undermines other exports and economic diversification.

"Hydropower's share in total exports saw a significant increase from 33 % in 2011 to 57 % in 2020, but the share of non-hydro power export decreased from 25 % to 11 %. It deteriorates the country's balance of payments." He said that in GDP calculation, the net exports are a major contributor to economic growth. "However, it has not improved while imports have increased significantly." On the other hand, he said that the agricultural sector employs nearly half of the workforce and is the least productive sector in the Bhutanese economy.

The hydropower sector employing about 4,000 people generated over USD 300 million of gross value added in 2020.

He also said that the productivity also stagnated in the tourism and hospitality sector and was low in the wholesale, retail, manufacturing, and transportation sector.

One of the challenges, according to Hamid Rashid is that nearly 60 % of Bhutanese living in the rural areas produced 15.8 % of its GDP-estimated GDP per capita in the rural economy compared with the national GDP per capita of about USD 3,200. "GDP per capita in the urban sector is over USD 8,000. There is a large rural-urban income inequality, which will increase if rural productivity growth continues to stagnate."

Another challenge, he said, is that Bhutan has a small and remarkably slow-growing population. Bhutan's population growth is estimated to be only 0.8 % a year until 2032, making it one of the slowest growing population groups in the world. Hamid Rashid said that an aging population will also require rapid improvement in productivity. "Bhutan will need to identify new growth sectors to absorb labour trapped in low productivity agriculture and tourism sectors."

Another panelist, the director of Macroeconomics, Research and Statistics of the Royal Monetary Authority, Gopal Giri, said that without hydropower, the economy would have contracted much lower than 10.1 % and the central bank projected at -25 %.

He said that the Bhutanese economy still faces challenges being an import-driven economy and faces twin deficit problems, which are high current account deficit and internal deficit and Bhutanese Ngultrum being pegged with the Indian currency.

Gopal Giri said that deficits were experienced since the first five-year plan. However, he added that the government is trying to inscribe economic policies and options and push the driving factors of growth in the 13th Plan. According to him, the three triggers of the Bhutanese economy are the government's capital

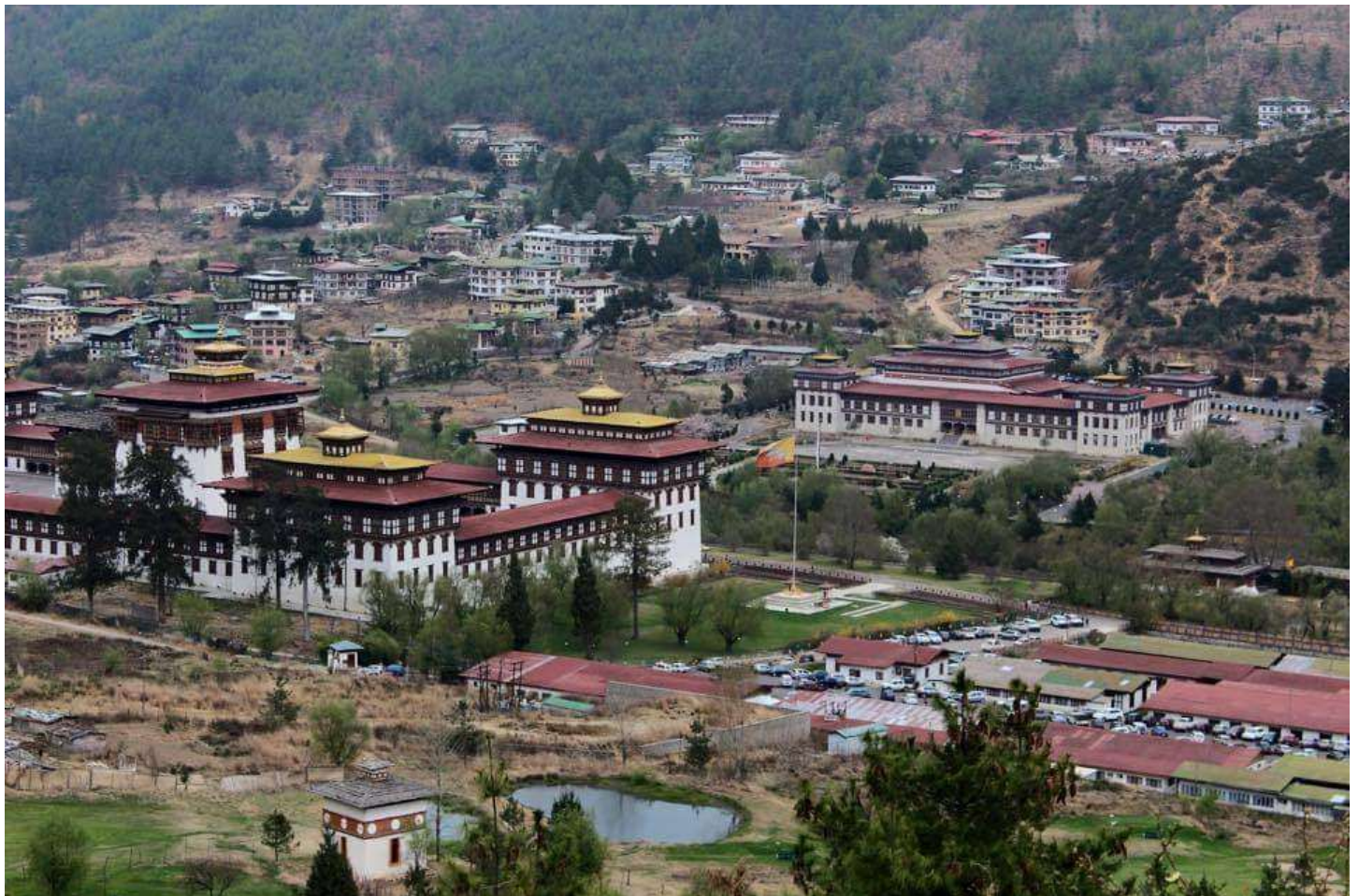
expenditure, hydropower and private investment. As a fiscal-dominated economy, Gopal Giri said that the private sector has very limited space for economic growth and the government has to be the driver until the private sector takes over the economy. He also said that the private sector is at a nascent state and the bureaucratic and licensing processes make it tighter and even deprive access to finance since banks find it risky. “Economic diversification is one of the solutions but it is very important to know the alternative sources of growth besides hydropower,” Gopal Giri said.

He added that more than 60 % of the sectoral loans comprise the imports and consumption loans, which would be not helpful. He, however, suggested that these resources have to be channeled to productivity growth sectors that generate employment. He also said that the central bank does not have capital control and cannot pump as much liquidity into the economy because of the currency being pegged. “If the peg is distorted, we might have to pay more for hydropower debt.” Gopal Giri suggested that financial inclusion and literacy could play an important role where an individual and country can become financially independent.

The forum was held by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy in collaboration with the Royal University of Bhutan.

Govt. tightens belt as revenues dwindle

September 5, 2022, [bhutantimes](#)



Ministry of Finance in Tashichho Dzong

This is part of the latest expenditure rationalization measures announced by the finance ministry as revenues dry-up

LHAKPA TSHERING | Thimphu

Lying on the precipice of a financial crisis, the government has banned cash-based incentives and printing of reports and publications, among others, as a desperate means to tighten their belts.

Informing of the seemingly grim scenario in the notification issued on 1 September, finance secretary Kesang Deki said that the expenditure rationalization measures are adapted to ensure proper management of scarce public resources.

She said that the initiatives are expected to reduce recurrent expenses and ensure that the approved controllable budget can adequately maintain and support critical services and operations of the agencies.

“In addition, respective heads of the agencies must use their own rationales to ensure that best prudence is observed to ensure cost efficiency while delivering meditates,” she added.

The government has banned all budgetary bodies from providing cash-based incentives such as cash prizes and support, and free toolkits to the winning competitors in different categories that were provided to encourage participation.

It must be noted that printing of paper publications such as annual, quarterly, and monthly reports is restricted. However, such reports and information will be made available online and distributed electronically.

In addition, all office orders, circulars, notifications, and intra-office memos will be circulated electronically, unless required to observe confidentiality, while office copy is to be maintained in PDF format.

“The head of the agency shall ensure that the procurement of dedicated printers per employee must be discontinued and promote the use of network printers or initiate consolidation of printers in the office,” reads the notification.

As per the notification, foreign travel for study tours, participation in seminars, workshops, conferences, and training funded by the government will be prohibited except for formal meetings of bilateral and multilateral bodies approved by the cabinet.

For unavoidable international meetings, the agencies must use the diplomats in the mission abroad to represent the agencies and reduce the size of official delegations.

In-country training, conferences, seminars, and workshops should be adequately substantiated and justified to be approved by the head of the agencies and due prudence must be observed.

“The agencies to the best possible extent must encourage virtual meetings and an annual subscription to virtual apps shall be encouraged at the departmental level,” it stated, adding respective ICT officials must validate and make subscriptions for respective agencies.

It also states that the head of agencies must rationalize the serving of working lunch and refreshments during internal meetings considering the budgetary constraints.

Expenses on awareness and advocacy programs will be rationalized by exploring ICT platforms. “The agencies must also explore possibilities to consolidate the awareness and sensitization programs of a similar nature.”

Given the huge annual expenditure on the procurement of extension kits such as tents, sleeping bags, boots, rucksack bags, and camping equipment, among others, it will remain restricted irrespective of funding sources.

Besides, it has also asked to ensure that the officials are not issued multiple laptops or desktops irrespective of funding sources from the government or donors.

“In addition, the replacement of the laptop should be approved by the head upon ascertaining the condition of the equipment by the ICT officer, verification by procurement/stock officer and is not as a result of mishandling,” it stated.

Given the increasing Year-on-Year expenses on vehicle fuel and maintenance at 10 to 15 percent annually, the government forewarns the heads to exercise utmost jurisprudence in handling dedicated pool vehicles.

In addition, to contain the rising expenses on maintenance of government vehicles, surrendered vehicles will be immediately auctioned and not be available for further redeployment and transfer.

PM during the virtual meet the press on 14 October: Bhutan should become a high-income country



In order to put a check on the growing number of people opting to go abroad, Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering said that Bhutan should become a high-income country and the economy should increase at a much higher pace.

As the increasing number of Bhutanese leaving abroad has become a concern, the PM during the virtual meet the press on 14 October said that there should be plans to make Bhutanese comfortable and decide not to go outside the country willingly. However, Lyonchhen added that such plans and reforms cannot happen overnight.

According to the Labour Force Survey of 2021, around 300,000 active labour workforces are there in the country and by the looks of the situation, such numbers might have declined due to the large influx of working-age population leaving the country in search for greener pastures.

“The current reformations and transformation that are happening in the country is to make Bhutan a high-income country as soon as possible and to create better opportunities,” Lyonchhen Dr Lotay said.

Lyonchhen added that people leaving the country for better opportunities to other country is good for them, and that it should be encouraged. However, he said that necessary measures should be placed in the country to provide employment, better payment so that they are encouraged to stay in the country: “Relevant institutions should be clubbed and consolidated into one person and agency for the smooth transition of public service delivery. We should appreciate the reforms and changes that are coming into the country”.

However, the PM said that for the transformation and reform to take its shape and reap its expected outcome and understood by the people, it will take some time.

Revamping the TVET institution in the country is another thing the PM stressed. He said the government has brought expertise from other countries to provide relevant and necessary skills that are required for the current generation.

According to the State of the Nation report 2021, there were more than 15,904 Bhutanese living abroad in 88 countries as of December 2021.

The enormous role of hydropower in Bhutan

Bhutan uses hydropower to conserve the environment, produce electricity, and achieve economic self-reliance.

25-01-2022 - <https://www.dailybhutan.com/article/the-enormous-role-of-hydropower-in-bhutan>

Bhutan is a tireless advocate against climate change. Pristine forest sprawls across the tiny Himalayan nation, compliant with their constitution that dictates “a minimum of 60% of Bhutan’s total land shall be maintained under forest cover at all times”.

Every year, the country generates 2.2 million tons of carbon dioxide. When carbon dioxide is trapped within the atmosphere, it becomes a greenhouse gas, leading to climate change.

Fortunately, Bhutan’s large number of trees—thanks to the pristine forest covers—absorbs over three times that amount of carbon dioxide. Thus, the country produces a negative four million tons of carbon dioxide yearly, rendering them [carbon negative](#).

To maintain its carbon negative status, Bhutan has to be mindful of the greenhouse gases it produces, hence the kingdom turned to its major asset — its raging rivers.

Unfortunately, Bhutan’s geography places them landlocked between China and India on mountainous land, which is not great in terms of economic advantage. Fortunately, the mountainous lands mean varying altitudes. Pair that with an annual rainfall that ranges between 500mm in the north and 5,000mm in the south, and Bhutan has themselves the solution to their environmental and economic hitch.

Now, hydropower is the backbone of the Bhutanese economy.

Bhutan has the potential to harness approximately [30,000 MW of power annually, of which 23,760 MW](#) is economically feasible. Thus far, sites for the 23,760 MW of hydropower have been identified and assessed to be technically feasible.

Firstly, what is hydropower?

Answer: Hydropower is the usage of the force from flowing water to produce mechanical energy.

To understand hydropower, one has to understand the water cycle, which consists of three steps:

- Solar energy heats the water in rivers, lakes, and oceans, causing the water to evaporate as water vapour.
- The water vapour condenses into clouds and falls as precipitation (rain and snow).
- Precipitation collects in streams, rivers, oceans, and lakes. Soon the whole process is repeated.

The amount of precipitation (that drains into the rivers and streams) of a particular area determines the available resources for producing hydropower. Factors such as seasonal and long-term changes in precipitation affect hydropower production too.

Since hydropower uses water, hydropower plants are naturally located on or near a body of water. As the water flows along a change in elevation, the velocity of the flow increases; this is referred to as a *head*. The volume of water flowing through a *head* dictates the amount of available energy. The higher the head, the faster the water flows, the greater the amount of electricity produced.

After the head, the water flows through a pipe, known as a penstock. The water turns the blades in the turbine to charge the generator and create electricity.

Hydropower in Bhutan

Electricity was first introduced to Bhutan in 1966 when a diesel-generating plant was established in Phuentsholing, a border town in the Southwest. Then in 1967, Bhutan built their first hydroelectric plant of 360 kW to supply power to Thimphu, the capital.

By 1974, mini hydropower plants of 300 kW to 1,250 kW were set up in five districts to provide electricity, primarily for lighting.

In 1974, [Bhutan and India](#) signed an agreement for the construction of the **336 MW Chukha** hydro project across the river Wangchu in western Bhutan. The project aimed to meet the power demand of the area. Surplus electricity was exported to India.

More and more hydropower plants were commissioned over the years as Bhutan moved steadily towards its goal to provide electricity for all by the year 2020. Bhutan achieved success by [providing 100% electricity access](#) in 2016.

A list of some of Bhutan's plants are as follows:

- Punatsangchhu-1 (1000 MW, 4770 GWh)
- Amochhu-2 (500 MW, 2210 GWh)
- Zhamgang (Digala) Project (670 MW, 3207 GWh)
- Punatsangchhu-2 (990 MW, 4667 GWh)
- Kholongchhu (Gomkora) (485 MW, 2209 GWh)
- Kheng (Shingkar) project (570 MW, 2713 GWh)
- Mangdechhu (670 MW, 2909 GWh)
- Khomachhu (326 MW, 1507 GWh)
- Nikachhu/Tangsebji (210 MW, 1042 GWh)
- Kurichhu (Rothpashong) (401 MW, 1883 GWh)
- Bunakha Reservoir scheme (180 MW, 893 GWh)

The socio-economic role of hydropower in Bhutan

Hydropower plays [two important roles in the socio-economic development](#) of Bhutan:

1. To provide safe, reliable, sufficient, and affordable electricity for domestic consumption and industrial use.
2. As an industry to earn revenue from the exportation of hydroelectricity, which contributes to the capital necessary to achieve economic self-reliance (80% of Bhutan's surplus power is channelled over to India)

During the 2000s, 27% of Bhutan's revenue and 14% of their GDP was owed to the hydropower sector. Nonetheless, since the early 2010s, the taxes and dividends of the country have been primarily from hydropower companies and constitute [more than 40% of national revenue](#).

Thus the hydropower sector has become synonymous with Bhutan's economy.

!!! 10,000 MW by 2020 given a quiet burial with P I and II as the last projects

Tenzing Lamsang 2 days ago [HEADLINE STORIES](#) [Leave a comment](#) 37 Views

Indian team not for the barrage solution proposed by Bhutan for P 1



PHPA-I

The Indian Power Secretary Alok Kumar and his team was in Bhutan on an official visit from 29 October to 1 November during which he met with the Prime Minister Dasho Dr Lotay Tshering and had

discussions with his counterpart the Secretary of the Minister of Economic Affairs, Karma Tshering.

In the meeting the 10,000 MW by 2020 list was discussed and both sides agreed that the earlier model of Inter Governmental (IG) projects are no more tenable now as so much has changed in the energy sector.

An official on the condition of anonymity said, "The earlier agreement of this many IGs and this many Joint Ventures is irrelevant and both sides have agreed to that. IGs will not happen." The official also said that the 2,560 MW Sunkosh reservoir project which Bhutan had been pushing for the last few years but was stuck due to project modality and funding issues will also not be happening as it comes under the 10,000 MW list.

The 1200 MW Punatsangchu I and 1020 MW Punatsangchu II are the last two projects. "If we want to do any projects in the future probably we can have a project specific model. The 10,000 MW list is not relevant," said the official.

The 10,000 MW decision of sorts is more an acceptance of the ground realities than anything else.

When the 10,000 MW by 2020 was first agreed to in 2008, India had almost an unlimited need for power, but since then there have been huge thermal, gas, solar, wind and hydro additions to generating power in India, making India power self sufficient.

Another development is that with so much power being generated and especially with the entry of solar and wind energy the cost of renewable energy has drastically dropped in India which increasingly makes hydropower tariff rates less competitive. Apart from this, the massive cost overruns, delays and a weak right bank in the P I project only added to the jitters for both sides.

There was also lack of agreement on the future modality of executing projects in Bhutan. The Bhutanese side wanted to have a more professional, accountable and international team with a larger Bhutanese role to avoid past mistakes, while the Indian side in the case of Sunkosh wanted it to be handed over to an Indian PSU to be built and then handed over to Bhutan with no Bhutanese role in the construction phase.

The recent meeting was only an acknowledgement of the reality of the changed power scenario and dynamics.

The acknowledgement helps the Indian side as the projects are no longer an obligation for them, and it also helps the Bhutanese side as the projects are not in any list and are so free for potential future development.

Of the 10 projects agreed to in the 10,000 MW by 2020 only the 720 MW Mangdechu project has been completed with P II under construction and P I stuck over the dam versus barrage proposal.

The projects that are not happening are the 2,560 MW Sunkosh Reservoir, 2,640 MW Kuri Gongri Reservoir, 180 MW Bunakha Reservoir, 600 MW Wangchu, 670 MW Chamkarchu, 620 MW Amochu (cancelled) and 600 MW Kholongchu.

Both sides more or less agreed that henceforth they must concentrate on and conclude whatever projects are at hand which is P I and II.

"For the future project we have to be very careful and we can only go with project basis," said the official.

While talking about the P I project there was some bad news for the Bhutanese side's proposal for a barrage instead of the current dam site which the Bhutanese side is saying is unsafe after continuous slides, movement and two international studies.

After the Bhutanese side had given a barrage proposal to the Indian side and Central Water Commission of India, which is the civil works consultant, the India side constituted a team from their side who examined the barrage proposal and rejected it.

Now with the Indian side insisting on the current dam site, and the Bhutanese side on the barrage, both sides decided to form a technical group of 8 members from both countries to find a solution to this and submit a report within the next three months.

The stakes are high for the Bhutanese side as P I has already spent Nu 82 bn of which 60 % is loan and the current dam site spent Nu 24 bn of which around half the amount worth of construction will have to be abandoned as studies show it is not safe.

For Bhutan, building on the current site will be dangerous in the future given how the right bank has always been sliding and defied several attempts by CWC and others to stabilize it.

A separate Nu 4.5 bn had been spent since 2013 on the right bank when the first slide happened in stabilization and strengthening measures under the advice of CWC, but it all failed to prevent the movement in the right bank with slides again in August 2016 and in January 2019.

After the 2019 January slide the CWC in October and December 2019 recommended another round of strengthening measures claiming that the right bank is safe enough to build the dam.

The Bhutanese side which was not fully convinced asked another Indian government company National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) to do a review of the CWC proposal and NHPC disagreed with the CWC assessment and said it is not safe enough to build a dam. The NHPC instead recommended to build a smaller structure in the form of a barrage 820 meters upstream of the current site. When the project authority asked to two companies with different findings to reconcile their contradictory findings they came back after a while and said it is safe enough to build the dam.

However, questions were raised on how the NHPC drastically changed its own stance and data to fit in with the CWC.

The government through DGPC hired a foreign company to do a review of the review which also showed the current site to be unsafe with a recommendation for a barrage.

If the India side insists on the dam site and Bhutan is not confident of its safety, then the next big literally billion-dollar question will be on what will happen to the Nu 82 bn invested so far.

The third issue discussed was the 600 MW Kholongchu project which is no longer a JV project. The Bhutanese side was hoping that Kholongchu project would be done as an IG project with an improved modality but while no decision was made, an initial offer from the India side was to handover the project to another Indian PSU under the Build Own Operate and Transfer model (BOOT) so that the project would be built by the PSU, owned and operated by them for 30 years and then transferred back to Bhutan after that. To accept a proposal like this would be jumping from the JV frying pan into the BOOT fire and so it did not happen. The official said, "The Joint Venture was not going well so the closure of JV was amicably agreed and so now the way forward must be how to take over the infrastructure, resolve the liabilities as is where is basis and so DGPC and SJVNL will discuss the way forward." The official when asked about the Indian side's rejection of the improved IG model for Kholongchu said, "They don't want to do any more Inter Governmental (IG) projects and that is for sure. They also cannot keep on investing money and so IG is not their choice." With the JV closed and the an improved IG not possible the only pathway left for the project is for Bhutan to do it by itself after looking for some international financing for the 600 MW project.

Import surge drives up nine-month trade deficit to Nu 13.7bn

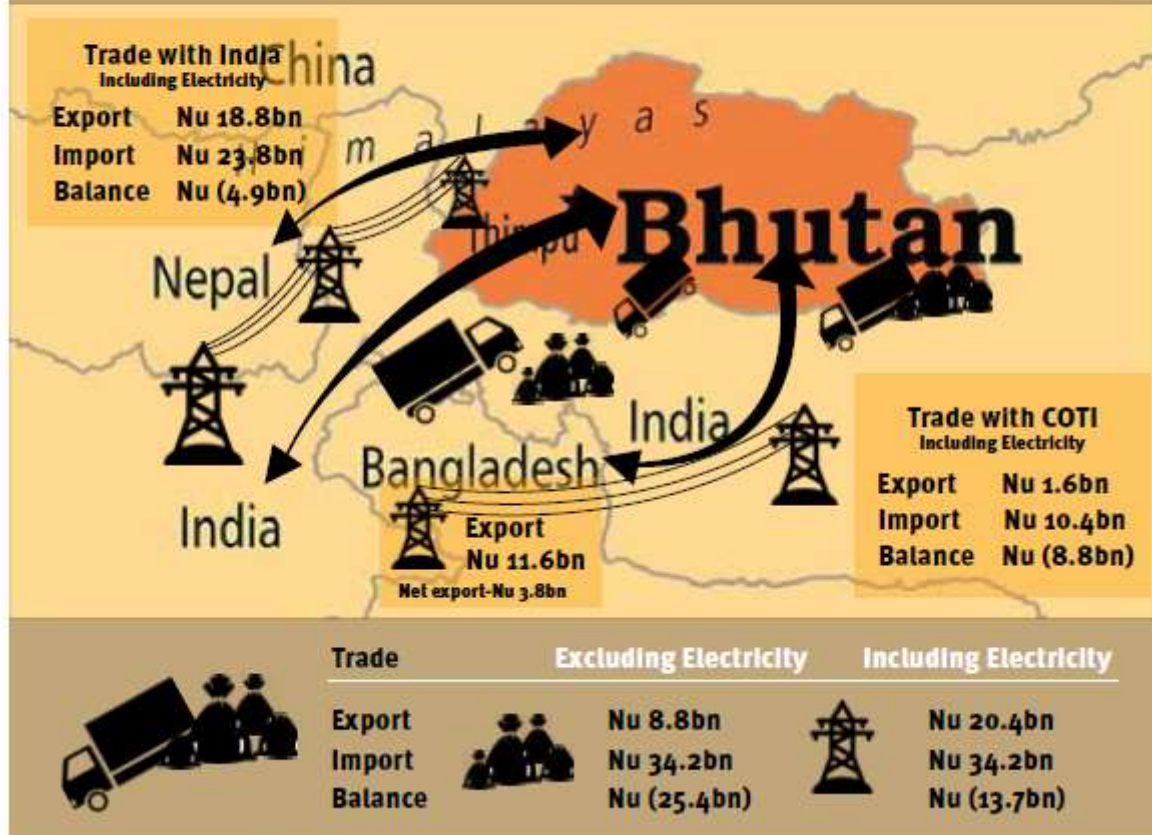
November 14, 2022, Business Bhutan, Kinley Yonten from Thimphu

Exports clocked the Nu 8.8bn mark in September for nine consecutive months. However, the trade deficit dropped by Nu 1.8bn compared to the second quarter of this year

BALANCE OF TRADE

Export & Import

As of September month



Source: Bhutan Trade Statistics 2022

The country's trade deficit is growing sharply owing to a massive increase in imports compared to exports and the rise in prices of almost all kinds of products, such as food items and fuel in the market.

In just nine months this year, the country has imported goods (including electricity) worth more than Nu 34.2bn and exported goods valued at Nu 20.4bn, resulting in a trade deficit of about Nu 13.7bn.

As per the quarterly provisional trade statistics published by the ministry of finance, the country's trade balance for the first quarter (January-March) was Nu 13.8bn in the red, Nu 21.2bn deficit in the second quarter (April-June) and another deficit of Nu 13.7bn in the third quarter.

In total, the quarterly provisional balance of trade, comes close to Nu 48.7bn in the red.

Trade deficit is an economic measure of a negative balance of trade, meaning imports exceeding exports. A country experiences a trade deficit or negative trade balance if its import bill is more than its earnings from export.

However, the trade deficit narrowed in the third quarter compared to the second quarter because the country exported electricity worth around Nu 11.6bn, compared to Nu 6bn in the second quarter and Nu 721mn in the first quarter. Had it not been for the electricity export, the country could have experienced a trade deficit of another Nu 25.4bn in this quarter alone.

In April-June, the exports clocked the Nu 14.6bn mark with almost 51% year-on-year growth, raking in Nu 21.2bn in six months of the current fiscal year. Import figures are shown in red with Nu 35.8bn, but the growth trend so far seen in these months points to further widening of the trade deficit.

In addition, due to the huge trade deficit in this quarter, the country has also plunged into a large deficit in the current account balance of foreign transactions.

Economists say a sharp rise in imports has led to a massive increase in the deficits of trade and transactions. However, to keep the country's economy stable, some imports have to be restricted. Otherwise, the economy will fall into a crisis.

"The government has already issued moratoriums on the import of non-essential vehicles and goods," experts say, adding that imports have been on the rise since the Covid-19 pandemic eased. And the gap between import and export or trade deficit is increasing.

According to the provisional trade statistics, Bhutan imported commodities worth more than Nu 34.2bn, which is a decrease of Nu 1.8bn from the import worth of Nu 35.8bn in the second quarter.

The country's export value (including electricity) also experienced a decrease from around Nu 21.2bn in the second quarter to Nu 13.7bn in the third quarter.

Although the exact import and export figures will be released at the end of the year, electricity generation during the third quarter of the year was recorded at Nu 11.6bn.

The country also imported fuel worth more than Nu 735mn and other light oils and preparation (HSD) worth Nu 2.3bn in this quarter, putting diesel and petrol as the two top most imported commodities.

In addition, processing units form a huge component of import making it to the top 10 list with more than Nu 4.9bn in nine months of the year, which increased by Nu 2.4bn from the second quarter.

Bhutan's top exports include silicon, which earned the country Nu 4.3bn in the second quarter and another Nu 4.1bn in the third quarter this year.

Figures, however, show that the country's trade balance began deteriorating since 2013. The country experienced a trade deficit of Nu 29.1bn in 2019 against Nu 32bn in 2021. This shows that the trade deficit widens by almost Nu 2.5bn every year.

Statistics over the last five years (2018–2022) show that the country's imports increased by almost 45%, and the increase in exports struggled at less than one-fourth of the import rate. This also shows the dependence of the country's economy on hydropower.

In an earlier interview with Economic Affairs Minister Loknath Sharma, he said that electricity generation increases with the onset of monsoon and the third quarter of the year falls between July and September.

"Another reason where the trade deficit has widened is that we have faced issues with boulder export in August-September," Lyonpo had said.

The minister had mentioned that the last quarter of the year is supposed to be the lean season for electricity production. Energy demand during these seasons is met through imports. So, the trade balance for the year is further bound to widen.

"Hydro-generation recorded a 12.7% decrease in the first eight months of 2021 compared to the same period last year. It will further widen now and we will have to import electricity from January," Lyonpo said.

Meanwhile, the balance of trade with India alone accounts for around Nu 4.9bn and Nu 8.8bn from other countries. Business Bhutan learned that the trade deficit is not just a Bhutan-centric phenomenon; it has been in other developing countries as well, where both the current account and trade balance deficit are increasing.

Local economists explained that this is mainly due to higher import costs and lower export growth. The reason for the increase in import costs is that commodities and petroleum have to be imported at higher prices.

"Although remittances played a good role last year, it is comparatively less this year. That has also affected the overall balance," they added.

The current account and trade balance are being affected by the globalized turmoil in trade, they said, adding, "However, the amount of reserves we have is still at a tolerable level. But if this rate of imports continues, the reserves will also decrease over time. Now we need to reduce import costs."

In this case, they said, the government should limit the import of non-essential products.

Meanwhile, the current NA session saw chairperson of the economics and finance committee, member of Gangzur-Minje constituency, Lhuntse, presenting the committee's review report on the balance of trade along with the committee's observations and recommendations.

He reported that the committee reviewed the balance of trade to curb the negative balance of trade, foreign reserves, and facilitation of export and import business.

The Committee identified 20 issues of which some were resolved and a few were forwarded to the concerned agencies during the consultation with the relevant agencies. The Committee submitted six issues in the house for deliberation.

The objective is to enhance competitive advantage through tax policy including the effect of tax differential between India and Bhutan, and transport and logistics. Import substitution needs support from local industries that promote import substitution

After a lengthy deliberation on it, the committee's recommendation was to address the Goods and Services Tax (GST) differences through a Preferential Trade Agreement and to Reform Bhutan Sale Tax (BST) for competitive advantage.

The House supported the recommendations through a majority show of hands. However, the house did not support the recommendation to revisit the reduction of the high voltage power tariff for industries as the Government had already prepared the domestic tariff projection 2040.

On the transport and logistics challenges, the committee recommended expediting the railway link and waterways; exploring rope-ways, and enhancing bridge load-carrying capacity. The House supported the recommendation with a majority show of hands. The House also supported the three recommendations to support local industries that promote import substitution.

His Royal Highness The Gyalsey inaugurated the Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super FabLab

4th June 2022; <https://www.facebook.com/BhutanBroadcastingService/videos/703994064157467>

His Royal Highness The Gyalsey inaugurated the Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super FabLab (SFL) at the TechPark in Thimphu, and the FabLab network in Bhutan.

The JNW SFL is only the third of its kind in the world. The SFL network consists of three additional FabLabs located at Druk Gyalpo's Institute in Pangbisa, Paro, Jigme Wangchuck Power Training Institute (JWPTI) in Gelephu and the Bio FabLab at the College of Natural Resources (CNR) in Lobeyesa.

The SFL and FabLab network in Bhutan were established as part of a series of initiatives in line with the Royal Vision to build platforms that will foster a culture of innovation and creativity.





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JIGME NAMGYEL WANGCHUCK
SUPER FAB LAB
Thimphu, Bhutan



Inaugurated by
HRH Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck
4th June, 2022



Landwirtschaft und Umwelt

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An: jantscher.christine@gmail.com; Reinhard.Wolf@bhutan-gesellschaft.de; sven.kaun-feederle@feco.de

Von: claudio.zingg@bhutan-switzerland.org

Datum: Freitag, 9. Dezember 2022 10:27

Liebe Christine

Lieber Reinhard

Lieber Sven

Wie ihr vielleicht in meinem Mailing von gestern gesehen habt, kann Bhutan Blossoms / Drachukha Flower Group zum dritten Mal ihre Produkte über die Plattform GEBANA verkaufen. Nun ist es neu auch möglich u.a. aus Deutschland und Österreich zu bestellen.

Der Verantwortliche von GEBANA hat Marianne geschrieben:

«Es freut mich, dass Sie bald ein Mailing versenden und damit das Projekt bewerben. Es wäre natürlich wunderbar, wenn Deutschland und Österreich mit einsteigen würden! Für Bestellungen in EU-Länder ist hier die entsprechende Webseite: <https://www.gebana.de/projects/de/project/information/79?lang=de>»

Es würde uns freuen, wenn ihr dieses Projekt euren Mitgliedern auch ans Herz legen könntet ...

In meinem Bericht «Overview Bhutan Meetings» S. 2-3 findet ihr auch Bilder des Baus der neuen Drying Unit, die SSB finanziert.

BB: Food import value almost five-fold that of export

- November 25, 2022

Food items worth about Nu 5.5bn were imported in nine months against over Nu 930mn worth of exports

Import



in Nu (Jan-Sept, 2022)



Meat- Nu 374.5mn



Fish- Nu 103mn



Rice & Cereal
Nu 903mn



Sugar & Sugar Confectionery
Nu 114.5mn



Vegetables products
Nu 1.87bn



Dairy products
Nu 469mn



Beverages, Spirits & Vinegar
Nu 286mn



Tobacco &
Manufactured Tobacco
Nu 541mn

RNR commodities self sufficiency & production

As of June 2021 - 2022

in terms of food self sufficiency ratio

Rice - 37.71%

Vegetables - 84%

Meat - 44%



Maize - 72.27%

Dairy - 92%

Egg - 100%

Winter vegetable production - 6115.24 MT worth Nu 351mn

Livestock production

As of June 2021 - 2022

Milk - 225,081MT

Chicken - 7571MT

Egg - 595mn

Chevon - 1039MT

Cheese - 15363MT

Pork - 4152MT

Butter - 8151MT

Frozen semen - 30843doses



When the country is striving hard to achieve food sufficiency, trade statistics show a sober food trade deficit. According to provisional trade statistics for three quarters of this year, Bhutan imported food commodities almost five times the value of export.

Bhutan experienced a food trade deficit of above Nu 4.6bn in nine months, as the country imports essential food items worth Nu 5.5bn in September, this year including around Nu 930mn worth of cereal.

A rough calculation shows that the country imported food items worth about Nu 17.5bn and exported food worth a little over Nu 3.1bn last year.

This was derived from the value of imports under sections I, II, III, and IV of the Bhutan trade classification (BTC), which mainly consists of food commodities.

The BTC section on live animals, and animal products, which are further classified into commodities like meat, fish, and dairy produce shows an import value of more than Nu 956mn against the export value of around Nu 13mn under the same Bhutan Trade Statistics (BTS) code.

Import of meat and edible meat offal, fish and crustaceans, molluscs, and other aquatic invertebrates comes to about Nu 477.6mn until September this year. Fish accounts for an import bill of Nu 103mn.

In a span of nine months, this year, more than Nu 374.5mn worth of meat and meat offal was imported, while dairy produce including honey recorded an import of about Nu 469mn. Import of birds' eggs; natural honey; edible products of animal origin, not elsewhere specified or included worth Nu 469mn.

As for export, the country exported dairy produce worth Nu 10mn, which constitutes almost all the export value of the BTC section on animal products. There are about Nu 3mn live animals' export.

Of the total cereal import of Nu 930mn, imports of products of the milling industry, malt, starches, inulin, and wheat gluten formed Nu 176.5mn. Commodity-wise, cereal is the only food featured in the top-ten import commodity among vegetable products.

Under the section of vegetable and vegetable products, Nu 1.87bn worth of vegetable products imported was recorded. The export value of the commodities under the same BTS section shows Nu 492.8mn. The report also shows that around Nu 254mn worth of edible fruits and nuts, peel of citrus fruits or melons are imported.

The country also imported prepared foodstuff, beverages, spirits and vinegar, and tobacco products worth around Nu 2.09bn, of which beverages, spirits, and vinegar formed Nu 286mn. In addition, sugar and sugar confectionery formed around Nu 114.5mn.

Between January to September this year, the country imported Nu 541mn worth of tobacco and tobacco-manufactured products.

However, in terms of food self-sufficiency ratio, the sector stands at 34.71% self-sufficient in rice, 72.27% for maize, 84% for vegetables, 92% for dairy, 44% for meat, and 100% for egg, according to Renewable Natural Resource (RNR) Sector report.

The overarching theme for the RNR sector 12th FYP is “Enhancing Food Self-sufficiency and spurring RNR Sector transformation while ensuring sustainable Natural Resource Management”.

In vegetable production, around 6115.24 MT of winter vegetable worth Nu 351mn was produced and livestock production includes 225,081MT of milk, 7,571 MT of Chicken, 595mn of egg, 15,363 MT of Cheese, 4,152 MT of pork, 8,151 MT of butter, 1,039 MT of chevon, 30,843 doses of frozen semen produced and distributed for dairy breed intensification program.

Livestock Mega farms reports show that about 45 broiler farms (3000 bird level), 15-layer farms (3000 bird level), and 57 piggery breeding farms (20 sow level) were established, engaging 167 youths and laid-off employees.

As of June, this year, RNR facilitated the export of 1,014,275MT of RNR products worth Nu 8884.49mn in the last three years. With Self-sufficiency for high-demand vegetables, the report states that around 66% was achieved for high-demand vegetables.

Further, Livestock production enhanced about 56,196.17 MT of milk production against the target of 55,171 MT (20%), 156.41mn egg production against the target of 154.8 million (10%), 2123.8 MT (258.8 MT BTI) chicken production against the target of 2636 MT (8.05%), 1189 MT pork production against the target of 1146MT (10%), and 211.25 MT fish production against the target of 205 MT (10%).

In addition, around 13 commercial broiler farms at the enterprise level were established against the target of 13 (10%), 161.73 MT of Chevon production against the target of 229MT (7.06%), 24 Layer farms established against the target of 20 (10 %), and 9.638 acres new fish pond established against the target of 8 acres (10 %).

A total of 47232 MT of apple (804.9 MT), betel nut (3127 MT), cardamom (646.8 MT), ginger (2284 MT), potato (37484.483 MT), and vegetables (2884 MT) were exported, according to RNR report.

However, around 17 products were sent to Singapore including quinoa, turmeric, ginger, and Highland honey 240qms, 3 products were sent to Malaysia, and 6 products were sent to Japan.

Meanwhile, Nu 3.6bn was spent against the target of Nu 4026.452mn as of 30th June 2022 with accounts for 90.3% of budget utilization, this year.

Nidup Lhamo from Thimphu

Post Views: 74

Reasons for food shortage [not Forest conservation!!!]

October 1st, 2022, Post Views: 395; !!! Contributed by Thinlay / Thimphu

An article that appeared in the Kuensel edition of 17 September 2022 titled “Forest conservation have turned self-sufficient Bhutan into a food importing country” is not a fair assessment of why we are not self-sufficient in food. It appeared to me as if forest conservation is the sole reason for Bhutan’s inability to feed its growing

population. In order to back up such hair splitting claim, it would be interesting to see some data, if it exists, that forest conservation indeed has turned Bhutan into food insufficient country.

Also there is hardly any authoritative data to suggest that Bhutan was food self-sufficient in the past. On the contrary, even in 1960's and 70's when I was growing up in the village in Thimphu, my parents could not feed us properly. During summer months we ran short of rice and had to depend on wheat and barley flour. Sometimes we had to pass day eating only one serving of rice. Those days potato was not popular and our family ate it just occasionally as curry not as staple. Thus, saying that we were food self-sufficient in the past needs more concrete evidence.

Perhaps, the article is a nostalgic reflection about the past when Bhutan's population was small so that people were satisfied with meagre available food. There was no construction or other development activities where extra mouths needed to be fed in the form of imported labours or other workers. Perhaps with modernization since 1960s numbers of people in Bhutan increased, both with baby boom and imported workers. As a results demand for food increased. Indigenously produced food quantity especially rice and wheat were not sufficient to meet the demand. So there is a pressing need to import food.

In my opinion, when we talk about food insufficiency we have to be very specific which food items we are talking about. For instance, Bhutan is more than self-sufficient if we are ready to eat potato and maize as staple. For staple items like rice and wheat, it is not forest conservation that have caused their insufficiency. The reasons for rice and wheat insufficiency are many and often difficult to attribute to any specific reason probably due to lack of concrete data. However, conversion of arable land for urbanization and other infrastructural development activities may have contributed to decrease in rice and wheat production. For instance, Thimphu valley, part of Paro, Khuruthang and Bajo areas in Punakha and Wangdue were prime rice and winter wheat production areas. But now these areas have turned into concrete jungle depriving farmers in those lands to produce rice, wheat and oil seed crop such as mustard.

Winter wheat is substituted by vegetables and other field cash crops like beans or spices. Also increasing population, increasing import of construction workers, changing food habits with emphasis on rice eating, migration of able working population to urban areas thus causing farm labor shortage and fallowing of arable land could be plausible reasons for insufficient production of rice and wheat or causing increased import of food items.

On technology fronts, unreliable irrigation water in critical food production areas is a bottle neck for increasing rice and wheat production, besides occasional outbreaks of rats, insects and crop diseases. For rice cultivation, weeds are major problem. We still have to search for effective rice weeds management practices other than weedicides which have other negative side effects. Decreasing soil fertility due to continuous cultivation in same area without means to replenish nutrients is a concern for farmers. High yielding rice and wheat varieties suitable for cultivation in complex microenvironmental conditions in Bhutan are lacking or limited. People also blame wild animals for causing problems in food production; but there is a real need for scientific crop losses assessment data to substantiate such claims. Wild animals sometimes are unnecessarily blamed for our inaptitude and inactions in many food production fronts.

Rather than blaming forest conservation, we have to look for solution to produce more food from available arable land. Some of the feasible solutions such as intensification of cultivation with double cropping in suitable environment, proper nutrients, water, pest and post-harvest management practices must be pursued on war footings. There should be focused resources allocation on project mode to increase rice and wheat production. Year round irrigation water for prime agricultural areas such as Sarpang, Samtse, Punakha Wangdue, Samdrukjongkhar must be developed on priority basis. Fallow arable land that are there in many Dzongkhags must be brought under cultivation. Farm labor saving devices must be introduced on priority basis.

Clearing forest for food production is a risky and suicidal proposition especially in a mountainous country like ours. Such proposition invites ecological and environmental disasters such as landslides, flash floods, decreasing ground water recharge thus decreasing water flow for irrigation, drinking and hydropower. Erosion of top soils in barren treeless environment has led to low productivity of crops in many parts of the world. To me those people who propose clearing of forest to increase food production do not understand complex

dynamics and interactions of crops, water and environment. It is a simplistic proposition, rather dangerous ones, to solve out food sufficiency problem.

No free-roaming dogs by 2030

Chhimi Dema, May 28th, 2022, Post Views: 283



There are 72,621 dogs roaming freely today

The country's efforts to control the dog population so far has been all bark without bite. The problem of stray dogs was recognised nearly five decades ago. Attempts like the dog sterilisation campaigns or neutering or even removing them were ineffective, evident from the continued increase in the number of dogs, stray dogs particularly. However, the problem of stray dogs or free-roaming dogs is poised for a change. The target is that by 2030, the country will have no free-roaming dogs.

Deputy chief veterinary officer, Karma Wangdi, said that if 100 % sterilisation of free-roaming dogs is achieved now, after seven to eight years there will be no free-roaming dogs. The sterilisation rate today is 93 %, according to officials. Dogs, if they could talk, would however disagree.

The result of sterilisation takes time to see results. Karma Wangdi said that the current number of free-roaming dogs will remain stagnant because the neutered dogs won't breed and will experience natural death.

The Nationwide Accelerated Dog Population Management and Rabies Control Programme (NADPM and RCP) launched last year aims to achieve 100 % sterilisation of free-roaming dogs, register, and vaccinate all pet dogs, and control feral dogs. The programme neutered 42,879 dogs from November until May 1. Currently, mopping up or sterilising 5,332 dogs that were missed during the first campaign is underway.





The first phase of the mopping which is underway neutered 1,888 dogs in 26 clinics until May 27. It is implemented in Chukha, Samtse, Punakha, Dagana, Wangdue, Tsirang, Zhemgang, Pemagatshel, Thimphu, Sarpang and Samdrupjongkhar.

Before the sterilisation campaign, the programme conducted the nationwide dog population census which recorded 72,621 free-roaming dogs or at least one dog for every nine Bhutanese. Out of this 26,951 were owned, but left to roam freely. 44,038 were stray dogs.

Under the NADPM, pet dogs are being monitored by inserting microchips. A total of 23,733 pet dogs in 15 dzongkhags were inserted with microchips as of May 19. Of these dogs, 72.4 % were neutered.

A microchip is a radio frequency device implanted inside the body of a pet dog for identification purposes. The chip has unique identification codes, can be scanned with a scanner, and is no bigger than a rice grain.

Karma Wangdi said that the previous dog population effort has failed because it lacked collaborative effort. "The success of the programme is because of the collaborative effort of the livestock department, Desuung, local governments, and communities."

From the 1970s to the 1980s, the dog population was managed by poisoning and shooting. Rochi Saymi (dog shooter) was a designation in the livestock department responsible for carrying out the shooting.

In the 1990s, the dogs were translocated that sparked animal welfare and social issues, and in the 2000s, the dogs were impounded.

Starting in 2009, the government and Humane Society International, an organisation that works to promote human-animal bonds, adopted a catch, neuter, vaccinate, and release programme, which ended in 2020.

Health

[Bhutan's fertility rate drops to lowest ever 1.8 births per woman in 2022 from 6.6 births per woman in 1971 – The Bhutanese](#)

Usha Drukpa, 5,356 Views; 2022-09-04



Photo Courtesy: UNICEF Bhutan

According to the Population Projections Bhutan 2017-2047 Report, Bhutan has been experiencing a steep fertility decline in the recent past, and it is expected to remain below replacement level in the foreseeable future. This could not have come at a worse time as thousands of young people and middle aged professionals leave for Australia. The current fertility rate for Bhutan in 2022 is 1.893 births per woman, a 1.41 percent decline from 2021. It was 1.920 births per woman in 2021 which was a 1.34 percent decline from 2020 with 1.946 births per woman in 2020 which again was a 1.37 percent decline from 2019. The fertility rate of Bhutan fell gradually from 6.6 births per woman in 1971 to 1.8 births per woman in 2022. Bhutan has reached the stage of low fertility, and the birth rate will decline substantially to 11 per thousand and the annual growth rate will fall from the current level of 1 percent to less than 0.3 percent in 2047. Also, the elderly population 65 years and above will rise from 6 percent to 13 percent by 2047. According to the Vital Statistics Report 2021, the size of the young generations started to decline approximately 25 years ago as a result of reduced fertility rates. The report also showed that out of the total population in Bhutan, 52 percent were males and 48 percent were females. This population was further projected to reach 748,931 persons by 2020 which is a 3-percentage point increase compared to 2017. A narrowing base of the population pyramid indicates declining fertility rates in the country. As per the National Statistics Bureau Report 2020, the number of births that occurred and registered in 2019 is 10,186 and 10,240 in 2020, which is lower than all the preceding years. But compared to 2019, there is a slight increase of 0.53 percent in live births. The highest number of births registered in the past five years was observed in the year 2018 with 11,368 births. In all the years, the number of registered live births for males is higher than for females. The Crude Birth Rate in 2020 is 13.7 per thousand population. There were more males than females. Out of the total live births in 2020, 5,266 were males and 4,974 were females. The highest percentage (33.1%) of births have occurred among mothers whose age ranges between 25 and 29 years, followed by 27.5 percent in the ages 30-34 years. According to the Age-

Specific Fertility Rates (ASFR) for 2017-2020, it is observed that the highest fertility rate was among mothers of age group 25-29 and 30-34 years, and thereafter it declines gradually. It also indicates the delay in giving births as well as the **increase in age at marriage**. According to international experts, a higher level of education and more career opportunities for women has led them to push marriage and childbearing so far off that they sometimes never materialize. Millennial women (born between 1980 and 1995) are about four times as likely to have completed their education. The more educated a woman gets, the more likely she is to postpone having a child until her 30s. Women today have more life options than women did 50 years ago. There are various factors that explain this, from increased contraception to a lack of affordable childcare, where women are choosing to be child-free. As per the Demographic Dividend in Bhutan 2020, Bhutan has transitioned from a situation of high fertility, high mortality, and a high child dependency ratio, to low fertility, low mortality, and a low child dependency ratio. Bhutan's birth rates and fertility rates have been steadily declining. Today, people of childbearing age are delaying having children or not having more than one child. Meanwhile, The Bhutanese interviewed a few women in their early 30s, late 30s, and early 40s and they all shared similar views on why they chose to remain unmarried or why they chose to have not more than one child. **A woman who is in her early 30s and is married said she doesn't feel the importance to have a child of her own. She also never gave a thought to having a child of her own in all these years, in fact, she said she does not have any plans to have a child. Upon asking the reasons, she said she already has her nieces and nephews, and that is enough. One does not need to have a biological child,** she added. While other women in their mid-30s and early 40s said, they are happy being unmarried and do not feel that they should have children of their own. Similarly, many women who are unmarried or either married are delaying having children or none at all. According to the staff nurse in The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital stated many women shared that having more than one or two children is difficult for them, as most of them are working mothers with little support to help raise their children. When they were counseled to plan for the next pregnancy, they usually hesitate or they have their own personal reasons not to go through another pregnancy.

BBS Is 'small family, happy family' policy backfiring?

November 25, 2022

Bhutan's population has been shrinking in the last couple of years. Raising the concern, the Member of Parliament from Monggar asked the Health Minister about measures to reverse the population decline during the Question Hour session in the National Assembly today.

Questioning the Health Minister, MP Karma Lhamo from Monggar Constituency said it is crucial for the Health Ministry to start dealing with the population growth slowdown.

"In the early 2000s, the health ministry sensitized on small family, happy family. I think it is still practised in remote areas. So, should we change this policy? Is it not the time to start working towards preventing negative population growth? Or are there any initiatives being taken to address this issue?" asked the MP.

The Health Minister clarified that Bhutan is not the only country, which is witnessing a drop-in population growth. There are some other countries in the region facing a similar problem.

Lyonpo further said the policy of a small and happy family was emphasized until 2000. After that, the ministry has been sensitizing the families on maintaining an acceptable duration after every childbirth.

The minister said all relevant agencies have to come together to establish enabling policies to prevent the population from ticking downward.

"We have started the Inter uterine insemination in the national referral hospital. This is to implant babies for those who cannot conceive. We will also start in-vitro fertilization soon. We have all the plans to start infertility facilities in the multi-disciplinary hospital. Many countries have a good policy to address such issues which our country should also look at," Lyonpo Dechen Wangmo said.

Bhutan's current population is more than 700,000. According to the Health Ministry, the country's fertility rate has dropped from seven per cent in the 1960s to less than two per cent today.

The world population replacement rate or the fertility rate needed to maintain a society's population is more than two children per woman.

Kinley Dem

Retaining nurses becomes arduous, health reforms being considered

The MoH is working on health reforms to retain the nurses

<https://businessbhutan.bt/retaining-nurses-becomes-arduous-health-reforms-being-considered/>

May 16, 2022, Sherab Dorji from Thimphu, Post Views: 2,383

Despite the government making teachers and medical staff the highest paid civil servants in the country, it has become an arduous task for the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH) to retain nurses with the hospital.

According to records maintained by the Ministry of Health (MoH), 29 nurses resigned in the year 2019, followed by 22 nurses in 2020 and some 27 nurses resigned from 2021-2022. Three nurses are on EOL (Extraordinary Leave) as of 2020 and one on EOL as of 2021-2022.

Since the opening of the international borders, 17 nurses have taken EOL, according to an official from the JDWNRH.

"In every Human Resource Committee (HRC) meeting held twice in a month, HRC gets applications from at least three nurses," the official added.

However, the official said it is really not possible to gauge the actual reasons since the reasons stated in the applications for resignation and EOL are domestic and family reasons.

"Going by past experiences, almost all the staff resign upon completion of the EOL. Staff usually prefer to go on EOL instead of directly resigning probably because of initial uncertainties while charting a new career," said the official.

However, the official said that their observation shows that they (the nurses) usually leave for third countries or as United Nations Volunteers (UNV). "It could be for better and wider opportunities including monetary advantages."

The MoH maintained that they are helpless to retain such professionals like nurses who are going abroad as health workers. Tandin Dendup, Deputy Chief Planning Officer of the Planning and Policy Division, MoH, said, "They are entitled to pursue what they desire if they meet the conditions and requirements set by Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) and the government in the BCSR."

According to the ministry, it cannot ascertain if the resigned nurses and those who availed EOL went abroad. Similarly, the ministry cannot comment on the EOL system as it is under the purview of RCSC where all the health personnel who are civil servants are entitled to such privileges as per the BCSR.

"However, to discourage people from availing EOLs, the RCSC has amended the BCSR to assure that the position of the individual is not protected in the civil service as it used to be in the past," Tandin Dendup said.

Meanwhile, the JDWNRH doesn't maintain record of where and how their ex-employees or staff are or have gone after availing an EOL and after resignation.

However, the official from JDWNRH said that the reasons for resignation and EOL are to either pursue studies or accompany spouse on studies, followed by a few other cases like getting time bound employment with the agencies of the United Nations (UN).

The shortage of nurses, however, has a serious and major implication on the provision of equitable healthcare services in the country. The country is currently short of nurses going by the nurses to population ratio.

"The ratio for every 1,000 population is two nurses as per the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), but we have a ratio of 8.8 nurses to 1,000 population," said Tandin Dendup. ???????????

Additionally, the overall attrition rate is not a huge concern for the JDWNRH given the internationally considered attrition rate of somewhere at 10%, but the hospital is losing experienced and trained nurses, which have to be replaced by fresh graduates. “Most of the nurses taking EOL and resigning are those who have vast experiences in the field of practice and also a few are trained and experienced in the specialised field of nursing,” the JDWNRH’s official said.

“It takes many years for an entry level nurse to achieve the expertise and skills of an advanced practising nurse both in terms of qualification and clinical experience in the special field of nursing practice,” the official said.

Additionally, the official added that a nurse has to undergo training to develop competencies to be able to practise independently in critical and specialised wards and units. Therefore, the hospital is not able to refill the gaps created by these expert nurses. The ad hoc and unplanned exit create a temporary shortage owing to the recruitment procedures and cycles,” the official said. Meanwhile, the MoH is currently training 71 nurses. It trained 75 nurses in 2021 and 47 nurses in 2020 at the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Science of Bhutan (KGUMSB).

Similarly, 38 nurses were trained as of 2022 followed by 21 and 15 nurses in the year 2021 and 2020 at the private training institutes. The figures do not include nurses graduating from India and other countries under private funding.

For instance, the government spends around Nu 22.7mn to train such professionals like doctors and nurses inside the country and outside the country like Bangladesh, Thailand, Nepal, Malaysia, and India.

Presently, there are about 1,635 nurses serving in regional hospitals and district hospitals across the country. According to the MoH, it is working on health reforms to retain the nurses.

On doctor shortage

September 12th, 2022, Editorial

It was teacher first. Now it is doctors. These two important sectors are losing manpower at a rate that can have us in a critical situation in the future. Investing in building competency and capacity of our health workers is important, of course. Bhutan is a country that aims to deliver top-class medical services. The reality, however, is that the doctor-population ratio in Bhutan is much lower than the WHO requirement. If the accepted requirement is one doctor per 1,000 people, Bhutan has almost one doctor per five thousand people. The health minister herself said that Bhutan is 50 percent behind workforce requirement in the sector. The real problem, though, is that our small pool of health professionals is leaving the system. Building competency and capacity of our health workers, therefore, is a plan that falls flat on the ground. Looking at the teachers, more than 345 teachers have left the school system in the past six months. Some schools are making do without specific subject teachers, especially in STEM subjects. Between 2020 and August 2022, 710 teachers resigned from the system. At a time when big changes are being launched in the country, this is not an encouraging sign. If workforce security in the health sector is of utmost priority for Bhutan, there is a need to look into systemic flaws. Health minister said that a major shift towards transforming the overall health system is underway. That brings us to why our doctors and health professional choose to leave the system and work abroad. Is it the pay package for health professionals that need to change? Or is it the working conditions? Delivering quality health services to our people will be an uphill task if these issues are not addressed first. Training and recruiting more health professionals is, of course, the top priority. More important, however, is to keep them in the system. Otherwise, we would just be spending millions on government scholarships to train young Bhutanese to become doctors and nurses only to lose them in great numbers year after year. Bhutan’s public health concern seems to have been neglected for a very long time. And, as the health minister put it, there is a need to bring it to the forefront of the development agenda.

MoH to develop a strategy to retain medical professionals leaving their jobs

The Bhutanese, Usha Drukpa

Many medical staff, regular and on contract, are leaving their jobs at the hospitals. In the last 8 months from 1 January to 31 August 160 members of the medical and health group separated from the civil service and another 71 went on EOL bringing the total to 231 of them. Of this group 3 medical doctors have separated while another 11 have gone on EOL. 40 Nurses have separated and another 30 have gone on EOL. From past experience most of the doctors and nurses going on EOL do not come back. There are even more doctors and nurses applying for resignation or EOL. The Ministry of Health (MoH) is yet to find replacements for those who have left, but it will be arranged through single window recruitment in January 2023, and through the annual transfer exercise, which is currently under review. The Chief Human Resource Officer CHRO of MoH said the health ministry is aware that many are leaving their jobs. "As of now, we do not have strategies, but we do have plans to develop a strategy to retain those staff leaving their profession," the CHRO said. In terms of the impact on the health services, he said, it will not have a huge impact on health services, as a replacement (regular recruitment) will be provided by January 2023 followed by contract recruitment if the replacement does not meet regular recruitment. He said specialized doctors have not left except for one or two doctors in JDWNRH who are on EOL. However, in the dzongkhag hospitals in need of specialized doctors, only the experienced ones will be deployed from a nearby hospital. Although there will not be a significant impact on providing the health services, however, the medical people leaving is quite alarming, and it is a concern since their job is very critical and is directly related to human care, he said. He said hospitals in other dzongkhags are not much affected unlike in JDWNRH where experienced nurses from Operation Theatre, Intensive Care Unit, and other departments are leaving which has a direct impact on services. An official from JDWNRH said many skilled and trained nurses are resigning, which is a serious concern. Nurses are required and there is an issue of retention. "We don't know how to retain our nurses, but we have informed the health ministry of this issue," said the official. The official said something has to be done to retain nurses otherwise, down the line, the quality of care will be affected. CHRO, MoH also said, in terms of doctors in JDWNRH, there are residents and doctors who are undergoing Masters in MD in the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB), but other dzongkhags may suffer and will be left with no doctors. There are 13 doctors who are doing Masters in Doctor at KGUMSB for four years. And it has caused a shortage of doctors in Ranjung in Trashigang, Khamdang in Trashiyangtse, and recently, one contract doctor was sent to Lhamoizingkha. The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of Mongar Regional Hospital said so far, no medical staff have resigned nor taken EOL, but there must be a few who are planning to take EOL or resign. Currently, there is no issue but if any doctors or nurses leave like in JDWNRH then it is going to be challenging. The CMO of Gelephu Regional Hospital said there are a few general nurses who already left their jobs, and as per the hearsay, there are some more nurses who are planning to leave. He said the numbers are not significant now, so they cannot say about the immediate impact on the services. But if more nurses are planning to leave or if they leave then definitely there will be a huge impact in rendering the medical services. He said even if one specialist leaves the hospital, there is going to be a huge impact on medical care, and it is the same with the specialized nurses leaving.

Kultur und Geschichte

Bhutan bald bargeldlos?

Über Münzen, Banknoten und Banken

Evtl. Uwe Dräger fragen

<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngultrum>

<https://www.bis-ans-ende-der-welt.net/Bhutan-B.htm>

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Selbige werden umgehend beantwortet und im Einzelfall entschieden.

Hier gibt es viele Scheine in guter Bildqualität.

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Von Manfred Rippich

Über den Autor: Manfred Rippich hat sich die weite Welt über Briefpartnerkontakte bis in die entferntesten Winkel erschlossen. Briefpartner hatte er auch in Bhutan. Im Dezember 1994 konnte er dieses grandiose Land eine Woche als Solo-Reisender etwas kennenlernen. Wir freuen uns sehr, dass er in aufgelockerter Form, nicht als „hochwissenschaftliche“ Abhandlung – diesen Artikel über die Geschichte des Bargeldes in Bhutan geschrieben hat. Seine ersten Artikel über Bhutan hatte er 1995 in „Der Geldscheinsammler“ veröffentlicht. Es folgten weitere in Radio Hören, Briefmarkenspiegel, der Deutschen Briefmarken-Revue und dem Radio-Kurier.

„Wo ist mein Geld nur geblieben“ hatte die Ost-Ikone Helga Hahnemann einst in einem Gassenhauer beklagt. War es ihr „nur“ unter den Fingern zerronnen oder doch gestohlen worden? Geld verschwindet oft; allerorts: meist durch Diebstahl. Auch durch Unachtsamkeit oder einfach Pech. Wie einem Landwirt im Gewog Drugjeygang, Dagana, vor Jahren widerfahren. Der hatte aus Angst vor Dieben 180.000 Ngultrum (Nu) in der Außenwand seines Lehmhauses versteckt. Nach einer Woche wollte er es zur Bank bringen. Der Weg allerdings erübrigte sich: gefräßige Ratten waren schneller gewesen und Bauer Ap Chathey sah sich um umgerechnet 2.600 Euro ärmer.

Ein Bauer in Bhutan; mit so viel Bargeld „unterm Kopfkissen“? Ja, die Zeiten haben sich gewandelt. Mag die UNO-Statistik das kleine Land noch immer als arm ausweisen – der Fortschritt ist allgegenwärtig: steigende Einkommen, bessere Bildung, mehr Demokratie, immense Fortschritte in der medizinischen Versorgung (gab es 1994 noch 40.000 Malariafälle, so waren es 2012 nur noch 82). Nicht zu vergessen, in welch' rasantem Tempo sich die elektronischen Medien binnen kurzer Zeit entwickelt haben (siehe THUNLAM, Mai 2021).

Der Einflussreiche giert, der Normalbürger ist oft redlich

Entwickelt haben sich – leider – auch die Krebsgeschwüre Gier und Korruption: es sind menschliche Schwächen. Und so wurde per königlichem Dekret im Dezember 2005 eine Anti-Korruptions-Kommission (ACC) gegründet: die kehrt auch in Ministerien aus! Doch, man mag es ahnen: aufgrund seiner späten Öffnung nach Außen und seiner Staatsreligion ist Korruption in Bhutan noch kein brennendes Problem. Nach Singapur, Hongkong, Japan und den **VAE** glänzt das kleine Königreich mit der niedrigsten Korruptionsrate auf dem riesigen, asiatischen Kontinent.

Glücklicherweise überwiegen bislang moralisches und solidarisches Verhalten der Bürger und so erfuhr man – übrigens innerhalb von nur drei Monaten – von ehrlichen Menschen, die gefundenes Bargeld wie selbstverständlich nicht einbehalten, sondern abgegeben hatten. Als da ein hagerer Tourist aus Westbengalen umgerechnet knapp 7.000 US Dollar in Währungen Macaus, Hongkongs, den USA und Bhutans, plus diverse Dokumente, in der Polizeistation zu Paro abgegeben hatte: Frau Lei Deolinda aus Macau zeigte sich überglücklich; verständlicherweise.

Einen Monat später fand der 18-jährige Kinley Tshering eine Geldbörse mit 8.561 Ngultrum: auch den 60-jährigen Eigentümer Chimi Dorji hatte die Ehrlichkeit des Schülers gefreut. Und schließlich gab die Studentin Tashi Wangmo im Februar 2019 bei der Polizei in Phuentsholing die stattliche Summe von 100.000 Nu ab. Zum Vergleich: für einen Arbeiter mit Mindestlohn entsprach dieser Betrag damals zwei Jahre harter Arbeit beim Straßenbau oder in einer Manufaktur!

Eines Tages, in nicht mehr allzu ferner Zeit, wird die Gefahr, Bargeld zu verlieren, fast gegen Null gehen: auch in Bhutan wird bargeldlose Zahlung immer beliebter und von erstaunlich vielen Bürgern praktiziert.

Gibst du mir, geb' ich dir

Güter und Dienstleistungen wurden über die Jahrhunderte fast ausschließlich durch landwirtschaftliche Erzeugnisse „bezahlt“; es herrschte also Tauschhandel. Am weitesten verbreitet war die Vergütung mit Reis, Käse und gewebten Stoffen; erst zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts wurden erste Silbermünzen auf dem Territorium Bhutans geprägt – als Zahlungsmittel an Händler in benachbarten Fürstentümern Nordindiens. Es folgten Münzen aus legiertem Silber, Kupfer oder Messing, die für kleinere Käufe auf lokaler Ebene verwendet wurden. Diese als „Ma-trum“ respektive „Chhe-trum“ bezeichneten Münzen wurden überwiegend im Auftrag lokaler Herrscher geprägt. **Während der Regentschaft König**

Ugyen Wangchucks wurde die Münzherstellung weitergeführt – nunmehr unter besserer Prägequalität als bislang. Eine „moderne“ Prägung von Münzen – in Kupfer und Silber – begann während der Herrschaft König Jigme Wangchucks, des zweiten Druk Gyalpo, circa 1928. Diese Münzen wurden erstmals von Maschinen und nicht per Hand geprägt.

Maschinelle Herstellung allerdings bedeutete noch keine Massenware: noch immer wurde vornehmlich getauscht; selbst Regierungsbedienstete wurden selten in bar, dafür oft mittels Sachleistungen – also Bedarfsgütern – entlohnt. Erst Mitte der 1950er Jahre – inzwischen saß der dritte Wangchuck-König auf dem Thron, begann ein nennenswerter Geldverkehr: Jigme Dorji Wangchuck ließ Münzen aus einer Nickellegierung prägen. Nach Gründung der „Bank of Bhutan“ (BoB) traten Sachleistungsbezüge und Tauschhandel immer mehr in den Hintergrund: Löhne wurden nun in „barer Münze“ bezahlt. Da diese relativ gering ausfielen, genügten ein paar Münzen in die Hand des Begünstigten. Doch der Fortschritt nahm seinen Lauf.

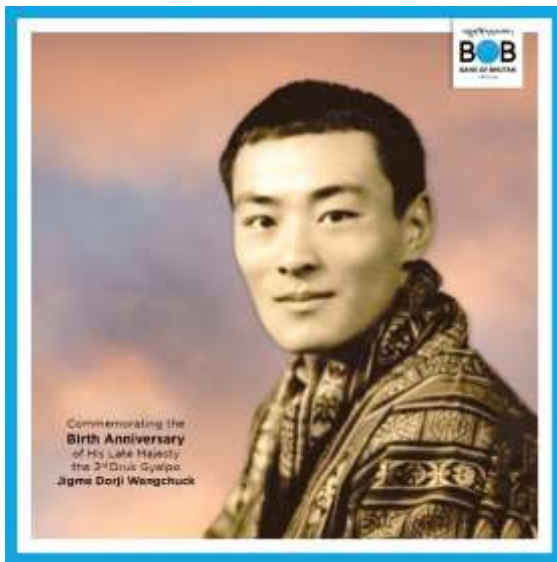


Foto-3: König Jigme Dorji Wangchuck hatte als erster ein Konto bei der Bank of Bhutan eingerichtet.
(Quelle: Bank of Bhutan via Facebook)

Klein und attraktiv: ein Anfang

Eine Staatsbank gab es mit der „BoB“ seit Mai 1968. Münzen waren im Umlauf [1]. Briefmarken, die einen gewissen Geldwert repräsentierten und auch international anerkannt wurden, die gab es seit 1962 ebenfalls. Doch erst 1974 wurden bhutanische Banknoten in Umlauf gebracht. Offizielles Ausgabedatum war der 2. Juni 1974. Alle Bhutanfreunde und -kenner wissen es: es war der Tag der Krönung des vierten Drachenkönigs. Damals wurde allen anwesenden Bürgern (members of the public) am „Royal Cottage“ traditioneller Tee gereicht. Weiterhin erhielten alle Anwesenden drei 5-Ngultrum-Geldscheine als Erinnerungsgeschenk. Hätte dieser oder jener Begünstigte auch nur einen dieser druckfrischen Banknoten pfleglich beiseitegelegt – als Erinnerungsstück, so hätte er laut heutiger Kataloglistung einen Wert von 250 Dollar als stille Reserve. Doch: wer wird das getan haben?

Ausländische Gäste erhielten damals ebenfalls Geschenke; frisch gedruckte Ngultrum-Noten waren allerdings nicht darunter. Sie, vom Staatschef bis zum Medienvertreter, erhielten u.a. ein Tisch-Zigaretten-Etui und eine Briefmarken-Kollektion – je nach Rang des Gastes mit 500, 300 oder nur 100 Marken.

Neben den 5 Nu-Noten wurden auch solche im Wert von einem und zehn Ngultrum ausgegeben. **Der 1-Nu-Schein maß nur zierliche 96 x 64 Millimeter.** Zum Vergleich: der 5-EURO-Schein misst 120 x 62 mm. Hergestellt wurden die drei Ngultrum-Nominale von der „India Security Press“. Sie trugen die Unterschrift von Ashi Sonam Choden Wangchuck, Repräsentantin Seiner Majestät im Finanzministerium. Spätere Emissionen wurden von Yeshe Dorji, Direktor der BoB, unterzeichnet.

Offizieller Emittent der ersten Banknotenserie war das „Ministry of Finance“; auf der Rückseite der Scheine allerdings war „Royal Government of Bhutan“ zu lesen. Während in heutigen Banknoten zahlreiche Sicherheitsmerkmale eingearbeitet sind, waren es bei den damaligen Scheinen maximal zwei: ein Sicherheitsfaden und ein Wasserzeichen. Aber auch diese Merkmale wurden nicht universell eingesetzt. So verfügte das 1-Nu-Nominal nur über ein Wasserzeichen (Dorji: Donnerkeil), **die 5-Nu und 10-Nu-Scheine** über beide Sicherheitsmerkmale.

Die nächste Serie wurde 1978 ausgegeben, welche u.a. das bisher höchste Nominal von **100 Ngultrum** beinhaltete. Dieser Schein hatte keinen Sicherheitsfaden, aber das übliche Wasserzeichen. Die 50-Nu-Note verfügte über beide Sicherheitsmerkmale: Wasserzeichen und Metallfaden. Alle anderen Nominale – ein, zwei, fünf, zehn und zwanzig Ngultrum – hatten keinerlei eingearbeiteten Sicherheiten. Gespart an der falschen Stelle? Mehr dazu an späterer Stelle: beim Thema „Fälschungen“.

Auf allen Geldscheinen die bisher (Stand: 2022) für Bhutan ausgegeben wurden, sind auf der Rückseite (Revers) Dzongs abgebildet: was könnte als markanteres Symbol dienen?

Den Anfang machte Simtokha Dzong, die erste von Ngawang Namgyel errichtete Feste, auf 5 Nu im Jahr 1974. Gefolgt vom Rinpung Dzong auf dem 10-Nu-Nominal; ebenfalls 1974. Bei späteren Ausgaben folgten Tashichodzong (Thimphu) und Punakha Dzong. 1978 dann – auf dem 50-Ngultrum-Schein – Trongsa Dzong; auf dem Avers dieses Scheines der dritte Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.

Die ab 1978 emittierten Scheine wurden nicht mehr von den Security Printers im benachbarten und befreundeten Indien, sondern von der größten, kommerziellen Wertpapierdruckerei De La Rue hergestellt. Ihr Gründer Thomas de la Rue wurde auf Guernsey geboren und stellte anfangs Hüte und spezielle Tapete her. Inzwischen hat die Firma Niederlassungen auf drei Kontinenten; auch in Indien.

Am 4. August 1982 wurde die „Royal Monetary Authority“ (RMA) per Gesetz als Zentralbank Bhutans gegründet. Kurz darauf hatte man Ashi Sonam Choden Wangchuck, Repräsentantin des Königs im Finanzministerium, zur Vorsitzenden

des Aufsichtsrates der RMA bestimmt. Der damalige Minister für Arbeit und Wohnraum, Lynpo Yeshey Zimpa, wurde als Hauptgeschäftsführer eingesetzt: beider Unterschriften finden sich auf den ersten Geldscheinen der RMA. Als die Monetary Authority am 1. November 1983 ihre Arbeit aufgenommen hatte, übernahm sie auch die Haftung für alle zuvor vom Finanzministerium ausgegebenen Banknoten und Münzen.

Die über die Jahre folgenden Emissionen trugen die Unterschriften der nachfolgend genannten Personen: Dorji Tsering, Lynpo Wangi Norbu, Lynpo Kunzang Dorji, Dasho Daw Tenzin und bis heute Dasho Penjore. Wobei die zwei Letztgenannten Gouverneur der RMA waren bzw. sind.



Foto-1: Sitz der Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan in Thimphu
(Quelle: Royal Monetary Authority via Facebook)



Foto-2: Logo der RMA
(Quelle: Royal Monetary Authority via Facebook)



Foto-8: Dashi Penjore bei seiner Wiederernennung zum Gouverneur der Royal Monetary Authority
(Quelle: RMA via Facebook)

Strapazierfähiges Material

1989 dann ein (für mich) unerklärlicher Schritt: obwohl De La Rue noch der Hauptauftragnehmer war, orderte die RMA einen Druck der 10-Nu-Note bei der „Korea Minting and Security Printing“. Diese Firma lieferte noch weitere Scheine: zu 20, 50 und 100 Ngultrum.

Die Serie der Ausgabejahre 2000-2003 wurde ausschließlich von De La Rue geliefert. Ihr Novum: auf den höchsten Werten (50, 100 & 500 Ngultrum) wurden die Seriennummern vertikal, statt bisher horizontal, wiedergegeben. Was die Ausgaben 2006 bis 2016 betrifft, so gab es weitere Neuerungen. Erstaunlicherweise wurde tatsächlich nochmals ein (neuer) 1 Ngultrum-Schein ausgegeben, obwohl dieses Nominal „nichts mehr wert“ war. Eine Münze hätte es auch und besser getan; auch hätte sie den Kreislauf länger „überlebt“.

Die **50 Ngultrum-Note von 2008** bot wieder die Merkmale Sicherheitsstreifen und Wasserzeichen: auf dem Avers – und im Wasserzeichen – war erstmals der derzeitige Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, abgebildet. Auf der Rückseite Trongsa Dzong.

Rekapituliert man an dieser Stelle, so waren bisher drei Banknotendruckereien für Bhutan tätig. Was nun, 2013, folgte, war ein Auftrag an die – wie De La Rue – sehr renommierte Druckerei „Giesecke & Devrient“ (G&D). Sie hat ihre Wurzeln in Leipzig, also ungefähr 50 Kilometer von meinem Geburtsort, meiner Heimat, entfernt.

Das Novum an den zwei von G&D hergestellten Nominalen (1 und 10 Ngultrum) ist ihr Material: Hybrid™. Dabei handelt es sich um ein Polymer/Papier-Substrat der Firma „Louisenthal“. Banknoten aus diesem Materialgemisch sind besonders geeignet für Länder mit feuchtem Klima und häufigen Handhabungen – d.h.: wenn Geldscheine in Mitteleuropa meist in Portemonnaies aufbewahrt werden und die Menschen, welche es ausgeben, relativ saubere Hände haben, so sieht das in Asien, Afrika und Lateinamerika völlig anders aus.

Ein kleiner Abstecher nach Ghana. Das westafrikanische Land verschwendet jedes Jahr Millionen von Dollar, um Ersatz für eingerissene oder stark verschmutzte Banknoten drucken zu lassen. Milliarden Cedi (Landeswährung) werden täglich

Regen, Hitze, Aufbewahrung in Hosentaschen, schmutzigen Händen, usw. ausgesetzt, dass sie bald Risse aufweisen, übel riechen: kurzum – nicht mehr für den Zahlungsverkehr verwendbar sind.

Tropen setzen Scheinen zu

Die Royal Mint in London konstatierte, dass der schnelle Verfall von Banknoten nicht mehr nur ein Problem der „Dritten Welt“ sei. Sprecher John Kelly: „Banknoten mit niedrigem Nennwert in entwickelten Ländern, darunter Frankreich, Italien, Großbritannien, Australien, den USA und Neuseeland, ist ein ähnliches Schicksal beschieden.“

Es gibt Untersuchungen, die belegen, dass die kleinwertigen Noten durch Unachtsamkeit nur drei bis sechs Monate halten – daher die Prägung von 1-Pfund-Münzen (in Großbritannien).

In Afrika, Lateinamerika und den Ländern des Indischen Ozeans ist das Problem aufgrund des heißen Klimas sogar noch gravierender. Nur wenige Leute benutzen Brieftaschen und die Scheine werden schließlich schlaffer; dünner.

Bisher wurden alle Könige Bhutans, außer Jigme Wangchuck, zweiter Druk Gyalpo, auf Geldscheinen abgebildet. **2016 dann eine Sonderausgabe anlässlich der Geburt des Gyalsey – dem ersten Sohn des jetzigen Monarchen. Der Nennwert beträgt 1.000 Nu, die Auflage 3.420.000 Stück. Hergestellt (wieder aus „normalem“ Papier) von G&D.**

Daneben wurden auch Scheine extra für Notaphilisten, also Geldscheinsammler, ausgegeben. Als erstes Exemplar ein **100-Nu-Schein anlässlich der Eheschließung von König Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck mit Jetsun Pema.** Er war drei Wochen erhältlich, kostete 500 Ngultrum und wurde von De La Rue gedruckt.

Als nächstes Sammlerstück wurde **anlässlich des ersten Geburtstages des Kronprinzen ein 100-Nu-Schein** emittiert. Er zeigt Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck (Gyalsey) sowie links neben ihm das Elternpaar. Gedruckt wurden die eine Million Noten von der nunmehr fünften von Bhutan beauftragten Wertpapierdruckerei, der Schweizer Firma „Orell Füssli“. Vorgestellt wurde die Banknote im Februar 2017, erhältlich war sie in einem Präsentationsalbum ab 5. Februar 2018; zu 250 Ngultrum.

Historie: Der Ngultrum **[2]** wurde zweckmäßigerweise im Verhältnis 1:1 an die Indische Rupie gekoppelt. Ähnlich wie der Singapur-Dollar zum Brunei-Dollar. Mit dem Unterschied, dass die zwei südostasiatischen Währungen jeweils beidseitig in den zwei Staaten als Zahlungsmittel akzeptiert werden.

Etwas modifizierter stellt sich die Situation im Fall „Bhutan-Indien“ dar. Zwar kann man überall in Bhutan mit Indischer Rupie (INR) zahlen, doch umgekehrt ist das im besten Fall nur in indischen Städten nahe der Grenze zu Bhutan möglich. Das beste Beispiel ist die Grenzstadt Jaigaon.

Fälscher am Werk

Da heißt es oft, Menschen in Monarchien würden „unfrei“ leben; mit zu wenig Mitspracherecht, Freiheiten, ausgestattet sein. **Das mag auf Marokko zutreffen; sicher trifft es auf Eswatini zu. Und auf Kuwait, Tonga und Brunei; auf Saudi-Arabien sowieso.**

Dann aber haben wir die zwei Nachbarn Bhutan und Indien. Letztgenannter Staat bekannt als bevölkerungsreichste Demokratie unseres Globus'. Doch Demokratie bedeutet auch „Offenheit“.

Möchte man sich einen tiefen Blick in die westbengalische Stadt Jaigaon verschaffen: mit GOOGLE Earth ist es nicht möglich. Aber: beginnend mit dem in landestypischer Tradition dekorierten Grenztorbogen zum Nachbarn wird alles anders; besser: Bhutan, das erst vor wenigen Jahrzehnten in die moderne Staatengemeinschaft aufgenommene Land, lässt es zu (als Monarchie, wohlbemerkt), via GOOGLE Earth bis in den letzten Winkel auch kleiner Städte zu blicken **[3]**. Aber: auch via GOOGLE Earth ist es nicht möglich, Schmugglern, Fälschern und allen anderen Missetätern auf die Finger zu schauen. Ergo auch nicht Geldfälschern.

Der erste, nennenswerte Fall von gefälschten Banknoten liegt 10 Jahre zurück. Damals, 2012, tauchten im Dzongkhag Tsirang, dem mit Abstand flächenkleinsten Verwaltungsbezirk, erste Fälschungen auf; nahe der indischen Grenze. Ein Fakt, der quasi „ins Bild passt“. Wer die bhutanischen Geldscheine fälscht, das ist auch für Ermittlungsbehörden schwer nachvollziehbar. **Doch es liegt nahe, dass die Schurken einen indischen Ausweis in der Gesäßtasche tragen.**

Mitte August 2014 informierte der Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS; siehe THUNLAM 2020) dass einer Mitteilung der RMA zufolge noch einige gefälschte Ngultrum-Noten im Umlauf seien. Falschgeld, so die klare Aussage der RMA, wird fast ausschließlich in Banken sichergestellt bzw. „entdeckt“: irgendwann wurden die Scheine von Kunden eingezahlt. Sicherlich meist unwissentlich. Fakt ist: je mehr und je ausgeklügelte Sicherheitszeichen in eine Banknote eingearbeitet werden, desto aufwendiger wird es für Fälscher, einen Geldschein nachzumachen. Auf der anderen Seite der Medaille ist die Herstellung von Banknoten mit zahlreichen Sicherheitsmerkmalen kostenintensiver als mit beispielsweise nur einem Wasserzeichen und/odereingearbeitetem Sicherheitsstreifen.

Blütenursprung jenseits der Grenze

Eines der jüngsten Beispiele, wenn auch ein relativ kleiner Fisch: Anfang Dezember 2021 beschlagnahmte die Polizei in Phuentsholing 40 gefälschte Noten im Nennwert von 1.000 Nu.

Nach Angaben der Polizei versuchte ein 56-jähriger Mann aus Jaigaon das Geld vom Grenztor der Stadt an seine Frau zu übergeben. Die Polizei weigerte sich in der Vergangenheit zweimal, ihm das Geld abzunehmen und forderte ihn auf, es legal zu überweisen. Letzte Woche erschien er erneut am geschlossenen Tor, warf ein Paket in eine schwarze Plastiktüte und verließ den Tatort. Mit Hilfe der Bank bestätigte die Polizei, dass es sich um gefälschte Banknoten handelte.

Unterdessen warnt die Polizei die breite Öffentlichkeit, beim Umgang mit Geld wachsam zu sein. Die RMA hatte in der

Vergangenheit auch eine Broschüre „Know Your Money“ veröffentlicht, um der Öffentlichkeit zu helfen, echte Ngultrum-Noten zu erkennen und sich vor der Annahme gefälschter Scheine zu schützen. Inzwischen hat die RMA, mit Unterstützung der Weltbank, eine landesweite Sensibilisierungskampagne initiiert. Geplant ist, abgelegene Regionen zu besuchen, um die Bürger über die vorhandenen Sicherheitsmerkmale der Banknoten zu informieren.

Es gab indes mindestens einen weiteren Fall von entdeckter Fälschung: wieder in Jaigaon. Von offizieller Seite hieß es: „Gefälschte bhutanische Banknoten waren bisher Amateuranstrengungen, die selbst gewöhnliche Bhutaner mit bloßem Auge, der Berührung der Papierqualität, der Farbe und dem Fehlen einiger Sicherheitsmerkmale erkennen können. Dies scheint sich jedoch zu ändern, da in Jaigaon gefälschte Scheine zu 1.000 Nu auftauchten, die dem Original mit 95 % Echtheit sehr nahe kommen [...].“

Die Beschlagnahmung der Fälschungen erfolgte im mobilen Geschäft „Rajesh Store“, kaum 200 Meter vom Grenztor von Phuentsholing entfernt. Auedesh Gupta, der Besitzer des Ladens [4], wurde von der Polizei Jaigaons in Gewahrsam genommen. Nach siebentägiger Untersuchungshaft wurde er dem Gericht in Alipurduar übergeben.

Verfolgt man das Geschehen im heutigen Bhutan, so weiß man um einerseits die Erfolge und Fortschritte, andererseits um die noch vorhandenen Hindernisse. Die liegen besonders in der Abgeschiedenheit vieler Dörfer. Die Menschen haben Ideen, gründen eine kleine Firma; bauen Feldfrüchte an, die gefragt sind. Die Krux: wie diese Erzeugnisse zur nächsten Stadt, zum nächsten Großhändler transportieren – ganz simpel zum Kunden bringen; ohne propere Straße?

Kreditinstitute

Erinnern wir uns also an den eingangs erwähnten Bauern, der ein gutes Sümmchen zur Bank bringen wollte. Ap Chathey lebt im scheinbaren Nirgendwo; irgendwo im „Busch“. Aber, man mag es kaum glauben: der Dörfler muss keine strapaziöse Reise auf dem Tsirang Highway mit einer siebenstündigen Reisezeit nach Thimphu auf sich nehmen. Auch nicht die fünfstündige Fahrt nach Wangduephodrang, um dort der Bank of Bhutan seine sauer verdienten Ngultrum anzuvertrauen. Nein: relativ nahe seines Dorfes unterhält die BoB eine Filiale in Daga. Insgesamt sind es deren landesweit 48 (plus 200 Agenturen); auch in so dünn besiedelten, abgelegenen und schwer zugänglichen Orten wie Lhuentse, Gasa und Trashiyangtse. Wer einfach nur Geld ziehen möchte, kann das an 44 Geldautomaten im Großraum Thimphu, sowie in 62 weiteren Standorten im Rest des Landes tun.



Foto-7: Mitarbeiter der Bhutan Development Bank reisen in der Hochzeit der Pandemie auch in den abgelegensten Winkel um Bargeld bzw. Kredite auszuzahlen.
(Quelle: Bhutan Development Bank Ltd via Facebook)

Die Bank of Bhutan war das erste Kreditinstitut des Landes. 2018, als die Bank ihren 50. Jahrestag feierte, blickte ihr Geschäftsführer zurück: „1969 verzeichneten wir bescheidene 46.974 Ngultrum Gewinn; letztes Jahr waren es mehr als 700 Millionen. Begonnen hatten wir mit Konten für 20 Kunden; heute vertrauen uns 300.000 Menschen ihre Geldgeschäfte an. Das erste kommerzielle Darlehen über 500.000 Ngultrum hatte unsere Bank an eine Lebensmittelkonservierungsmanufaktur in Samtse ausgereicht. Per 1978 hatten wir nur sieben Zweigstellen; heute sind es 48, verteilt über alle Dzongkhags.“

Als starken und erfahrenen Partner hatte sich die BoB die „Chartered Bank Calcutta“ gewählt. Die erste Filiale wurde in Phuentsholing (damals noch Phuntsholing) eröffnet, das erste Konto vom dritten Druk Gyalpo. Am Eröffnungstag gab es weitere 20 Kontoeröffnungen – von indischen Händlern, einigen potenten Regierungsmitarbeitern und bhutanischen Geschäftsleuten.

Neben der Bank of Bhutan gibt es noch mindestens vier weitere, kommerzielle Kreditinstitute; die älteste von diesen die 1980 gegründete „Bhutan National Bank“. Sie hat heute 30 Filialen, dazu 24 ATM (Geldautomaten) in Thimphu plus weitere 26 außerhalb der Hauptstadt. Fast gleichauf liegt die 1988 gegründete „Bhutan Development Bank“, die ihrer Klientel landesweit 53 ATM bereitstellt und die Kunden in 37 Filialen betreut.

Recht übersichtlich die Präsenz der „Druk Punjab Bank“, die im August 2022 ihre erst neunte Zweigstelle, gegenüber dem Hubschrauberlandeplatz in Thimphu, eröffnet hatte.

Zuletzt: alle erwähnten Geldinstitute stellen eine umfangreiche Webpräsenz bereit. Diesen sind auch in der unscheinbarsten Kleinstadt Kontaktdaten der Mitarbeiter zu entnehmen: Telefonnummer und E-Mail-Adresse. Wirklich vorbildlich: à la bonne heure!

Es würde mich nicht wundern, wenn Bhutan unser Deutschland in wenigen Jahren digital nicht nur eingeholt, sondern auch überholt haben wird. Singapur hat das bereits vor 20 Jahren getan; Estland vor 10 Jahren.

Verweise

[1] Die ersten „neuzeitlichen“ Münzen wurden ab 1974 ausgegeben. Zu diesen Nennwerten: 5, 10, 20, 25 und 50 Chetrum sowie 1 und 3 Ngultrum. Wegen dem Wertverlust des Ngultrum verlieren besonders die Chetrum-Werte immer mehr an Bedeutung für den Zahlungsverkehr. Inzwischen werden die Nominale zu 5 und 10 Chetrum nicht mehr geprägt.

[2] Der ISO-Code des Ngultrum lautet „BTN“. Die internationale Abkürzung von Währungen basiert fast ausschließlich auf dem Prinzip, dass die ersten zwei Buchstaben das Land anzeigen, der dritte Buchstabe den Währungsnamen. Also BT-N entspricht Bhutan Ngultrum. Weiterhin GBP = Great Britain Pound; INR = India Rupee; MVR = Maldives Rufiyaa; etc.

[3] Selbst so abgelegene Orte wie Yangthang westlich Haa und Gasa im hohen Norden sind einsehbar: für mich fast unglaublich! Gern kann man sich auch einige Filialen der Bank of Bhutan landesweit ansehen – in Kanglung oder in Thimphu. In meinem Heimatort in Sachsen (Mitteleuropa) ist es übrigens nicht möglich!

[4] Der mobile Laden ist einer der 20 bis 25 Geschäfte in Jaigaon, die illegal indische und bhutanische Währungen tauschen und dafür eine Gratifikation einfordern. Heutzutage berechnen Geschäfte wie diese eine Provision von drei bis fünf Prozent für die Ausgabe von INR im Gegenzug für die Einnahme von Ngultrum. Letztes Jahr beschlagnahmte die SSB (Grenzschutztruppe) in Jaigaon 50.000 Ngultrum in gefälschter Scheinen von einem Maultier, mit dem versucht wurde, über das Grenztor Bhutans nach Phuentsholing einzureisen.

Übrigens ist auch Alipurduar (130.000 Einwohner) nicht über GOOGLE Street View einzusehen.

ABBILDUNGEN:

Ich überlasse es Ihnen, wie viele und welche Banknoten Sie als Bildmaterial in den Artikel einfügen; ggf. auch Münzen. Es gibt zahlreiche Quellen im Internet.

FOTOS:



Foto-4: (Quelle: T Bank via Facebook)



Foto-5: (Quelle: T Bank via Facebook)



Foto-6: (Quelle: Druk PNB Bank via Facebook)

Literaturhinweise:

Coinage of Bhutan (by Nicholas Rhodes): pdf-Datei im Internet

„Das Fenster“ (Geld und Handel am Dach der Welt)

www.ksk-koeln.de/content/dam/myif/kskkoeln/work/dokumente/pdf/allgemein/eigen/pdf-174.pdf?n=true

Die Münzen von Bhutan

„Thunlam“, 2008/1

On the 50th death anniversary of His Late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck: Remembering the True Patriot

July 23rd, 2022, Post Views: 217, Contributed by Tshering Tashi



"I wish to address this Assembly today briefly on the subject of the passing away of my late father His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who was the parent of our country's welfare and our most beloved and precious ruler." This was His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's opening statement for the 37th session of the National Assembly of Bhutan. At the time, His Majesty was 17 years old. Two months ago, on 21 July 1972, He had lost his father. While His Late Majesty lay in state in the Garden Palace from 23 July to 20 October, an emergency session of the National Assembly had been convened. In His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's address on 10 September, He said that to the great misfortune of the country, his late father had fallen seriously ill some time ago and had to fly to the capital of Kenya to Nairobi, to receive medical treatment.

His Majesty said that despite the medical attention and religious ceremonies performed by the Central Monastic Body for his recovery, His Majesty passed away peacefully in Nairobi at 10:20 p.m. (7:50 p.m. BST) on 21 July 1972. His Majesty said that terrible grief had come to all of us as if night had fallen during the light of the day. "Speaking for myself also, the personal sorrow on the decease of my own father is indeed very great."

Addressing the emergency autumn session of the National Assembly, His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo said that, "just as we having being born will all have to die, it should be remembered that my father has only succumbed to the transient nature of world existence. Our grief is also somewhat lessened when we recall that during the period of His Majesty's lifetime, besides serving him well and with full loyalty, none of us acted other than in accordance with his wishes. Now, there is no benefit to be gained by abiding in our grief and I am sure it would be much better if, instead, you all prayed for his departed soul."

Reminding the august house, His Majesty said that during His Late Majesty's reign all his actions were qualified by his desire to benefit the nation. It is as a result of this that Bhutan, from being a remote and isolated country, had now entered into the mainstream of world affairs. He said that all were aware of His Late Majesty's extraordinary vision and foresight.

Cremation

Nowadays reverently referred to as Drukgyal Zhigpa or the Great Fourth, He informed the Assembly about the cremation rites for His Late Majesty. He said that while Thimphu was the fitting place for the cremation, when His Late Majesty was sick in Phuentsholing the year before, He had told his son that, "since all his forebears had been cremated at the temple of Kurjey Lhakhang in Bumthang, he himself would be very

pleased if the same could be done for him.” Drukgyal Zhigpa said that the preparations for His Late Majesty’s cremation ceremonies at Kurjey Lhakhang were made in accordance with His will.

Quoting the Speaker of the National Assembly in the book, “The Hero with a Thousand Eyes,” Dasho Karma Ura said that while His Late Majesty was in Trongsa to attend the 15 May investiture ceremony of the Trongsa Penlop, he fell ill. Royal Family members, pleaded with His Majesty to go to Switzerland for treatment, and although he was not keen he acceded to his Royal Mother’s wish.

His Majesty believed in the Bhutanese saying, “One should die where one was born.”

After spending three nights in Thimphu, the royal entourage consisting of the Royal Mother, Trongsa Penlop and other senior officers drove to Phuentsholing and then caught a flight to Bombay (Mumbai) from Hasimara. Recounting the four-hour flight to Nairobi, Zimpon Sangay Tenzin said that his Boss was not well and slept for most part of the journey. All these details have been recorded in the book, “One Hundred Years of Development.” The author Damchu Lhendup quotes the Zimpon and writes about how after landing in Nairobi on 14 July, His Late Majesty conveyed his final wish to the Crown Prince. “The touching advice given to the young Crown Prince reduced everyone present to tears.”

As His Majesty was recovering, the plan was to go to Zurich for treatment where he had asked Her Majesty Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck and the eldest princess to join him. However, His Majesty suffered a fatal heart attack and on 21 July passed away at the age of 44 at the Hotel Fairmont The Norfolk.

According to Kuensel of 18 August 1972, on the night that His Majesty passed away, after the Royal Mother and Trongsa Penlop sent the sad news to Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Princesses, the Trongsa Penlop phoned the Prime Minister of India to inform her of the sad news.

With the help of the Indian High Commission in Kenya, on 22 July the royal cortege flew to Bombay where the Indian Foreign Secretary, and other top brass received them. HRH Ashi Dechan Wangmo Wangchuck, senior Bhutanese and Indian officers and the Consul General of Nepal received the royal cortege in Calcutta’s Dum Dum airport and paid homage. The Indian Air Force finally flew the royal cortege to Hasimara airport near the Bhutan border. In Phuentsholing, Her Majesty the Queen and the two youngest princess and other members of the royal family received the royal cortege. At the request of Her Majesty, Dudjom Rinpoche offered prayers and performed the *phowa* or the ritual of transference of consciousness in Kharbandi goenpa.

Great Blow

When the news of the untimely death of His Majesty reached Bhutan, the people felt like they were struck by a thunderbolt. It left the country deeply shocked and saddened and was described like as if the midday sun had set.

People from all walks of life lined up along the highway to pay their last respects. In Thimphu, people received the body with incense in hand and tears in their eyes. When the jeep driven by the royal chauffeur with a white scarf spread on the King’s empty seat, slowly passed by, it was an emotional moment for many people.

His Late Majesty’s body was kept in state in the Lingkana Palace from 23 July to 20 October 1972. His Holiness the Je Khenpo and more than 500 monks from the Central Monastic Body along with His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, the 16th Karmapa, Rabdeys of Tango, Tharpaling and Nyimalung received the royal coffin and offered special prayers.

In preparation for the final rites, His Majesty the Fourth Druk renovated and whitewashed Kurjey Lhakhang in Bumthang. On 20 October, royal family members and senior officers, started the final journey to Bumthang with a night halt at Wangduephodrang and Trongsa along the way.

Many revered Buddhist masters jointly presided over the final cremation rites. In keeping with the royal tradition, on 28 October 1972, the royal mortal remains were consigned to flames before the hallowed shrine of Guru Rinpoche on the fore court of the Kurjey Lhakhang. This was the culmination of all the prayers ceremonies and rites leading to the final performance of the sacred duty of a son, family and nation to the Late King.

On 21 July 1972, when His Late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck passed away in Nairobi, Bhutan not only lost the parent of our country’s wellbeing but also its greatest patriot. His Late Majesty devoted his entire life to

improving the welfare of his people, ensuring the progress and prosperity of his kingdom and enhancing the security and safeguarding the sovereignty of the country.

In his 20 years on the golden throne, through radical reforms, He removed many of the social and economic evils, which gave meaning and dignity to lives of the common people. Besides going down in our history as the Father of Modern Bhutan, His Late Majesty is remembered as an affectionate and generous man who led an extremely simple life. He had a deep and abiding faith in religion, never indulging in pettiness in his thoughts or actions. He had insatiable curiosity and was an avid reader. Knowledgeable on wide range of subjects, he made himself relevant to all ages.

In Kurjey, after India's Prime Minister, paid homage to our Late King, Indira Gandhi said that in the passing away of His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, Bhutan lost the father of the Nation, India a staunch friend, and the world a lover of peace and universal brotherhood. During his 20 year's reign he heralded Bhutan into the modern era, and giving her a new sense of unity and purpose. He heralded her entry into the U.N. But Mrs Gandhi said that the richest legacy of His Late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck is his worthy son and successor, in whose hands now rest the destiny of Bhutan. She said that, "His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck is the young King of a young kingdom and yet both have maturity and wisdom that go back to centuries. That is why, in our strife-stricken world, Bhutan continues to be a fountain of peace."

Wangdue Dzong rises to glory again

November 12th, 2022. Post Views: 228, **Jigme Wangchuk**



November 11, a serene morning at Gangtey Thangka, Wangdue. As the first rays of the autumn sun touch the aureate fields of the hill opposite, painting a pastoral portrait of medieval Shangri-La, the Druk Khamsum Wangdue Choeki Dzong, known popularly as Wangdue Dzong, shimmers atop the ridge that resembles a

sleeping elephant. Far dawn, from the Tsangchhu Zam, this singular wonder of Bhutanese ingenuity stands resplendent, towering, and proud, floating in the sky.

Ten years ago today, a fire accident engulfed this most unique and magnificent of Bhutanese dzongs which was originally built in 1639 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. A popular narrative has it that while in Chimi Lhakhang in Punakha, an old cripple approached Zhabdrung Rinpoche. The protecting deity *Yeshey Goenpo* or *Mahakala* of the glorious Palden Drukpa in disguise, the old cripple advised the peerless founder of Lhomon Tsendhen Jong or Drukyul to build a dzong overlooking the confluence of Dangchhu and Punatsangchhu if he were to bring the dominion of the Southern Land of Medicine under him.

Wangduephodrang Dzong



Sketch by Samuel Davis, 1783

Druk Khamsum Wangdue Chhoek Dzong is the third oldest dzong in Bhutan. When Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel was at Chimi Lhakhang in Paro, an old cripple approached him and told him that if he built a dzong in Wangduephodrang on a ridge that resembled a sleeping elephant, he would unite the country. Zhabdrung concluded that the old man was Yeshey Gempo (Mahakala) and sent a noble to study the location. The noble reported that he saw four ravens circling the ridge, which flew away in four different directions when he visited the place. Taking this to be a good omen, Zhabdrung constructed the dzong in 1638.



1638 Built by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel

1639 Construction completed

1837 Dzong destroyed by a major fire

1897 Damaged by earthquake



2012 A major fire mishap destroys the dzong

2014 His Majesty The King placed the first *sachu burner* (religious vessel for land stability) into the ground of the Wangduephodrang dzong *uste* (central tower), re-sanctifying the site that once housed the fortress.

2016 Consecration ceremony of the *kaentrey*. The three-storey *kaentrey* is the first phase of the reconstruction project.

2018 His Majesty The King graced the installation of the *Sering* (golden pinnacle) on the *Uste* (central tower) of the Wangduephodrang dzong.



November 11, 2022

The dzong is believed to have been enlarged by the Fourth Desi, Gyalsey Tenzin Rabgye, who also added two more storeys to the Uste. In 1837, the dzong was destroyed by a great fire and was rebuilt. During the time of Neten Pelden Singye, the dzong was damaged by a severe earthquake and rebuilt to its former glory. Once again, during the reign of the Third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck the dzong saw a renovation under the supervision of Dronyer Pema Wangdi.

When the fire razed the dzong to the ground on the evening of June 24, 2012, a pained nation stood stunned in disbelief. The utter feeling of helplessness as the people watched the inferno devour the nearly 400-year-old dzong is so deeply etched in human memory that the people still recall with the event tears. The then Wangdue Dzongdag Lhendup Wangchhu was among the few who managed to get inside the dzong, soon after Bhutan Power corporation informed him about the fire. The people inside the dzong were trying to create a fire-line to stop it from spreading towards the *dratshang*. It was a futile effort in the end. The main statue of the Zhabdrung was lowered down from the window with the help of big ropes that were available from the scaffoldings. Only precious little could be salvaged. Today, as the Je Khenpo consecrates the new dzong, it marks a new beginning for the nation, particularly for the people of Sha Dargye (eight divisions of Sha).



His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, His Majesty the Fourth King, members of the Royal family, and senior government officials attended the consecration ceremony.

As the dzong was being consumed by fire, contributions began to flow immediately from individuals and organisations for the reconstruction of the dzong. In less than a month, the government mobilised Nu 1.3B to fund the dzong's reconstruction. In solidarity, Bhutan's neighbour and friend, India, committed Nu 1 billion for the reconstruction project. On

January 2014, reconstruction of the dzong began. On July 14, His Majesty the King graced the installation of the *sertog* (golden pinnacle) on the *utse* of the dzong.

Fire razed the dzong to the ground in 2012

Phento, a villager, watched the event from Rinchengang. "I saw history burn to dust and now I see it rising again. I couldn't sleep for days after that fateful day."

The dzong reconstruction project was not easy; it progressed slowly. The recommendations of experts had to be presented to the steering committee of the project on January 24. Based on the recommendations, the culture department had to work on how to go with the *utse* construction, keeping in mind the original structural and cultural components. More than 320 workers, 53 open-air prisoners, and 30 carvers were engaged in the *kuenray* construction.

Fire accidents are common in dzongs and lhakhangs. And there is the threat of natural disasters such as earthquakes. The new Wangdue Dzong was rebuilt with these dangers in mind. The dzong is the first in the country to have used a base isolation system, a method of seismic protection where the structure or superstructure is separated from the base or foundation. Among other modern amenities, the dzong has fire alarm control panels and an underground service tunnel where internet, sewage and electricity lines run through. Druk Khamsum Wangdue Choeki Dzong, thus, is a model dzong.

"No such fire disaster should destroy any dzong in the country," said Kencho Tshering from Bajo Town.

Tashi Ngasoel of historic Wangdue Dzong concludes

November 12th, 2022, Post Views: 262



Ten years after a fire razed it to the ground, the Wangduephodrang Dzong once again adorns the fabled hill resembling the trunk of a sleeping elephant.



The historic Wangduephodrang Dzong, rebuilt to its former glory upon Royal Command, was consecrated today on the auspicious occasion of November 11.

His Majesty The King, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, Their Royal Highnesses Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel and Gyalsey Ugyen Wangchuck, and Members of the Royal Family graced the Tashi Rabney (consecration) of the dzong. His Holiness the Je Khenpo presided over the ceremony and the prayers, which began on November 9.

Tashi Ngasoel prayers were performed, and Mendel Ku, Sung, Thukten Thinley offered to His Majesty The King, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, and the Je Khenpo by representatives of the dzongkhag at the Zhabdrung Tong-ku Lhakhang of the dzong.

The Prime Minister, Ministers, and the Ambassador of India to Bhutan and relevant government officials attended the ceremony, along with the people of Wangduephodrang dzongkhag.

Wangduephodrang Dzong, built in 1638 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, is of great historical importance to Bhutan as an administrative centre that connected the east and west, besides being an architectural and cultural landmark.

A fire on 24 June 2012 destroyed not only the magnificent building, but also the many precious statues and relics housed within. However, many other relics were retrieved due to the valiant efforts by the armed forces, de-suups and volunteers.

His Majesty The King Commanded that the dzong be rebuilt to its former stature, with state-of-the-art technology for disaster resilience, and granted Nu 200 million to commence work. Reconstruction work based on the new design began in 2014.

The new structure was built upon the footprints of the old, using traditional materials and techniques, by local artisans. Pioneering integration of modern and traditional design and technology include use of bearings in the foundation of the Utse, galvanised steel latches connecting floors to walls, and more resilient building materials. A Service Tunnel in the center spine of the dzong enables all service related pipes and lines to be transported safely with easy maintenance and as a safe exit during emergencies.

The dzong houses both the salvaged relics as well as new commissions, which was funded in large part by the offerings made by the people after the fire.

The government of India granted Nu 1 billion for the reconstruction of the dzong as part of Project Tied Assistance (PTA) grant during 11th and 12th Five Year Plans.

His Majesty thanked the people who had worked on the reconstruction project for over 8 years to successfully complete the dzong, and to the government of India for its support.

His Royal Highness Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel planted a Cypress Tree at the entrance, to bring auspiciousness to the new dzong.

More than restoring a monument

November 12th, 2022 Post Views: 220

June 24, 2012: On hearing the dzong had caught fire, Aum Yeshey dropped the tools, folded her hands and started praying. Seeing only the smoke from her village in Gaselo, Yeshey cried, frantically praying for rain. By late evening she heard the majestic Wangduephodrang dzong was reduced to ashes.

Yesterday, standing close to the television set perched on a “showcase” at her granddaughter’s house in Babesa, Yeshey, 87 cried again. This time she cried out of happiness watching the consecration programme that was broadcast live from Wangduephodrang.

For once, the octogenarian was convinced of an old saying (*mitse chi na kap gu, gu gi medo, chopgay yoed*). This roughly translates to – we can witness anything in a lifetime. Yeshey never thought that the dzong would be restored to its original glory. She was speechless.

Wangduephodrang dzong has risen from the ashes. The people of Shar Dhar Gye got their dzong back, with greater glory and magnificence. Beyond Shar Dhar Gye, Bhutan has a monument that is historically and symbolically important. Perched high on a spur overlooking the Punatsangchhu and Dangchu, the dzong was a pride not only for the people of Shar Dhar Gye, but a monument with deep significance. When the fire left only the walls, the people felt that their “heart was ripped out of the body.”

Today they agree that the fire was a blessing in disguise. When the dzong went up in flames and effort to save it became futile, many believed that it was predestined, a symbol, an indication to restore the dzong to the grandeur of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel’s times.

Wangduephodrang dzong was the third dzong Zhabdrung built in Bhutan. It was damaged thrice – once by a fire in 1837, an earthquake in 1897 and a devastating fire in 2012. If what people believed was hope, restoring it back to greater glory after the third disaster is a hope fulfilled.

When Zhabdrung built the dzong in 1639, it was to be a seat of power strategically located between the western and central regions, built to unite the country. If the vision was fulfilled, the consecration yesterday was assuring of the unity that is Bhutan’s strength.

The unity was symbolised by the presence of His Majesty The King, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, Their Royal Highnesses Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel and Gyalsey Ugyen

Wangchuck, members of the Royal family, elected leaders including local leaders, Lam Netens and the people at the consecration presided by His Holiness the Je Khenpo.

Rebuilt on the grounds Zhabdrung chose more than 400 years ago, the new dzong is a blend of the old and the new, no less sacred or significant. 10 years ago, a monument was destroyed, but it was only a physical structure. The spiritual legacy has stayed and it has risen from the ashes. In line with Zhabdrung's effort of uniting the country centuries ago, the disaster helped in achieving the same vision.

As soon as the dzong was destroyed, Bhutanese from all walks of life, at home and abroad, Bhutan's friends and development partners knew that it had to be restored.

His Majesty The King generously contributed to the restoration, the government of India recognised the priority and Bhutan's friends, well-wishers and Bhutanese played a crucial role in reviving not only a monument but hope and belief.

Wangduechoeling Palace receive historical artefacts

August 22nd, 2022 Post Views: 82, Staff Reporter



After completing the restoration of Wangduechoeling Palace, Bhutan Foundation, in collaboration with culture department, is working on the gallery plans, narratives, and exhibits for a world-class Palace Museum and Cultural Centre.

The museum has received numerous rare and sacred artefacts from donors. The artefacts include a rare sacred Tashi Gomang, old silk applique thangkas, an 18-19th century Karmapa statue, traditional amulets and jewellery, and textiles indigenous to Bumthang.

A press release from the Bhutan Foundation stated, "Building a museum and cultural centre around available artefacts, informed by interesting narratives, has been a journey of collective endeavour since its inception. Therefore, the magnanimity of these gifts is greatly appreciated."

Most notable among them is the Tashi Gomang, translated as 'the many doors of good fortune', a travelling shrine representing the copper-coloured palace of Guru Padmasambhava, dating back to the 18th-19th

century. “There are only 35 such relics recorded in the country by the Tashi Gomang Project,” the release stated.

The “extraordinary gifts’ were donated by Hoch and Oltramare families of the United States and Switzerland respectively, who have been friends of Bhutan through generations. Michael and Nancy McClelland from Los Angeles, and Diana Myers from Washington, DC also gifted several artefacts from their collections.

“With this gesture of goodwill and generosity, it is hoped that the project will receive other significant contributions from well-wishers within Bhutan and elsewhere,” the press release stated.

“Creating intentional accessibility and inclusivity for the public, the Palace project aims to safeguard the country’s rich heritage and pass it on to the next generation of Bhutanese,” the release stated.

The Wangduechoeling Palace Project is implemented under the guidance of Her Majesty Gyalum Tseyring Pem Wangchuck.

“It aims to be a cultural hub, a place where people from all backgrounds can come together to connect with the exhibitions, immersive programs, and stories in their many forms, to gain a greater understanding of Bhutan’s history and culture in general, and that of the Palace and Bumthang specifically. And all this will happen within the architectural grandeur of a Palace that has historic significance as the seat of Bhutan’s monarchy,” the release stated.

Bemji in the northern mountains of Trongsa: A picture of Bhutan that could soon disappear

January 5th, 2022, Post Views: 275



Tashi Dema

Winters are harsh in Bemji, in the northern mountains of Trongsa. Thick early morning frosts cover the whole expanse of the village. The wind bites.

However, the cold does not deter the villagers from coming together to contribute free labour. A house is being constructed. This age-old tradition of lending a hand is very much alive in Bemji.

Men and women and even school-going children, who are on winter vacation, wake up early in the morning to complete their household chores. Then they go to the house construction site to ram cold earth. Others help with woodworks.

Looking mid-distance from the madding crowd, this is not the only house construction going on. There are four more. Only a few metres separate one from the other.

Keza Dem, 43, bring home a bundle of firewood or dry leaves from the forest floor before going for other's work.

She has already contributed free labour for three days in a house construction site, and will now go to another house construction. She has to be fair. Day after tomorrow, Keza's sister Yangchey, 32, will also go and contribute free labour. This means Keza will have to stay behind and attend to the cattle and household chores.



Simple feast after a sumptuous community work

"Women and girls ram earth and boys ready the soil. This has been a tradition since I was a little girl," Keza said.

Nagtshom, 57, is carrying mud in a bamboo basket and climbing up the rickety stairs. At her age, this is a dangerous affair. But she has been doing this since she was a little girl.

"As children, way back then, we use to ram the earth at the night with the help of moonlight," Nagtshom said. "Now, of course, we have electricity. It is so much easier."

The activity is not all drab and tiring; there are songs and sharp exchanges of wit.

"If the walls are incomplete even after everyone in the village contributes three-days labour, then we contribute again," Nagtshom said. "Social cohesion, more than anything else, was important. It still is."

This is a powerful example of "community vitality" that is fast disappearing with change.

In the past, people who contribute free labour would be compensated with a lavish feast on the day of

consecration. That was long before modern development when people often faced food shortages. But the tradition still continues.

Karma Tshoki, who is also constructing a house, said that **building a house without free labour was impossible then. “We had little money to pay wages.”**

With all the new changes fast burying or entombing age-old cultures, Karma Tshoki said that villages could be the last bastions of Bhutan that was—a happy and self-sufficient society. “We now have roads, electricity, basic health units, and most such modern amenities, but we are increasingly becoming less helpful to each other.”

It is this nostalgic call from deep within that keeps Karma Tshoki thinking about the future. There is nothing concrete to hold on to, so she goes to contribute her share of “free” labour when her neighbour is building a house.

Nyilo is gone and days are becoming longer. That means more farm work. At a time when villages are facing shortage of farmhands, this bit of culture that the people are still hanging on to will have the fields tilled and rice turning to gold, literally. It’s free labour again in the difficult terraces.

But there is also joy and happiness to celebrate together in a village like Bemji. Festivals and *tsechus* will come soon to add colour to the lives of otherwise weather-beaten villagers. The communities will come together again—those who live in towns and cities and can afford will bring used clothes to share with their rural cousins.

The beauty is in the songs and stories they share and relish; it is also in the feeling, in each heart, of safety, care, and love that flow abundantly for the sake of the community.

Bumthang – immerse yourself in the history & heritage of central Bhutan

Department of Tourism – Bhutan, 14. November 2022

Located in central Bhutan, Bumthang is one of Bhutan’s most scenic destinations with winding roads lined by tall evergreen pine forests, wide breathtaking valleys and a rich heritage. Home to most of the country’s oldest Buddhist temples and monasteries, Bumthang is a place permeated by peace and tranquility where stories of spirits and treasures still seem to linger in the shadows. Aside from spiritual excursions, Bumthang is popular for its unique textiles, beer factory, delicious Swiss cheese, fabulous hiking trails, and museums.

Below are some of Bumthang’s attractions that will spark new appreciation for this beautiful district.

Ogyen Choling Palace and Museum



Ogyen Choling Museum by Bassem Nimah



Inside the Ogyen Choling Museum by Bassem Nimah

The OgyenCholing Palace and Museum located in Tang, over an hour's drive from the maintown of Bumthang is Bhutan's first private museum. It is owned by the family of the well-known author Ashi Kunzang Choden, one of the first Bhutanese authors to write in English. Originally built in the 19th century, the Ogyen Choling Heritage House is a historic cultural site whose central tower was converted to a museum in 2001. Here you will find one of Bhutan's largest collections of artefacts and exhibits including ancient Bhutanese art, textiles, arms and armor, masks, musical instruments, tools, household items and more. It is a lovingly preserved museum showcasing the lifestyle of aristocrats in Bhutan before its social reforms. Don't be put off by the long drive - it's an excursion through gorgeous villages and pine forests. The heritage house also has guest rooms in three of its buildings. Find out more [here](#).

Yathra - Bumthang's native textile



Yathra shop in Chumey Valley



Yathra textiles

Bhutanese textiles are recognized for their vivid colours, sophistication, intricate hand-woven patterns and natural dyeing. While eastern Bhutan is known for its exquisite laborious *kushuthara* and naturally dyed *buray*, the *yatra* (woolen) textile woven on a back-strap loom is originally from Bumthang. In local terms, *ya* means mountains and *thra* means patterns. The Bumthap ladies innovatively borrowed the patterns of the mountains and embedded them in their work, hence the name *yathra*. Bumthang has long, cold winters so clothes made from *yathra* keep them warm. The people of Bumthang use *yathra* to make coats, hats, shawls, rain coats, couch covers, table runners, baby blankets and bedding material. In keeping with changing times, *yathra* is now even made into fashionable attire fit for runways. Visit the Chumey valley to shop for excellent *yathra*-textiles.

Jakar Dzong



Jakar Yugyal Dzong, commonly known as Jakar Dzong sits on a ridge overlooking Jakar village of Chamkhar valley in Bumthang, and translates to ‘fortress of white bird’. The dzong played a critical role in ancient times as a fortress of defense for the east-central region. It is believed that when the 14th century saint Lam Ngagi Wangchuk came to Bhutan to spread Buddhism, he saw a white bird perched on the ridge, and the location was subsequently chosen for the dzong. A three-day annual Tshechu celebration is held at Jakar Dzong showcasing various religious and traditional mask dances and folk songs. Many people miss the Water Tower on their visit to Jakar Dzong. Just

behind the Dzong, there is a series of moss-covered stone steps leading down to the huge well that was used in the past as a water reservoir. It’s both eerie and exciting to go down that path.



The inside of Jakar Dzong by Bassem Nimah

Conservation and Environment Institute at Lamay Monastery



Lamay Monastery by Bassem Nimah

Lamay Gonpa is a Buddhist monastery located above Jakar Dzong. It was built in the 19th century by Trongsa Penlop Sonam Drugel, the great-grandfather of the first monarch of Bhutan, King Ugyen Wangchuck. Today it houses the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment (UWICE), a public research and training institute. The institute aims to conserve the country's natural environment through science-based research focusing on areas of needs and challenges within and outside Bhutan. You can take a tour inside the Dendrochronology laboratory where Foresters carry out tree-ring dating and collect data for dendroclimatology.

Tamshing Tshechu



Tamshing Tshechu by Bassem Nimah



Tamshing Tshechu by Bassem Nimah

Tamshing Lhakhang, a one-storied temple, is a significant temple of Nyingma (oldest of the four major schools of Buddhism) that houses rare mural paintings and statues. Established in 1501, it is the principal seat of Terton Pema Lingpa. Oral stories say that Terton Pema Lingpa built this monastery with the help of dakinis. The wall paintings of Terton Pema Lingpa found in Tamshing Lhakhang are some of the earliest found in Bhutan. Currently it is the seat of Sungtrul Rinpoche (speech incarnation of Terton Pema Lingpa.). TamshingTshechu is an annual festival held at Tamshing Lhakhang, unique for its fire blessings.

Kurjey and Jambay Lhakhang



Kurjey Lhakhang by Bassem Nimah

Located adjacent to each other, Kurjey and Jambay Lhakhang in Bumthang are among the most revered temples in the country. Kurjey Lhakhang is named after the body print (*kurjey*) of Guru Rinpoche which is preserved in a cave inside the temple. Guru Rinpoche is believed to have meditated in Kurjey Lhakhang in the 9th century and left an imprint of his body on a rock, which can still be seen today. Built in 659 CE, Jambay Lhakhang is one of the 108 temples constructed by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo in Tibet and Bhutan.

Red Panda Brewery and Cheese Factory



Red Panda Brewery



Swiss cheese tasting

Cheese forms one of the most important ingredients in Bhutanese cuisine. Bumthang is famous for its Swiss cheese. In the 1960s, a Swiss man named Fritz Maurer who lived in Bumthang established a small emmental and gouda cheese production. Near the cheese factory is the Red Panda brewery that produces German-style wheat beer. Today, you will also find a workshop in the premise affiliated with the Desuung Skilling Program where Mr. Namgay Maurer trains young Desuups to build Swiss-style furniture.

Wangduechoeling Palace



Wangduechoeling Palace by Bassem Nimah

Constructed in 1857 as a private residence for Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyel, Wangduechoeling Palace was the birthplace of the first monarch of Bhutan, King Ugyen Wangchuck, son of Jigme Namgyel. Under King Ugyen Wangchuck, the palace housed the king's offices and court, and it became the seat of national power in the early 20th century. In 1950, the court was moved to Paro. Since then, Wangduechoeling Palace has been largely uninhabited. Currently restoration work is in progress to turn the historic palace into a museum of Bhutan's history, court life, culture and architecture.

Trans Bhutan Trail and Hiking Trails



Hiking Trail in Bumthang

The famous Trans Bhutan Trail, listed in the TIME magazine's "World's Greatest Places 2022" passes through Bumthang via Kikila pass (3477m). Now turned into an out-door adventure, before 1960, the 250-mile trek was the only trail connecting the western Bhutan with eastern Bhutan. If you're looking for a less rigorous day-hike, Bumthang has shorter hiking trails around the valleys that are just as fabulous.

Pema Choling Nunnery



Pema Choling Nunnery

Pema Choling nunnery (Anim Dratshang) is a monastery for female Buddhist nuns. The nuns come from all over Bhutan, some having joined when they were young girls. Some of the nuns are studying to get a masters degree in religious studies. They speak English, and completely self-reliant, they build everything themselves, as seen in the pictures where they are renovating their verandah.



Nuns renovating their verandah

Visit Bumthang and immerse yourself in the history and heritage of central Bhutan. A range of accommodation options are available in Bumthang, from guesthouses to 3-star, 4-star and 5-star lodges. There are also routine domestic flights available from Paro to Bumthang.

Pemagatshel: The blissful land of lotus in the far east of Bhutan

September 17th, 2022, Post Views: 902



The district has rich spiritual memories, abundant local festivals, folklores, artisans and a historical story of resisting British troops during the Duar Wars. Pemagatshel is the lotus garden of happiness, almost forgotten by travellers but still celebrated in history books.

Pemagatshel literally means the “Blissful Land of Lotus”. It is situated at the South- Eastern part of Bhutan, covering an area of about 1,023 square km with the population of 23,800 and 4,448 household according to the recent survey. This is the only eastern Dzongkhag where no other dialects are spoken except Tshangla. The district has its own special tourist attractions. Situated upon a dagger-shaped mountain, Yongla Goenpa is one of the oldest and holiest shrines in Eastern Bhutan.

Yongla Goenpa

Also known as the Yongla Riwa Pelbar Dargay Choeling Gonpa or the Pelri Gonpa is a 18th century buddhist monastery. The Goenpa was constructed on the orders of the second Yongla Lam Dorji Jamtsho in 1736 to commemorate Khendrup Jigme Kuendal who identified, mediated and blessed this place. According to legend, Jigme Kuendal was sent by Jigme Lingpa (treasure revealer) to find a place that resembled Tsari in Tibet and shaped like a ritual dagger. He was also asked to spread his teachings through the land. When Jigme Kuendal reached the site , he asked Khandro if it was the same place prophesied by Jigme Lingpa , Khandro replied ,” yong yong” meaning “yes yes”, hence the place came to be known as Yongla. Having confirmed that he was in the right place, Jigme Kuendal meditated immediately. As time passed, people from the nearby villages approached him for blessings and teachings. Jigme Kuendrol graciously gave them blessings and teachings, and over time built a meditation center. He soon attracted many disciples and the center flourished around Yongla. A nunnery was also established close by, and was looked after by Kudung, a disciplinarian. One of the more interesting historical facts about the temple is that during the Duar War the Trongsa Poenlop (Feudal Lord) Jigme Namgyel, father of the First King Ugyen Wangchuck, used it as a base of operations in order to launch raids upon the British troops.

Yongla Phurpai Drubchen

The famous Yongla Phurpai Drubchen is said to have begun right from the time of Jigme Kuendrol. It however, lost some of its significance during the successive Lams. It was restored back to the past glory by Lam Sonam Zangpo, the great Yogi Master in the 1960s. Its significance peaked once again in 1970 following the visit of

His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche during which time His Holiness gave the present name, Pemagatshel, meaning “the Blissful land of the Lotus”.

According to elderly people of the Dzongkhag, the Lhakhang was built in the late 1980s. A total of 16 successive lams have served as the abbot of Yongla Goenpa. Besides, several Buddhist masters and luminaries have also blessed this sacred place in the past. Unfortunately, the Lhakhang was severely damaged by the 6.1 magnitude earthquake that struck the entire country on 21st September 2009. Visiting the Goenpa in 2009, His Majesty commanded the reconstruction of the Goenpa, with immediate effect, to its present glory.

Jashar Anim Goenpa

There were many instances of the reincarnations of Drubchen Saraha being reborn in Tibet and out of the many reincarnations; one of them was Togden Shakya Shri. He had many disciples and out of them, nine were considered very learned. Among these nine learned disciples, Anim Woesel Choden turned out to be the most learned of them. She had dedicated her life to lifelong meditation. In 1958, she built the Ja Shar Woong Drubdey. She had about 15 to 25 disciples.

She was born in 1921 and lived until 1982. After her death, the house that Anim Woesel Choden and her disciples lived was not maintained and it had dilapidated. After a request from the local community, H.E. Gyeltshen Trulku took over the management and started building a monastery, which comprised a common place for meditation, a guest house and other facilities. Since then, there has been over 50 people studying and living there all the time. However, the construction is not complete yet and funds are still required to paint frescoes on the walls of the temple, and commission the making of life-size statues of Buddha Amitabha, Avaloketishvara and Guru Dewa.

Kheri Goenpa

The 15th century Goenpa was established by Kuenga Wangpo, son of the great treasure revealer, Pema Lingpa. The structure is said to be built over a lake at which he meditated for several days. The temple’s main relics are some sacred statues of the Buddha, Guru rinpoche, Chenrizig and Chuchizhey. The Tsechu is performed on the 10th day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar.

Ngangshing Goenpa

The Lhakhang was constructed over 400 years back by Drubthob Kuenzang Lhuendup. The Lhakhang was constructed mainly to have their village and people blessed and also for the well-being of all the sentient beings. Due to some urgent maintenance, the Lhakhang has undergone a renovation in the year 2013 through labour contribution by the public. It is currently owned by the community.

Dungkhar Lhakhang

Dungkhar Lhakhang, located to the south of the Dzongkhag, is believed to have been constructed by Yab Mipham Tenpey Nyima (1567-1619), father of Zhadrung Ngawang Namgyel, in the 16th century when he visited Bhutan. Yab Tenpey Nyima was said to have fathered a son from a woman who later played an important role under Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel.

The Lhakhang is said to have been constructed on a ridge that resembles a conch. Hence it got the name Dungkhar. It is currently owned by the community. They perform the religious ritual, Annual Tshechu where people from the neighboring villages gather at the Goenpa in pitch tents for many days. Considered very sacred, people seek spiritual blessings from this Lhakhang and it’s believed to be unfailing in its blessing and protection.

Thonphu Goenpa

Thonphu Zangdopelri Goenpa, like all the Goenpas, was built to benefit sentient beings, particularly to the people in the locality. There was no Lhakhang or a religious institution before the construction of the Lhakhang to receive blessings of Buddha dharma in the locality. The Lhakhang was constructed with the pure labour contribution by the public under the spiritual guidance and direction of late Lam Sangay Dorji. The Goenpa, with more than 50 monks, perform religious ritual known as Annual Drupchen.

Pemagatshel is also famous for its artisans and weavers, and for numerous local festivals and folk songs. We will bring you more stories from Pemagatshel in the following weeks.

Nima Zangmo is currently working as Asst. Economic Development Officer at Pemagatshel Dzongkhag

Administration. She has graduated from ICFAI University, Sikkim, India and majored in BBA. She enjoys reading, poetry, cooking, hiking and traveling. She believes that “We tend to progress when we are out of our comfort zone so never hesitate to step out for your self-growth”.



This series is sponsored by Ecotourism Project “Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into the Tourism Sector in Bhutan” funded by GEF-UNDP through Tourism Council of Bhutan, RGoB.

Mesmerizing Mongar: the seven valleys of temples built by sky-dancers, healing pools and of a world heritage dance of drums from Bhutan

October 1st, 2022, Post Views: 353



KUENSEL
Oct 1, 2022

Entering Mongar district is a door to a multi-dimensional destination brimming with historical landmarks, cultural pursuits, natural wonders, and societal intricacies, offering an incredible and fascinating window into a diverse way of life and beliefs in the Zhonggar Tshodhuen (Seven Valleys).

The dzongkhag covers an area of 1,954 sq. km with elevations ranging from 400m to 4000m asl. Historically, Mongar was known as the “bastion of the Zhonggarps” as some of the finest administrators in the country were born here. The district is strategically located and is often considered as the capital of eastern Bhutan. The region is one of the largest dzongkhags and is enclaved by Trashigang, Lhuentse, Pemagatshel, Samdrup Jongkhar and Zhemgang districts. This has led to the proliferation of a unique multi-dimensional cultural identity of the dzongkhag.



Aja Ney



Hike to the mystical Larjab Drakar Choeling

Surrounded by alpine forests and mountains, Larjab Drakar Choeling Lhakhang in Yakpogang, Mongar gewog, was built sometime between 1701 and 1707 by Druythob Kuenzang Chophel, a disciple of the 9th abbot of Bhutan, Je Khenpo Shakya Rinchen. Larjab literally means “behind the mountain”. It is said that at the spot where the temple was built, Druythob Kuenzang Chophel subdued an evil spirit which had assumed a human form. It is said the temple was miraculously built by sky dancers (dakini), empowered by Druythob’s wisdom. Resembling a Rhino’s Horn, the temple is said to have been built with small pebbles at the bottom (foundation), with bigger boulders used as the construction grew in height. Over the years, given its sanctity, the temple attained a special status as the “Taktshang of the east”. Today, the monastery has a Drubdey (a retreat for meditation) for lay monks established by Gyeltshen Truelku. The Larjab Drakar Choeling is reachable by a day-long hike.

Sacred Aja Ney and Aja-Ugyen Draphu-Sheridzong Trail

The renowned Aja Ney is located at an altitude of more than 3,500 meters under Sherimuhung Gewog. The most sacred are the 100 imprints of the sacred syllable “Aa” on the rock-cave left by Guru Rinpoche besides numerous other sacred sites. The Nye also has a medicinal spring which the locals believe can cure 18 diseases besides a nearby pool called Awa Chhu (now known as Uma Chuu). It is said to remove defilements in a person. It takes a minimum of three days to complete a pilgrimage to all the sacred sites.

There is a belief that Omba Ney of Trashi Yangtse, Aja Ney of Mongar and Hungrel Dzong of Paro are three equally important religious sites in Bhutan because their names start with the letters Om, Ah and Hung to complete the Buddhist Mantra of Om Ah Hung. The trail connecting Aja Ney and Ugyen Draphu in Mongar, and Sheri Dzong in Mongar-Trashi Yangtse border has made pilgrimage more convenient. The pilgrims can further trek to either Trashi Yangtse or Phuningla in Lhuentse via a trail connecting three districts.

Drametse Thekchog Namdrol Ugyen Choeling Monastery

Drametse Lhakhang was built in 1511 by Ani Choeten Zangmo, a descendant of Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). The blessings of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal were multiplied by three succeeding incarnations, Zhabdrung Jigme Drakpa (1791-1830), Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861), and Zhabdrung Jigme Chogyal (1862-1904). Both the Kudung (the bodily remains of Ani Choeten Zangmo) and the Kapala of Dakini, which bears the self-arisen words OM AH HUNG, are kept at the monastery. The Kapala was once again found by Terton Pema Lingpa and preserved in Tamzhing Lhuendrup Choeling’s Taen Gam (treasure box) until Ani Choeten Zangmo was given it as a part of inheritance.

After finishing the construction of Samye Monastery in 769 AD, Guru Rinpoche and Khandro Yeshe Tshogyal are believed to have hidden it. The monastery not only has unique collection of significant manuscripts, murals, and religious sculptures, but it is also the home of the Dance of the Drums of Drametse.

Drametse Nga-chham

The Mask Dance of the Drums of Drametse was choreographed there in the 16th century after the monastery’s founder, Kunga Gyeltshen, the great grandson of Terton Pema Lingpa, had a vision of Guru Rinpoche’s Zangtopelri (Copper-Colored Mountain Paradise). A total of 16 male dancers wearing masks and 10 musicians perform the dance. They first perform a prayer dance in the main shrine, and then, one by one, they enter the monastery’s courtyard. The dance is divided into two sections: a quiet, meditative portion that symbolizes the tranquil deities, and a swift, athletic portion that symbolizes the wrathful ones. The quintessence of Bhutanese identity, this dance has been performed for nearly five centuries all over the country. Now, it has become a crucial component of Tshechu in Bhutan. Dramétsé Nga-chham was designated as a “Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage” at the Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in Paris in November 2005 because of its worldly, spiritual, and artistic values.

Wengkhar Nagtshang

Wengkhar Nagtshang is renowned and venerated for being the birthplace of Zhabdrung Jigme Drakpa (1725–1761), the third reincarnation of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. Its artifacts include gold-written religious texts, sculptures, and holy items belonging to Zhabdrung as well as his personal rosary, headpiece, and monk’s garb and the carpet on which he worshiped. The numerous relics are displayed to the public during a religious ritual that takes place on the tenth day of the third month of the Bhutanese calendar.

Yakgang Sang-ngag Choeling Lhakhang

The Yakganag Lhakhang was built by Sangdag, the youngest son of Terton Pema Lingpa sometime in the 16th century. The temple is renowned for its special and unique treasures, including a statue of the Buddha that Terton Pema Lingpa found in Mebartsho, a three-sided Phurpa (sacred dagger) that Pema Lingpa found in Ugordra in Tibet, a dakini’s skull from Samye Chimphu Nadrak, and a Naga king’s skull. The temple also exhibits xylograph blocks, musical instruments, weaponry, and armor and masks from ancient times. The Buddhas (past, present, and future) as well as statues of Guru Rinpoche, Chenrizig, Terton Pema Lingpa, and Gyapo Lhashang can be found on the ground floor. When Choekhor Deb, a local king, attempted to open the treasure chest disclosed by Pema Lingpa, three statues were said to have escaped flying to Jakar Dzong, the

Dongkala monastery, and to Yakgang Lhakhang.

Mongar is one of the fastest developing districts in the East. It is a home of diversity that offers a variety of exciting experiences, many of which will be covered in the coming weeks.



Article contributed by Karma Dema. Karma is working as Asst. Economic Development Officer under Mongar Dzongkhag Administration. She graduated from Sherubtse College with B.A in Economics and Population Studies, and Post-graduation in Public Administration from Royal Institute of Management. She loves travelling, photography and enjoys talk shows. She is also a certified Basic Entrepreneurship Course facilitator.

This series is sponsored by Ecotourism Project “Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into the Tourism Sector in Bhutan” funded by GEF-UNDP through Tourism Council of Bhutan, RGoB.



Trashigang – The Far East

October 8th, 2022, Post Views: 111



Trashigang is all about legendary history, thriving nomadic culture and unique social practices. A destination brimming with extraordinary experiences for adventurous traveler.

Trashigang has been the political stronghold of Eastern Bhutan for over 300 years. Even today, it is one of the largest Dzongkhags in the country and has an area of over 2204 square kilometers. Characterized by high forest cover, endemic flora and fauna, flourishing agriculture, rich weaving culture and semi-nomadic community, the district has diverse and authentic Bhutanese experiences to offer for travelers who haven't experienced the eastern pockets of Bhutan yet.

Trashigang Dzong

Known as 'The Fortress of the auspicious hill', Trashigang Dzong was built in 1659 to defend against Tibetan invasions. The historic significance of this dzong is its strategic position on the spur overlooking Drangmachhu River that has visually suppressed invading Tibetan armies. It is believed that the view of the dzong forced them to retreat, as the soldiers said, "the fortress is not on the ground, but looks like it is a sky fortress". As highlighted in this oral history, the dzong does look high above in the sky when viewed from the **chazam (the iron bridge)** below.

Yonphula Domestic Airport

The military airfield of 1960s was developed into a domestic airport in 2012. Standing at 9000 feet above sea level, this airport connects people of six districts of eastern Bhutan to west, central and south-central regions. DrukAir, the Royal Bhutan Airlines operates its flight service from Paro International airport, Bumthang and Gelephu domestic airport to Yonphula on regular basis.

Sherubtse college

Bhutan's premier institute, Sherubtse College was founded as a public school in 1968 and became a junior college in 1976. It became the oldest and largest constituent college of the Royal University of Bhutan in 2003. Spreading over a sprawling lush green campus with an authentic rural ambiance, Sherubtse College is only about 10 minutes' drive away from the Yonphula airport on the way to Trashigang Dzong. Kanglung is a small town with few shops, Zangthopelri and beautiful college campus that makes travelers worth stopping by for a few hours.

Rangjung Woeselel Choeling Monastery

The elders in the locality vividly remember that the present Trashicho Dzong was proposed to be constructed on the hillock where present day Rangjung Woeselel Choeling Monastery is located. They believe that the local spirit at that time obstructed construction of the Dzong and finally diverted to Thimphu dzongkhag. The monastery was founded by His Eminence Dugsey Garab Dorje Rinpoche in the year 1989 and became an iconic place for worshiper of Dudjom New Treasure Lineage. The daily prayers of monks and nuns along with melodious sound of religious instruments keeps small satellite town of Rangjung lively and free of misfortunes. Driving from Trashigang to SWS headquarters in Phongmay, one will be tempted to visit the monastery and meet with the monks and nuns.

Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary

Expanded within the altitude range of 1700-4100 meters above sea level, Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary (SWS) represents the diversity of Eastern Himalayan terrestrial ecosystem – alpine meadows, temperate and ward broadleaf forests. Adorned with extraordinary beauty of 35 species of rhododendrons, the sanctuary is popularly known as 'paradise of rhododendrons' in Trashigang. The presence of globally threatened and endangered species such as Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*), Himalaya Serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis thar*), Wild Dog (*Cuon alpinus*), Himalayan Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and Musk Deer (*Moschus moschiferus*) add glory to richness of the sanctuary. The mutual thriving of **semi-nomadic pastoralist locally known as 'Brokpa'** confirms unique feature of the sanctuary where human and wildlife can live together. Merak and Sakteng forms core custodians of the wildlife sanctuary with their aged old traditions of yak herding in the **sacred mountains of Nakchungla**. This mountain between Merak and Sakteng villages is historically known for causing altitudinal sickness to both horse and human. It is a moderately tough walk and experience the beauty of alpine meadows.

Radhi village – the rice bowl of Trashigang

Known as the 'Rice Bowl of the East' Radhi village is characterized by vast expanse of paddy fields. Radhi is biggest producer of local rice in Trashigang. The other attractions of this village comprising of 200 households is textile production using raw silk locally known as Bura textiles. All textiles produced in Radhi are made using the traditional back-strap loom and traditional dyes. As a result, Radhi village produces some of the most authentic high-quality raw silk textiles to be found anywhere in Bhutan. For the travelers wishing to halt a night and enjoy the agriculture or textile tour around the villages, there is village homestay with a very reasonable price and friendly host at Radhi Panthang.

Nomadic culture



Merak and Sakteng villages are home to the semi nomadic indigenous people known as the Brokpas (highlanders). Merak means land created from slash and burn and Sakteng literally means bamboo field. Men wear a thick red wool coat and women wear a red and white striped dress. The name of Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary is derived from the Sakteng Village since this two villages form the cultural and social heritage of the sanctuary. Livestock rearing and seasonal movements of the household from mountains to lowland is peculiar lifestyle of the

highlanders. Both the villages are connected by motorable road and it takes half day to drive from Trashigang.

Article contributed by Jigme Dorji

This series is sponsored by Ecotourism Project "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into the Tourism Sector in Bhutan" funded by GEF-UNDP through Tourism Council of Bhutan, RGoB.

39-2: In Pictures: Thimphu Dromchoe

October 1st, 2022, Post Views: 175

HEALING WITH HAPPINESS - A BHUTAN ART SHOW IN BRUSSELS: 5th October - 23rd December 2022

The Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Brussels will be presenting an Art Exhibition "Healing With Happiness", curated by VAST Bhutan, at Agence de Belfius Bank, Rue de la Loi 82, 1040 Brussels, starting 5 October 2022. The Art Exhibition will bring together more than 100 artworks by 65 contemporary and traditional artists from Bhutan. The artworks will also be available for sale. For further information and to visit the exhibition by arrangement, [please click on this link](#).

Breaking stereotypes and conventions: Miss Universe Bhutan

11.6.22; [Tenzing Lamsang](#) [HEADLINE STORIES](#) [Leave a comment](#) 10,234 Views; 16.6.22: 33,463 Views

thebhutanese.bt/breaking-stereotypes-and-conventions-miss-universe-bhutan

Siehe auch: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tashi_Choden



Bhutan, which is still seen as a deeply traditional country across the world, will be sending a Miss Bhutan to the Miss Universe Pageant, who is openly Gay, is of mixed ethnicity and despite losing both her parents at a young age, has achieved so much on her own terms.

A tragic childhood

The story of Miss Bhutan Universe, Tashi Choden, 23, does not start in Bhutan but in the Indian state of Nagaland where she was born to a Bhutanese mother and a Tibetan Khampa father, and raised for the first three years of her life. Her mother, Kinley Wangmo, was from Shaa region in Domkha village in Wangduephodrang, ran a shop in Bajo town, and used to come to Thimphu to fetch supplies for her business. In one of her trips, she met Tashi's father, Chombal, who was a Tibetan Khampa businessman from Nagaland on a business trip to Thimphu. It was love at first sight, and the businessman stayed on for a year in Thimphu until the couple married and moved to Nagaland. At the age of three, Tashi and her mother moved back to Wangdue, as the father had to constantly travel for business, leaving

the two mainly alone.

Tragedy struck as at the tender age of four when Tashi lost her father to an illness, and ten years later, her mother also succumbed to an illness, when Tashi was just 14 years old. "They had some medical issues. Their tried their best to hold on, but they passed away," said Tashi.

When Tashi came back to Bhutan with her mother she said her maternal aunty and grandmother recalled her only being able to speak some Hindi and Naga language with no Dzongkha. Losing both her parents at a tender age was a major blow for her, as it would be for any person, but she had support in the form of her maternal aunty, maternal grandmother and her stepfather and her two half siblings (a 13-year-old half-sister and 10-year-old half-brother). She said, "It was a difficult period for me. I am the oldest, and so I had to pick up the pieces and make it work, and be an example (to her siblings)."

Tashi did her schooling at Wangdue Lower Secondary School, Bajothang Higher Secondary School, Ugyen Academy and then finishing with Utpal Academy.

Modeling

Tashi's tryst with modeling started at the age of 15 while on a trip to Thimphu where she came across 'Project Bhutan' for models, started by Paljor Gyabak, a model himself, who had success in India.

Tashi said she was asked by Paljor if she is interested in modeling, and she developed a passion for it from that age and started taking part in shows and even pageants. She started doing shows even outside Bhutan, like the North-East Fashion Week, and she even won a Miss Indo-Bhutan pageant.

She also took part in Miss Asia and made it to the Top 15. Apart from commercial modeling assignments and pageants, she took part in Bhutanese movies, like Singye and Nyingtob. Tashi said initially she would go back and forth between Wangdue and Thimphu for work, but given her work in Thimphu, she decided to take a small apartment for herself and stay here. She now calls herself a 'Thimphu girl.'



Coming out



On her sexual orientation, Tashi was among the first few people in Bhutan to come out publicly and she did so at the age of 15. “Initially, I came out as a bisexual person on my Facebook account, but as I did more research and reading, I realized that I am actually a woman comfortable in my body and attracted to other women,” said Tashi. She said sometimes as a kid she used to be called a tomboy, but that is not how she identifies herself.

Tashi said she is not trans, as she is comfortable with her body, but it depends on the emotions and moods she is going through. There are days where she feels very feminine and she dresses up in a very feminine way with full make up and everything, and there are other days she feels more masculine or wants to feel in control, and that is when she dresses in a more masculine or boyish way.

When asked about the reactions of her coming out, she said that she was not very nervous, as at the time, she was not a public figure, and she thought she would get through with it and not many people would know. She received positive reactions from her friends who congratulated her, and they said that they kind of knew it as she gave a certain vibe.

The only struggle was to come out to her own family, which she did on the International Pride Day on 2 June 2021. She said her family is very conservative minded, and the reaction was strong from her aunty and grandmother, but after a month or two, they also accepted the fact.

She said she and her female partner spend time together and do things that couples do, but they also give each other space and she has her own place. Tashi’s partner has also come out to a few of her family members. Her partner is into sports and plays basketball, but also does part time work and assignments.

College

Another area where Tashi has broken convention is that despite completing high school she has not yet gone to college. “For me, I did not want to go to college as I have never been a bookish person, and I would rather have some experiences and achievements before going to college,” said Tashi. She said there is no financial constraint on her, but she is working on some projects lined up which she would like to focus on, the main one being the Miss Universe Pageant. “I feel like I can go to college when I am 30 or 40, or even end up having a baby and going to college after that,” said Tashi.

However, despite her lack of a college degree, Tashi is fluent in English, and is well spoken and mature, and comes across as someone who knows herself and her environment well. When asked about this, Tashi said that while growing up, despite seeming to be an extrovert, she was actually a very introvert person, and she kept a diary where she expressed her feelings and emotions.

She said she was always into literature and loved poems, writing and debating, and made it a point to participate in all those events in school.

Identity

In terms of her identity, Tashi says her ‘official name’ is Tashi Choden given to her by her aunty and grandmother, but she considers her real name to be Tashi Chombal Dorji. Chombal is in honor of her late biological father, and Dorji is in honor of her Bhutanese step-father who met and married her widow mother, years after her biological father passed away.

In terms of her mixed ethnic heritage, she said that she always looked a bit different from her friends, and when she was small her late father and mother lovingly called her ‘*Naley Pem*’ for her tanned skin complexion. With her tanned skin and her unconventional looks, she would be often mistaken for a Lhotsamph model.

She said that she inherited her looks from her parents, but it was always a struggle, not looking more ‘Bhutanese’ but that also helps her to stand out a little, and she is now much more comfortable in her looks.

Tashi said after her win, her family is planning a celebration for the relatives in Thimphu, and though it has been a while, she also plans to go back to Shaa village in Domkha and pray to the local deity of *Agey Radap* for her Miss Universe journey, as there is a strong belief that if people pray to him, he will support them.

Miss Universe

On her win she said, “When the stars are aligned that is when you hit home. It has been quite a few years since I lost touch doing pageants, as I worked on other projects. A lot of people think I had an advantage due to my experience, but I don’t think so as every contestant was worthy. To be honest, I was **surprised to win after having quite a bad command over Dzongkha**, but it was a learning experience for me, and I will go on and work to be worthy of the title.”



Tashi said she will be doing her interviews and other local social commitments in June, and her full preparations for the Miss Universe Pageant would begin from July 2023. Tashi said that you need to have a social cause to represent, as that is how people know about you and you have to make a videography on it. "I have had some discussions with sir Karma Tshering, and **my first priority is on the LGBTIQ community** and Pride for the community, and after that we can have more discussions with sir Karma." She, however, said that the real social commitments and other work would be more after the Miss Universe Pageant gets over.

Advice for young girls and the youth

Tashi also has some important advice for young girls who want to get into modeling or the fashion industry. "When I first stepped into the industry, it was without knowing about the spotlight and how toxic it can get, as there are times you think you are not good enough. People think you are perfection, but people get that wrong." She said she went through her own self-doubt and self-critique at the young age of 15, and she did not get the right guidance. Tashi said it is important for girls to be strong, brave and aware, and know that the most beautiful thing is the inner beauty. She said girls should know how to handle the spotlight with elegance and grace, and be able to stand on your own feet. She said it is most important to have self-love and acceptance.

On her message to the youth, she said it is important to find the voice to speak up, and due to the fact that she did not have things easy and laid out for her, the dark and hard moments that she went through has enabled her to appreciate her life now. "When you dream of something in life, it is important to work hard and struggle, but also to believe in yourself and be true to yourself. Grab the small opportunities, as it happened to me. I took up modeling as a hobby in my free time, and I ended up winning Miss Bhutan Universe 2022. Be proud of what you have achieved, and who you are and have self-love and acceptance. Every morning complement yourself, and you will note the difference that it makes."

On certain **rumors of adoption**, Tashi said she has heard about it but she cannot remember such a time, and the current family is the only one she grew up with, and so it must not be true.

Support needed

Founder and Director of Miss Bhutan Universe, Karma Tshering, said that Bhutan was accepted into the Miss Universe Pageant only after years of communication from his side, and an interview of the technical team.

He said **one of the requirements of the Miss Universe Pageant was a USD 12,000 license fee for which he first requested Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) as the relevant body since the event would showcase Bhutan, but the TCB turned him down. He then approached DHI but was also turned down. Finally, he did receive the support, but the person or the institution behind the move does not want to be revealed.**

Karma said the event is likely to happen in the Bahamas and will entail other expenses like travel and also a month's worth of events and various dresses required for it before the final event. He said he is looking for corporate and other sponsors on that front for Bhutan's first ever foray into the Miss Universe Pageant.

Tourismus

Angela Merkel und ihre Sehnsucht nach Bhutan

Angela Merkel im Live-Gespräch mit Schriftsteller Alexander Osang am 7. Juni 2022 in der Sendung „Phoenix vor Ort“ von ARD und ZDF. Erster größerer Auftritt von Alt-Kanzlerin Angela Merkel

Alexander Osang: „Haben Sie denn Länder, in die Sie fahren wollen, Traumländer in die Sie reisen wollen?“

Angela Merkel: „Ich habe so viel Tolles gesehen. Ich habe so viele Länder, in die ich wollte und würde. Mal wollte ich zu Amtszeiten nach **BHUTAN**, weil die (Bewohner) dort dieses Well-Being, diesen Glücks-Index haben und dann habe ich festgestellt, dass wir gar keine diplomatischen Beziehungen mit Bhutan haben. Aber es lag jetzt nicht an uns, sondern an Bhutan, weil die so klein sind, dass sie gar nicht die Kraft haben mit 180

Ländern aus der Welt diplomatische Beziehungen aufzunehmen. Ich habe das dann verworfen, weil es mir wahrscheinlich als Urlaubsreise ausgelegt worden wäre. Aber ich könnte mir sehr, sehr viele Dinge vorstellen.

Drukair ernennt TAL Aviation Germany zum General Sales Agent (GSA) in Deutschland

Frankfurt am Main, 23. Juni 2022 * * * Die staatliche Fluggesellschaft des Königreichs Bhutan hat TAL Aviation Germany zum General Sales Agent (GSA) in Deutschland ernannt.

Flüge mit Drukair (IATA-Code KB) können ab sofort über TAL Aviation Germany gebucht werden. Das Verkaufsbüro von TAL Aviation Germany in Frankfurt ist für die Ticketausstellung und die geplanten Vertriebsaktivitäten in Deutschland zuständig.

Drukair wurde im Jahr 1981 gegründet und brachte 249,474 Fluggäste im Jahr 2019 sicher und bequem ans Ziel.

Die Fluggesellschaft, mit Hauptsitz in Paro, Bhutan, bot im Jahr 2019 mehrere Domestic Flüge und insgesamt 11 internationale Verbindungen an, darunter u.a. nach Indien, Singapur, Nepal und Thailand. Zur Flotte gehören drei Airbus 319-100, ein Airbus A320neo und eine ATR 42-600.

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Landing in Paro, One of the World's Most Dangerous Airports

– Interview with Chhimi Dorji, Captain of Drukair

[HTTPS://WWW.DAVESTRAVELCORNER.COM/INTERVIEWS/LANDING-IN-PARO-ONE-OF-THE-WORLDS-MOST-DANGEROUS-AIRPORTS-INTERVIEW-WITH-CHHIMI-DORJI-CAPTAIN-OF-DRUKAIR/](https://www.davestravelcorner.com/interviews/landing-in-paro-one-of-the-worlds-most-dangerous-airports-interview-with-chhimi-dorji-captain-of-drukair/)

FEBRUARY 11, 2022 BY TEH CHIN LIANG [4 COMMENTS](#); Photograph credit: Drukair (except otherwise cited)

Q. Landing in Paro airport is different and way more challenging than landing in other airports due to the location of the airport in a valley surrounded by towering mountains, making it one of the most dangerous airports for landing in the world. What are the take-off and landing procedures?



Indeed, flying in and out of the Paro Airport is such a thrill for pilots. I would term it as one of the most “demanding” as it requires the highest levels of piloting skills, but not necessarily the most “dangerous”.

There are many airports around the world which are much easier to land and take off but may be much more risky owing to traffic and the instrument landing procedures that allow aircrafts to fly in at much worse weather conditions. So, saliently, those airports could be more dangerous than Paro airport, where pilots do not attempt a landing below a certain weather minima or pre-conditions being satisfied. That is, of course, just my personal opinion. *Photo credit: Chhimi Dorji.*



The take-off procedure from Paro involves a certain weather limitation being satisfied prior to departure. The flight path of the aircraft in between the mountains and visual reference points must be clear of any clouding.

It is the single engine performance of the aircraft that must be taken into account while deciding on the total load of passengers and other loads that may be carried onboard. This usually impacts the total amount of fuel that can be carried onboard, thus, long distance destinations usually require a technical halt at a nearby airport in India, where we can uplift

more fuel to continue the journey.

Procedures for takeoff are only visual. There are no instrument departures out of Paro. There is a VOR/DME to help pilots with their orientation in IMC (instrument Met Conditions). As a part of the Company Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), there are pre-determined “headings” or “tracks” to help the pilots fly safely out of the terrain and join the Airway/Air-routes in the area. Overall, the departure is performed only in VMC (Visual Met Conditions) and the pilots are trained to identify certain landmarks along the path to help them perform the procedure safely.

Similarly, the arrivals and landings must also be performed visually. All captains are trained meticulously to fly the approach and landing in the simulators and the actual aircraft, where they are required to demonstrate their ability to safely take off and land in Paro in asymmetric engine conditions in the event of a failure in one of the engines.

Initial approach in IMC involves the pilots commencing a “Cloud Break Procedure” using the onboard navigation system coupled with VOR/DME to help break visual with the ground around the airport. Pilots are then required to **disconnect the autopilot and navigate visually to land at the airport.** Landings from either side of the runway (runway 33 and runway 15, which are directions in which the runway is oriented) involves very sharp turns prior to touch down, to align the plane to the runway. Runway 15 is extremely challenging for pilots especially with strong prevailing winds in the valley around the airport. Even with years of experience, this maneuver can still seem tricky from time to time. But with a year-long command training, newly released commanders are well-trained to handle any of the exigencies that may arise in operating the A320 in Paro.

Paro airport may be the most demanding on a pilot’s skill, especially flying a jetliner such as an A320/319. It is **not inherently the “most dangerous”** given the nature of the terrain surrounding the airport that allows a pilot to manually fly the aircraft safely. And **pilots will never operate into Paro airport unless the weather conditions are favourable.**

The manual flying skills and knowledge of the local terrain is essential in being able to safely fly the plane in and out of Paro. A newly hired or upgraded captain is mandated to undergo a stringent training and checking procedure prior to being released to take command of aircrafts.



Q. I understand that not every pilot is certified to fly into the mountainous terrain that surrounds the Paro airport. It takes special skills and technique to land the plane. What kind of training a new pilot must go through and what qualifications to obtain before being allowed to fly the plane in and out of Bhutan?

This is true. A newly hired pilot, especially a captain, has to have a valid ATPL license issued by a competent Civil Aviation Authority. The candidate is mandated to meet the minimum duration of hours.

At the beginning, the training department will assess the competence of the pilot in the simulator. After satisfactory completion, we will introduce him/her to a model of the Paro airport in the simulator. With a trainer as the second pilot, they will be introduced and observed whilst flying the maneuvers at Paro. Obviously, flying in Paro airport is not for the faint of heart. This process helps us eliminate those pilots lacking the competence to operate in Paro.

Those who make the cut will be trained on the procedures in a classroom. Finally, once their ground training is completed, they are required to perform a specific training which is coined “valley training”. This is an actual training in the aircraft, which is performed by an examiner who is trained for this type of training. Once their competence is demonstrated, they will continue their training under the supervision of training captains, who

will supervise their procedural valley flying techniques and competence. Every trainee commander will have to complete 30 landings and takeoffs under supervision. At the end of it, a final line check will be performed by a TRE, prior to being successfully released to fly without supervision.

The above procedure is solely for experienced captains. For a new upgrade, the procedure is much longer and can take up to 12 months to complete.

Q. Any unforgettable mid-air incidents you have ever experienced?

I have been lucky in all these 21 years of my flying career. Apart from a few technical issues here and there, I don't really have much to share. Bad weather is very much prevalent in our area of operation. The pre-monsoon, the monsoon and the retreating monsoon seasons are always challenging. The period from February through the end of May is coined the "windy season" for our operations. No afternoon operations are permitted since the wind in the Paro valley can gust up to 45 knots, making the flight operations very turbulent and difficult.



I suppose taking command of a plane for the first time is always an unforgettable moment for every captain. My first flight as a captain was a memory that I will cherish from time to time. The weather was a challenge that day. I breathed a sigh of relief after safely bringing the flight back to Paro, the next day, after completing 4 long sectors.

Q, Is being a pilot your childhood dream? Tell us about your journey to achieving an Airline Transport Pilot License (ATPL) in Spain after you completed A level.

In the late 90s and the early 2000s, being a pilot was not a popular career choice. After I had completed my "A levels" in Science, I was offered a government scholarship to study medicine (MBBS). While I was waiting to start my course, Drukair had a vacancy for Airline-sponsored Pilot Training that came with a subsequent employment. This sounded too exciting for me. I applied for it and managed to get in. So here I am, 21 years later, no regret over the career choice I had made for myself.

I had the opportunity to undergo a pilot training course at BAE Systems Flight Training College. It used to be a British Flying College but based in the Andalusia region in Southern Spain, thanks to its favourable weather conditions for flight training. It was then renamed as FTE (Flight Training Europe). The course was very intensive with its ground school and flight training being integrated. I can say that the training and the knowledge that I received during my early days did prepare me well for my future career as an airline pilot.

What is unique about my country, Bhutan, is that the opportunities are endless if you put in the right effort. The leadership, starting right from our benevolent Kings to the government, always works to ensure equality and fairness in every aspect of our nation. I am happy to be born and raised in Bhutan where I was given opportunities to thrive and succeed in my life. I am always grateful and indebted to my Kings and my motherland Bhutan.

Q. What do you enjoy most about your work?

Once a pilot, always a pilot. "Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return" – Leonardo da Vinci.

I have no regrets or qualms with my career choice. It dawned on me that sky is my home where I belong. Hence, flying has been my life for the last 21 years. I have also been an instructor for the last 8 years and an

examiner for the last 5 years. It is always a pleasure to be able to pass on my knowledge and experience to the younger pilots.

There are a myriad of different types of people – People with different beliefs, outlooks and personalities. But when it comes to flying, there are fixed sets of belief-systems that stand true regardless of what your belief is. It brings me great joy in moulding the inexperienced pilots and turning them into fine professionals that make up the bulk of our roster. When I succeed in doing that, I take pride in that and derive tremendous satisfaction from my job.

Q. I understand you spend most of your time nowadays at quarantine facilities due to the global pandemic. What do you miss the most about flying before the pandemic and what are your hopes for the aviation industry when the pandemic is over?

As a pilot, I have been through many global pandemics such as SARS, Swine-flu, MERS etc. But little could any of us foresee that a respiratory illness such as the COVID-19 would come along and wreak havoc on the aviation industry. There have always been highs and lows in the industry but this, by far, has been the worst we have ever experienced.

The pandemic has triggered a ripple across the aviation world and devastated the very foundation of what has been created through all these years of successful operations. However, it also provides us an opportunity to reset, reflect and start afresh. I hope aviation would rise from the ashes and bounce back even stronger and better prepared.

Q. As a commander who has flown over 14,000 hours, can you share with us some interesting/unknown facts that people might not know about flying the plane?

Statistically speaking, flying is the safest mode of transportation. When people think of pilots, they think of us flying the plane on autopilot. While this statement can be true, it is not necessarily the case. The pilot competency requirement is even more stringent than it used to be.

First, the basic piloting skills and competency requirement remain the same, it hasn't changed.

Secondly, a pilot has to get a grasp of new technologies and features that are being introduced to them to enable greater automation.

Thirdly, a pilot has to act as a mediator between the aircraft and its automation systems, in essence, having an equal understanding of both. Automations have certainly improved safety and reduced piloting errors. But errors in automation systems are now at the forefront of many causes of air accidents. It's essential for pilots these days to retain their basic piloting skills while having to increasingly improve their understanding of all the automation systems.

Q. What are your favorite Drukair destinations?

While I have no preferences to fly to any of the destinations on Drukair's route, flying to Bangkok is always preferred since it is a night halt destination where you can eat some authentic Thai food.

Q. I recently saw a video about a commercial flight from Nepal to Bhutan. Everest's peak can be clearly seen from the plane en route to Bhutan. What is one spectacular cockpit view you have ever seen?

On the flight from Paro to Kathmandu and vice versa, you fly parallel to the Himalayan range along its southern side. You will be able to see Everest, Kanchanjanga, Makalu and Lhotse peaks. These are 1st, 3rd, 4th and the 5th highest mountain peaks on the planet, just under 50 minutes of flight time. On a clear autumn or winter day, these sights are spectacular!

However, if you happen to catch a flight from Paro to Delhi and vice versa, you will be flying along the south-parallel of the entire eastern Himalayas. They include the Himalayan mountains in Bhutan, China, Nepal and India.

Q. I have been on A320 quite a few times, but I don't think I have ever been on A319. The distinct difference between both is the length of the fuselage – A319 is 33.84 m in length while A320 is 37.57m. You are a commander on the Airbus A319/ A320, what are your experiences flying these two types of aircrafts?

A320 and the A319 are essentially the same plane. A319 is a variant of the A320 class of aircrafts. The other variants available are the A318 and the A321. The only difference is the length of the fuselage and in some cases, the thrust rating of the engines. Any A320 type-rated pilot may fly any of these variants of the A320 with minimal ground training. The flight handling characteristics might be ever-so-slightly different but nothing major.

Q. You are a Type Rating Examiner (TRE), and your main duty is to revalidate a pilot's proficiency ratings on the aircraft they fly. How is the assessment process conducted? Aside from the technical knowledge, is the pilot's personality important as part of the assessment process?

I am a Designated Check Pilot and a Type Rating Examiner for Drukair, on behalf of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bhutan. As a Type Rating Instructor for Drukair, my job is to teach and assist all pilots in learning. However, as a TRE, I wear the hat of authority for the job. My duty is to assess the pilot's competence without any prejudice. The assessment standards must be in accordance with the standards required by the BCAA.



When it comes to personalities, everyone is different. Absolutely no two pilots are identical in their thought process. There is a wide range of personalities that most pilots fall into. During our initial screening process, we prioritize a pilot's knowledge, technical skills and his/her personality.

Acquired skills, such as technical skills and knowledge are important too but not as much as personality, which is an inherent quality that is difficult to change. It is important for a pilot to have a good and positive outlook. Through our initial and recurrent CRM courses, we promote healthy practices and educate/sensitize pilots on behaviors that may impact a successful team building and a safe operation.

Biography: Chhimi Dorji has been a Druk Air Captain for over 12 years and pilot for over 21 years.

He is currently the Training Manager for Pilots and a Type Rating Examiner (TRE), doing examining duties for the Bhutan Civil Aviation Authority. He has logged in over 14,000 flight hours in total and about 10,000 of them as Captain.

Nima says: Hello Mr. Chin Liang, thank you for doing a comprehensive interview with Captian Chhimi Dorji of Drukair. It would certainly provide the readers with some degree of excitement and curiosity. Although some may believe that the Paro airport is dangerous for landing, I would like to believe that it is one of the safest airports. It gives passengers an adventurous experience during landing. And with veterans like Captain Chhimi, every traveler is in safe hands. Chin Liang Teh says: Thank you Nima for your comment, yes I agree with you, and that's what this interview all about, to shed light and provide clarity to this often misunderstood notion.

Eröffnung des Trans Bhutan Trail: Der Königsweg

Siehe auch Nr. 39

<https://www.spiegel.de/reise/fernweh/trans-bhutan-trail-wird-wiedereroeffnet-der-koenigsweg-a-224072a7-6cf0-4eef-8788-d8125a3b498f>

Boten und Pilger liefen einst über den Weg durch den Himalaja, bald sollen es Touristen sein: Der 400 Kilometer lange Trans Bhutan Trail wird nach 60 Jahren wiedereröffnet.

Von **Antje Blinda** • 04.02.2022

Seit dem 16. Jahrhundert soll der majestätische Weg Festungen, sogenannte Dzongs, und auch heilige Stätten der Buddhisten im östlichen Himalaja miteinander verbunden haben. Dann machte ihn ein neu errichtetes Straßennetz überflüssig. Brücken und Treppen brachen zusammen, Pfade wurden zerstört. Der Handelsweg, der Transport- und Pilgerroute zugleich war, geriet jahrzehntelang in Vergessenheit. Im März wird der Weg nach 60 Jahren seine Wiedergeburt feiern – als »Trans Bhutan Trail«: ein rund 400 Kilometer langer Weitwanderweg, der vor allem Touristen in das kleine Königreich zwischen Tibet und Indien bringen soll.

Von Haa im Westen, an der Grenze zu Tibet, bis Trashigang im Osten führt die neue Route auf dem alten Pfad. Einst eilten sogenannte Garps hier entlang. Die schnellen Läufer überbrachten Nachrichten von Dzong zu Dzong, oft mit wenig Proviant und Pausen. Als Urlauber oder Urlauberin kann man gut auch vier Wochen für die gesamte Strecke veranschlagen. Mit vielen Pausen in den Dörfern entlang der Route, die über Gebirgspässe und Wiesen, durch Flusstäler und Schluchten führt und zu Klöstern, die sich wie Vogelnester an Felsen schmiegen.



Trans Bhutan Trail: Etwa 400 Kilometer zwischen Haa an der Grenze zu Tibet im Westen bis Trashigang im Osten Foto: Trans Bhutan Trail

2018 begann die Restaurierung, die Bhutans 41-jähriger König Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck angestoßen hatte. Umgesetzt und finanziert von der Bhutan Canada Foundation in Toronto und unterstützt von Bhutans Touristenzentrale, machten seither mehr als 900 Arbeiter den Trail zugänglich. Sie bauten 18 Brücken, hunderte Kilometer Weg und mehr als 10.000 Treppenstufen auf. Ein »gemeindeorientiertes Projekt, das sowohl beim Bau als auch im Betrieb ein altes kulturelles Symbol wiederherstellt«, nannte es Sam Blyth, Vorsitzender der Bhutan Canada Foundation, in einer Erklärung.

Das Konzept des Trails legt Wert auf Nachhaltigkeit – sowohl die Einheimischen als auch die Umwelt sollen profitieren: Für jeden Besucher, jede Besucherin und jeden Mitarbeitenden werde ein Baum gepflanzt, steht auf der Website (<https://transbhutantrail.com/>) des Projekts. Das Bauholz für die restaurierten Brücken stammt aus nachhaltiger Forstwirtschaft; Einmal-Plastik soll nicht genutzt werden, dafür wiederverwendbare Wasserflaschen; die Wegweiser bestehen aus recyceltem Kunststoff. »Die Menschen vor Ort profitieren unmittelbar vom gemeindeorientierten Tourismus, sei es über Privatunterkünfte, die lokale Beschaffung von Vorräten für mehrtägige Trips oder die Anstellung einheimischer Guides«, so Blyth.

Und der Stiftungschef sieht noch mehr in dem Projekt: »Der Pfad spiegelt auch die Philosophie des Bruttonationalglücks des Landes wider und wird es den Kindern Bhutans ermöglichen, in den Fußstapfen ihrer Vorfahren zu wandeln«, sagt Blyth. Das Königreich mit seinen rund 770.000 Einwohnern gehört nach Einschätzung der Vereinten Nationen zu den am wenigsten entwickelten Ländern der Welt – und doch wird nach seiner Philosophie das allgemeine Wohlbefinden des Volkes höher geschätzt als ein

Wirtschaftswachstum. Laut Verfassung müssen 60 % des Landes mit **Urwald** bedeckt bleiben; zurzeit sind es 70 %. Bhutan absorbiert mehr Klimaemissionen, als es ausstößt.

Bhutan hängt stark vom Tourismus ab und reglementiert ihn dennoch seit Jahrzehnten stark. Nur wenige Gäste dürfen kommen, und diese müssen für jeden Tag **mindestens 250 Dollar im Voraus bezahlen** – für Kost und Logis, einen Reiseführer, Transport und eine Nachhaltigkeitspauschale. Die Coronakrise bedeutete daher auch für den kleinen Staat heftige Einbußen.

Auch der Trans Bhutan Trail wird **nur mit Guide begehbar** sein. Die Angebote beginnen bei wenigen Tagen, gerichtet sind sie an Wanderer, Radfahrerinnen und Trailrunner, Vogelfans, Pilger und Fotografinnen. Auf der Trail-Website ist schon jetzt unter anderem **eine 34-Tage-Tour buchbar für 11.215 US-Dollar (etwa 10.000 Euro, ohne Flug)**. Als erster ausländischer Veranstalter darf G-Adventure, ein kanadisches Unternehmen, ab Mai Trips auf dem Weg durchführen, für **Preise ab etwa 2750 Euro für elf Tage (mit Unterkunft im Zelt, ohne Flug)**.

Mit dem Trans Bhutan Trail haben Weitwanderer ein neues attraktives Ziel in Asien. Als einer der schwierigsten Treks im Himalaja gilt der **25-tägige Snowman-Trail**, der im Norden Bhutans 356 Kilometer lang über acht Pässe auf einer Höhe von durchschnittlich 4000 Metern verläuft. Ein Teil davon ist der etwas **leichtere Chomolhari-Trek**. Bisher gilt vor allem Nepal mit Treks wie der Annapurna- oder Manaslu-Runde als Sehnsuchtsland für Fans moderaterer Weitwandertouren, großer Höhen und vieler Tempel. Auch Ladakh in Nordindien bietet solche Trails etwa durch das Markha-Tal. In beiden Ländern lassen sich Touren auch selbst mit Guides vor Ort organisieren.

Wenn der König an der Tür klopft

Einen Haken hat die Eröffnung der neuen Attraktion in Bhutan: Das Königreich hat sich im Zuge der Coronakrise, bei der bisher weniger als 5000 Covid-19-Fälle registriert wurden, weitgehend abgeschottet. Wer Sehenswürdigkeiten wie die Hauptstadt Thimphu oder Klöster wie Taktshang-Lhakhang (Tigernest) im Parotal sehen will, muss sich zurzeit noch **in eine mindestens zweiwöchige Quarantäne begeben** und einige formale Hürden nehmen. Bisher hat das – soweit bekannt – **nur eine US-amerikanische Touristin auf sich genommen**, die Bhutan schon zuvor ausgiebig bereist hatte.

Seit Beginn der Pandemie besuchte König Jigme Khesar immer wieder zu Fuß, mit dem Auto und zu Pferd abgelegene Dörfer, um die Coronamaßnahmen zu überwachen. Mit Baseballkappe auf dem Kopf, im knielangen traditionellen Gho-Gewand und mit Rucksack wanderte er durch Dschungel und über Berge, auch auf dem neuen Trail. »Die Anwesenheit Seiner Majestät ist weitaus wirkungsvoller als die Herausgabe öffentlicher Richtlinien«, sagte der Premierminister des Landes, Lotay Tshering, der Nachrichtenagentur Reuters. »Wenn der König meilenweit reist und anklopft ... um die Menschen vor der Pandemie zu warnen, dann werden seine bescheidenen Worte respektiert und sehr ernst genommen.«

Die feierliche Freigabe der Trans Bhutan Trails steht jedoch bereits im Kalender des Königs. Im März wird Jigme Khesar den Weitwanderweg in der heiligen Stadt Trongsa in Zentralbhutan eröffnen. Gerade rechtzeitig zur Reisehochsaison, zu der in Nicht-Corona-Zeiten die meisten Besucher kamen: Gruppenreisen finden meist zwischen März und Mai und zwischen September und November statt. Sollen dann mit den ausländischen Wanderern und Wanderinnen die dringend notwendigen Devisen ins Land kommen, müssten also bis dahin die Einreisebeschränkungen gelockert werden.

Mehr zum Thema

- **Bhutans einzige Touristin: »Wie ein Rockstar empfangen«**
- **Kleinstaat kämpft gegen die Pandemie: Abgeriegeltes Himalaja-Königreich Bhutan trauert um vierten Coronatoten**
- **Erfolgreiche Coronastrategie: Wie Bhutan fast alle Erwachsenen binnen einer Woche impfte** Von Maria Stöhr

Fotostrecke



Mönch in Bhutans Hauptstadt Thimphu: Seit Beginn der Pandemie hat sich der Himalaja-Staat abgeschottet, nur mit viel Aufwand könnten Urlauberinnen und Urlauber ins Land.



Wanderer auf dem Trans Bhutan Trail: 2018 hatte Bhutans König die Vision, den alten Handels- und Pilgerpfad zu restaurieren und als Weitwanderweg bekannt zu machen.



Punakha Dzong: Der Trail führt etwa 400 Kilometer weit quer durch Bhutan und zu etwa 400 historisch und kulturell bedeutsamen Stätten wie dieser Festung.



Auch das Nonnenkloster Kila im Paro-Tal gehört dazu, das an einen steilen Felsen gebaut ist und zu dem sieben kleine Tempel gehören.



In der Nähe des Kila-Klosters: Die Anlage ist im 9. Jahrhundert als Meditationsstätte gegründet worden und natürlich nur über einen Pfad erreichbar.



Auch das Kloster Bumdrak liegt am Weg und erlaubt einen Blick über das Paro-Tal.



Camp am Kloster Bumdrak auf rund 3900 Metern Höhe: Solche Höhen können schon mal schlaflose Nächte bescheren, wenn die Akklimatisierung noch nicht geschafft ist.



Lachen ist auch eine Sprache: »Die Menschen vor Ort profitieren unmittelbar vom gemeindeorientierten Tourismus, sei es über Privatunterkünfte, die lokale Beschaffung von Vorräten für mehrtägige Trips oder die Anstellung einheimischer Guides«, sagt **Sam Blyth, Vorsitzender der Bhutan Canada Foundation.**



Arbeiten am Trail: Mehr als 900 Arbeiter bauten 18 Brücken, hunderte Kilometer Weg und mehr als 10.000 Treppenstufen auf.



Brückenrenovierung: Das Bauholz der restaurierten Brücken stammt aus nachhaltiger Forstwirtschaft.



Gebetsfahnen: Der Trail verbindet buddhistische Heiligtümer im östlichen Himalaja und war einst die einzige Möglichkeit von Klosterfestung zu Klosterfestung zu kommen.



Geschmückt ist auch die kleinste Brücke: Bhutan ließ bisher nur wenige Gäste ins Land, diese müssen für jeden Tag mindestens 250 Dollar im Voraus bezahlen – für Kost und Logis, einen Reiseführer, Transport und eine Nachhaltigkeitspauschale.



Camp am Trans Bhutan Trail: Übernachtet werden kann in Zelten, Pensionen oder Hotels. Die Tour muss bei einem Veranstalter und mit Guide gebucht werden.

Gawa Zangpo and Karma Yangden win Snowman Race

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October 19th, 2022 Post Views: 309



KUENSEL
Oct 19, 2022



Gawa Zangpo
31:53:26



Sangay Wangchuk
34:18:02



Sangay
35:21:06

Kinzang Lhamo
49:27:38



Lhamo
50:01:38



Karma Yangden
48:01:49

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Gawa Zangpo	6:57:26	5:59:12	6:17:06	5:48:04	4:56:00
Sangay Wangchuk	7:36:24	5:55:23	6:08:16	5:50:22	4:57:37
Sangay	7:39:19	6:16:11	10:48:20	5:48:03	4:50:48
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Karma Yangden	9:17:33	8:30:16	13:28:18	7:34:29	7:13:59
Kinzang Lhamo	9:13:00	9:31:42	15:18:10	8:39:29	6:57:04
Lhamo	9:18:32	9:14:24	15:18:10	8:41:00	7:33:28

Total Participants: 29
16 Bhutanese
20 Foreigners
17 runners completed

Day 1



Gasa (2,800msl) -
Narithang (43KM)
October 13
29 runners

Day 2



Narithang (4,650msl) -
Lhedhi (41KM)
October 14
28 runners

Day 3



Lhedhi (3,724msl) -
Geche Wom (43KM)
October 15
20 runners



Day 4

Geche Wom (4,595msl) -
Julay Tsho (33KM)
October 16
17 runners



Day 5



Julay Tsho (4,322msl) -
Bumthang (43KM)
October 17
17 runners



Bumthang 2,800msl



Tshorim lake 5,200msl

Snowman Race

Oct 13 - 17

Completing the five-day 203km Snowman Race from Gasa to Bumthang in 31hrs, Gawa Zangpo from the Royal Body Guards won the 2022 Snowman Race.

Gawa was followed by Sangay Wangchuk who took 34hrs to complete the race. Completing the race in 35hrs, Sangay came third.

Gawa started his international debut in the South Asian Cross-Country Championship 2017 where he came fifth. In the same year, he participated in Laya Run and came second. Gawa said: "This first-ever title is something that I will remember for the rest of my life. This is very special to me and my family." Gawa used to run from his school days. "More than the prize I got, I am happy that nothing happened to any participant."

In 2018, Gawa came first in the Coronation Marathon and the Thimphu Half Marathon, where he recorded his personal best of 1hrs and 9mins. In 2019, he participated in other international championships such as Asian Athletic Championship in Qatar and South Asian Games in Nepal.

In 2020, Gawa came first in Bhutan International Marathon and recorded his personal best of 2hrs 36mins.

Gawa said he would continue training and participate in the next Snowman Race. "I will sensitise others on climate change through my experience in the five-day run."

In the women's category, Karma Yangden, 30, from Laya came first. Karma managed to complete the race in 48hrs. Karma, a mother of three, said her aim was to just complete the race. "I am very happy, of course. I want to thank officials for the support rendered to runners. They cared for us so much at the checkpoints and aid stations," Karma said, adding that she had an advantage having spent most of her life in the mountains with the yaks. She said confidence and training are a must to run in such difficult terrain. "I want to participate in the next Snowman Race."

Karma took part in many marathons, including the Laya Run in 2016 where she came first, and second the following year. She also participated in the women's race for climate action in 2021 and came first.

Kinzang Lhamo, 24, and Lhamo, 23, from the Royal Bhutan Army, came second and third. Kinzang completed the race in 49hrs and Lhamo in 50hrs.

In both categories, the top three winners are awarded, Nu 200,000, Nu 100,000 and Nu 50,000 with a medal. There are also special prizes for the top three winners. Besides the cash prize, Gawa took home the overall winning trophy.

Bhutanese runners trained for more than two months and also went and stayed in Laya for a week to acclimatise.

A total of 29 runners participated, including 20 foreigners.

Snowman Race chairperson, Kesang Wangdi said that climate change is unfair and inequitable. "Top 10% of the world population or the advanced economies contribute about 50 % of the greenhouse gas emissions. The bottom 10 contribute only 12 %."

The Snowman Race: Running on Top of the World... Literally!

October 26, 2022; <https://www.askthemonsters.com/the-snowman-race-running-on-top-of-the-world-literally/>

Holly Zimmermann



The opening sentence of the email read, "It is official, you are invited to run the 2022 Snowman Race Bhutan."

The Snowman Race was conceived to be the toughest footrace in the world, covering over 200 kilometers in the Himalayan mountains, traversing passes of over 5400 meters (17,000 feet) above sea level, and nightly temperatures well below freezing. It was initiated by His Majesty the King of Bhutan to raise worldwide awareness to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, including climate change impacts, particularly on the inhabitants in fragile mountain ecosystems. What many people may

not know is that Bhutan is only one of three nations world-wide that is **carbon negative**. This means that they absorb more carbon dioxide than they emit. Even so, the glaciers that feed its rivers, irrigate agricultural lands, and power its hydropower plants, are melting rapidly. Landslides and flash floods are no longer uncommon, leaving the Bhutanese highlanders constantly at risk of losing their livelihoods and their lives.

The race was by invitation only, extended to 22 international and 8 Bhutanese athletes. The athletes chosen included some of the best endurance trail runners in the world. Why were trail runners chosen to be witnesses to climate-change impacts? His Majesty stated that he knew how much trail runners love nature and that they would observe and be in tune with their surroundings. In his mind, trail runners were the perfect messengers for his call to action.

When asked to participate in a 200+km race just 2 months prior to the start doesn't allow much time for preparation. Either you are already trained for it, or you stay home. For me, it was not an option to decline. This was like a dream come true. The perfect race. And after years of running ultramarathons, my endurance was at the point where on any given day I could go out and run a marathon without thinking twice about it (though not fast). So I knew that the distance would not be a hurdle. My concerns were (1) the terrain: would it be at all runnable? and (2) the altitude: would I be a victim of the dreaded high-altitude sickness? To prepare for the technical terrain, I began incorporating more strength training into my weekly program. Hiking up steep rocky slopes would require strength and balance. And to prepare for the high altitude I rented an altitude-simulation compressor and tent, which I erected over my bed, allowing me to sleep at progressively higher altitudes over the four weeks prior to traveling to Bhutan. Other than that, my good-luck charms would have to suffice.

As the inaugural event, there were many unknowns about this race. Logistics, gear, availability of food and clean water, weather conditions, evacuation and health & safety options. And to be quite honest, I wasn't 100% sure of much of anything as I packed my bags and boarded the plane, not even whether the race organizers would meet me as planned in Bangkok for the flight scheduled to carry the entire group of athletes up over the clouds and into the magical Kingdom of Bhutan.

Bhutan: Pre-race

The week in Bhutan prior to the race went by in a whirlwind. We hiked up to Paro Taktsang, known also as the Tiger's Nest, and probably the most well-known temple in Bhutan to the outside world. The next day was a visit to the largest Buddha in the world, Great Buddha Dordenma, a magnificent golden deity which resides on a hillside overlooking the capital city of Thimpu. We enjoyed watching men 'play' archery, their national pastime, sending off arrows at lightning speed across the length of a football field where the small target was surrounded dangerously close by other competitors keeping an eye on the results. We dined with the former Prime Minister and visionary leader Tshering Tobgay, entertained by traditional music and dancing in costumes inspired by the wildest of fantasies. There were blessings from holy men, offerings to Buddha and candle-lighting ceremonies. We drank tea with roasted rice served in exquisite china cups with the abbot in the holy temple of Gasa Zhong, the political and spiritual center of the region where the race was to start. The Zhong was a magnificent fortification on a hill, where inside the main walls a maze of walkways, stairs, courtyards, small buildings and temples was to be found.

We were treated like rock stars wherever we went. The news of our presence in Bhutan was omnipotent. Everyone knew who we were and we were awarded the royal treatment. Literally. As you'll find out once you read on.

The Race

The race course itself on the first day began with 20 kilometers of forestry road which was easy to run on and fast, since we were still at relatively low elevation. The first river crossing that swept unabashed across the forestry road was running at a high level from recent rains. The current was strong and as I approached, I saw no easy place to cross. There was a military officer on the other side who was clearly there to watch out for our safety. I looked at him in desperation, hoping for a tip as to where and how I should best traverse. He made a motion for me to remove my backpack as he began to wade across in his knee-high rubber boots. He took my backpack from me, motioned for me to stay put, then crossed back over the river, placing my pack on the other side. Then he waded across again, turned around and motioned for me to hop up on his back! A piggy-back ride across!

We then entered a valley that was ankle-deep full of mud for many miles. We couldn't avoid stepping in the muck that was also loaded with horse dung, except to try to jump from rock to rock, tapping the mud with our trekking poles to find firm places to step. Then the trail began to gain altitude quickly. Running was all but

impossible. Higher and higher, over passes strung with colourful prayer flags and meticulously-piled stones. It began to get very cold when the sun set around 6 pm, 12 hours since the race start. It began to rain lightly, which eventually turned to snow. The trail markings were difficult to see, and I was left with only GPS to navigate the track. After 13.5 hours I finally reached the first night halt, cold and hungry. I was given a quick medical check and my vitals were good. The nurse was surprised to see that my oxygen saturation was 93%, higher than any of the other runners (I guess the tent had worked). I had woken that morning at an elevation of 2200 meters and was going to sleep that night at 4800 meters, a dangerously risky game with the altitude. I went to my tent, changed into dry clothes and pulled my sleeping bag out of my backpack. Food was brought to me which, despite being hungry, I had to force down. Altitude does crazy things to appetite and digestion. I was still cold for a long time but eventually fell into a light sleep. When I woke at 4 am and packed my bags for the 6 am start I felt pretty good. But I noticed right from the start that I was moving slower than normal, and then at the first climb over the Karchung La pass at 5280 meters, I realized that my pace was very slow, too slow. Although I had no symptoms of high-altitude sickness, at that elevation I simply could not move fast. I was afraid I would not make the subsequent daily cutoffs, which would keep me out on the trails until late into the night, putting myself (and the organization) at risk. So I had to make the hard choice to return to camp 1 and retire from the race.

Post-Race Clarity

Six runners had retired on that first day, several more during the next, and some were even evacuated by rescue helicopters after showing signs of high-altitude sickness. In the end, of the 29 starters, 17 athletes completed the entire race (8 of 20 international starters), including all 9 Bhutanese who also, as expected, took every one of the podium positions.

But even as the race was over the fairytale was far from ending as we were subsequently treated to a reception with His Majesty the King and Queen of Bhutan. The finest whisky and wine in crystal goblets as well as *hors d'oeuvre* of Bhutan's finest delicacies were being served in abundance. And if that weren't enough, on the evening before flying back to reality we dined with the Bhutanese Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and other high-ranking dignitaries and military officials, discussing our impressions, ideas and the future.

As I made the humble suggestion that perhaps some of the tourist dollars could go into supporting the infrastructure such as roads, since we'd just come in from Bumthang and the roadway was treacherous (landslides, sheer drop-offs with no guard rails, missing stretches of asphalt, cows, dogs, etc.) He gave me a smile and said, "The road from Bumthang is the best in our country!" We all laughed.

I went to Bhutan focused on running a race, but I came home as an unofficial ambassador for this small country that stole my heart. It is one of the last untouched natural wonders of the globe, with nature, wildlife and mankind living in harmony as was done for millennia but is not seen anywhere else (or seldom) here on earth today. Their contribution to the climate crisis has been minimal if not insignificant, but they carry the greatest burden. In a bizarre reversal of the economic trickle-down theory, by the time that Western nations feel the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, the countries at the top of the world, like Bhutan, will be no more.

!!! [DW] Snowman Race in Bhutan: Ultramarathon gegen den Klimawandel

<https://www.dw.com/de/snowman-race-in-buthan-ultramarathon-gegen-den-klimawandel>

Das neue "Snowman Race" im Himalaya-Staat Bhutan gilt als eines der härtesten Rennen der Welt. Das sagt auch die in Deutschland lebende Ultra-Läuferin Holly Zimmermann (US-Amerikanerin), die bei der Premiere dabei war.



Ultra-Läuferin Holly Zimmermann auf einem Bergpass beim Snowman-Race in Bhutan

"Es war sehr abgelegen, eine echte Expedition, richtig wild und schwierig", sagt Ultra-Läuferin Holly Zimmermann über ihre Erfahrungen beim ersten "Snowman Race" in Bhutan. Die in Deutschland lebende US-Amerikanerin ist nicht so leicht zu beeindrucken. Schließlich bewältigte sie bereits in der marokkanischen Sahara den "Marathon des Sables", ein Etappenrennen durch die Wüste über 230 Kilometer - oder auch den Everest-Marathon, der im Basislager zu Füßen des höchsten Bergs der Erde auf gut 5300 Meter Meereshöhe gestartet wird. "Am Everest waren viele Leute unterwegs, und es ging meist bergab", sagt Zimmermann der DW. "Das Rennen in Bhutan war viel härter." Mit 52 Jahren war sie die älteste Teilnehmerin.

Pflichtgepäck im Rucksack

Nur 29 Ultra-Läuferinnen und -Läufer gingen beim "Snowman Race" an den Start: neun Einheimische und 20 aus aller Welt, die von den Veranstaltern persönlich eingeladen worden waren. Das Rennen folgte den Spuren des "Snowman Trek", einer legendären, anspruchsvollen Drei-Wochen-Trekkingtour im östlichen Himalaya. In fünf Tagesetappen ging es über 203 Kilometer, der höchste Punkt lag auf 5470 Metern.



Holly Zimmermann (4.v.r.) war die älteste Teilnehmerin des "Snowman Race" - und die einzige, die in Deutschland lebt

Die Strecke war mit Fähnchen markiert. "Die waren aber am Abend unmöglich zu sehen. Im Dunkeln mussten wir mit GPS navigieren", sagt Zimmermann. Übernachtet wurde im Zelt, alle trugen Rucksäcke. "Wir hatten eine Pflichtausrüstung. Schlafsack, Essen für unterwegs, Wasser, Regenklamotten, eine wärmere Jacke, Mütze, Handschuhe, Erste-Hilfe-Material. **Am schwersten war der Schlafsack. Ich hatte einen für Temperaturen bis minus 30 Grad Celsius. Und es war trotzdem kalt.**"

Gefährliche Gletscherseen

Als "einen der härtesten und höchsten Ultra-Marathons der Welt" hatten die Veranstalter das Rennen bezeichnet. Es ging ihnen nicht nur um die sportliche Herausforderung, sondern auch um eine politische Botschaft: Mit dem Spektakel wollte Bhutan die Aufmerksamkeit der Welt auf die Folgen des Klimawandels für den kleinen Himalayastaat lenken. "Die Menschen, die am Rande der schmelzenden Gletscher leben, tragen am wenigsten zum Klimawandel bei, bekommen aber als erste seine verheerenden Auswirkungen zu spüren", sagte Bhutans Königin Jetsun Pema - **seit 2011** mit dem Regenten, König Jigme, verheiratet - in einer Grußbotschaft nach dem Ende des Rennens.

In Bhutan gibt es rund 700 Gletscher, die in immer schnellerem Tempo abschmelzen. 567 Gletscherseen haben Forscher im vergangenen Jahr in den Bergen des Kleinstaats gezählt, 17 davon stuften sie als gefährlich ein. Sollte einer der natürlichen Dämme brechen, könnte sich ein Unglück wie jenes am **7. Oktober 1994** wiederholen: Damals schossen 17 Millionen Kubikmeter Wasser aus dem Gletschersee Lugge Tsho talwärts, Dörfer und Felder wurden überflutet, 21 Menschen kamen ums Leben.



Rund 70 Prozent der Ansiedlungen Bhutans liegen in Flusstälern

"Wir sind die Leidtragenden des Klimawandels, ohne dass wir etwas dafür können", sagt Karma Toeb, der sich als Glaziologe des Nationalen Zentrum für Hydrologie und Meteorologie (NCHM) seit mehr als 20 Jahren mit der Gletscherschmelze in seinem Heimatland befasst. Worauf Karma hinweist, ist die Tatsache, dass Bhutan - neben Panama und Surinam - zu den nur drei Staaten weltweit gehört, die eine negative CO2-Bilanz aufweisen: Dort werden mehr Treibhausgase absorbiert als produziert. Das schützt jedoch nicht vor den [Folgen des Klimawandels](#).

Appell an die bevorstehende Weltklimakonferenz

"Wir sahen die Veränderungen mit eigenen Augen", sagt US-Läufer Luke Nelson. "Ich sah deutlich die Spuren der früheren Gletscher, mit Moränen, die nicht mehr mit Eis gefüllt waren. Was mich allerdings am meisten beeindruckt hat, waren die Menschen dort und die Bedrohung, mit der sie jeden Tag leben." Einer Bedrohung, die sehr real ist. So zerstörte Ende September nach drei Tagen Dauerregen ein Erdbeben mehrere Häuser eines Bergdorfs in Bhutan, fünf Menschen kamen ums Leben.

"Zunächst war ich voll auf den Wettkampf fokussiert", sagt Holly Zimmermann. "Aber dann habe ich schnell gemerkt, dass es um sehr viel mehr ging. Wir haben hier etwas gelernt über die Klimakrise und was sie dagegen tun." Nachdem Bhutan sich wegen der Corona-Pandemie mehr als zwei Jahre lang nach außen abgeschottet hatte, dürfen seit September wieder Touristen ins Land. Sie müssen dafür tiefer in die Tasche greifen. Die Regierung hat die Gebühr für nachhaltige Entwicklung von 65 auf 200 US-Dollar pro Person und Nacht angehoben. Das Geld wird unter anderem für Klimaschutzprogramme eingesetzt.

Die Botschaft, dass es nicht so weitergehen kann wie bisher, ist auch bei den Läuferinnen und Läufern des "Snowman Race" angekommen. "Ist das die Welt, die wir unseren Kindern vererben wollen?", fragt Simon Mtuy. Der Läufer aus Tansania richtet einen Appell an die bevorstehende [Weltklimakonferenz](#) im November in Scharm El-Scheich in Ägypten: "Wir müssen das Problem sehr schnell anpacken und reparieren, was wir zerstört haben."

17 von 29 kamen an

Mtuy war einer von 17 Startenden, die nach gut 200 Kilometern das Ziel des "Snowman Race" erreichten. Zwölf hatten vorher aufgegeben. "Mehrere Läufer mussten wegen Höhenkrankheit mit dem Hubschrauber evakuiert werden", berichtet Holly Zimmerman. Ihre eigene Aufgabe am zweiten Tag hatte einen anderen Grund: An einem Pass auf gut 5200 Metern war sie nur noch sehr langsam unterwegs, nachdem sie am Vortag noch bis in die Abendstunden gelaufen war. "Ich habe zu Hause vier Kinder im Alter zwischen 14 und 21 Jahren. Ich habe mir gesagt: 'Sicherheit geht vor' und habe umgedreht."

Auf den Podestplätzen landeten am Ende nur Einheimische. "Das hatten wir alle erwartet", sagt Zimmermann, die seit dem Jahr 2000 mit ihrer Familie in einem Dorf nahe Regensburg lebt. Sie kehre mit vielen Eindrücken nach Deutschland zurück - aus dem einzigen Land der Welt, in dem das Glück der Bevölkerung als Staatsziel in der Verfassung festgeschrieben ist. "Ich hoffe, ich nehme die Ruhe, Demut und Gastfreundlichkeit der

Menschen mit", so die Ultra-Läuferin. "Sie sind als die glücklichsten Menschen der Welt bekannt. Und nach dem, was ich erlebt habe, kann ich das bestätigen." Wären da nicht der Klimawandel und seine Folgen.



Veröffentlichungen

Book review: Gods and rites of eastern Bhutan's phenomenal world

February 19th, 2022, Post Views: 604; Contributed by Dasho Karma Ura, Ph D

Source of Life by Toni Huber (Vol I – 640 pages ; Vol II – 499 pages)

In a breathtakingly wide canvas filled with countless analytical drilling down, eastern Bhutan is lit up in detail for the first time in Huber's *Source of Life*. To be precise his subject is non-Tshangla speaking part

of eastern Bhutan consisting of areas where *Dzalakha* (related to *Brag-gsum* language spoken by *mkhar* builders of Tibet), *Kurtoedpaikha*, *Dakpakha*, *Khengkha*, *Bumthangkha* and *Chocha-ngacha* (*Tsamangkha*) are spoken. Sources of old festivals, cultures, languages, folk etymologies, *mkhar*- architecture, in-migration, and settlements among these East Bodish linguistic speakers of eastern Bhutan have been largely unknown until Huber's monumental research lasting 15 years.

He takes us on an enriching journey of analysis of ancient Tibetan texts as well as of ancient texts in *Kurtoepaikha*, *Dzalakha*, *Dakpakha*, and *Bumthangkha*. Handwritten folio manuscripts of these Bhutanese dialects provide surprising evidence of our ancestors writing their dialect hundreds of years ago. This direction should be renewed if these languages are to be revitalized and the sensibilities of their cultures maintained.

In the course of his work, Huber translated over 1,000 pages of some 100 manuscripts he came across. Huber's multi-disciplinary and cross-boundary approach takes us into East Bodish languages through which shared lexicons and concepts have percolated, and over vast geographical expanses from Zhemgang in Bhutan, Subansiri river valleys stretching from Arunachal Pradesh into Tibet, and further east to Yunnan and Sichuan where Naxi and Namuyi people live.

He deepens our understanding in radically new ways about the non-Buddhist cosmology; performances, gesticulations and ritualized bodily movements; verse chants about journey of gods and verse chants accompanying dances; material culture and accessories of rituals; instruments and objects; flora and fauna, including bat, related to the cult; food and vitality substances; and the role of key ritual performers.

The key ritual specialists are known variously as *rup*, *phajo*, *kharipa*, *mi sim*, *shu'd*, *gongma*, *ga-sdang*, *nami*, *habon* and *bonpo* depending on location. The techniques of rites include chants, dances, divinations, omens, and prognostications of future; and dreams of the key ritual performer corresponding to dreams of gods since the key ritualists are called *lha mi* or *lha'i mi*. His work challenges and shifts our hitherto imprecise and inaccurate perspectives about eastern Bhutan. Huber's work should not only adorn the shelves of administrators, teachers, and planners, but they should be actively referred to prevent accelerating decline of ancient eastern Bhutanese traditions.

After years of studying Arunachal communities, Huber visited his research area in Bhutan – Tongsa, Bumthang, Zhemgang, Mongar, Kurtoed, Tashi Yangtse and Tashigang – many times between 2009 and 2014 at the invitation of the Centre for Bhutan Studies. The Centre was keen to support such a leading ethnographer also to mark the beginning of the reign of His Revered Majesty who has attached great importance to understanding our nation in all aspects. The result is astonishingly original. Its richness and depth have made the book an epic of Himalayan ethnography. Guntram Hazod (2020) acclaimed it in his review as a standard in the field of Tibetan studies and Himalayan ethnography, a class on its own.

Huber's previous works such as *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain* (1999) about Vajra Varahi's Tsari Ney and *The Holy Land Reborn* (2008) demonstrated extraordinary scholarship able to illuminate the often convoluted and complex way in which the pilgrimage hotspots have evolved over millennia and disappeared and got recognized and reappeared elsewhere.

Source of Life maps eastern Bhutan along with contiguous areas of Dirang and West Kameng in Arunachal Pradesh where the worship of *Srid-pa'i lha* (*lha* of procreation or the *lha* of phenomenal world, as he calls them) has spread, across ethnic and East Bodish linguistic groups. Yet Huber clarifies that it is unique to this area, as at present *Srid-pa'i lha* worship is confined only to these transborder communities. Though it can be traced back to Lhobrag, none of it exists in Tibet suggesting that it might have been assailed by other religious sects or political forces. Certain aspects of the cult are prevalent among the Naxi of north-west Yunnan and western Sichuan, some 800-1000 km further east along the same geographical stretch. Vol 2 is a rigorous exposition of his new hypothesis that Naxi and Qiang people and the *Srid-pa'i lha* communities of eastern Bhutan have a shared ancestry, drawing on linguistic cognates and similarities of rites and beliefs.



Tsango festival in Khoma

One of the vital distinctions between *Srid-pa'i lha* cult on the one hand and Buddhism or Yungdrung Bon on the other is that *Srid-pa'i lha* cult believes in *bla* (*pla* in Dakpakha, *pra* in Dzalakha, *cha* in Kurtoedpaikha) as a divisible and multiple vitality principle as opposed to unitary and singular principle in Buddhism. He distinguishes *Srid-pa'i lha* cult as a social and cultural phenomenon. He considers it not religious, in contrast to Buddhism or *Yungdrung Bon*. But there is no value judgement intended in distinguishing it as non-religious. Labelling it as non-religious does not mean that it is inferior. Lamas and officials and similarly inclined people are prone to be dismissive about *Srid-pa'i lha* cult. In fact, this attitude can and has led to discouraging the culture that sustains the communities. A greater and more versatile capacity of the *Srid-pa'i lha* worshipping communities is that they are multi-polar, being Buddhists as well as honouring *Srid-pa'i lha* deities and local numina. There is no good reason why they or others cannot have such multiple identities.

In volume 2, Huber disambiguates further the complex and deep cosmology of *Srid-pa'i lha* cult which differs from Buddhism and *Yungdrung Bon*. In doing so, three crucial ritual texts for his analysis are the *rnal dri 'dul ba* manuscript, and *ste'u* and *sha slungs* manuscripts. Huber notes a significant point that word *bon* does not occur in any of these manuscripts though *gshen* does a few times. All three of these illustrated texts are dated to the eleventh century and all three originated in Lhobrag in Tibet, quite close to north-eastern Bhutan. These three ancient texts articulated cosmological concepts and mundane rites from an earlier period. Huber characterizes *Srid-pa'i lha* cult as a continuity and transformation of ideas and rites found in these key manuscripts.

Central to the cosmology of *Srid-pa'i lha* is the notion of 13 levels of vertical cosmic axis delineated in detail in the three ancient texts. Sky is the highest level in the axis where the *lha* dwell and terrestrial or earth surface is at the lowest level. Unlike in classical Tibetan or *Yungdrung Bon* traditions, there is no lower subterranean level beneath terrestrial level. In the cosmology of *Srid-pa'i lha*, life and vitality flow up and down between the highest *lha* level and our own world. However, in its cosmology, there are also a range of other negative and positive spirits at various other levels such as *sman*, *mtshun*, *bdud*, *gyen*, *rmu*, *srin* etc. There is also wildlife, especially herbivores on the terrestrial level. Rites maintain the relationship among these multitude of beings.

The cult's rites are directed to keeping the wilderness abundant to support the birth of *lha* as human beings.

Srid-pa'i lha worship, particularly *lha Guse Langling*, was first mentioned briefly, in the 1688 book by historian-monk Ngawang of Tashigang in connection with the genealogy of Dung families. Huber asks readers to transcend Ngawang's *Rgyalrigs* due to its limitations. Ngawang paid attention to identities of Buddhist clans of Jobo and Zhelngo. However, Ngawang glossed over *Srid-pa'i lha* communities of Khu, Seru, gNamsa, Mi, Shar, Ba and Na who are still found in the region and who are mentioned in the local manuscript *Lha'i gsung rabs* he came across in Khoma. Huber charts the distribution and ancient origin of these clans.

Srid-pa'i lha cult reflects pursuit of fertility, reproduction and virility of human beings and their key livestock such as sheep, yaks, and horses. These were popular domestic animals that were dominant in the environment of southern Tibetan Plateau where the cult rose. Thus, a festival or a rite seeks to cultivate *tshe* (patrilineal fertility), *yang* (quintessential female reproductive potency) and *phya* (sky beings) for the worshipping communities, just like *tshe-khug yang-khug cha-khug* of Vajrayana rites which had perhaps assimilated this ritual technique. *Srid-pa'i lha* cult is also distinctive from Buddhism and Yungdrung Bon because it claims the existence of various *Srid-pa'i lha*, the human progenitor, who live in the sky and who is at the centre of its cosmology. Worshipping communities claim common descent from their progenitor-*lha*, whether they are its chief *lha*, O-de Gungyal, or his divine son Guruzhe, or other *lha*. Gurzhe, Guse Langling and many other variations refer to the same *lha*, Gurzhe, Huber finds. O-de Gungyal and other *lha* are white, dressed white and ride white horses. They do not bear any arms unlike Vajrayana protector deities. In Kurtoed, an array of siblings (about eight) of Gurzhe such as Namdorzhe, Yang chung and Yum sum is worshipped, and some of them are represented in visual arts photographed by Huber.

Gods of *Srid-pa'i lha* cult descend from the sky along a magical cord (*rmu thag*). In rites, they alight on top of tree stands or freshly cut young trees (*lha shing*) installed on top of houses and return to the sky afterwards, while the ritual specialists chant sonorously the narratives of inbound and out-bound journey of the gods. A cord is attached to a *lha shing* to conduct revitalizing energies of the gods to the earthly beings. Similarly, vitality and fertility flow down from heaven to the worshippers, indeed into their bodies. The myth of the first King descending from the sky unto Ura village, to govern Monyul, found in the earlier Bhutanese history textbooks, echoes this concept. Readers might recall that in the earlier Bhutanese history texts, the *Dung* elites rise in Bumthang and diffuse their network of elites across central Bhutan. But the elites' titles of *Dung* were muted in eastern Bhutan for reasons yet unclear while later elite titles of *khoche*, *ponche* and *chosje* spread. Modernization has flattened the *Dung* and other traditional households, along with their social and cultural functions. A less structured society, except for huge inequality of income, is perhaps a loss from a wider point of view.

It is noteworthy that *Srid-pa'i lha* are vegetarian and their ritual simulacrum and edible offerings are strictly vegetarian. This reality is far from the widespread misconception about its mode of worship and criticisms based on such fundamental misconceptions that exist among many Bhutanese. Meat eaters project their own perception on others.

Srid-pa'i lha tradition was brought along by people known as *gDung* between 1352-54, the years of conflict between these warrior clans and the emerging centralizing Sakyapa power in Tibet. Reference to *gDung* in Lhobrag are occur in 7th and 8th century Tibetan documents. *gDung* has been spelt both with g prefix and without g prefix, as I do here. The first spelling means descendants and the second spelling means primordial. Either way it alludes to original people of a land. *gDung* were probably, Huber notes, ancient clans in the Tibetan plateau, who stood against pressure of transformation wrought elsewhere by Buddhist post imperial Tibet.

Huber notes that Sakyapa military leaders distinguished *gDung* people for military campaign convenience into two sub-groups: *Lho gDung* and *Shar gDung*. *Lho gDung* were in southern side of Tibet near Phari while *Shar gDung* lived in eastern Lho-brag. *Shar gDung* migrated to Bumthang and eastern Bhutan and other parts of the eastern Himalayas in the middle of 14th century. Huber notes that Lhobrag Sharchu river valley was the main centre for *Shar gDung* communities until they migrated southwards due to Sakyapa's military offensive between 1352-54 and destruction of their *mkhars*. Although historian-monk Ngawang had indicated that *Dungs* of Bumthang came from south-western Lhobrag, Huber's reading of *Lha'i gsung rabs* found in eastern Bhutan confirmed that ancestors of *Zhongar gDung* migrated from Lhobrag and Gru-shul through

another route, i.e., Nyamjang chu valley. Huber characterizes *Lha'i gsung rabs* as collective memory of migrant clan population. Narrative in *Lha'i gsung rabs* recalls the backward route to different locations in Lhobrag which the clans left.

However, the in-migration of *gDung* from adjacent Tibetan highlands does not mean that there were no pre-existing communities in central and eastern Bhutan. Genealogy of Lhasa Tsangma's descendants show that eastern Bhutan was already populated during his arrival centuries earlier. Longchen in his 1355 poem about Bhutan (Ura, 2016) notes that Bumthang and Tongsa were populated, though surprisingly he does not comment on exodus of *gDungs*. Huber points out that the older communities in eastern Bhutan, whom he calls Mon clans included Na clans (*Na mi*= Na people), whose worshipped deities known as *zhe*. For example, Kurtoed Nay/Nas village was most probably settlement of Na people. Autonyms using Na was found also in Tawang where Na clan live today. The meaning of Naxi people living in Yunnan is the same.

Settlements of *Shar gDung* in eastern Bhutan are associated with their toponyms. Dirang, a Bhutanese territory till 1930s, is a corrupted form of Dung-rang Lungpa that Pema Lingpa visited in late 15th century. *gDung dkar* is another place names which most likely refers to an important *Shar gDung* settlement. It is even probable that it was originally known as *gDung mkhar* and the name became Buddhist over time to hearken to white-conch shaped land.

Mkhar (tall stone towers) was an essential architecture of the *gDung*. These multi-storied towers are still found in Lhobrag and Sichuan. Readers will remember that *mkhars*, though shorter and architecturally slightly different from the classical *mkhars* of the type found in Sichuan, were densely distributed in eastern Bhutan. Carbon dating of timber from the ruins of Tsenkhar la fortress (*bTsan-mkar* or Mi Zimpa) of Lhasa Tsangma traced it back to 1430s. This legendary *mkar* could have been a consolidation of an earlier structure built by Lhasa Tsangma.

The climax of the *Srid-pa'i lha* worship in any village in eastern Bhutan is calendrical festival. Huber initially found **altogether 52 festivals being performed in Bhutan and Arunachal**. Huber includes detailed account of such festivals accompanied by instructive high resolution, and aesthetic diagrams and photographs.

In his minuscule study within Bhutan, there is a sharp focus on itineraries, settings and communities surrounding three main festivals. These are the *Lhamoche* of Tsango in Khomachu valley, the *Lawa* in Kuri chu valley, and the *Ahey lha* of Changmadung in Kholong chu valley. Documentations of these main rites are informed and supported by data collected from the Kharphu festival in Nyimshong in Chamkhar chu valley, and a series of rites in Tabi, Gangzur, Zhamling, Shawa, Chengling, Ney, Tangmachu, Da, Bumdeling, Khoma, Ura, Tang, Bemji and several other festivals in Arunachal. In general, he finds that festivals occurring west of Nyimshong in Chamkhar chu valley and as far as Mangde valley has become degraded or ceased to be performed. He notes that festivals in eastern Bhutan visibly declined in the span of six years while he was doing field research.

During a festival, the progenitor-*lha* is invited to descend from the sky into the midst of the associated clans and lineages. In every festival a hereditary ritual expert who can chant *rabs*, the narrative of the *lha's* attributes and journey itinerary, leads the event. Huber notes that there are many versions of *rabs*, and they are dynamic in that creative ritual experts might spontaneously add to them in the moment of performance. Considering that the practice is dedicated to the fecundity and vitality of men and animal, both domestic and game, representations of human and animal sexuality, full nudity in certain performances, without any unease of the prudish, were the norm in the past.

Jambay Lhakhang *drub* with its midnight nude-with-mask *tercham* used to draw throngs of winter tourists briefly flooding the hotels and houses and draining money into the communities of Choskhor. Authentic festivals of eastern Bhutan could sustain both its culture and livelihoods many times more. But nobody will fly thousands of miles just to have a look at beach shorts, or any newly fabricated rite.

Three nights of a festival were demarcated from the normal: people gave permission to themselves to be free to enjoy without any inhibitions and shame. These festival communities maintain that the regime of Zhabdrung was conceded rule over the country, but not over the three days and nights of celebrations. This mutually agreed term must go on, in fact encouraged enthusiastically, if our cultures are not to get impoverished by numbing homogeneity. A general trend in our country has been dissemination and thriving

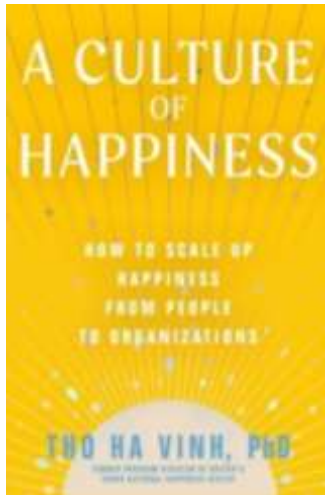
of the same set of dances in different festivals in different places, flattening creativity, depth, and diversity. Huber's splendid two volumes can be a turning point in the revival of these specific festivals in eastern Bhutan or a documentation of extinct cultures.

Tho Ha Vinh: A Culture of Happiness

How to Scale Up Happiness from People to Organizations

<https://www.parallax.org/product/a-culture-of-happiness/>

Paperback \$19.95, eBook \$14.99. This product will be released on September 27, 2022.



Practical principles for creating conditions for happiness at scale from the program director of the Gross National Happiness Center of Bhutan, the only country in the world to measure progress by the happiness of its citizens. Despite countless happiness programs focused on individual well-being, are we any happier, really? Is it in fact possible to be fully happy within a miserably dysfunctional society built to keep structural inequities in place? Possible, perhaps, but not easy. While the pursuit of happiness is a much-celebrated ideal, how can countries and communities design the right environments for people to lead happy lives? Personal programs for happiness that include mindfulness, empathy, and gratitude are a good start, but without structural changes, they can only go so far. Taking the case of the country of Bhutan as an example, the nation's former Gross National Happiness program director Tho Ha Vinh explains how the principles of happiness can and must apply to people, families, and communities at scale to produce the

conditions for a truly satisfying life. More and more people feel that we live in a time of transition and that our very survival on this planet depends on renewing the way we live together in society. Gross National Happiness is an innovative development paradigm that puts the happiness of all people and the well-being of all life forms at the center of progress. Based on real-life experiences, this book shows a multitude of practical methods for strategic thinkers and change makers to apply the framework of Gross National Happiness to bring about positive change in schools, businesses, and communities.

Tashi Delek, the in-flight magazine of Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines is back.

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Reformen im Königreich Bhutan: Bytes, Blogs und Buddha

<https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/bhutan-koenigreich-reformen-100.html>

Von Silke Diettrich, 15.11.2022, [Audio herunterladen](#) 23:03 Minuten

Seit Jahrzehnten gilt Bhutan im Himalaja als Paradies auf Erden. Glück ist dort offiziell notiertes Staatsziel. Doch die Generation Z in dem rückständigen Land verlangt auf dem Weg in die Moderne mehr vom Glück als nur einen Internetanschluss.

„Ich bin total glücklich. Ich bin froh, in Bhutan geboren zu sein. Es ist der sicherste Ort der Welt.“

„Glück klingt immer so nach: Hahaha, ich bin immer happy. Hier ist Glück eher der innere Frieden mit sich selbst.“

„Unser Land ist doch wie ein Paradies. Wir haben hier keinen Krieg wie in anderen Ländern. Wir betrügen einander nicht. Unser Land ist mit Glück gesegnet.“

Manchmal klingt es wie aus einem märchenhaften Königreich, wenn Menschen aus Bhutan über ihr Land erzählen. Und vieles wirkt in der Tat zauberhaft: schneebedeckte Berge, wenige Menschen, Geschichten von Dämonen und Geistern, abgelegene Klöster, tiefgrüne Reisfelder und Wälder.

Schon der Anflug ist exklusiv. Einige sagen allerdings, er sei alles andere als märchenhaft. Die Landebahn gehört zu den gefährlichsten der Welt.

Zweieinhalb Jahre Corona-Lockdown

Der einzige internationale Flughafen von Bhutan liegt zwischen fast 5000 Meter hohen Gipfeln in einem Tal. Nebel verdeckt oft die Sicht. Und nur speziell ausgebildete Piloten dürfen den Flughafen ansteuern. Kaum eine Handvoll Maschinen landen hier am Tag, kurz nachdem Bhutan seine Grenzen für Touristinnen und Touristen geöffnet hat. Zweieinhalb Jahre durfte wegen der Corona-Pandemie fast niemand das Land besuchen. Bhutan war in der Zeit wieder so abgeschieden von der Außenwelt wie vor rund 50 Jahren. Erst seit 1974 war es überhaupt möglich, touristisch nach Bhutan zu reisen.

Buchstäblich hinter den Bergen lag das Land auch bei der Einführung von Internet und Fernsehen: Jahrzehnte später als in vielen anderen Ländern der Welt wurden erst 1999 die Leitungen gezogen. Und Bhutan ist derzeit auf der Suche nach Lösungen, um auf dem Weg in die Moderne nicht alle Traditionen zu verlieren.

In einer Karaoke-Bar in der Hauptstadt Thimphu wird gerade Abschied gefeiert. Namgay zieht in den nächsten Tagen nach Australien. Für ihre Freundinnen singt sie heute zum letzten Mal einen Song von John Legend: US-Songs sind in der Bar angesagt, manchmal auch Lieder aus Bollywoodfilmen. Alte Lieder aus Bhutan stehen nicht auf der Liste. Diese Bar könnte sich überall auf der Welt befinden, hier scheint nichts mit der märchenhaften buddhistischen Tradition übereinzustimmen.

Jeans, kurze Shirts, hochhackige Schuhe

Die Leute tragen Jeans, kurze Shirts, hochhackige Schuhe. Die bhutanische Generation Z: Sie ist die erste, die mit Internet und Fernsehen groß geworden ist. Die Entwicklung in ihrem Land hänge daher noch weit zurück, sagt Namgay: „Wir haben noch einen sehr weiten Weg vor uns. Wir fangen ja gerade einmal an, uns zu entwickeln. So viele Leute hier leben hier noch so rückständig. Aber jetzt hat die Jugend begriffen, dass für sie in Bhutan nichts zu holen ist. Es ist wirklich schwer, hier zu überleben.“

In Sachen Entwicklung steht Bhutan tatsächlich ganz weit hinten auf der Liste der Länder in der Welt. Fast 40 % der Menschen sind Bauern, die sich selbst versorgen, ein Viertel der Menschen hat kaum 28 Dollar im Monat zu Verfügung. Dabei sind gerade die jungen Leute im Land sehr gut gebildet. Der Schulbesuch ist für sie kostenlos, viele sprechen fließend Englisch. Das sei großartig, sagt auch Namgay. Sie ist eine ausgebildete Krankenschwester. Niemand im Land müsse für medizinische Versorgung zahlen. Aber: Sie verdient keine 200 Euro im Monat. Deswegen will sie nach Australien. Ihre Schwestern leben schon dort: Ohne Geld geht es nicht im Leben. Und auch unsere Jugend hat verstanden, wie wichtig es ist, Geld zu haben. Nur mit Geld kann auch Glück kommen. Namgay aus Bhutan wandert nach Australien aus.

Glück spielt in Bhutan eine große Rolle, Geld hatte lange Zeit keine gespielt. Schon aus dem 18. Jahrhundert gibt es Quellen in einem alten Rechtskodex.

Darin wird erwähnt, dass die Regierung des Landes keine Existenzberechtigung habe, wenn sie dem Volk kein Glück bescheren könne.

Im Jahr 1979 hat der vierte König von Bhutan zum ersten Mal das sogenannte „Bruttonationalglück“ ins Spiel gebracht. In einem Interview betonte der König, dass dies wichtiger sei, als das Bruttoinlandsprodukt, an dem bekanntlich ja die Wirtschaftsleistung in der globalisierten Welt gemessen wird.

Zahlreiche Bücher und Abhandlungen sind seitdem über das einzigartige Bruttonationalglück von Bhutan geschrieben worden.

Warum verlässt die Jugend das Land des Glücks?

Es bedeutet, kurz runtergebrochen, dass ein Gesetz in Bhutan nur erlassen werden darf, wenn es dem Glück der Bevölkerung nicht entgegensteht. Darunter fallen vor allem die vier Staatsziele: Erstens: Die Wirtschaftsentwicklung soll sozial und gerecht sein. Zweitens: Kultur und Religion sollen bewahrt werden, drittens: Umweltschutz und viertens: eine gute Führung der Regierung.

Im Jahr 2008 ist in Bhutan die Demokratie eingeführt worden, die Menschen können seitdem selbst darüber bestimmen, ob sie die vorherige Regierung abwählen oder behalten wollen.

Fünf Jahre lang war Tshering Tobgay Ministerpräsident des Landes und kandidiert auch wieder für die Wahlen im nächsten Jahr. Er sieht keinen Widerspruch darin, dass gerade junge Menschen das Land mit dem Bruttonationalglück verlassen wollen:

„Unsere Wirtschaft, so nachhaltig und gerecht sie auch ist, hat nicht mit dem sozialen Fortschritt Schritt gehalten. Wir können derzeit nicht ausreichend Jobs zur Verfügung stellen. Wir haben Arbeitsplätze in der Landwirtschaft oder auf dem Bau, aber unsere Jugend ist für bessere Jobs ausgebildet worden. Uns so lange wir keine entsprechenden Stellen anbieten können, schauen sie natürlich außerhalb des Landes nach Jobs.“

Hat sich Bhutan in der globalisierten Welt also in den zurückliegenden Jahren zu sehr aufs Glück verlassen und die Augen vor der Realität des weltweiten Kapitalismus verschlossen? Der ehemalige Premierminister wiegelt ab.

Ich glaube fest daran, dass es letzten Endes wichtig ist, dass sich die Menschen wohlfühlen und glücklich sind. Und weil wir nicht ausreichend Jobs haben, sollten wir deswegen unsere Jugend ungebildet lassen? Nach dem Motto: Sie sind glücklich, aber unwissend? Das kann doch nicht die Wahl sein, auch wenn sie nun das Land verlassen wollen. Natürlich ermöglichen wir es, dass sie sich weiterbilden können, um die soziale Leiter hochzusteigen.

Tshering Tobgay, Ex-Ministerpräsident von Bhutan

Tradition und Moderne prallen im ganzen Land aufeinander, jetzt gehe es darum, ein gutes Gleichgewicht zu finden: „Wir brauchen Investitionen, aber solche, die nicht gegen unser Bruttonationalglück verstoßen. Bei uns ist doch nicht alles schiefgelaufen. Wir haben Probleme, auch soziale. Auch hier leiden Menschen unter Depressionen. Andere wollen mehr Geld. Wir sind auch einfach nur Menschen. Ihr von außen schaut auf unser Land und sagt, es sei der Himmel auf Erden. Das haben wir nie behauptet. Dann kommt ihr her und seid enttäuscht. Das ist nicht fair!“

Bhutans neuer Slogan: Glaube statt Glück

Die Erwartungshaltung, dass Bhutan das glücklichste Land der Welt ist und ein Himmel auf Erden sein könnte, kommt aber ja nicht nur von außen. Jahrzehnte lang hat die eigene Tourismusbranche damit geworben:

„Glück ist ein Ort“ – so hieß der Slogan bis vor Kurzem. Jetzt, nach der langen Corona-Sperre hat sich der Leitspruch geändert, sagt der Direktor des Tourismus-Rates **Dorji Dhradhul**:

„Wir wollen in Zukunft authentischer sein. Mag sein, dass wir Ausländer und Ausländerinnen mit dem Glück anlocken konnten. Aber für uns Menschen in Bhutan ist das sinnlos. Was bedeutet das eigentlich wirklich? Glück? Und sind alle Menschen hier glücklich? Das kann man doch wirklich anzweifeln, deshalb finden wir den Slogan mittlerweile zu künstlich.“

Die alten Plakate und Flyer mit „Glück ist ein Ort“ liegen jetzt in unzähligen Kisten im Büro von Dorji Dhradhul, um sie zu entsorgen. Der neue Slogan hängt schon an seiner Wand und auf prangt auf Jutebeuteln. Er lautet: „Glaube!“

Wir wollen an unsere Zukunft glauben, die groß sein wird für uns. Wir wollen auch an uns selbst glauben, dass wir das schaffen. Wir sollten eigentlich schon ein gut entwickeltes Land sein, aber wir straucheln. Wir müssen zu viele Sachen importieren, weil wir selbst kaum etwas herstellen. Und wir dürfen unsere Werte dabei nicht verlieren, an die müssen wir weiterhin glauben.

Dorji Dhradhul, Direktor des Tourismusrates

Mit diesem Leitspruch will die Regierung die Menschen in Bhutan auf tief greifende Reformen vorbereiten. Sämtliche Beamtinnen und Beamte müssen jetzt Prüfungen durchlaufen, wer sie nicht besteht, muss gehen. Ähnliches gilt für die Tourismusführer, für Hotels und ihre Angestellten, für die Tourismusagenturen. Wer nicht professionell genug ist, muss verbessern oder schließen.

Gäste müssen 200 Euro pro Tag zahlen

Denn Bhutan setzt seit der Öffnung nach der Corona-Pandemie noch mehr als zuvor auf „Klasse statt Masse“. Seitdem müssen fast alle Gäste rund 200 Euro für jeden Tag zahlen, an dem sie sich in Bhutan aufhalten. Sozusagen eine sehr teure Kurtaxe. Die bhutanische Regierung nennt es „Gebühr für nachhaltige Entwicklung“.

„Wir wollen jede und jeden in Bhutan willkommen heißen. Aber wir zielen auf Menschen ab, die bewusst reisen wollen. Die unsere Kultur respektieren, unsere Natur, unsere Regeln. Einfach Menschen, die auch unsere nationalen Werte und Ziele teilen.“

Ein Dorf in der Nähe der Kleinstadt Punakha ist nur über eine lange Hängebrücke zu erreichen. Über einen glasklaren Fluss herüber. Am Horizont saftig grüne Hügel. Bauern und Feldarbeiterinnen ernten Reis, ohne Maschinen, alles per Hand. Sie bündeln die langen Halme und schlagen die Rispen auf einen großen Stein. Die Reiskörner fallen auf eine Plastikplane herab.

Dawa wischt sich den Schweiß von der Stirn und zieht die Ärmel ihres Pullovers hoch, auf dem in knallig pinker Farbe überall „Love“ geschrieben steht. Die 32-Jährige hat von ihrer Familie ein Stück Land geerbt und sich dann entschlossen, als Landwirtin zu arbeiten. Sie begrüßt auf Englisch:

„I forgot english now.“ Sie habe leider so viel verlernt, sagt sie. Bis zur 12. Klasse ist sie in die Schule gegangen. Und in den meisten wird auf Englisch unterrichtet. Dawa hatte schon davon profitiert, dass Kinder in Bhutan kostenlos eine gute Ausbildung erhalten:

Ich bin glücklich. In Bhutan stehen gerade viele Reformen an, gerade bei den Beamten. Aber ich bin ja keine Beamtin. Ich bin eine Landwirtin. Keiner gibt mir Befehle. Ich muss nirgendwo pünktlich in einem Büro erscheinen. Ich bin mein eigener Boss. Ich kann mir meine Zeit selbst einteilen. Das macht mich glücklich.

Dawa, Landwirtin

Hype um das Auswandern

Dawas Zähne und Lippen sind rötlich gefärbt. Sie schmatzt beim Sprechen, weil sie auf einer Betelnuss herumkaut. Das ist eine Tradition in Südasien, die schon mehrere Tausend Jahre alt ist. Das Kauen der Betelnuss bezeichnen einige als

Volksdroge. Es hinterlässt eine angenehme, berauschende Wirkung und der Appetit geht verloren. Vielleicht trägt auch das dazu bei, dass Dawa sich gerade so glücklich fühlt.

Viele andere junge Leute aus ihrem Dorf, sagt sie, wollten lieber raus aus Bhutan:

„Viele wollen nach Australien, sogar meine Schwester plant das gerade. Das hat auch mit den Veränderungen bei den Staatsbeamten zu tun. Die Leute denken, wenn nicht einmal dieser Job sicher ist, dann versuche ich es besser woanders. Hunderte aus unserem Land gehen hier im Monat nach Australien.“

Es gibt keine gesicherten Zahlen darüber, wie viele Menschen Bhutan verlassen. Denn einige versuchen es mit einem Touristenvisum, andere über Studienvisa. **Mehr als 30.000 Menschen aus Bhutan leben derzeit schon in Australien.**

Dawa und ihr Mann Namgay können den Hype um das Auswandern nicht ganz nachvollziehen:

„Unser Land ist doch wie ein Paradies. Wir haben hier keinen Krieg wie in anderen Ländern, wir betrügen einander nicht und wir leben glücklich unter unserem König, unser Land ist mit Glück gesegnet. Ich habe ausreichend zu essen, das meiste direkt von unserem Feld. Nur Öl und Salz muss ich noch dazu kaufen.“

Wie fast überall im Land hat das Ehepaar auch auf dem Dorf fast immer Strom und Internet. Sie sagen, sie hätten nicht das Gefühl, irgendetwas in ihrem Leben zu vermissen.

So geht es auch Pema. Mit rund einem Dutzend anderer Nonnen sitzt sie im Gebetsraum eines Frauenklosters in der Nähe der Hauptstadt Thimphu.

Sie alle tragen rötlich violette Roben und lehnen sich im Schneidersitz an große Kissen an, während sie beten, oder einige von ihnen in die Dungchen blasen. Das sind sehr langhalsige traditionelle Trompeten.

Ich denke, die Menschen hier in Bhutan sind glücklich, weil wir alle Buddhisten sind. Wir sind gut zu Tieren und wir sind einfühlsame Menschen. Wir hören einander zu. Wir sind wie eine große Familie. Wir verspüren keinen großen Druck, können uns frei bewegen. Das ist aus meiner Sicht wahres Glück.

Pema Choden, Nonne

Damit dieses Glück auch weiterhin anhalten kann, würde Bhutan nun eine historische Transformation durchlaufen, sagt Azusa Kubota. Seit mehr als drei Jahren ist sie in Bhutan die Chefin des Entwicklungsprogramms der Vereinten Nationen.

Verbesserungen mithilfe der Vereinten Nationen

Die Corona-Pandemie habe dabei vieles neu angestoßen. Innerhalb nur weniger Wochen waren alle Menschen im Land geimpft.

Es leben zwar nur rund 800.000 Menschen in Bhutan, aber weit verteilt in unzähligen Tälern und Bergen. Nun hat das Land zusammen mit den Vereinten Nationen verschiedene Apps entwickelt und sucht weiterhin nach Lösungen, um ein elektronisches Gesundheitssystem zu entwickeln:

„Ein Beispiel ist CTG. Das ist ein kleines Gerät, das wie ein Herz aussieht. Das legen schwangere Frauen auf ihren Bauch und die Informationen, die das Gerät herausliest, gehen direkt an die Frauenärzte im Land.

Auf diese Weise können die schwangeren Frauen lange Wege vermeiden oder eben umgekehrt, falls es Komplikationen gibt, können sie rechtzeitig Hilfe suchen. Das ist nur ein Beispiel von vielen, wie digitale Lösungen hier auch in Zukunft helfen sollen, Menschen Dienstleistungen näher zu bringen.“

Bhutan hat kaum Industrie, wegen der vielen Berge ist es dem Land kaum möglich, große Fabriken zu bauen. Strom gewinnt Bhutan aus Wasserkraftwerken und kann sogar so viel produzieren, dass der Verkauf von Strom nach Indien die Haupteinnahmequelle für das Land darstellt, neben dem Tourismus.

Doch Indien investiert selbst viel in erneuerbare Energien. Bhutan muss sich für die Zukunft also neue Ziele setzen.

Einziges Land mit einer negativen CO2-Bilanz

Und die sollen weiterhin im Einklang mit Umweltschutz stehen. Bhutan ist derzeit das einzige Land der Welt mit einer negativen CO2-Bilanz, das heißt, das Land bindet mehr Kohlendioxid, als es ausstößt:

„Bhutan hat sich selbst dazu verpflichtet, CO2 neutral zu bleiben, auch in den nächsten Jahren. Der König hat das festgelegt und ich glaube, alle Menschen im Land stehen auch dahinter. Dafür jedoch muss das Land neue Technologien entwickeln, neue Strategien und andere Wege finden. Aber diese Transformation findet ja gerade statt und sie ist dringend notwendig.“

Auf dem Platz des Uhrenturms mitten in der Hauptstadt liegt ein Hipster-Café. Tshering Denker – große Hornbrille und breites Grinsen – trinkt hier einen Smoothie. Auf einer Glücksskala von null bis zehn liege ihr Leben bei neun, oder fast zehn, sagt die 32-Jährige und lacht:

„Generell sind die Leute hier schon ziemlich happy, denke ich. Viele Leute von außerhalb sagen: Du kommst aus dem Land des Glücks. Und ich kann da nur zustimmen.“

Tshering ist die erste Reise-Video-Bloggerin aus Bhutan. Sie ist in jeden Winkel ihres Landes gereist, hat sämtliche Berge bestiegen und darüber ein Buch geschrieben. Vor allem aber hat sie Videos für ihren Vlog gemacht.

Leute in meiner Generation haben die Welt gesehen. Einige vielleicht eher durch die sozialen Netzwerke. Und ich glaube, gerade wir Millennials in Bhutan durchlaufen eine ziemliche Krise. Wer wollen wir sein und wer nicht? Können wir unsere eigene Kultur dabei bewahren? Als erste Generation, die all die Einflüsse von außen sehen kann: Das kann

den Seelenfrieden schon stören. Das ist eine große Herausforderung für Bhutan, aber ich glaube, es muss sein, Veränderungen hier sind unvermeidbar.

Tshering Denker, Reise-Video-Bloggerin aus Bhutan

Aber sie selbst sei doch auch ein gutes Beispiel dafür, dass der vermeintliche Kultur-Clash auch etwas Positives hervorbringen könne, sagt Tshering stolz. Sie sei die erste Buddhistin, die einen Reiseblog gestartet hat, zu einer Zeit, in der kaum jemand in Bhutan wusste, was überhaupt ein Blog im Internet ist.

Sogar der König habe sie deswegen schon eingeladen und ihr Mut gemacht, diesen Weg weiterzugehen. Der Glaube an die Natur sei in ihrem Land tief mit dem Buddhismus verwurzelt.

Um die Berge zu schützen, darf niemand in Bhutan die Gipfel besteigen, die höher als 6000 Meter liegen. Es sind schon hohe Summen geboten worden, aber die Berge sind hier heilig:

„Wir leben nicht nur in Harmonie mit der Natur, sondern auch mit den Göttern. Es leben Götter und Geister auf den Bergen und wenn wir sie stören, wäre das ein großes Desaster für die Menschen im Tal.

Die Natur versorgt uns mit so vielem. Also ist es an uns, dass wir sie nicht komplett ausbeuten. Und deswegen besteigen wir eben auch nicht die höchsten Berge hier. Daher haben wir den zweithöchsten Berg der Welt hier, der nie bestiegen wurde.“

Bhutan ist voll mit Legenden von Göttern und Dämonen. Ist ein Ort voller Mystik und Zauber. Und das letzte Königreich im Himalaja, in dem die Menschen absolut von der Monarchie überzeugt sind.

Gleichzeitig ist Bhutan Vorreiter bei der Bewahrung von natürlichen Ressourcen und damit eines der sehr wenigen Länder auf der Welt, das sich an das Klimaabkommen von Paris hält. Und versucht, für die Zukunft eine Balance zu finden: zwischen buddhistischen Traditionen und modernen Technologien sein Glück zu finden.

Photos



Für kein Geld der Welt: Auf die über 6000 Meter hohen Berggipfel in Bhutan darf niemand klettern. Sie gelten als heilig. © imago / Danita Delimont / imago stock&people



Die Verdienstmöglichkeiten im „Land des Glücks“ sind schlecht. Viele der gut ausgebildeten Jugendlichen in Bhutan wandern deshalb nach Australien aus. © imago images / Ephotocorp / Ephotocorp via www.imago-images.de.



Bhutan als Postkartenmotiv: Pero Taktsang, das „Tigernest“, ein buddhistisches Kloster im Parotal in einer Höhe von über 3000 Metern im Himalaja. © IMAGO / Christian Offenberg



In welche Richtung soll es jetzt gehen im „Drachenland“? – Noch gibt es keine Ampeln in Bhutan. © Silke Diettrich, ARD-Studio Neu Delhi



Im Land gibt es keinen Zweifel an der Monarchie. Die Königsfamilie ist hochverehrt und so eine Art „Glücksgarant“ in den Augen des Volkes. © imago images / PPE / PPE via www.imago-images.de



Spiritualität ist ein wichtiger Teil der Gesellschaft. Der Buddha Dordenma vor den Toren der Hauptstadt Thimphu ist mit mehr als 50 Metern einer der größten der Welt. © IMAGO / Christian Offenberg / IMAGO / Christian Offenberg



„Wir finden den Glücksslogan mittlerweile zu künstlich“, sagt Dorji Dhradhul, Direktor des Tourismusrates. © Silke Diettrich, ARD-Studio Neu Delhi



Glück in der Heimat: Landwirtin Dawa ist zufrieden mit ihrem Leben und ihrer Arbeit und kommt deshalb gar nicht auf die Idee auszuwandern. © Silke Diettrich, ARD-Studio Neu Delhi



Staatsreligion: Etwa 73 Prozent der Bevölkerung gehören dem buddhistischen Glauben an. Deshalb sind sie glücklich, sagt Nonne Pema Choden. © Silke Diettrich, ARD-Studio Neu Delhi



„Den Menschen mit digitalen Lösungen helfen“, sagt Azusa Kubota, Chefin des Entwicklungsprogramms der Vereinten Nationen in Bhutan. © Silke Diettrich, ARD-Studio Neu Delhi



„Veränderungen sind unvermeidbar“, meint Tshering Denker. Sie ist die erste Buddhistin in Bhutan, die einen Reiseblog betreibt. © Silke Diettrich, ARD-Studio Neu Delhi

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