

A deep dive into Bhutan

ISBS leads to a 'Bhutan Studies' in its own right and a better insight into Bhutan on its own terms

Tenzing Lamsang/ Oxford

As any Bhutanese will be acutely aware, Bhutan is broadly defined in two ways. One, is that of a small but strategically important country lodged in between two giants along with its various implications and complications.

The other definition of Bhutan can be seen in travel articles and magazines of being a 'Shangri-La' or romanticized Kingdom in the clouds.

As a result, there is limited international understanding of the real Bhutan and its people, given the two dominant narratives above.

Even in the world of international academics, Bhutan, so far, has been studied only as one of the subsets or countries of the 'Tibetan and Himalayan studies' group that also includes India, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan.

The International Society for Bhutan Studies (ISBS) inaugural conference in Magdalen College, Oxford



The former Prime Minister DASHO Tshering Tobgay who led the Bhutanese delegation spoke at the opening of the conference

University made the important first step of discussing and studying the diverse and less discussed aspects of Bhutan in a large international academic setting. More importantly, it set up and gave shape to an independent international 'Bhutan studies' group in its own right.

Some speakers highlighted the point that Bhutan deserves its own study group given the fact that it is the only and last independent Vajrayana Buddhist Kingdom.

In that sense, the ISBS is not just another academic conference, but holds special significance for Bhutan,

with the potential to be both a valuable resource group and one that helps strengthen Bhutanese identity and understanding in the international forum.

The conference from 8-10 January, 2019 saw a large number of Bhutan experts in various fields gathering from

over 80 countries taking part in 12 sessions in various diverse fields, three plenary sessions and two key note addresses. Each session in turn had an average of three speakers with a time of around one hour and 30 minutes.

The sessions were about cutting edge research into linguistics, ecology, anthropology, law and international relations, GNH, development, food, education, history, Buddhism and governance in Bhutan.

The speakers and scholars presented their in-depth papers followed by usually spirited and in depth questions and comments that made it both an academic exercise and also a collaborative event with the audience.

The quality of the conference and papers presented in the sessions was apparent from that fact that many Bhutanese participants got additional and even new insight into their own

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Ex-PM's Key-note address at Oxford focuses on Monarchy, Sovereignty, Culture, Democracy, Environment, GNH and welfare

Tenzing Lamsang/ Oxford

The Former Prime Minister DASHO Tshering Tobgay delivered the main key note address at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford University on 9th January as the main event of the three-day International Society of Bhutan Studies (ISBS) conference.

The topic given to the former PM was, 'Does Bhutan Matter? Stories from a young democracy.'

As per the title, the main task before DASHO was to show that 'Bhutan matters.'

He said that while he is acutely aware of the many problems and challenges he asked to be indulged for glorifying his country in

the interest of establishing that 'Bhutan matters.'

DASHO started his speech by conveying the greetings and warm wishes of His Majesty the King of Bhutan.

He said that Bhutan was never colonized, its culture is thriving, the country is a biodiversity hotspot, Bhutan is the only carbon neutral country, it is a functioning welfare state and that Bhutan is one of the youngest democracies.

"But what we revere the



most – what we hold to be the most sacred above all else – is our leadership, specifically the leadership of our Kings. Bhutan

Bhutan. It is the symbol of our unity, the protector of our people, and the fountainhead of our future. Bhutan's monarchy

is unique, and successful in its own way, because of one and only one factor – the extraordinary leadership of our Kings who have led by example and who continue to do so," he said.

"That's why the monarchy is the most important institution in

was established in 1907, so it is only 111 years old. All of us in Bhutan love our Kings – we revere them, and we look up to them as Plato's ideal of the philosopher king," said DASHO.

He gave various examples of the democratic reforms instituted by the Monarchy to the handing over of democracy.

"Here's another extraordinary fact: our King has no personal wealth. Today, when some of the richest people in the world continue to be monarchs, our King does not own any personal property," said DASHO.

"All citizens have access to the King. We celebrate the fact

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Editorial

Understanding
Bhutan

Bhutan is at an important juncture as we stand ready to graduate from our least developed country status in 2023 and become a middle income country, albeit at the lower end of the scale.

This graduation will mean that we have achieved or are close to achieving our main and basic socio-economic goals. It will also mean that our economy is heading towards self-sufficiency.

Having achieved and maintained political and economic stability and with our sovereignty strengthened, the question to ask is -what next.

At one level, Bhutan, despite having limited resources, has never hesitated to go for its own identity and growth model that we now know as GNH. This has served us well and played a huge role in getting us where we are today, both as a nation and people.

Bhutan is a soft power in its own right, and as we graduate and move ahead we should capitalize on this not just to strengthen our international presence and identity, but also to better understand our own domestic issues and challenges and solutions to them.

For this, we have to not only engage with the best minds in the field but with those who also deeply care about Bhutan.

This is where bodies like the International Society of Bhutan Studies (ISBS) comes in providing us with a valuable and well networked resource center that does not just focus on the usual GDP and hard power, which we lack, but focuses on more relevant areas of strength like culture, ecology, biodiversity, good governance, linguistics and more.

It can also look at important social issues like education and public health, among other areas.

Bodies like the ISBS is not only a way to strengthen our own academic, social and policy resources but it will can help us to shape and control our narrative at the international academic level.

Q

Just a quote

“What is soft power? It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.”

Joseph S. Nye Jr

DRUKYUL SPEAKS ITS MIND

The Vital Isolation of Indigenous Groups

OPINION BY

BRAHMA CHELLANEY

NEW DELHI – The remote, coral-fringed North Sentinel Island made headlines late last year, after an American Christian missionary’s covert expedition to convert its residents – the world’s last known pre-Neolithic tribal group – ended in his death. The episode has cast a spotlight on the threats faced by the world’s remote indigenous groups, which are already on the brink of disappearance.

The Sentinelese people targeted by the slain evangelist John Allen Chau are probably the most isolated of the world’s remaining remote tribes, and they are keen to stay that way. They shoot arrows to warn off anyone who approaches their island, and attack those, like Chau, who ignore their warnings.

It was not always this way. When Europeans first made contact with the Sentinelese, the British naval commander Maurice Vidal Portman described them in 1899 as “painfully timid.” But the profound shift is not hard to explain. Tribes like the Sentinelese have learned to associate outsiders with the ghastly violence and deadly diseases brought by European colonization.

British colonial excesses whittled down the aboriginal population of the Andaman Islands, which includes North Sentinel Island, from more than two dozen tribes 150 years ago to just four today. The tribes that escaped genocide at the hands of the colonizers did so largely by fleeing to the deepest and most inaccessible parts of jungles.

That was the story in North Sentinel, which Portman and his forces raided, abducting the few children and elderly who failed to flee into the dense rainforest in time. As a 2009 book by Satadru Sen notes, Portman used members of Andaman tribes as subjects in his supposed anthropometry research, forcibly measuring and photographing their bodies. The research, according to Sen, reflected a perverted “fascination” with “male genitalia.”

After the decimation of indigenous peoples under colonial rule, the countries where isolated tribes remain –

including Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, India, and Peru – have pursued a “no contact” policy toward these groups. This policy is anchored in laws that protect indigenous people’s rights to ancestral lands and to live in seclusion, and reinforced by an international convention obligating governments to protect these communities’ lands, identities, penal customs, and ways of life.

It is illegal – and punishable by a prison sentence – for outsiders to enter India’s tribal reserves. Yet Chau dodged Indian laws and coastal security, according to his own diary accounts, to make repeated forays into North Sentinel over three days – an arduous effort that was facilitated by a Kansas City-based missionary agency, which trained him for his journey. The Sentinelese killed him only after he ignored repeated warnings to stop trespassing.

But the threat to the Sentinelese people – and, indeed, all isolated tribes – is far from neutralized, as some have taken Chau’s death as an opportunity to argue that we should reverse the policies protecting isolated tribes. And while some have good intentions – to provide access to modern technology, education, and health care – others do not. For example, Brazil’s new far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, has threatened to repeal constitutional safeguards for aboriginal lands in order to expand developers’ access to the Amazon, the world’s largest rainforest.

Whatever the motivation, connecting with remote tribes would amount to a death sentence for them. The first waves of European colonization caused a calamitous depopulation of indigenous societies through violence and the introduction of infectious diseases like smallpox and measles, to which the natives had no immunity.

In Brazil, three-quarters of the indigenous societies that opened up to the outside world have become extinct, with the rest suffering catastrophic population declines. Over the last five centuries, Brazil’s total indigenous population has plummeted from up to five million to fewer than 900,000 people, with the introduction of constitutional protections for indigenous territories in the late 1980s aimed at arresting the decline.

In the Andaman chain, of the four tribes that survive, the two that were forcibly assimilated by the British have become dependent on government aid and are close to vanishing. Indigenous communities’ combined share of the world population now stands at just 4.5%.

To be sure, leaving secluded tribes alone is no guarantee that they will survive. These highly inbred groups are already seeing their numbers dwindle, and face the specter of dying out completely. But they will probably die a lot faster if we suddenly contact them, bringing with us modern pathogens against which they have no antibodies.

These tribes might be isolated, but their demise will have serious consequences. With their reverence for – and understanding of – nature, such groups serve as the world’s environmental sentinels, safeguarding 80% of global diversity and playing a critical role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. When the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami struck, more than a quarter-million people died across 14 countries, but the two isolated Andaman tribes, which rely on traditional warning systems, suffered no known casualties.

But, as Bolsonaro’s promises underscore, indigenous societies have been pitted directly against loggers, miners, crop planters, ranchers, oil drillers, hunters, and other interlopers. In the last 12 years alone, according to satellite data, Brazil’s Amazon Basin has lost forest cover equivalent in size to the entire Democratic Republic of Congo, the world’s eleventh-largest country.

Indigenous people are an essential element of cultural diversity and ecological harmony, not to mention a biological treasure for scientists seeking to reconstruct evolutionary and migratory histories. The least the world can do is to let them live in peace in the ancestral lands that they have honored and preserved for centuries.

Brahma Chellaney is the Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin

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TVET program allocated only 1.8 percent in the 12th plan period

Sonam Yangdon/ *Thimphu*

The special committee of the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) presented their findings from the interim review report on the TVET after the house, on the 16th Session, December 2015 resolved that there was a need to conduct a comprehensive diagnostic study on the current TVET system.

The rationale behind conducting the assessment was to study the effectiveness of the TVET system in meeting desired quality and relevancy of skills, as well as in meeting the required skilled workforce in the priority sectors, particularly in the construction, manufacturing, automobile and hydropower.

Presenting the review report, Member of Parliament Phuntsho Rapten, who is also the chairperson of the committee said that despite considerable investments made in the public TVET system, it still continues to face significant challenges- particularly in access, relevancy and quality of skills which are further aggravated by the rapid economic transformation and changing labour market requirements.

“As a consequence of TVET system’s inability to respond effectively to the emerging labour market needs, prolonged shortage of skilled workforce (mismatch of skills) has been a

continuing reality, which has led the economy to be overly dependent on foreign workers, particularly in the construction sector,” reported the committee’s chairperson.

Several members of the lower house raised that majority of the youths opt for TVET due to lack of other opportunities and not out of interest or to pursue their passion.

The preliminary findings by the special committee, which was based on broad consultation with the primary stakeholders revealed several inadequacies in achieving the desired outcomes from the TVET program.

With about 100 registered training providers – government, private and NGOs offering numerous programs/ courses at certificate or diploma level, Phuntsho Rapten, said that some of the programs are broadly governed by the policy and related regulations of the labour ministry while some programs are implemented independently by the sector-specific agencies in the health, tourism, agriculture among others.

Due to such hindrances, it has become challenging for the MoLHR to carry out holistic national planning, coordination and aligning skills development to the economic priorities.

Rebranding the TVET institutes to make the program more attractive and improve the overall image of the TVET programs were also said to have

been ineffective after such initiative only caused confusion among trainees, institutes and industries.

“As of now, Technical Training Institutes of MoLHR provide TVET programs only at the certificate level. It has neither been able to provide government scholarships nor avail attractive scholarships from TVET institutions outside the country to provide an opportunity for the top performing TTI graduates to pursue higher technical and vocational education. This is one of the reasons why TTIs are not able to attract good performers from school education,” stated the findings by the special committee.

It has also been found that Department of Technical Education (DTE) under the labour ministry is bogged down with the bureaucratic works and is not able to provide focused and timely professional TVET services particularly in the areas of research and development, curriculum review and development, professional development.

TVET instructors and graduates expressed dissatisfaction over their certificates not being accorded the same level of recognition like their peers in other sectors for the job promotion and position.

At the institutional level, there seems to be a lack of well coordinated and standard practice of establishing

industrial linkages. Some TTIs reported that for industrial linkage program, they select industries based on the relevancy of TTI courses and sign MoU once in a year mainly for the purpose of on job training.

Despite recognizing TVET as an important driver to absorb 20 percent of the students from higher secondary schools in the TVET system by 2024 and generate skilled workforce for gainful employment, its share in the 12th plan period is only 1.8 percent (Nu. 2.1 billion) of the overall outlay.

In order to find a clear way forward, the Committee will present its complete review findings along with appropriate recommendations in the summer session after extensive consultations with the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Association of Bhutanese Industries and Bhutanese Automobile Association.

It has been found that there are currently more than 50,000 foreign workers engaged in the country, of which the majority is employed in the construction sector.

There are six Technical Training Institutes (TTIs) and two Institutes of Zorig Chusum under the purview of Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR) and several other registered private and non-governmental organization TVET training providers.

Preservation and promotion of culture to be reinforced

Damchoe Pem/ *Thimphu*

Preserving and promoting culture and tradition has been identified as one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) with the aim to strengthen the country’s identity and sovereignty.

Culture and tradition encompass intangible aspects such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, music, oral traditions, and festivals in addition to tangible culture, which includes dzongs, temples, arts, antiques, antiquities, indigenous food, and sports.

Therefore, in order to address the challenges in preservation and promotion of culture, and achieve the NKRA, the government has identified few strategies- preserving age-old traditional festivals and highland traditions and culture, supporting

important historical community-managed lhakhangs and making Dzongkha more user-friendly and promoting Dzongkha computing.

In addition, the government also has various programs which they will implement to achieve the said NKRA like sustenance and continuity of cultural heritage, promote contemporary arts such as films and music, enhancing spiritual values, promotion of national language and local indigenous languages and culture and traditions preservation and promotion.

Sustenance and continuity of cultural heritage

This program aims to undertake the preservation and conservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Based on requirements new Dzongs and Lhakhangs will

be constructed and existing ones maintained and restored. They will register cultural properties, conduct research, and document in order to safeguard cultural heritage. Museums and cultural library services will be enhanced. Furthermore, the disaster management capacity of cultural heritage sites will be improved. The program will be implemented by Ministry of Home and Culture Affairs.

Enhancing spiritual values

It aims to promote meditation, monkhood, and spiritualism. The program will be implemented by the Dratshang Lhentshog.

Promotion of national language and local indigenous languages

This program aims to promote the use of the national language and other local dialects. The program will

conduct research, organize national events including awareness programs and improvement of language contents. The program will specifically document 18 indigenous dialects native to Bhutan for use and preservation. The program will be implemented by the Dzongkha Development Commission.

Culture and traditions preservation and promotion

This program will aim in preserving and promoting culture and tradition by maintaining tangible cultural heritages such as community lhakhangs and chortens in respective Dzongkhags. The program will also focus on the promotion and preservation of intangible cultures such as local songs, dances, folk stories, and local festivals. The program will be implemented by the LGs.

Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs is the lead agency for this NKRA.

Govt to reduce unemployment rate to 6.5 percent in the 12th FYP

The reduction rate is down from the earlier target of 9 percent

Sonam Yangdon/ *Thimphu*

Creating productive and gainful employment has been identified as one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) out of the 17 NKRA in the 12th plan.

The key performance indicators under this particular priority are to maintain national unemployment rate below 2.5 percent and reduce youth unemployment rate from 12 percent to 6-6.5 percent. On the same line, MP Rinzin Jamtsho expressed during the ongoing parliament session that it was important for the government to set the minimum target below 2 percent if his proposition to reduce it to 1.5 percent sounds very ambitious.

The MP also suggested that the government, in their objective to reduce the youth unemployment rate from 12 percent to 6-6.5 percent, should be clear and specific to reduce the rate either to 6 percent or 6.5 percent.

“Currently, an important issue is on the high prevalence

of unemployment rate in the urban areas than in rural areas where more than 22 in every 100 youth in the urban areas are without a job. Therefore, I think the government should also aim to reduce the number of youth unemployment rate in the urban areas by at least 10 in every 100 youth in the future,” said the MP Rinzin Jamtsho.

The labour force survey found that the unemployed youth are concentrated more in the urban areas with 17 percent and only 8.6 percent residing in rural areas.

The labour minister, Ugyen Dorji responded that the government will aim to maintain the youth unemployment rate at 2.5 percent or below as deemed healthy internationally. “To avoid further confusion, the government will set the target to reduce youth unemployment rate to 6.5 percent explicitly. And on the need to focus more on the youth unemployment in urban areas, I think the government’s aim to reduce the youth unemployment by 6.5 percent will address the issue,”

said the labour minister.

Acknowledging the concerns expressed by the MP from Shompangkha, the labour minister said that the government will be focusing on creating conducive employment opportunities in the construction sector which has huge potential to absorb hundreds of youths. “On one hand, the unemployment rate is increasing in the country and on the other hand, the construction and agriculture sector are facing shortage of skilled labour forces. Thus, the ministry plans to make opportunities in such sectors attractive either by improving the incentives or through new policy frameworks aimed at employing more youths.”

The labour minister, in response to the opposition leader’s suggestion to institute a committee that includes members from all the relevant stakeholders to address the issue of youth unemployment in the country said that the concerns of the government and opposition seem to vibrate on the same frequency. “Just

as suggested, the government already has plans to institute Employment Responsibility System from Royal Civil Service Commission, corporations, private organizations among others to address the unemployment problem. The ministry is currently exploring ways to make the system more efficient and doable. With the new system, we plan to collaborate with all the nine sectors that we have identified. The government agencies and sectors will come together and will be the responsible for creating certain number of jobs in each sector.”

During the Friday question hour session in the parliament, labour minister said that more than the hydro projects, youths need to be regarded as the jewel of the nation and that the government will invest in their skills development more than ever before.

“In the 12th plan, it is projected that 82,000 jobseekers will enter the job market, of which 77,000 will be the youths. Thus, through the Employment Responsibility

System, the labour ministry projects to create employment opportunities for 67,000 youths in the 12th plan. The government will also continue with the Direct Employment Scheme which has been revised further to improve the scheme better- the scheme is projected to employ 20,000 youths,” clarified the labour minister during the Friday question hour session in the National Assembly.

Lyonpo Ugyen Dorji also added that the government will continue with the Overseas Employment Program. “It is important for the government to equip our youths with necessary education and skills and the government will look into the existing loopholes in the overseas program, rectify and come up with measures to implement the program more successfully.”

The labour minister also added that in the 12th FYP, the labour ministry has decided to allocate 75 percent of the total budget for the ministry for technical and skills development of the youths.

Govt plans to address citrus greening and target production of 68,000 metric tons of oranges in the 12th plan

Pema Seldon/ *Thimphu*

During the question hour session on Tuesday, member from Lhamoi Zingkha-Tashiding constituency questioned the agriculture minister on the plans and programs to address citrus greening disease affecting the farmers.

In response, the agriculture minister, Lyonpo Yeshey Penjore said, “About 39 percent of the rural households are engaged in citrus production and citrus is grown in 16 dzongkhags including sarpang, Tsirang, Dagana, Samdrup Jongkhar, Pemagatshel and Chukha.”

Lyonpo said, “Inadequate orchard management practices adopted in the field, erratic rainfall resulting from climate change, pests, fruitfly and trunk borer, abandoned orchards and difficulty in implementing citrus ordinance are the key issues and

challenges related to citrus greening.”

Lyonpo also said, “It is not right to say that the government did not do anything to address the issue of citrus greening. Until 2016, the government was involved in studying the problem associated with citrus greening and in 2017 the country produced 28,000 metric tons of mandarin and exported 16,000 metric tons, earning Nu. 479 mn in that year.”

“According to the information received by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAF), in 2018, production has improved and export has also increased with support from the government”, Lyonpo added. MPs from different constituencies questioned the agriculture minister on poor allocation of budget for the agriculture sector, water shortage and failure to pay the loan due to citrus greening.

Agriculture Minister said, “Reviving the orchards in citrus declining areas,

increasing the area under citrus orchards and improving the varieties and enhancing the production through the implementation of appropriate management practices are the programs, strategies and actions proposed in the 12th Five Year Plan.”

Lyonpo said, “In the 12th plan, Nu 250 mn has been proposed for citrus orchard rehabilitation. Since citrus decline is mainly due to erratic rainfall, drought, pest and disease outbreak, the citrus rehabilitation is being developed to guide rehabilitation program by replanting old orchards beyond rejuvenation scope, rejuvenating old and declining orchards to revive and sustain the production and identifying and promoting alternative crops.”

The government is planning to produce 68,000 metric tons of oranges in the 12th plan.

He said Nu 200 mn is proposed

for new orchard development which includes promotion and diversification of citrus varieties adaptable to different agro-ecological zone and for different market purposes.

“Nu 400 mn is proposed for climate smart irrigation to revive and sustain the production. Orchards are mostly under rain fed condition and suffer inadequate rainfall leading to rapid decline. However, some of the orchards are far from irrigation sources with limited scope for irrigation supply. So, development of irrigation supply to citrus orchard is one of the key intervention in the 12th plan”, Lyonpo added.

While Nu 45 mn is proposed for large scale commercial production and Nu 10 mn for capacity building of farmers and extension on citrus orchard management.

Incorporated pledges of the other three political parties in the 12th plan: Finance Minister

Sonam Yangdon/ *Thimphu*

Presenting the overview report on the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) to the first session of the third parliament, finance minister Namgay Tshering said that the 12th FYP period has been moved to November 1, 2018 to October 31, 2023 in order to align with the term of the incoming government unlike past plans which commenced from July. And likewise, the future FYPs will also follow the incoming government's tenure so that plan period will be aligned accordingly.

The fiscal projections, the finance minister said has been made based on the medium term economic outlook and the government will strive to achieve the target of maintaining average fiscal deficit below 3 percent and plans to cover 80 percent of the total expenditure by domestic revenue. The government also targets to maintain tax to GDP ratio at 12 percent, maintain budget variance below 3 percent and maintain non-hydro debt below 35 percent of GDP.

The resources envelop for the 12th FYP is estimated at Nu 280 bn, of which domestic revenue is Nu 217 bn and the grant is Nu 63 bn. According to the plan, grant constitutes 22.5 percent of the total resources and will finance 54.3 percent of the capital expenditure. "The estimated revenue is expected to fully cover the current expenditure and finance at least 21 percent of capital expenditure," said Lyonpo Namgay Tshering.

"As mentioned earlier, the fiscal deficit is estimated to be Nu 29 bn,

which is 2.4 percent of GDP as planned by the government to maintain fiscal deficit within 3 percent of GDP," said the finance minister. The fiscal deficit is expected to be financed through an estimated external borrowing of Nu 4 bn from ADB and World Bank on highly concessional terms.

"The remaining deficit of 25bn will be financed from domestic market through issuance of government bond and treasury bills. However, to relieve pressure on the domestic credit market, efforts will be made to access new external grant financing windows such as trust funds and green climate fund," informed the finance minister to the house.

As per the projections, public debt by the end of the 12th FYP is expected to touch Nu 249 bn- which is about 87.6 percent of the estimated GDP. Of the total debt of Nu 249 bn, external debt is projected at Nu 215 bn (80 percent on hydro debt) which is about 75.9 percent of GDP. Hydropower debt will constitute 68.4 percent.

"With the expected commission of Mangdechhu and Nikachhu Hydropower Projects in the 12th FYP, the external debt stock is projected to decline," said the finance minister.

The finance minister also said that another notable aspect of the 12th FYP is the flagship programs that are instituted mainly as an intervention to address high priority national issues that includes economic diversification, employment generation, drinking water, healthcare, and public services through coordinated multi-sectorial approach. The flagship programs that

are in line, will have detailed blueprint with clear plan action, dedicated resources, clear plan of action and assignment of responsibilities to implementing agencies, added the finance minister.

The 12th FYP has also incorporated pledges of the other three political parties as some of the pledges were deemed to be of national importance and for the common good of the people.

The 12th plan, considered very important as it is the last plan before Bhutan graduates from the list of Least Developed Countries in 2023, the government's key priorities over the five years are addressing the last mile challenges such as reaching the unreached, improving quality of health and education services, poverty reduction, narrowing the

gaps between haves and have not, and addressing the needs of the vulnerable group which includes the senior citizens, disabled persons, orphans among others.

Another key priority of the government in the coming years is to strengthen the economy through economic diversification, and youth employment generation. The government will also focus on preservation and promotion of culture and traditions, environment development, and strengthening good governance.

The government has also laid out the consolidation and maintenance of existing infrastructure and investing on softer aspects of developments such as human resources as one of the major priorities for the coming years.

Taxi driver arrested for illegal transaction of tobacco products

Damchoe Pem/ *Thimphu*

On January 4, 2018, Thimphu police apprehended a 41-year-old taxi driver from Olakha vegetable market at around 1:30 AM. The suspect is from Trashigang and was arrested by the police patrolling team.

Police have seized 4590 packets of

tobacco (Baba) from his possession. Police said that although the suspect was sent on surety, he will have to pay fine to Regional Revenue Custom Office (RRCO) for the possession.

Police will charge sheet the case to the court at the earliest.

This is the first case of illegal transaction of tobacco in 2019.



FACULTY OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE
KHESAR GYALPO UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES OF BHUTAN
KAWANG JANGSA, THIMPHU



Ref. No. FTM/ADM/17/2019/681

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Faculty of Traditional Medicine, Kawang Jangsa invites sealed bids for the construction works detailed in the table.

Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Bid Security	Duration	Class	Bidding document cost
Construction of Dongdrem Model (Medicine tree)	Nu. 5,26,826.00	Nu. 10,500.00	Three Months	Small	Nu. 500.00 (Non-refundable)

A complete set of bidding documents can be purchased from the Procurement Section.

Sale of bidding Documents : 10th January 2019 to 11th February 2019

Last date & time submission : 11th February 2019, 12.00 PM

Date and time Opening : 11th February 2019 at 02.00 PM

Prospective bidders can seek clarification from Sr. Administrative Officer, telephone No.02-321473/ 17117113 during office hours.

(Dean) FoTM

DAGACHHU HYDRO POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
CHHULUMITHANG, DAGANA: BHUTAN



DHPC/TSMMU/PROC-05/2019/35

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Dagachhu Hydro Power Corporation Limited (DHPC) is pleased to invite "Sealed Bids" from the interested and eligible National Supplier holding valid trade license for the following bids:

- a) **Office Stationeries**
 - b) **Tyres and Tubes**
1. Bidders may obtain further information and inspect the Bidding Documents from DHPC, Technical Support & Material Management Unit (TSMMU) at **+975-17116137/24** during office hours.
 2. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders on the submission of a written application to the address above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Nu. 500.00 (Ngultrum five hundred) only and 1000.00 (One thousand) only respectively. A soft copy of the bidding document is also available at <http://www.dagachhu.com/index.php/downloads/>
 3. Bidders who have downloaded and printed the bidding documents and wish to participate should submit an application to the above address and make a payment of non-refundable fee of Nu. 300.00 (Three hundred) only and 500.00 (Five hundred) only respectively to make the bid enforceable.
 4. Bids must be delivered to the address above on or before **15:00 hours of February 08, 2019**. Electronic bidding shall not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend in person at the address below at **15:30 hours of February 08, 2019**, at DHPC Corporate Office, Chhulumithang, Dagana.

TSMMU

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN
DZONGKHAG ADMINISTRATION
WANGDUEPHODRANG
Human resource Section



DAW/HRD-01/2018-2019/4036

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

"The Dzongkhag administration, Wangduephodrang is pleased to invite applications from eligible candidates for the following vacant positions to be recruited on consolidated contract;

Sl. No.	Position Title	Slots	Qualification	Eligibility Criteria	Contract Duration	Placement
1	Matron	3	Minimum Class XII Passed	18-50 years	24 months	1 each for Samtengang CS, Phobjikha CS and Gaselo CS
2	Caretaker	4	NA	18-50 years	24 months	1 each for Wangdue PS, Sephu PS, Phobjikha CS and Tencholing PS.
3	Sweeper	1	NA	18-50 years	24 months	Bajo HSS
4	Cook	4	NA	18-50 years	24 months	2 for Gaselo CS and 1 each for Phobjikha CS, Nahi PS.

The following documents should reach HR Section latest by **January 25, 2019** and the short listing will be done on **February 01, 2019** and will be notified in the Dzongkhag website at www.wangduephodrang.gov.bt. The interview will be held on **February 07, 2019** at DT Hall at **9.00 am**;

1. **Civil Service Employment Application Form (Form 4/1)**
2. **Academic Certificate and Transcripts for Matron post**
3. **A copy of CID card**
4. **Approved Security Clearance Certificate (Online Approved Sheet)**
5. **A copy of Medical Fitness certificate**
6. **No Objection Certificate (If employed)**
7. **Please do not forget to provide your mobile number in the application form.**

All are requested to bring the original documents during the time of interview.

For further information, please contact HRO at **02 481896** during office hours"

Sr.Dzongrab

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Sudoku

	2		1					
	3			6	5			
1				8		7	2	
7		4				8	5	
	8	2				6	1	
		9	8			2		3
	5	6		4	7		9	
8		3		1				
4	7		5	9				

Difficult rating: ***

answer next issue

2	4	6	5	7	3	1	8	9
8	5	7	9	6	1	4	2	3
3	6	1	2	4	8	7	5	9
4	9	8	3	5	7	6	2	1
1	2	1	5	4	9	6	3	8
7	3	7	1	9	8	4	6	5
5	9	2	7	3	6	8	9	4
1	5	7	2	1	4	9	8	3
9	3	7	8	4	2	5	6	1
6	9	4	8	1	9	5	2	7

Last issue Answers

WEATHER

SATURDAY

Thimphu
Max: 12 °C
Min: -5 °C



Trashigang
Max: 18 °C
Min: 3 °C



Bumthang
Max: 08 °C
Min: -6 °C



Phuentsholing
Max: 26 °C
Min: 10 °C



SUNDAY

Thimphu
Max: 15 °C
Min: -5 °C



Trashigang
Max: 19 °C
Min: 3 °C



Bumthang
Max: 08 °C
Min: -5 °C



Phuentsholing
Max: 27 °C
Min: 10 °C



Source: <https://www.accuweather.com/en/bt/bhutan-weather>

ZAKAR

SATURDAY

Good day to appease local deities, perform wealth accumulation ritual, appoint to new post, start new education, start new business, shift house, make medicine and start medication, marry, hold good discussion, sow seeds, plants trees and flowers.

Bad day to consecrate, enter new house, roof house and hoist Lungdhar.

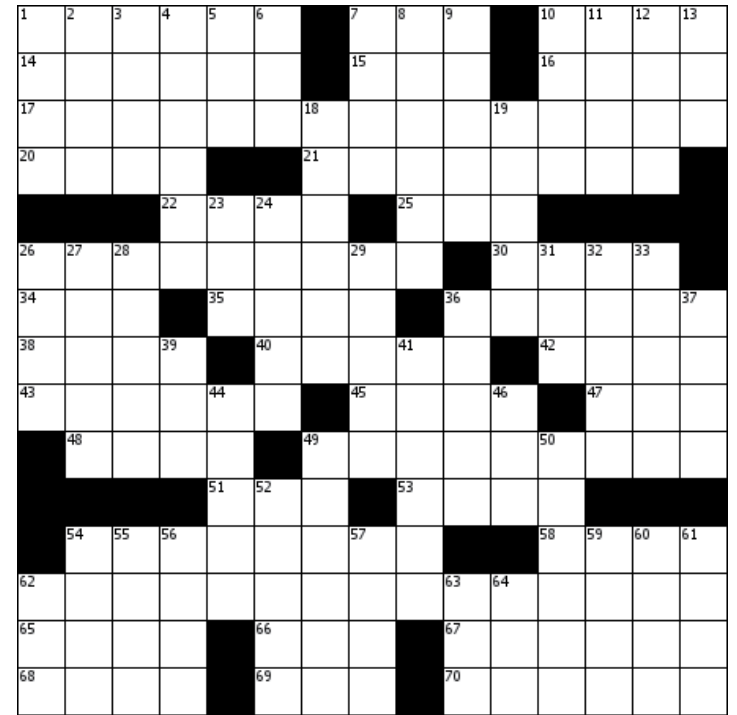
SUNDAY

Good day to conduct Lhabsang Thruesoel, consecrate, start education, appoint to new post, enter new house, shift house, hold good discussion, start new business, roof house, sow seeds, plant trees and flowers.

Bad day to appease local deities, marry and celebrate.

Across

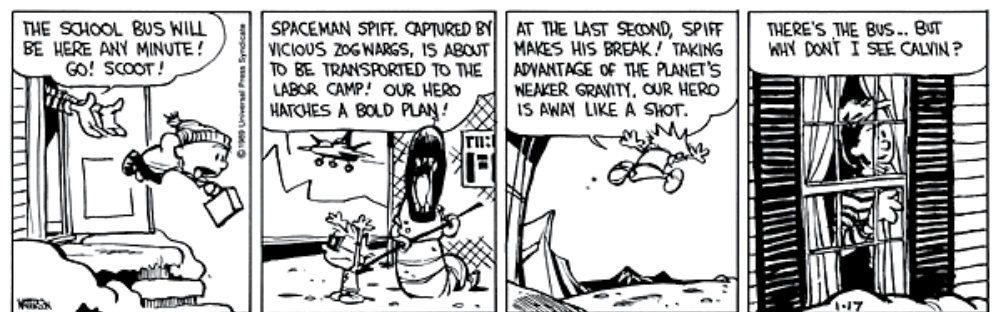
- 1. Off course
- 7. Hen concern
- 10. "Waterloo" group
- 14. Haifa greeting
- 15. La Brea stuff
- 16. Legal wrong
- 17. Easter-song animal
- 20. Shuttle org.
- 21. Comeback
- 22. Long tale
- 25. Queen or drone
- 26. Under-the-bed clump
- 30. Tra _
- 34. NATO member
- 35. Therefore
- 36. Photogs' settings
- 38. _ one's time
- 40. Skin layer
- 42. Singer James or Jones
- 43. Sharp-tongued
- 45. _ Antony
- 47. Harden
- 48. PRNDL pick
- 49. Carroll tea-party host
- 51. Wyo. neighbor
- 53. Role for Carrie
- 54. Asti _
- 58. Highlands toppers
- 62. 1999, on Chinese calendars
- 65. Doctor's prescription
- 66. Lobster _ Diavolo
- 67. Ruling threesome
- 68. Red-tag event
- 69. Go off course
- 70. Small band



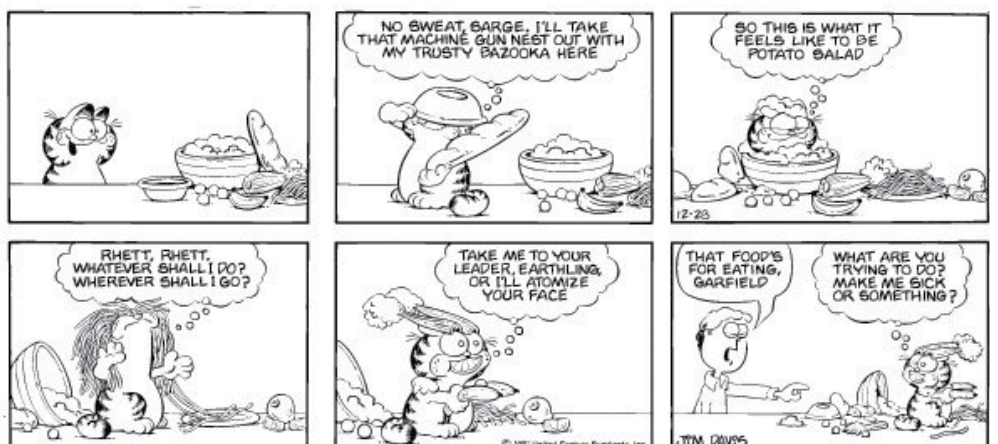
Down

- 1. Hoops network
- 2. Perlman of "Cheers"
- 3. "Phooey!"
- 4. The Yanks' div.
- 5. _'easter
- 6. HBO competitor
- 7. Suffix with novel
- 8. Fitzgerald hero
- 9. Feel blindly
- 10. Envelope abbr.
- 11. Jungle crushers
- 12. Mold-ripened cheese
- 13. Part of NATO
- 18. Sherbet flavor
- 19. Yuletide songs
- 23. Grandpa Simpson
- 24. Hurdy-__
- 26. Nicknames
- 27. Partaking of
- 28. _ Hawkins Day
- 29. " _ Rae"
- 31. Munched on
- 32. " _ luck!"
- 33. More suitable
- 36. Mockery
- 37. Stuff to the gills
- 39. Ecol. watchdog
- 41. Oscar-winner Matlin
- 44. A-one
- 46. Greek X
- 49. Repetitive chant
- 50. Bonnet holder
- 52. Cartoon duck
- 54. Medical fluids
- 55. One of the Fab Four
- 56. Push along
- 57. Defrost
- 59. In _ (soon)
- 60. Emcee's need
- 61. "Now!" in the OR
- 62. NFL gains
- 63. ACLU concerns
- 64. "Odds _ . . ."

calvin & hobbes



garfield



cont. from pg 01

A deep dive into Bhutan

country.

There were many international scholars who had dedicated years and some even decades in studying the various lesser known aspects of Bhutan. The conference also saw good Bhutanese participation and high quality of presentations from Bhutan.

One well researched field was the two linguistic sessions where Gwendolyn Hyslop expounded on the history and development of East Bodish Languages like Bumthap, Kurtop, Dzala, Upper Mangdep, Khengkha, Chali and Dakpa and how studying them helped in learning about Bhutan's ancient history. She said that there are around 19 languages in Bhutan.

Fuminobu Nishida went in-depth into Mangdebikha language but also gave a broader exposition of the various language groups in Bhutan.

Selin Grollmann showed how Tshangla is not just one uninformed language but has an incredible array of diversity through various dialects including the little known Bjokapakha, which she argued is so different from the popularly spoken Tshangla that it can even qualify as a separate language.

An interesting observation was on how the Bjokapakha speakers passed themselves as Khengpas or Khengpa speakers in front of others to assimilate better with their Khengpa neighbors, but spoke Bjokapakha amongst themselves.

Pascal Gerber talked about the Gongduk language of 1,000 to 2,000 speakers which had been discovered by Professor George Van Driem in the 90's, who did a lot of pioneering work in linguistics in Bhutan.

Both Selin and Pascal are lecturers but also students of Van Driem.

They called for the need to preserve these mostly endangered languages quoting Van Driem who said that losing a language is equivalent to losing a conceptual universe.

The linguistic field is the internationally most well researched and documented field, making it

a rich repository of Bhutanese knowledge and culture.

Fergus Lyon and Kuenga Wangmo presented their study on the case of building earthquake resilience in Bhutan which saw several questions and comments from the audience.

Francoise Pommaret presented her paper on the various seasonal traditional migrations within Bhutan including the lesser known ones and highlighted the case that Bhutanese valleys were not as isolated from each other as it is made out to be.

Nitasha Kaul in her paper 'Where is Bhutan? The historical production of an 'in-between' Bhutan,' said that Bhutan cannot be seen just from the lens of being a small country caught in-between two giant countries.

She pointed out that Bhutan is so much more and deserves to be recognized on its own rather than in mere correlation to its neighbors. She went into the historical roots of how and why Bhutan got defined with an 'in-between' entity and she argued that this is neither correct nor fair.

A plenary session on Buddhism saw Lopen Gemo Dorji talk of the significance of the masked dances of Bhutan. Lam Lotay Singay gave an exposition on the religious music and chants from Bhutan and their significance while Draplop Rinpoche Sangay Dorji went deep into the mandala and arts of Bhutan.

In the evening of the first day the ISBS guests experienced the famous Magdalen College Choir which is its signature cultural tradition. The Chaplain during the event also led prayers for Bhutan and His Majesty The King.

On day two, on a session on GNH and Development, Matthew Schuelka talked about the constraints of the education sector in Bhutan.

He called for the Bhutanization of education given the various flaws in the current system of schooling giving case examples of how countries across the world have given themselves their own education systems,

suited to their conditions and development.

In a fascinating presentation called 'Ideal Happiness,' Yoshiaki Takashi addressed the issue of why Bhutan scores in the 90's in the annual World Happiness Report, which is an outcome of the happiness resolution moved by Bhutan in the UN General Assembly.

Looking at the methodology he suggested a cultural factor at play as most Bhutanese have a very balanced idea of happiness and know that 100 percent happiness is not realistic.

Taking the cultural factor into play he presented a modified version of the methodology to calculate happiness called 'Happiness Adjusted' which saw Bhutan's happiness ranking going much higher and closer to the results in Netherlands.

Dorrine Eva van Norren gave an eye opening comparison of the Sustainable Development Goals with that of GNH and other philosophies of *Ubuntu* in Africa and *Buen Vivir* in Ecuador.

She showed how *Ubuntu* in Africa is a collectivist worldview where the interdependence of the community and group is given precedence over individuals and *Buen Vivir* or good living is bio centric and gives equal rights to all living beings where there is harmony with nature and a balance between spiritual and material wealth.

A session that saw a packed room and a lot of buzz was on 'Politics and Elections in Bhutan: The Role of the Social Media,' by Romolo Gandolfo who has done in-depth research on the field.

The room was visibly surprised to see the deep level of penetration of the social media in Bhutan.

Romolo, while presenting the positive aspect of social media in Bhutan, also delved into its darker side.

He said that the former Bhutanese Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay had the highest percentage of the electorate following him on facebook, more than any other world leaders.

An important observation of Romolo was that the electoral system of Bhutan, where only two parties make it to the final round, made it a much more intensive affair and this was also partly reflected in the social media culture.

The end of the second day saw two key note addresses from Dasho Tshering Tobgay (see story on page 1) on 'Does Bhutan matter? Stories from a Young Democracy,' and Dasho Karma Ura's address on 'Development with integrity: Bhutan's development and its Gross National Happiness Index.'

Day three saw a full auditorium as the former NC Chairperson Dasho Sonam Kinga talked on, 'Modernity of Monarchy: The case of the Wangchuk Dynasty.'

The after noon session saw two interesting papers from Dorji Penjore and Kuenga Wangmo. Dorji Penjore in his presentation 'Chukor: Water sharing institution for sharecropping and subsistence in Samcholing, Bhutan' brought forward the central idea with anecdotal evidence that it is far more effective to invest in small community irrigation projects than go for mega and expensive projects which are difficult to maintain and sustain.

Kuenga Wangmo's presentation 'Archaeology in Bhutan: Understanding Ancient Mortuary Practices,' gave an eye opening insight on various current and historical burial practices including mound burial, sky burial and even a cliff burial.

These burial methods not only give an insight into Bhutan's history, but can also hold valuable archeological and historical artifacts.

This was followed by a plenary session which looked at the way forward

for the ISBS. An important information that came out from the session is that the ISBS has started the process to register as an international civil society organization in the USA given the better tax laws in USA when it comes to such CSOs.

ISBS is also expected to keep itself active throughout and also have a conference every three to four years.

There were several other sessions and high quality papers, but attendees had to chose which ones to attend given that there were as high as three parallel sessions going on at the same time.

While ISBS was formed in 2015, this conference was the first to give it real form and impetus.

The current President of ISBS is Sabina Alkire, who is the Director of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and one of the main driving forces behind the conference. Sabina was in a Kira on all three days of the conference.

The ISBS Conference was made possible due to active participation and inputs by the Center of Bhutan Studies, Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness and University of Oxford.

The ISBS seeks to also support Bhutanese scholars, both junior and established, and it also seeks to create intellectual community and academic exchange and provide opportunities for networking, and sharing.

The ISBS also seeks to contribute to the happiness of future generations, so the it will engage both the guardians of culture and tradition and those able to use the research to enact positive change on the ground.

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Fifth Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition to be held in Samdrupjongkhar

Staff Reporter/ *Thimphu*

A committee headed by the Samdrupjongkhar Thromde planted 1710 saplings of plants and flowers around the town, in preparation of the 5th Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition, which is to be held in Samdrupjongkhar.

The saplings of plants that thrive in the southern climates, including protulaca, poinsettia, begonia, Queen of Bhutan Rose, bougainvillea, and bauhunia, among others, were granted to the Thromde as Soelra from His Majesty The King.

The 5th Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition will be held in Samdrupjongkhar. The committee responsible for the 5th RBFE has decided to inaugurate the exhibition on the 21st of February, coinciding with the Birth Anniversary of His Majesty The King.

Samdrupjongkhar was chosen as the venue for the 5th RBFE in light of the historic and geographic importance of the border town, which serves as one of the gateways to the country.



Besides promoting the local economy in floriculture and supporting small businesses through the event, the flower exhibition also aims to galvanize town beautification.

In line with this aim, work for the flower exhibition includes preparation

at the main exhibition site, as well as development of permanent gardens throughout Samdrupjongkhar town to add to the beauty of the Thromde.

Coordinated by the MOAF and a local committee chaired by the Samdrupjongkhar Thrompon,

government agencies, local government, corporations, private organizations, the business community and armed forces are working to develop micro gardens in strategic locations. The stakeholders will develop fifteen micro gardens of various sizes totaling to an area of 9.75 acres.

The Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition was initiated in 2015 upon the Royal Command of His Majesty The King. His Majesty's message on the inauguration of the 1st Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition was:

"Where we live must be clean, safe, well-organized and beautiful; for national integrity, national pride and for our bright future. This too is nation building."

Thus, the RBFE is envisioned as an event which would foster an appreciation and pride in the community for aesthetic spaces that are well cared for, resulting in the development of beautiful towns and cities in Bhutan. It also aims to promote local economy, boost tourism, and encourage local businesses in floriculture.

Fourth pay commission instituted

Staff reporter/ *Thimphu*

As provided under Article 30 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and as approved by His Majesty the King on the recommendation of the Lhengye Zhungtshog, the Royal Government is pleased to establish a time-bound autonomous pay commission with immediate effect.

The taskforce members for the Fourth Pay Commission have been selected from among cross-sectoral agencies for their wide experience and competence. The Commission shall comprise the following members, Dasho Penjore, Governor, Royal Monetary Authority as the Chairperson, and the other members are Dasho Karma Yezer Raydi, Chief Executive Officer of Druk Holding and Investment, Kesang Deki, Commissioner, Royal Civil Service Commission, Dungtu Dukpa, CEO, National Pension and Provident Fund, Sangay Dorji, Secretary General, Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tshering Dorji, Registrar

General, Royal Court of Justice, Supreme Court, Nim Dorji, Finance Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Chhime Tshering, Director, National Statistical Bureau.

Lyonchhen (Dr) Lotay Tshering, Foreign Minister (Dr) Tandi Dorji and Finance Minister Namgay Tshering met the members of the Fourth Pay Commission this evening and requested for recommendations based on in-depth analysis. The Fourth Pay Commission has been urged to consider incentivizing special skills, recognitions and extraordinary performance of the public servants in addition to regular enhancement of benefits.

The Fourth Pay Commission will examine and recommend the government on salary, allowances, benefits, and other emoluments for civil servants and other relevant public servants. The Commission which will function autonomously will submit its recommendations to the Lhengye Zhungtshog for approval by the Parliament.

Three cases of newborn abandonment reported in 2018

Damchoe Pem/ *Thimphu*

Thimphu police have received three cases of newborn abandonment in 2018. The last case reported was on 31 December 2018.

The initial incident was informed to the police by a group of kids who found an infant abandoned near the mortuary house of JDWNRH.

Police said that as per the forensic report, the infant was a fully developed female newborn. The abandoned infant was found wrapped in a pink plastic with the placenta and umbilical cord still attached.

In addition, the forensic report also stated that no external injury was established. The report also confirmed that it was home delivery. The body of the infant was kept in the mortuary since then. However, since they could not trace the mother of the infant, they handed over the body to the Thromde for proper disposal on January 10, 2019.

Police said that they were not able to establish if it was a stillbirth or

live birth. Police suspect unwanted pregnancy as the reason behind the abandonment.

Since the place of crime was away from CCTV surveillance, the police did not get any lead on the case.

Similarly, the other two cases of abandonment, the police said couldn't be ascertained, as the bodies of the infants were fished out from the river. Due to religious belief, people also bury dead infants in the river, the police conjectured.

Section 219 of PCB 2004 states that a defendant shall be guilty of the offense of abandonment of a dead infant if the defendant leaves a dead corpse of an infant in any place or manner other than required by the practice of disposal of such corpse.

Likewise, section 220 of PCB 2004 states that the offense of abandonment of a dead infant shall be a petty misdemeanor.

Police said that they are working towards determining the mother of the abandoned infant, police said.

cont. from pg 01

Ex-PM's Key-note address at Oxford focuses on Monarchy, Sovereignty, Culture, Democracy, Environment, GNH and welfare

that the poor, the landless and the destitute can approach the King for intervention and help. To create easier access for the people, His Majesty travels throughout the country. He has personally visited almost every village, in every nook and cranny of the country, making him the most widely travelled person in Bhutan."

Dasho said that most importantly, Bhutan's Kings have single handedly secured Bhutan's sovereignty.

Sovereignty

Dasho said that Bhutan still remained sovereign despite being surrounded by bigger and more densely populated neighbors.

"It's not that foreign powers didn't try to colonize Bhutan. The Tibetans invaded Bhutan no less than 17 times. And after lasting peace was secured with our Tibetan neighbor, we had to fight the British. First in 1772 with the British East India Company, and then in 1865 with the British Empire," said Dasho.

"Added to that, Bhutan had to deal with threats from missionaries, immigrants and political interference. But we succeeded in persevering as an independent country."

Dasho said that Bhutan's Kings did not fail to lead their troops personally in battle be it in 1865, when Deb Jigme Namgyel, the father of the First King, personally fought the invading British army or more recently, in 2003, when His Majesty the Fourth King, led his small army literally from the front - to dislodge Indian militants from Bhutan's southern jungles.

"So the single reason Bhutan is a sovereign country is the extraordinary leadership exercised by our Kings," said Dasho.

GNH

"But what's the point of a sovereign nation if people are not happy. That's why our Kings have given us, and the world, Gross National Happiness, a pioneering vision that aims to improve the wellbeing and happiness of our people," said Dasho.

Dasho expounded on GNH and its implementation and said, "His Majesty the King has paraphrased GNH as simply "development with values" and commanded that GNH must be "our National Conscience guiding us towards making wise decisions for a better future."

He said the Center for Bhutan Studies has identified nine domains as the conditions that influence the happiness and wellbeing of people.

"The first three domains are straightforward. Living standard, health and education. The importance of these have been widely accepted by all governments for quite some time now.

The next two domains have also started gaining currency among governments. They are environment and governance," said Dasho.

"The final four domains, however, are still at the cutting edge of government development policy. These are psychological wellbeing, time use, cultural resilience and community vitality."

He said the Center for Bhutan Studies conducts extensive GNH surveys periodically to establish where we stand as a nation in GNH terms. The results of these surveys are used by the government when formulating national policies and plans.

"GNH - Gross National Happiness - therefore, is what defines us as a nation and what guides us as we move forward as a society. GNH has become Bhutan's brand image. That image is so influential that many people are convinced that the Bhutanese are the happiest people in the world. We are not. But we do take happiness seriously, and we are trying hard," said Dasho.

Dasho said that the holistic approach to governance and development has caught the attention of several international thought leaders and public policy experts who are attempting to advance the ideals of GNH in their own constituencies.

"GNH has also been deliberated in the United Nations, and contributed

to the development of the Sustainable Development Goals," said Dasho.

"All this has made many visitors to Bhutan wonder if GNH is influenced by Buddhist values. In some ways it must be so, as Bhutan has been a predominantly Buddhist society for an uninterrupted 1500 years."

Vajrayana

Dasho said that Bhutan is one of only four countries in the world that has Buddhism as a state religion and Bhutan is the only and last surviving independent Vajrayana Buddhist Kingdom today.

"But in Bhutan, Vajrayana is thriving. We have more monks than soldiers, and many of them - the monks, that is - spend years in solitary meditation," said Dasho.

"For a population of 700,000 people we have about 2,500 monasteries. What's more, we have 10,000 chortens or stupas," said Dasho.

Dasho said that that Vajrayana is so pervasive in Bhutan that it has not just influenced Bhutan's unique culture but it has defined it.

Culture

"Our culture is unique. You can tell by the way we dress. You can also tell that our culture is different from the way we eat. We eat red rice, chew on rock hard cheese, and add butter and salt to our tea. And we consume copious amounts of chili. To us the chili is not a spice; to us the chili is our principle vegetable," said Dasho.

"Similarly, the way we sing and dance is also different. But what's truly unique is archery, our national sport. It is a celebration of our martial past, our love for song and dance, and our belief in rituals and ceremony."

"What I like the most about our culture is our women. Or rather that they have a special place in our society. Women do not take their husband's name or wear their wedding band when they marry. Forget about taking the husband's name, in Bhutan, a man is expected to move into his wife's home and

to serve her family. That's why family inheritance traditionally passed from mother to daughter," said Dasho.

Dasho said that any people think that the Bhutanese are a homogenous people since there are barely 700,000 Bhutanese but this couldn't be further from the truth as Bhutan has 19 separate languages.

Environment

Apart from the forest cover, constitutional protections and Bhutan being the only country world that is carbon neutral, Dasho said Bhutan has great bio-diversity in its forests with 5600 vascular plant species.

"Bhutan has more than 200 species of mammals. To put this in perspective, all of Europe has just 219 mammal species. 27 of Bhutan's mammals are globally threatened. These include the rare Bengal Tiger and the shy Red Panda. 770 bird species have been recorded in Bhutan. All of Europe has 700 bird species. Plus, we have about 900 species of butterfly. Europe has just 482 species. What's more, every year we hear of more species of birds, butterfly and insects being discovered in Bhutan."

Dasho said that human activity in protected areas is strictly monitored to the extent that mountain climbing is strictly forbidden in Bhutan. "As such we have the tallest virgin peak in the world: Gangkar Phuensum which stands at 7570 meters has never been climbed."

"All this is ultimately because of the visionary leadership of our Kings. They are the true champions of the environment," said Dasho.

Welfare

Dasho said that a little known fact about Bhutan is that Bhutan is a fully functioning welfare state. He said education and healthcare are free, and all citizens have recourse to compensation in times of disaster, deprivation and destitution.

"This is why, in a recent survey, our people indicated that their biggest expense for healthcare was conducting religious rituals."

Dasho said that it is expensive and almost 30% of the government's budget each year is set aside for social programs including healthcare and education.

"But the returns are also phenomenal. In the last 30 years, life expectancy increased from 45 years to 70, while infant mortality rates have plummeted from 140 per 1000 live births to just 15.

Literacy which was under 50% has increased to 72%, and youth literacy is now at an impressive 93%. And importantly, the proportion of the poor reduced from 31% to 8% in just 15 years. Multidimensional poverty is even lower at 5.8%," said Dasho.

"Our GDP is barely 2 billion pounds! But there too we've made considerable progress: 30 years ago our per capita GDP was only \$155; today it has increased manifold to \$3500 making Bhutan eligible to graduate from the Least Developed Countries category," said Dasho.

Democracy

Dasho said that though multiparty parliamentary democracy was introduced in Bhutan in 2008 the democratic process has already taken firm root, with citizens being fully aware of the power of their franchise.

"Having voted for three different governments in our first three elections, one has to conclude that the Bhutanese have already developed a thorough understanding of democracy. Whether my party wins or not, and whether I'm happy with the outcome of the elections or not is inconsequential. What is of consequence is that, through the democratic process, our people win," said Dasho.

Dasho said that His Majesty the King did not just introduce democracy in Bhutan, he imposed it. "But His Majesty went further - he educated and trained all his people in the democratic process. And most importantly, His

cont. from pg 11

Ex-PM's Key-note address at Oxford focuses on Monarchy, Sovereignty, Culture, Democracy, Environment, GNH and welfare

Majesty the King designed our democracy to suit our unique needs, ensuring that it is fit-for-purpose to serve country and people," said Dasho.

"So our democracy is not an end in itself, it is the means to protect our sovereignty, to nurture our unique culture, to preserve our pristine environment, to strengthen our welfare system, and to ensure that political leaders and decision makers remain

faithful to the ideals of Gross National Happiness."

Dasho then gave some suggestions on how the areas mentioned by him intersect with Bhutan Studies.

"First, focusing on each, it is interesting to study and understand each of these qualities well. For example, why is it that visionary environmental policies are politically feasible in Bhutan even if they have serious

economic implications? And why are such policies absolutely impossible in many other countries," asked Dasho.

"Next, studying change is vital: How are the rich traditional cultural and language groups navigating the entry of cell phones and globalization? We know from our statistics bureau that in the five years between 2012 and 2017, multidimensional poverty halved. But what do

better services in education, health care, roads, and electricity feel like," added Dasho.

"Last and perhaps most importantly, research for policy is also needed to address some of the challenges that Bhutan faces – climate change is a prime example.

But there are other challenges too: rapid and unplanned urbanization is a big one; creating desirable

jobs for the young is another. And as we graduate from the Least Developed Countries category and donor presence changes, we need to re-adjust our economic patterns – but how do we do that?"

He said coming to Gross National Happiness, Bhutan has learnt that it does not need to necessarily follow the policy models of other countries. In some areas Bhutan can innovate and can lead.

Quality of education and skills to given a priority

Tshering Delma/ *Thimphu*

While a commendable progress has been made in education system over the years and is very close to achieving universal primary education in a current scenario, the main question, however, has always been on the quality of education and training in country.

Numerous studies highlighted the shortcomings in both learning outcomes and skills. "While accessibility has improved significantly, various studies have pointed out the need to urgently address issues around the quality of education", states the 12th plan report.

The report pointed out that in a diagnostic standardized test conducted in 2008, it was found that a student learning outcomes were below the minimum expectations of their grade levels and are unable to perform basic numeracy and literacy tasks. "Majority of students were unable to understand core concepts and apply knowledge to real-life situations across grades and subjects."

Similarly, the report says that the findings by the education ministry showed that children could not master the curriculum within the prescribed time, resulting in high primary school grade repetition.

As per the Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA -D) Report, 2018, it was found that while students in Bhutan in general have higher success rates in items requiring lower cognitive skills, a significant gap exists in performance in more demanding tasks.

"Overall, it was concluded that that

Bhutanese students have performed at par with top PISA-D countries but significantly below Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average."

'Quality of education and skills improved' is one of the seventeen national key results areas (NKRA) of the 12th plan, aimed at achieving excellence in student learning outcomes comparable to leading international standards while also reflecting the country's rich culture and traditions.

Bringing the quality education and skills development refers to early childhood care and development (ECCD), general education, technical and vocational education, tertiary education, and non-formal and continuing education.

Some of the strategies outlined in the 12th five year plan to address the challenges and achieve the key result area have been identified in trying to create pathways between mainstream and vocational education, revamping technical and vocational education and strengthening value education are also some of the identified strategies.

Some major programs highlighted in the 12th plan to achieve the key result area includes quality and inclusive education improvement through consolidation and decentralized system, enhancing teacher development and support and improving equity and quality of tertiary education.

Improvement in quality and relevance of school curriculum and implementation, enhancing the quality and standard of examination and assessment systems and enhancing quality and relevance of school education are also some of the major programs in the 12th five year plan.

Preventive, curative and rehabilitative healthcare services for everyone in the 12th plan

Tshering Delma/ *Thimphu*

Enhancing a healthy and caring society will be the priority of the health ministry in the 12th five-year plan. The health sector plans to work towards creating a healthier nation by taking free, equitable and quality healthcare to everyone which includes preventive, curative and rehabilitative services.

The key result areas also include care needs for vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, child monks, and nuns, persons with disabilities and youth in conflict with law to provide targeted care services.

Some of the main challenges remain in the changing disease patterns- the onset of a triple burden of diseases and the escalating cost of delivering health care.

Taking specialized healthcare services to the needy, upgrading skills of health workers and ensuring adequate deployment, promoting Bhutan as a center of excellence for indigenous medicine in the region and curbing non-communicable diseases are identified as a strategy to overcome the ongoing challenges and achieve the priority of the 12th plan.

Other strategies also include strengthening tertiary healthcare services including referral system, strengthening healthcare services and facilities at dzongkhag and gewog level and automating and digitalizing patient information for

efficient management, tracking and follow-up.

Considering the exorbitant cost in treating a patient with non-communicable disease (NCD) and high rate of NCDs, the health ministry has identified the case as one of the key challenges that need to be tackled in the 12th plan.

Communicable disease on other hand is also seen as a major concern in the health sector due to the fact that the prevalence of Multi-Drug Resistant (MDR) TB and HIV-TB co-infection is increasing while the cross border transmission is still an issue.

Sustaining healthcare and financing in the coming years with gradual phasing out of external support is seen as a challenge in the future while the issue with malnutrition and retaining good doctors and specialists is seen as another main challenge.

Five programs which are outlined in the 12th plan book to be implemented by Ministry of Health (MoH) are programs on governance, health workforce and financing which are aimed to develop healthcare workforce both in numbers, skills development and improving management efficiency.

Improving access to quality tertiary healthcare services would be implemented by the national referral hospital while strengthening medical products and regulatory services to be implemented by the drug regulatory authority.

Population projected to reach only 883,866 persons by 2047

Damchoe Pem/ Thimphu

Lyonchhen (Dr) Lotay Tshering launched the report on Bhutan's Population Projections (2017-2047) on Friday in the capital.

Chhime Tshering, the Director of National Statistical Bureau (NSB) said that population projection is the computation of future population based on current population size, assumptions on future trends in fertility, mortality, and migration, combined with past trends and experts.

He said, "It is one of the main statistical data that provides an estimate of future population, which is critical for planning and policy formulation. It can alert policymakers to major demographic trends and assist in coming up with policy interventions for sustained socio-economic growth."

PHCB 2017 is the primary source of data; however, he

said that they also have used other nationally representative household surveys to study the past demographic trends and to extrapolate the future demographic trajectories.

The report projected that the population of Bhutan will continue to grow but at a slower pace.

The population is projected to reach 883,866 persons by 2047, staying below the one million mark.

Bhutan has been experiencing steep fertility decline in the recent past and it is expected to remain below the replacement level of 2.1 (number of children per woman during her entire reproductive age) in the foreseeable future. Due to the declining fertility rates, the birth rate will decline substantially to 11 births per 1000 population and the annual growth rate will fall from 0.99 percent in 2017 to 0.27 percent in 2047, according to the report.

In addition, the mortality rate is expected to fall but due to the aging population, the crude death rate is going to maintain at around the same level as in 2017 with a marginal increase to about 8 deaths per 1000 population by 2047.

With the aging of the population, the age structure of the population is projected to change notably over time. The share of the population in the ages 0-14 years will fall considerably from 26 percent to 17 percent, and that of ages 65+ years will increase from 6 percent to 13 percent during the projection period.

The urbanization in Bhutan is happening at a moderate pace and by 2047 it is projected that more than half of the total population (56.8%) will reside in urban areas. The population growth is not expected to be uniform across all Dzongkhags.

Meanwhile, Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering said that this

is not good news for Bhutan. He said, "Bhutan's population in 2040 will touch 8 and a half lakhs, way below 1 mn. But what I fail to understand is that the growth rate now is 1.9 and it is expected to fall to 1.7. It scares me because we know that at least there should be 2.2 to 2.3 fertility rate in order to replace, but of course, it depends upon the mortality rate and health care services."

"If we put the right formula in the right place, we can derive better revenue from demographic dividends, more than the hydropower," Lyonchhen reassured.

The projection report also reveals that about 30 percent of the total population will reside in Thimphu Dzongkhag by 2047 and no other Dzongkhags will have a population more than 100,000 persons although some Dzongkhags could have a population exceeding 50,000 persons.

On the contrary, due to the

sharp decline in the fertility rates, the number of babies born annually is going to decrease and subsequently, the population in the school going age would decline gradually calling for a policy shift in the education system.

Likewise, with aging population, the median age is projected to increase to 40 years by 2047 from 26.9 in 2017 (meaning half of the population in Bhutan is going to be above 40 years and the other half younger), which would mean increased Non-Communicable and degenerative diseases, giving more pressure on health and other social services.

The report was published by the National Statistics Bureau (NSB) with technical and financial assistance from the UNFPA. The report is prepared at two different levels: "National level" and "Sub-National (Dzongkhag) level".

Low occupancy in Motanga Industrial Park questioned

Sonam Yangdon/ Thimphu

During the Friday question hour in the parliament, member from Dewathang Gomdar questioned the minister of economic affairs, Lyonpo Loknath Sharma on the low occupancy of the industrial parks.

"The DPT government identified and developed a number of industrial areas in east, south and central Bhutan and all political parties promised to promote balanced regional development. However, due to minimal interest from entrepreneurs, these industrial areas remained largely unused and unoccupied, but on the other hand it has been learnt that recent enquiry to set up an industry at Motanga was met with the answer that the area fully occupied. So, if the minister could clarify as to how and when the area has been filled up when there are

just two factories in the area," questioned MP Ugyen Dorji.

Motanga Industrial Park is located in Samdrupjongkhar with an area of 156 acres. It is the only park that is fully funded by Bhutanese government. During the 11th FYP, a total budget of Nu 100 mn was allotted for the park.

To this, the economic minister responded that industrial development has been critical in diversification of the economy, job creation, export enhancement and revenue generation. "Therefore, efforts are made to develop industries in a cluster approach in order to derive the benefits from the close geographical proximity amongst industries based on establishing value chains and the government will work to operationalize all the four industrial parks."

Lyonpo Loknath Sharma clarified that the existing two industries which are in

operation were existent even before Motanga has been identified as an industrial park.

He said that as per the master plan of Motanga Industrial Park, the area is divided into three zones of industries- mineral and chemical based, forest and wood based, and food and agro based. However, the food and agro based industry zone is further divided into two zones- food and agro based and services and other industries. The reason for creating additional zone is to allow services industries and other industries which are not accommodated in the other three zones.

"As per the master plan, a total area of 27.11 acres has been earmarked for mineral and chemical based industry and currently, the whole area has been allotted to 14 promoters, which is the exact space earmarked for mineral and chemical

industry. The land allotment orders to these promoters have been issued and some have already obtained their industry licenses, while some are in the process of seeking environmental clearances," said Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, construing that the grievances submitted by some of the prospects over land allotment might be in regard to the allotment for mineral and chemical industry which has already been occupied.

The economic minister, however, said that since some of the prospects who've been allotted the space on provisional period are still seeking necessary clearances and project approvals from relevant agencies, and failure to which will result in the termination of the space allotment, there might still be opportunity for those who're interested.

When another member raised that instead of keeping

other zones vacant, it would be wise if the government can allot the space to those prospects who wish to establish mineral and chemical industry. Lyonpo Loknath responded that if the government allots the vacant spaces near food and agro based industries for establishment of chemical and mineral based industry, it might violate the food safety standard which is hazardous. "However, we will explore other possible measures and carry out a study."

The country's four upcoming major industrial parks- Jigmeling Industrial Park in Sarpang, Dhamdum Industrial Park in Samtse, Motanga Industrial Park in Samdrupjongkhar, and Bondeyma Industrial Park in Monggar are all expected to be complete within the 12th FYP, whereby the investors will develop and invest in business ventures once the plot allocations are made.