



**EMBRACING A LEADER'S MAJESTIC LEGACY**

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BICMA REGISTRATION No: 100001147



ISBN 978-99980-709-0-5



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*Dedicated to the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck,  
who ascended the Golden Throne formally on June 2, 1974*



**TASHICHHODZONG**  
THIMPHU, BHUTAN

**HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN MOTHER**

## **PREFACE**

As we commemorate the golden jubilee of the coronation of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, our beloved King of Destiny, we do so with hearts full of gratitude and eyes toward the future he envisioned for Bhutan. His Majesty's reign, underpinned by the profound philosophy that unity and faith are the bedrocks of national prosperity, has indelibly shaped our nation. It is with this ethos – embracing each other as Bhutanese, united in purpose and spirit – that our kingdom has flourished, achieving unprecedented levels of peace, happiness and well-being.

For 34 illustrious years, the Great fourth guided Bhutan with wisdom and compassion, his governance becoming a golden era of progress and unity. This book, “Embracing a Leader’s Majestic Legacy,” organized by Garab Dorji and authored by Ugyen Tenzin, is a heartfelt homage to His Majesty’s transformative impact on our nation and beyond. It explores not just the achievements, but the enduring influence of a monarch whose legacy continues to inspire both his people and those across the globe who look to Bhutan for a model of integrity and enlightened leadership.

Let us prostrate at the feet of Drukgyal Zhipa with deep gratitude and reverence.

Lungten Gyalpo Kusey Ringwa Sho,

Pelden Drukpa Gyelo!

  
**Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck**  
**Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother**

At the tender age of sixteen, he embarked upon the noble endeavor of shepherding a realm where the nascent roads whispered of journeys yet to be traversed, destinies yet to unfold. Before nineteen, he ascended the throne, bedecked in regal splendor as the Fourth Dragon King.

At fifty, his soul enriched by the gentle caress of time's wisdom, he heralded the dawn of a new epoch in the land he had ardently nurtured. It was an act of humility unparalleled, a testament to his profound understanding of leadership. With graceful demeanor and far-reaching foresight, he entrusted his enduring legacy to his successor, initiating a paradigm shift towards democratic governance.

A year hence, amidst the zenith of his prime, he gracefully relinquished his crown, a gesture exuding unparalleled elegance.

Thus unfolds the tale of a luminary, a sage within his sovereign domain—a reverent homage to his indomitable courage, his visionary foresight, and the enduring legacy of his reign.



**When I say that I will put my life before my men, I don't say it because it sounds beautiful; I say it because I genuinely mean it from the core of my heart.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King, December 2003**



By the paramount benediction of the Triple Gem; the providence of the Guardian Deities; the devout prayers of our benevolent ancestors; and the splendid luck of a fortunate people, Bhutan was blessed with such a superlative leader as His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck– a King of visionary foresight, pure clarity of thought, unparalleled determination, and excellent statesmanship; a King who dedicated a lifetime in carrying out the unimaginably profound task of Nation-Building, in the service of His country and people.

His Majesty the King, November 11, 2015, Changligmithang, Thimphu.



## Bhutan's Radiant Luminary

At the tender age of sixteen, amidst the poignant shadow of his father's untimely departure, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck ascended to the revered throne of Bhutan as its Fourth Druk Gyalpo. This solemn juncture marked a pivotal moment for the Kingdom, poised at the nascent stages of planned development, with the Third Five Year Plan just unfurling and Bhutan freshly inducted into the United Nations fold in 1971.

In the wake of mourning for his esteemed predecessor, the youthful monarch exhibited an extraordinary fortitude, acutely cognizant of the gravity of his responsibilities. Tasked with the momentous duty of steering Bhutan towards modernity, he inherited the mantle of economic advancement meticulously laid by his father. From the dawn of 1972 until his unprecedented abdication in 2006, His Majesty unfalteringly devoted himself to the service of his beloved nation, orchestrating a prodigious era of economic prosperity and metamorphosing Bhutan from a realm reminiscent of medieval times into a bastion of contemporary governance.

His visionary stewardship not only elevated Bhutan's prominence on the global stage but also introduced the world to the revolutionary paradigm of Gross National Happiness (GNH), eliciting widespread admiration among experts in development. Gradually, he initiated the prudent devolution of authority, charting the course for Bhutan's evolution into a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy. Moreover, he personally led Bhutan's valiant armed forces in repelling foreign incursions, safeguarding the sacred

sovereignty and security of his cherished realm.

Dubbed the "Golden Era" of Bhutan, His Majesty's reign witnessed the nation's ascension as a formidable force regionally and globally. Revenue-generating ventures such as hydropower and tourism were established, while infrastructure, education, and healthcare flourished under his sagacious direction. Guided by his sage leadership, Bhutan embarked upon an epoch of unprecedented progress, symbolizing a beacon of prosperity and stability amidst the tumult of the region.

On June 2, 2024, we embark upon the grand festivities of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck's Coronation, a momentous occasion steeped in historical significance.

As an expression of our profound admiration and reverence, we undertake a solemn endeavor to honor the remarkable tenure of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, delineating the pivotal milestones that adorned his stewardship over Bhutan. Mindful of the vast expanse of his 34-year reign, we confine our reflection to select milestones, recognizing that encapsulating His Majesty's legacy would require naught less than composing an epic.

Furthermore, in humble tribute, we seek to illustrate how His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has magnificently carried forth the visionary ideals of his esteemed father and mentor, ensuring the perpetuation of a noble legacy that continues to illuminate the path of our Kingdom.

## A PROPHECY FULFILLED – THE BIRTH



■ HRH with the Third Druk Gyalpo

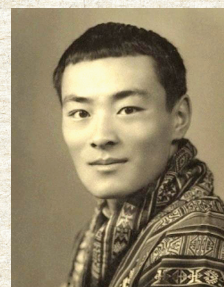
According to Guru Padma Sambhava’s revelations chronicled by Tertön Tenzin Drugdra Dorji, a prophecy foretold the birth of a remarkable leader in the “Southern Baeyul” region. This destined individual, born in the Female Sheep Year in a place called Wodrong (present-day Kabjisa, near Dechhencholing), would possess distinctive features—a good mole and dimple on his face—and would bring profound positive changes to the nation. This figure, if crowned King, would usher in an era of peace, happiness, and progress within twelve years.

The revelations mention that:

**“In the Southern Baeyul;  
Surrounded by three mountains;  
The land of peace and happiness;  
In a place called Wodrong (Kabjisa);  
A person born in the Female Sheep Year;  
Would possess good mole and dimple on his face;  
If he becomes a King;  
He would bring good changes in the country;  
Within twelve years;  
He would benefit Buddha’s teachings;  
All the people would enjoy peace and happiness.”**

**If I were to make a prayer, I would ask that during my son’s reign the people of my country would be far more prosperous and happy than they are today.**

**His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck**





## EARLY LIFE

The fulfillment of this prophecy unfolded on November 11, 1955, with the birth of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, to the Third Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Her Majesty Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck at Dechhencholing Palace. The auspicious occasion was marked by remarkable signs—a change in the color of the holy water of Menchu Kaba and the blossoming of a marigold in front of the National Assembly Hall, heralding a prosperous future for the Kingdom. To commemorate the birth, a three-day national holiday was declared by the Third Druk Gyalpo.

The birth of the Crown Prince brought immense joy to Their Majesties and the entire nation. With Bhutan embarking on planned development and opening up to the world, the grooming of the heir to the throne became paramount. The Third Druk Gyalpo ensured the young prince imbibed the qualities befitting a great leader from an early age.



■ HRH with Gyalum Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck

At the age of three, His Royal Highness (HRH) Jigme Singye Wangchuck was honored in a grand ceremony at Tashichhodzong, receiving the well wishes and respect of the monk body, officials, and the public. His education commenced at six at Dechhencholing Palace, and in 1963, he began studies at St. Joseph School in Darjeeling, India. However, due to geopolitical tensions, he was compelled to leave Darjeeling a year later.

HRH continued his education in England at Summerfield and Heathersdown Schools, fostering lifelong friendships and cultural exchanges. Returning to Bhutan in 1969, he embarked on further education at Namselling Palace and later at Ugyen Wangchuck Academy in Paro, where he was entrusted with significant responsibilities, notably as Chairman of the Planning Commission in 1971.

In early 1972, the Lhengye Zhungtshog recommended appointment of HRH The Crown Prince as Trongsa Penlop. It was at that time that HRH was accompanying the Third Druk Gyalpo and getting acquainted with the affairs of the state. HRH was to return for his further studies “after completing a period of active training.”

On May 15, 1972, HRH was installed as the Trongsa Penlop in the Throne Room of Trashichhodzong. The significance of the occasion and the joy that followed is symbolized by the three day celebrations, which ended only on May 19th, 1972.



■ His Royal Highness at Trongsa

### **HRH Graces First Official National Day**

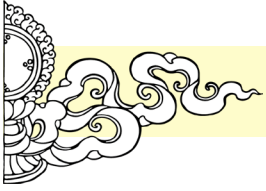
For the first time in history, Bhutan celebrated its National Day on December 17, 1971, to mark the enthronement anniversary of His Majesty the First Druk Gyalpo, Ugyen Wangchuck.

Throughout the nation, government officials and members of the public gathered in district towns, where the National Flag was unfurled and the National Anthem was sung. Later, special performances were held to honor the occasion. In Thimphu, a grand function was organized at Changlingmithang ground, emphasizing the importance of the occasion.

A large number of the public were present at 10 am when His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Jigme Singye Wangchuck arrived.

After their arrival, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince unfurled the National Flag and the entire assembly sang the National Anthem of Bhutan. His Majesty the King then took the salute as men of the Royal Bodyguard and the Royal Bhutan Army presented arms.

Bhutan's first official National Day ceremony marked another milestone in the modern history of this land.



## TRONGSA PENLOP CELEBRATIONS

On May 16th, 1972, His Royal Highness (HRH) participated in the festivities at Changlingmithang, where archery matches, mask dances, a dog show, and an exhibition hockey match were featured. The following day, amidst various activities, the Royal Bhutan Army garnered applause from onlookers for their ground and horse-work display.

On the morning of May 18th, members of the Royal Family arrived at 9 am, followed by HRH, at Changlingmithang. A tent pegging and show jumping display was showcased, accompanied by a band performance from the Don Bosco Technical School. Additionally, a sword-fencing demonstration was presented. The audience was entertained by a barrel race for Thimphu Public School, a horse race, and a stick race, which proved to be highly amusing. Various other events filled the day, including athletics, hurdle jumps, a fancy football match, kabbadi, Tibetan dances, Nepali dances, dances of Trongsa, a “Thank You” dance performed by Thimphu Public School girls, and ongoing archery. In the afternoon, pony and horse races took place.

On the final day, an evening cinema show was arranged for the public at Changlingmithang Ground. Despite drizzling rain in the late afternoon, a considerable crowd turned out to attend.

### Significance of Trongsa Penlop

The ceremony is equal to the installation ceremony of the Prince of Wales in Great Britain. On his installation as the Trongsa Penlop, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince is truly regarded as the heir to the Bhutanese Throne. A deeper significance is that before becoming the King of Bhutan in 1907, the Crown Prince's great grandfather the late King Ugyen Wangchuck was the Penlop of Trongsa. Since then each Crown Prince of Bhutan has always been installed as the Trongsa Penlop signifying his true heritage to the Throne. In the case of the present Crown Prince, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, a full recommendation for the installation was made by a special Cabinet meeting (Lhengye Zhungtshog) to His Majesty the King and later approved by the Spring session of the National Assembly.



## DARKNESS IN DRUKYUL

### THE NATION MOURNS THE LOSS OF A GREAT AND NOBLE KING



His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, our beloved King, passed away peacefully while staying in Nairobi hotel on July 21, 1972, at 10:20 pm (7:50 pm local time). His Majesty had been suffering from muscular pains in his knees and had gone to Nairobi for a checkup and rest, accompanied by Her Royal Highness the Royal Mother, His Royal Highness the Trongsa Penlop, the Foreign Minister, the Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Development, and personal physicians and attendants. His Majesty reached Nairobi on July 14, and had been making some progress and was planning to go for further treatment to Zurich where he had asked his wife the Queen and his eldest daughter Princess Sonam Chhoden to join him. Before he could leave, however, His Majesty suddenly suffered a fatal heart attack.

Our beloved King's premature passing away at the age of 44 is an irreparable loss to Bhutan and has plunged our whole Nation and people and the Royal Family in profound sorrow. His Majesty had devoted his entire life to the welfare and happiness of our people, and to the progress and development of our country. It was due to his great wisdom, foresight and untiring efforts that he brought Bhutan into the Community of Nations and had Bhutan universally recognised as a sovereign independent state. On the night that His Majesty passed away, the Royal Mother and Crown Prince sent the sad news to Her Majesty the Queen and Royal Princesses, and then His Royal Highness the Trongsa Penlop spoke to Her Excellency the Prime Minister of India on the telephone telling her of our great loss. In Kenya the Indian High Commission gave every assistance, and on the evening of July 22 the Cortège of our beloved King left Nairobi and started the sad return journey home. The Government of India and Government officials and Army officers and Air-India personnel extended all courtesy and assistance and sympathy. The Foreign Secretary of India Mr. T. N. Kaul, the Chief of Protocol Mr. Mahboob Ahmed, Director (North) in the External Affairs Ministry, Mr. L. Mehrotra and other senior Indian officials received His Late Majesty at Bombay Airport and conveyed the sympathy of the Government and people of India to the Royal Mother and His Royal Highness the Trongsa Penlop.

In the early hours of the morning of July 23 at Dum Dum Airport, Calcutta the Royal Cortège was received by Her Royal Highness Princess Dechhen Wangmo, Dorji Lupon, the Finance Minister, the Chairman of the Royal Advisory Council and Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command. Senior Indian Army officers acted as pallbearers. The acting Consul General of Nepal placed a wreath on behalf of His Majesty the King of Nepal, and also conveyed a personal message of sympathy and condolence from the King of Nepal to the new King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

Mr. Mahboob Ahmed, Chief of Protocol of the Government of India accompanied the Royal Cortege to Hasimara, and Mr. Mehrotra, Director (North), accompanied the Royal Cortege to Thimphu.

The Indian Air Force Plane left Dum Dum just before dawn and landed at Hasimara airfield at 6:10 am. Amidst chanting of prayers by the monks from Tashichhodzong, our beloved Majesty the Late King was received by Her Majesty the Queen and the two youngest Princesses and other members of the Royal Family, Dunjom Rimpoche, the Representative of India in Bhutan Mr. & Mrs. Gokhale, and innumerable people, both Bhutanese and Indian who had come to pay their homage and respects to our great King. A detachment of an Indian Army unit presented arms and then rested on-arms while the Royal Cortege passed the unit.

The Royal Cortege left Hasimara by road and reached the Royal Mothers Goenpa at Phuntsholing at 7:30 am where Dunjom Rimpoche and the Bhutanese monks performed the sacred Buddhist rites for His Late Majesty. At 0:30 am the Royal Cortege started the journey to Thimphu. Throughout the journey, his people sorrowfully lined the route. At 3:30 pm in the soft rays of the evening light, the Royal Cortege reached the Garden Palace where His Holiness the Je Khenpo and Tashichhodzong monks, together with our people and officers, and the Royal Bhutan Army and Royal Body Guards and Royal Bhutan Police received the Royal Cortege and paid their loving homage and respects to their beloved King. Prayers for our Late King were at once offered in the Royal Cottage and throughout the country. His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa and His Holiness Dengur Khentsi Rimpoche, the Chogyal of Sikkim, the Crown Prince and other members of the Sikkim Royal Family, and innumerable people came to offer their prayers and respects.

Special Buddhist rites for our Late King will be performed daily until the 49th forty-ninth day, on September 10. His Late Majesty will lie in state in Thimphu till October 20 when the Royal Cortege will start the journey to Bumthang. The Royal cremation will take place at Kurjey in Bumthang on October 28 at the same place where the previous Kings of Bhutan were cremated. Kurjey is one of the holiest places in Bhutan blessed by Guru Rimpoche and most sacred for all our people.

Foreign dignitaries and friends who wish to pay their respects to His Late Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck may do so in Thimphu from August 11 to September 10. The funeral Cortege will leave Thimphu for Kurjey on October 20, and after halting for one night each at Tencholing and Trongsa, will reach Kurjey on October 22. After five days of prayers, the cremation will be performed at Kurjey on October 28. State mourning will be observed for one year. The national flag will be flown at half mast, and there will be no public entertainment during the mourning period. All offices and institutions in the country were closed for one week from July 22 as a mark of respect to the Late King, and all prisoners granted pardon.

Bhutan has lost a noble King and a great Patriot who gave his unfailing love to his people and unparalleled service and devotion to the Nation. Every Bhutanese will cherish in his heart the memory of our beloved King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.

*Source: Kuensel, August 18, 1972*

The annals of Bhutan's history were marred by the tragic loss of His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo in 1972, casting a somber pall over the realm. Yet, from the depths of mourning emerged a beacon of hope in the form of a youthful leader, HRH Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who, at a mere 16 years of age, assumed the mantle of leadership with a grace and sagacity beyond his years.

In the face of profound sorrow gripping the nation, he espoused a clarion call for unity and progress, guiding Bhutan through the tumultuous currents of transition. In 1972, he was anointed as Trongsa Penlop, and within a span of two years, the auspicious dawn of June 2, 1974, witnessed his ascension to the throne as the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, heralding the commencement of an epoch marked by extraordinary stewardship and vision.



■ HRH with late Ashi Phuntsho Choden Wangchuck, who passed away on August 24, 2003 at the age of 92



## WORLD'S YOUNGEST KING TAKES CHARGE

### ROYAL PROCLAMATION TO THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN

A great misfortune has befallen upon our Kingdom. Despite medical treatment and prayers offered for his recovery, my beloved Father His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the source of all our present and future hopes and happiness, the parent of our welfare, our innermost Heart, passed away in Nairobi, the Capital of Kenya, at half past ten at night on the additional Tenth day of the Sixth month in this Year of the Water Rat. It is as if the Sun of this Kingdom's happiness has set at noon and night fallen during the day. The Nation is overwhelmed with immeasurable grief.

Even though we are a small Kingdom, it was due to my beloved Father's great kindness, wisdom and foresight that we have been protected till now from the dangers of foreign enemies, internal dissension, epidemics and famines, whereas other countries in the world today have little peace and happiness.

As if warmed by the Sun shining through the clouds, we have been established firmly in a state of security and tranquility. Forsaken now by our loving Ruler we are all at a loss as to what to do like a blind man abandoned in the middle of the field.

In particular, speaking for myself my sorrow in having lost my own Father is indeed very great, what is more, the Nation has lost a King the like of whose kind, has, till now, never been known. The parent of this Country's welfare having now forsaken us and departed in peace, the grievous suffering of the whole Kingdom at having been left without a protector is almost unbearable.

The feeling of sorrow in itself increases our

great grief. Since my noble Father the King has succumbed to the transient nature of all existence, it now falls upon me to join the line of the Dynastic succession to the throne, however unworthy I may be.

According to the great trust and hope that you have placed in me, for my part, therefore, I hope to serve my Kingdom and people with all my heart and soul to the best of my ability. Although someone like myself will be unable to perform the kind of service to our Kingdom such as my Father rendered, yet it will be my constant endeavor to emulate his deeds as far as possible.

Ours being a Religious Kingdom, and due especially to the compassion of the Lord Buddha and the guardian deities of our country and moreover on account of the strong and unbroken faith existing between Ruler and subjects, and because of the fact that servants of the Government are doing their utmost to serve the country with devotion, I feel that the Kingdom will not fall into serious decline.

For my part, therefore, I am now trying to bear the great sorrow that has befallen us and at present we are having the last rites for my Father performed as well as possible. All of you must also bear your grief with fortitude, and with strong effort in each of your own tasks. We must all unite with one mind and joint endeavour for the sake of the strength and progress of our Kingdom .

*His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, fourth hereditary monarch of the Kingdom of Bhutan. 15th day of the 6th month in the year of the Water Rat.*

*"As Crown Prince you are like a father to all Bhutanese. A father will not betray his children; so take care of the people." "The three Gems – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are like the past, present and future protectors; don't neglect them." "Peace will depend on law and justice. Treat everyone equally."*

These were some of the last words of the Third Druk Gyalpo to the young Crown Prince, Jigme Singye Wangchuck.



## HIS MAJESTY'S ADDRESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



I wish to address this Assembly today briefly on the subject of the passing away of my late father, His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck who was the parent of our country's welfare and our most beloved and precious ruler. To the great misfortune of the nation, His Majesty fell seriously

ill sometime ago and departed for Nairobi, the Capital of Kenya, to receive treatment. Despite the medical attention and religious ceremonies performed for his recovery, His Majesty suddenly passed away there at 10:30 pm on July 21, 1972. Terrible grief has therefore come to us all as if



night had fallen during the light of day. Speaking for myself also, the personal sorrow on the decease of my own father is indeed very great.

However, just as we, having been born, will all have to die one day, it should be remembered that my father has only succumbed to the transient nature of worldly existence. Our grief is also somewhat lessened when we recall that during the period of His Majesty's life time, 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.

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 has now entered the forefront of world affairs. All of you are aware that His late Majesty not only acted for the present and immediate welfare of the country but also looked to its future security as well.

With regard to the cremation rites of my late father, Thimphu as the Capital may be seen as the most fitting place for its performance. However, when His Majesty was suffering an illness at Phuntsholing last year he said that all his forebears had been cremated at the temple of Kurjey Lhakhang in Bumthang, he himself would be very pleased if later the same could be done for him. The preparations we are making for His late Majesty's cremation ceremonies at Kurjey Lhakhang are therefore in accordance with his will.

In respect of the Government works which we share and which have to be undertaken from now on, I feel that for some time it would be best to continue with the wise policies laid down by my father.

Although I myself do not possess wide experience in Government work, I shall be able to con-

sult with the Royal Advisory Council and with the Lhengye Shungtshog. In addition to this, it will be convenient to refer important matters of state to the bi-annual meetings of the Assembly. Speaking for myself, I have an earnest desire to serve our beloved country and its people as best as I can with all powers. I also hope that all of you, the monks of the state monasteries, the Government servants and the public, will assist me as well as you can, as you assisted my late father.

With regard to the question of regency, in Clause No. 7 of an Agreement drawn up by this Assembly there is a provision for the appointment of a Council of Regency to be appointed by this Assembly which will stand till I reach 21 years of age. It will be very useful, therefore, if you can pass a resolution as to who should be appointed to this Council of Regency.

I would like to say that I hope very much that our relations with the Government of India, who have been assisting us as well as it can upto the present will now grow even stronger.

The state of peace and happiness which our country has been able to enjoy up to the present is in general due to the fact that, since ours is a Buddhist country, everyone is able to give recognition to the Lord Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha and therefore believe in the Law of Cause and Effect. In particular our condition of peace and happiness is due to the strong and undefiled sense of faith and loyalty which has existed between Ruler and subjects. I believe that if the monk body, the government servants and the public give careful consideration to the welfare of the Kingdom with full loyalty, the Kingdom will be able to enjoy its state of peace and prosperity for a long time to come.

*Delivered on the Third Day of the Eighth Month in the Year of the Water Rat. (September 10, 1972).*

## RESOLUTIONS OF THE 37<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1972



Two days after the sudden passing away of His late Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, at seven o'clock in the morning of the 13th day of the 6th month in this, the Year of the Water Rat, the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness the Trongsa Penlop, Jigme Singye Wangchuck was enthroned King in a simple ceremony. At a later date a ceremony in a more extended form will be performed during which His Majesty will be crowned as the fourth hereditary monarch of Bhutan and the beloved leader of our country. The country shall remain in a state of mourning until the 19th day of the 6th month in the Year of the Water Bull. At a suitable date following this period of mourning the Coronation shall be held on a grand scale.

The third Resolution that the Assembly passed has to do with the most important event in recent Bhutanese history, in the coronation of the fourth hereditary King in the Wangchuck dynasty, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Although he ascended the throne a few days after his father's death, protocol and the country's traditions require a full coronation as it becomes a nation's popular ruler. Therefore, the Assembly, representing every section of the people, has deemed it necessary to crown His Royal Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck as King of Bhutan, in a manner befitting the worthy son of a worthy father.

**There are beings of such profound magnificence that they transcend mere description, defying the constraints of conventional measurement. They radiate an aura of transcendence, appearing as embodiments of divine essence, surpassing the limitations of humanity itself. His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck stands as a luminous example of such an extraordinary soul, whose essence and deeds elude the grasp of mortal understanding, resonating with a celestial brilliance that transcends earthly realms.**



## THE HISTORIC CORONATION

Two years following the passing of the Third King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck ascended to the throne as the Fourth King of the Himalayan Kingdom. For a nation steeped in rich cultural and spiritual traditions, the Coronation held profound significance religiously and spiritually. Yet, its importance transcended these realms.

Arguably Bhutan's grandest spectacle of the era, this historic occasion drew hundreds of dignitaries from across the globe to the capital, transforming it into an unprecedented gathering of international importance. Among the distinguished guests were over 30 heads of state, delegates from numerous countries, and more than 13 representatives from UN agencies, alongside esteemed friends of the Bhutanese Royal Family.

Media luminaries from renowned outlets in India and worldwide were extended invitations to cover the momentous event.

The Coronation solidified Bhutan's status as a sovereign nation while strengthening bonds of friendship and collaboration with representatives from diverse nations and multilateral organizations.

Moreover, the world witnessed the emergence of a young but promising leader in His Majesty, who articulated both immediate and long-term aspirations for his nation and its people, showcasing his vision and resolve.

The Coronation also underscored the profound and sacred bond between Sovereign and subject, as citizens embarked on arduous journeys from every corner of the Kingdom to partake in the festivities. It was a testament to the unwavering love, hope, and trust that the people held for their new King.

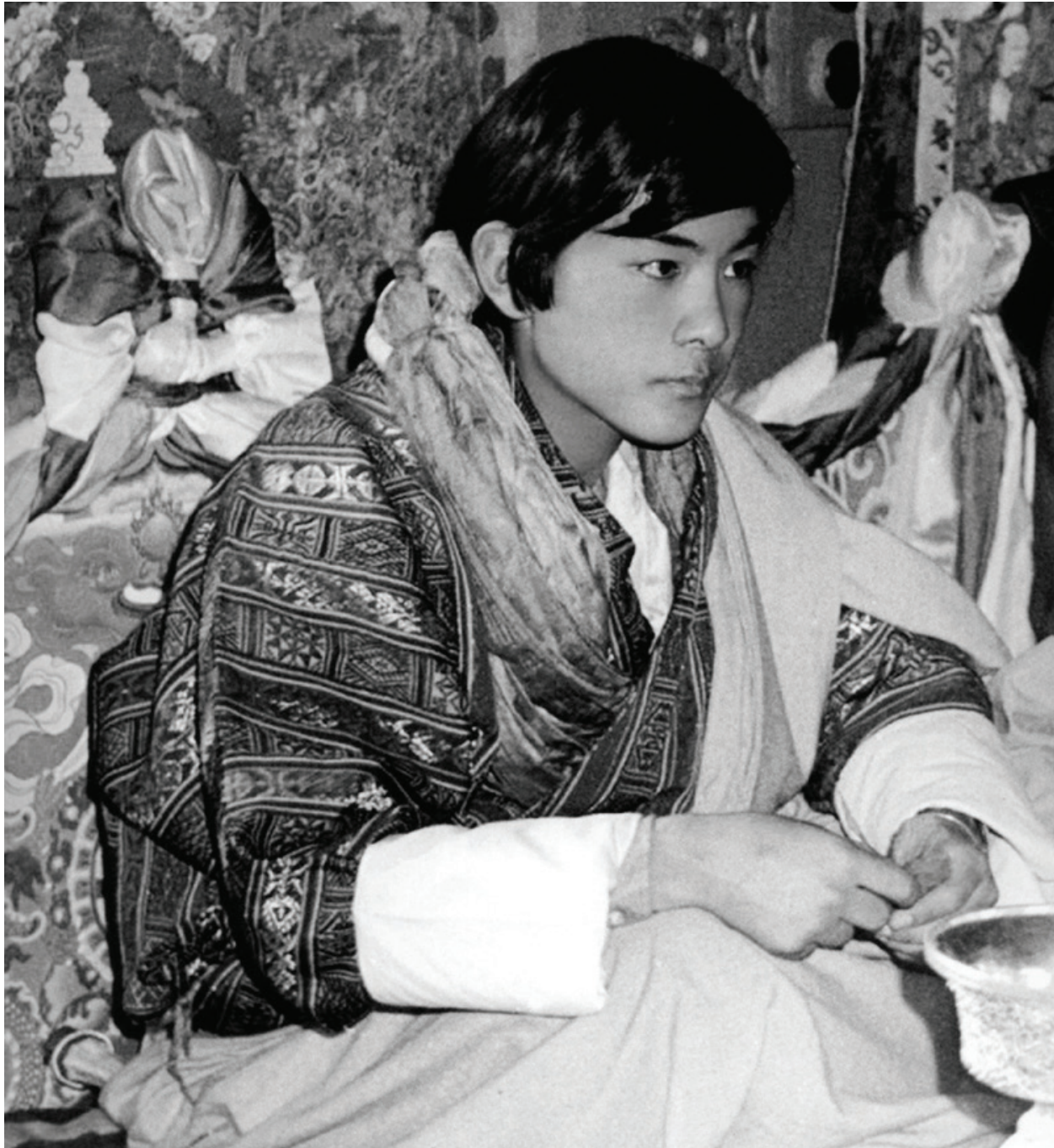


### **Bhutan Crowns a New Dragon King**

“IN THE FOURTH MONTH of the Wood-Tiger Year, at the auspicious Hour of the Serpent-June 2, 1974, at 9:10 am, a handsome teenager rose from his golden throne and placed on his shoulders his great-great-grandfather's five-colored scarf. No hands but his and those of the Je Khenpo, Bhutan's spiritual head, may touch the sacred relic. Thus 18-year-old Jigme Singye Wangchuck formally became the fourth hereditary King of Drukyl, the Dragon Land, as his 1,100,000 subjects know their country. Here, moments after the enthronement, the youngest of the world's 29 reigning monarchs calmly faces the challenge of guiding his sequestered nation into the 20th century.”

John Scofield, National Geographic, October 1974.

## BHUTAN CEMENTS ITS GLOBAL POSITION



The coronation of His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan marked a watershed moment, not only as a symbolic reaffirmation of the Kingdom's enduring monarchy but also as a pivotal juncture with profound implications for its sovereignty and global stature. The influx of dignitaries and

visitors converging to witness this regal spectacle underscored Bhutan's burgeoning presence on the world stage, illuminating its rich tapestry of cultural heritage and steadfast commitment to preserving its distinct identity amidst the relentless tides of change.



In its June 3, 1974 edition, the New York Times captured the essence of this historic event: “Bhutan King, 18, Crowned Amid Pageantry.” The convergence of tradition and modernity was palpable, as the coronation not only heralded the dawn of a new reign under His Majesty, the fourth in his illustrious lineage, but also signaled a gradual departure from Bhutan’s erstwhile seclusion. With more than 150 foreigners graced with invitations, it marked an unprecedented opening of Bhutan’s gates to the outside world.

Among the esteemed guests were luminaries from across the globe, including the President of India, V. V. Giri, and the President of Bangladesh, Mohammadullah, alongside the Chogyal of Sikkim. Notable diplomats from major capitals, such as the United State’s Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan, presented the King with symbolic gifts, including a telescope and fragments of the lunar surface. Representatives from nations that had extended assistance to Bhutan, including Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union, further underscored the Kingdom’s growing international ties.

National Geographic’s John Scofield wrote that the Third Druk Gyalpo started his nation on a road of change, while also devoting time to guide his son, who at 16 became chairman of the planning commission. “For two years prior to last June’s Coronation, Jigme Singye capably held the reins of his emerging nation.”

The coronation became a reaffirmation of Bhutan’s inherent sovereignty and resilience. By orchestrating this grand event with grace and dignity, Bhutan asserted its capacity for self-governance and determination to chart its own destiny on the global stage.

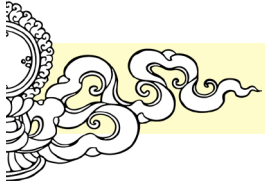
Moreover, the coronation’s international spotlight bolstered Bhutan’s standing among the fraternity of nations, facilitating meaningful engagements and fostering diplomatic alliances that promoted mutual prosperity and stability. Within the Kingdom, jubilant celebrations followed a period of mourning, with a resolute belief in the transcendent role of Kings. Despite his youth, the people entrusted their monarch with guiding them towards a future adorned with peace and prosperity, embodying the timeless spirit of Bhutanese resilience and unity.



■ Thongdrel was unfurled during the celebrations



■ One of the popular programs



## THE CELEBRATIONS



■ People at the celebrations in Changlingmithang, June 3, 1974

Visitors flocked to Thimphu from all corners of the globe for the momentous occasion. Among them were Heads of States, Representatives of foreign Missions and International Organisations, guests of the Royal Family and the media. Phuntsholing and Thimphu were decorated according to traditional custom and elaborate reception arrangements made in all the guest houses to receive the dignitaries attending Bhutan's most historic occasion for many decades.



### Guests Visit National Memorial Chorten

On the afternoons of May 31 and June 1, 1974, all the dignitaries visited the National Memorial Chorten at Zilnon Namgyeling. They were received by the Home Minister, Lyonpo Tamzhing Jagar. After arriving on the morning of June 1, the Presidents of India and Bangladesh, as well as His Highness the Prince of Nepal and Princess Prekshya, visited the Chorten at 3:45 pm, 4:05 pm, and 4:45 pm, respectively. They placed scarves and wreaths on the altar of the Great Phurba (Kilaya) Chapel in memory of His late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, and then proceeded on a guided inspection of the entire three floors.

The Chogyal of Sikkim visited the National Memorial on the morning of May 31 with his delegation and placed scarves on the altar of the Phurba Chapel. He closely inspected all three floors of the Chorten, inquiring about the various images and wall paintings. He expressed great pleasure at the beautiful view of Thimphu valley from the top floor.

Following the visits of the Heads of States and the Prince of Nepal, the Heads of Missions and International Organizations, as well as guests from the Royal Family, visited the National Memorial Chorten from 5:15 pm to 7 pm the same evening, offering scarves at the main altar.



■ An elephant which was part of the Coronation procession added to the grandeur of the day

## JUNE 2 - THE FIRST DAY



On June 2, 1974, the radiant sun cast a serene atmosphere of calm tranquility. At 6 am, His Majesty the King received the sacred "Long Life" blessing at Dechhencholing Palace before embarking on a procession to Tashichhodzong. At 7 am, the Ministers and four senior Lobpons, accompanied by the Chief Operations Officer of the Royal Bhutan Army and the Commander of the Royal Body Guards, arrived at the Palace.

At 7:30 am, the Ministers and Lobpons led His Majesty's procession from the Palace to the Dzong. At Langjaphaka, His Majesty was greeted by a Chibdrel (ceremonial procession).

As the King's arrival approached, monks from the Dzong roofs heralded his coming with music, while the smartly uniformed Guard of Honour stood ready to salute their Supreme Commander and King. His Majesty alighted from the car, received the Salute, and inspected the Guard of Honour. Subsequently, in a ceremonial procession accompanied by His Holiness the Je Khenpo, His Majesty ascended the steps into the main courtyard of Tashichhodzong, where Heads of State, Heads of Missions, International Organi-

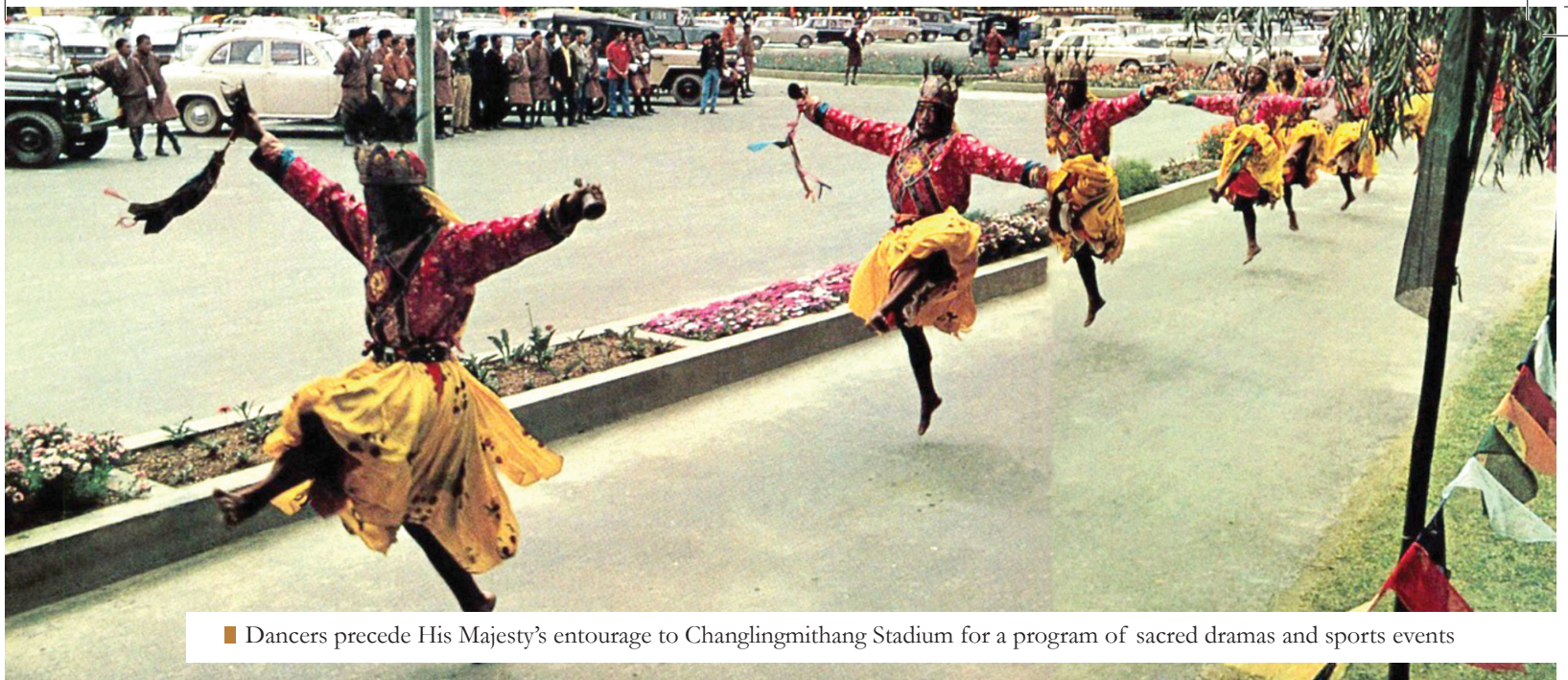
zations, and other distinguished guests had already gathered.

Against the backdrop of the resounding 31-gun salute, His Majesty and His Holiness stepped onto the ceremonial platform facing the Utse, upon which hung a monumental sacred Thangka. Following the Marchang ceremony, His Majesty and His Holiness proceeded to the Throne Room, preceded by Serdang, with the Heads of State and other distinguished guests following.

In the Throne Room, His Majesty walked to the Sungkhor Tangsa altar and bowed three times. Then, he took the Five-Coloured Scarf from the altar and, in the presence of the Je Khenpo, placed it around his own neck, marking the moment when he was acknowledged as the Fourth Hereditary King of Bhutan in the Wangchuck Dynasty. With the commencement of the "Tashi Ngasol" ceremony (the formal offering of Good Wishes) at 8:45 am, His Holiness the Je Khenpo stood in front of His Majesty the King, who was seated on the Golden Throne, and chanted the "Phuensum Tshogpa Nga Den" (Owner of the Five Treasures) prayer and performed the Conse-



■ Monks from the Dzong's roof herald the coming of His Majesty



■ Dancers precede His Majesty's entourage to Changlingmithang Stadium for a program of sacred dramas and sports events

cratation ceremony. As the nine gelongs performed the Grace for the Zeje (eight food offerings) to religious music, His Holiness took his seat to the right of His Majesty, and the four senior Lobpons entered the Throne Room for the Zhugdrel ceremony.

The Zhugdrel ceremony was then announced serving the 21 ceremonial offerings of food, nuts, and fruits to His Majesty and all those present. His Holiness then blessed His Majesty and delivered a short address during which he spoke of the advent of Buddhism to the world and to Bhutan, of the diligent efforts of Bhutan's religious institutions in preserving and propagating the sacred Teachings (84,000 Holy Doors) of Lord Buddha, of how Bhutan came to be known as Palden Drukpa Chogle Namgyal (All Victory

to the Glorious Drukpa), and of how the sacred duties of the Je Khenpo had been faithfully transmitted through the centuries to him as the 63rd Je Khenpo. His Holiness then presented a ceremonial scarf to His Majesty the King.

The offering of Thidhar (ceremonial gifts to the King) then commenced, with the Je Khenpo's Zimron making the offering on His Holiness's behalf, followed by others. After a brief interlude, His Majesty proceeded to receive Thidhar from the Rabdeys of Trongsa, Wangdiphodrang, Paro, Dagana, Lhuntse, Tashigang, Mongar, and Zhemgang; the Council of Ministers and their spouses; the four senior Lobpons; the Royal Advisory Council; the chiefs of the Royal Body Guards and the Royal Bhutan Army; and representatives of the people.



Twenty-five Indian chefs prepared lavish meals for the guests and taught Bhutanese schoolboys the niceties of serving them. Among the treats: caviar and pate de foie gras from Hong Kong, champagne and cheeses from France, trout from Bhutan's own rushing streams, and pork from black pigs fattened to perfection.

## "Ashi Nangsey" Staged

On the afternoon of June 2, the students of Yangchenphug Public School in Thimphu presented the famous Bhutanese play "Ashi Nangsey" at the Lophel Theatre in Lungtenphu. The play was attended by the President of Bangladesh, Mrs. Muhammadullah, Members of the Royal Family, the Nepalese Foreign Minister Mr. Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, and Heads of Missions and International Organizations. The performance was greatly appreciated by the audience.

## His Majesty hosts glittering reception

On the evening of June 2, following the public enthronement as the Fourth King of Bhutan, His Majesty hosted a glittering buffet dinner at the Kunrey in Tashichhodzong. The Kunrey was beautifully illuminated with floodlights. The catering was organized by the Oberoi Grand, Calcutta, under the supervision of Dasho Ugyen Dorji. The guests, including local dignitaries, Heads of Missions and International Organizations, and Royal Family guests, began arriving shortly after 6 pm.

Shortly before 7:30 pm, the Presidents of India and Bangladesh and their wives, Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Nepal, and the Chogyal of Sikkim arrived and were received by His Majesty the King and the Royal Family. It was an impressive sight to see so many dignitaries from all over the world assembled together in Thimphu to witness one of the most important events in recent Bhutanese history. The traditional architectural style of the Kunrey added a unique and otherworldly atmosphere to the occasion.

While cocktails were being served, dancers and musicians delivered an excellent performance of their dance repertoire, much to the delight of the guests, many of whom had never before witnessed traditional and folk dances of Bhutan. During dinner, the Royal Bhutan Army band, known for their excellence and smart appearance, entertained guests with their extensive repertoire of tunes. It was an excellent end to a remarkable day.





## DIGNITARIES AND GUESTS

1. His Excellency the President of India and Mrs. V.V. Giri, accompanied by their two daughters.
2. Mr. I. K. Gujral, Minister-in-Waiting, and several officials.
3. President and Mrs. Muhammadullah of Bangladesh.
4. His Royal Highness Prince Dharendra Bir Bikram Shah and Her Royal Highness Princess Prekshya Rajya Lakshmi Devi Shah of Nepal.
5. The Chogyal of Sikkim.
6. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Grant (High Commissioner, Australia).
7. Dr. and Mrs. A.R. Mallick (Ambassador of Bangladesh to Bhutan).
8. Mr. and Mrs. William John Jenkins (Acting High Commissioner, Canada).
9. Mr. and Mrs. Ma Mu-Ming (Charge d' Affaires, China).
10. Mr. Jean Daniel Jurgensen (Ambassador, France).
11. Mr. Kinya Niiseki (Ambassador, Japan).
12. Mr. and Mrs. R.R. Cunninghame (High Commissioner, New Zealand).
13. Mr. Kenneth Michael Byrne (High Commissioner, Singapore).
14. Sir Michael Walker and Lady Walker (High Commissioner, United Kingdom).
15. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Ambassador, United States of America).
16. Mr. Victor F. Maltsev (Ambassador, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).

### The specialised agencies of the United Nations were represented by:

1. Mr. R. Coomaraswamy, Assistant Administrator, UNDP, New York.
2. Dr. and Mrs. John McDiarmid, Resident Representative, UNDP, New Delhi.
3. Mr and Mrs. H. Kuloy, UNICEF Representative in Nepal.
4. The Mahabodhi Society was represented by the General Secretary Venerable Jinaratna.

### Others

1. Mr. and Mrs. F. Toga from Japan.
2. Mrs. Massonau from France.
3. Mrs. F. Laurencin from Belgium.
4. Mr. and Mrs. Schulthess from Switzerland.
5. Mr. Malcolm Lyell from the U.K.
6. Mr. and Mrs. N.K. Rustomjee
7. Mr. and Mrs. J .C. Talukdar from India.
8. Mr. C. Irani, Managing Director of Statesman, Calcutta, and his wife.
9. Mr. Desmond Doig, Editor, Junior Statesman, Calcutta.
10. Lt General and Mrs. N.C. Rawley, GOC in C, Eastern Command.
11. Lt. General B.N. Das, Engineer-in-Chief, Army Headquarters, New Delhi.



■ Butter-lamps offered at Tashichhodzong

## THE SECOND DAY



On the morning of June 3, His Majesty arrived in the Throne Room of Tashichhodzong to receive Thidhar from the guests of the Royal Family, representatives of news media and other guests who were unable to offer Thidhar the previous day.

At Changlingmithang Stadium, the public galleries had begun to fill up from as early as 5:30 am and by the time the guests began to arrive, the stadium was packed to capacity.

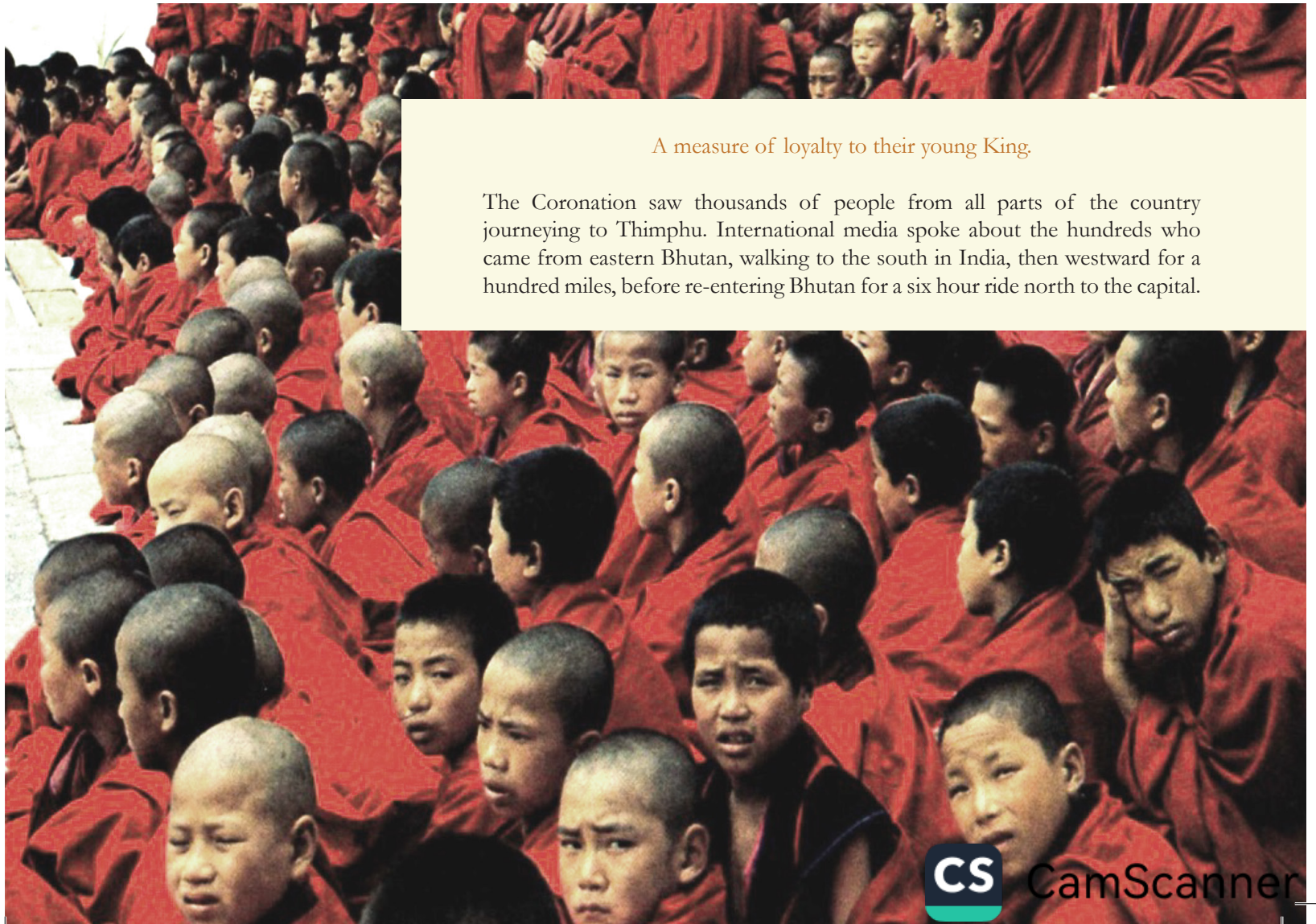
The morning was cloudless and clear and the flags of Bhutan, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, France, India, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, Sikkim, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, U.K, USA, then USSR and the UN fluttered in

the breeze. The entire Stadium was beautifully festooned with traditional decorations. The contingents of Royal Body Guard (RBG) and Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) stood ready, with the National Flag and the RBG - RBA Ceremonial colours (presented to them by His Majesty at his public investiture ceremony when he became Trongsa Penlop in May 1972) borne by standard bearers in the middle. The uniforms of the RBA band glittered in the morning sun.

The Heads of States and the foreign dignitaries arrived at the stadium before 9:30 am to witness His Majesty's ceremonial arrival. Immediately after his arrival, His Majesty addressed the people from the Royal Pavilion.

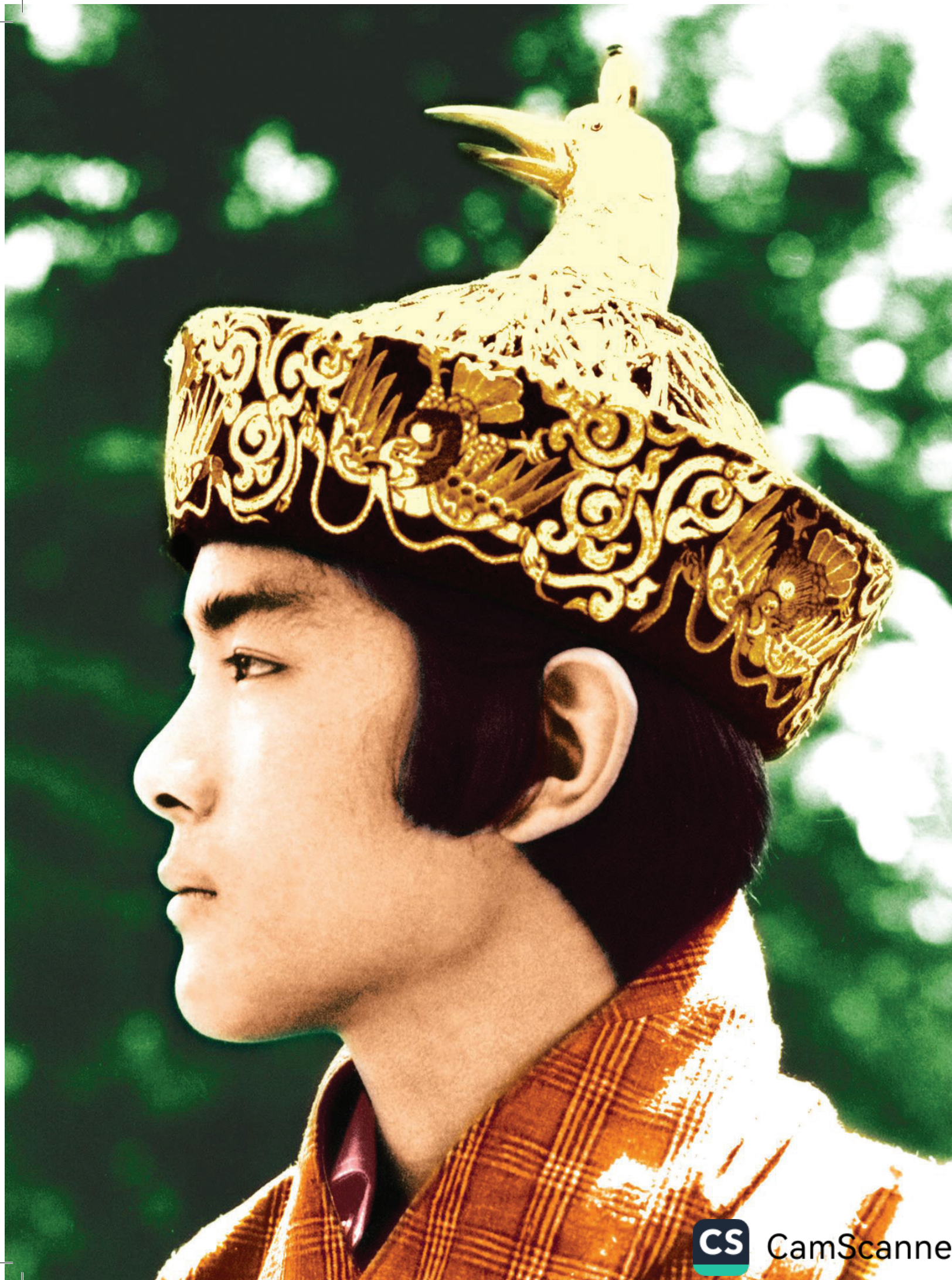


■ The whole of Bhutan converge at Changlingmithang



*A measure of loyalty to their young King.*

The Coronation saw thousands of people from all parts of the country journeying to Thimphu. International media spoke about the hundreds who came from eastern Bhutan, walking to the south in India, then westward for a hundred miles, before re-entering Bhutan for a six hour ride north to the capital.





## CORONATION ADDRESS

Two years ago when my father passed away, all the Dratshangs (Monk Body), officials and you, my people, placing your trust in me made me King. During the short while that I have been on the throne, I have not been able to render any great service to our country. However, I offer my pledge today that I shall endeavor to serve our beloved country and people with fidelity and to the best of my ability.

From year to year Bhutan is receiving increasing financial and technical assistance from many countries: among them we have received the greatest assistance from our good friend India.

Although the process of socio-economic development was initiated in our country only a few years ago, we have achieved tremendous progress within a short span of time. In spite of this progress, our present internal revenues cannot meet even a fraction of our Government expenditure. Therefore, the most important task before us at present is to achieve economic self-reliance to ensure the continued progress of our country in the future.



Bhutan having a small population, abundant land and rich natural resources, sound planning on our part will enable us to realize our aim of economic self-reliance in the near future.

As far as you, my people are concerned, you should not adopt the attitude that whatever is required to be done for your welfare will be done entirely by the Government. On the contrary, a little effort on your part will be much more effective than a great deal of effort on the part of the Government. If the Government and people can join hands and work together with determination, our people will achieve prosperity and our nation will become strong and stable.

In olden times, when our country was passing through a critical period and our people were suffering greatly due to civil wars and internal strife, Ugyen Wangchuck was unanimously elected as the first hereditary King of Bhutan on 17th December 1907, ushering in a period of great peace and happiness of Bhutan.

The fact that our country continues to enjoy peace and stability is due to the blessings of our Deities and the great loyalty and devotion shown by the Dratshangs, officials, and people to our Kingdom.

The only message I have to convey to you today, my people, is that if everyone of us considering ourselves Bhutanese can think and act as one, and if we have faith in The triple Gem, our glorious Kingdom of Bhutan will grow from strength to strength and certainly achieve prosperity, peace and happiness.

Today we are extremely happy to have with us representatives of friendly countries and other guests to participate in our celebrations. To you, my people and all guests, I offer my Tashi Delek!



National Geographic reported that exotic treats drew town dwellers and country folk to the Ping stand, a highlight of the coronation fair. “For most, it was their first taste of ice cream and popcorn. Crowds gathered ten deep to marvel at an automatic vending machine that cooked and dispensed the corn. Proud of their own culture, they also thronged stands offering familiar handicrafts, including the colorful homespun used to make the kho, a knee-length garment worn by these Bhutanese.”

## THIRD DAY OF CELEBRATIONS



At 7:30 am on June 4, His Majesty the King arrived at the Throne Room to receive Thidhar from civil officers, gelongs, and government servants. Afterward, His Majesty proceeded to the Changlingmithang Stadium, where programs of traditional and modern dances were presented by the Royal Dance Troupe, monks, and dancers from Sarbang, Samtse, and Trongsa. At noon, a buffet lunch was hosted by the Monk Body at the Stadium. Following lunch, guests watched cycle

polo and a spirited football match between Eastern Command XI and a local team.

In the evening, His Majesty the King hosted a buffet dinner for the guests at the Kunrey. Dancers and musicians entertained the guests throughout cocktails and dinner. After dinner, coffee was served in the courtyard. The evening's program concluded with the auspicious dance "Tashi Pheb," in which all participated.

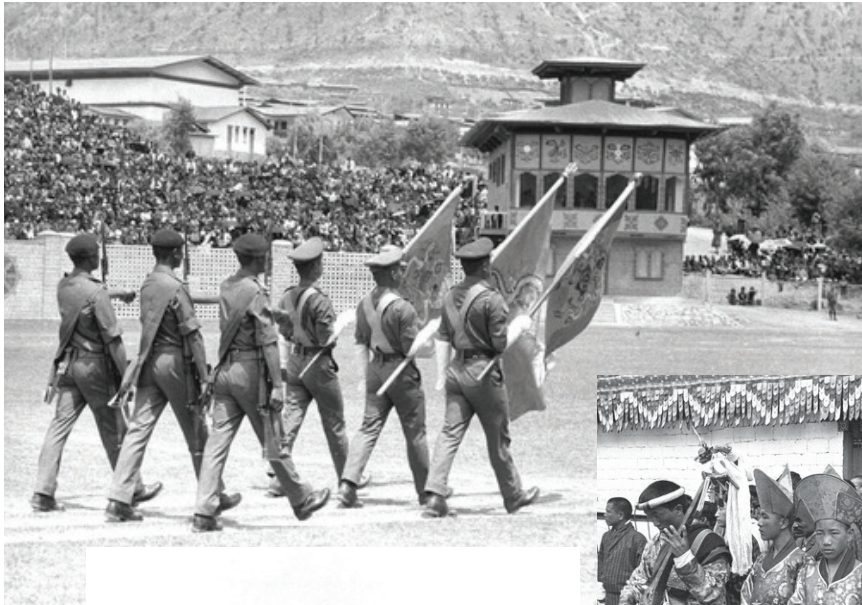
His Excellency the President of Bangladesh gave the following message to the press:

"It has given me, my wife, and the members of my party great pleasure to have attended the auspicious Coronation of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, King of Bhutan. This happy occasion has provided us with yet another opportunity to demonstrate, in however modest way we could, the value we attach to the extremely cordial and friendly relations that so happily exist between our two countries.

We have been delightfully impressed by the substantial measure of progress already achieved by Bhutan in such a short time, and we have no doubt that the friendly people of Bhutan will march forward to further progress and development in the days to come under the dynamic and popular leadership of His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. We wish and pray the reign of His Majesty would usher in a new era of more fruitful cooperation between Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The Government and the people of Bangladesh join me in wishing His Majesty long life, success, happiness, progress, and prosperity for the people of Bhutan.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to place on record that we have been deeply touched by the warmth and hospitality extended to us here, for which we express our grateful and sincere thanks to His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Their Royal Highnesses, the members of the Royal Family, the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Monk Body, and the friendly people of Bhutan. Joi Bhutan, Joi Bangla."



■ Coronation celebrations in different colours



But the richest legacy of His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck is his worthy son and successor, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in whose hands now rests the destiny of Bhutan. 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. May it be so for all time to come!

Late Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, May 1972

## GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT ON BHUTAN'S CULTURE



The coronation of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo unveiled Bhutan's cultural opulence to the global stage, a grandeur seldom witnessed before. While these cultural customs had long been embedded within Bhutanese heritage, their lavish display to the outside world was unprecedented.

The intricate rituals such as the chipdrel procession, soeldra ceremony, and the taking of the five-color ceremonial scarves, followed by the Tashi Ngasol ceremony, and the reverent chanting of the Phuensum Tshogpa Nga Den, culminating in the consecration ceremony, presented an extraordinary spectacle. The solemn Zhugdrel ritual and the offering of Thidhar added further layers of significance to the coronation proceedings.

The Guard of Honor, accompanied by a 21-gun salute and the stirring melodies of a military band, showcased Bhutan's military grandeur and ceremonial splendor, evoking a profound sense of pride among the gathered Bhutanese populace, steeped in reverence for their culture and heritage.

The occasion was embellished with the graceful movements of Bhutanese traditional dances and the mesmerizing spectacle of mask dances, serving to enrich and rejuvenate the cultural tapestry of the nation.

The inclusive celebrations with the public held profound significance, reinforcing the sacred relation shared between the King and his people, enriching the bond of national unity and identity.

The meticulously orchestrated sequence of events witnessed during the coronation became the blueprint for all subsequent occasions of national importance. The Chibdrel procession, Zhugdrel ritual, and other ceremonial rites became integral components of Bhutanese cultural observances, serving not only to enlighten others about Bhutan's rich cultural heritage but also to further fortify the cultural identity of the nation. To this day, Bhutan continues to uphold and cherish the legacy initiated during the Fourth King's coronation.

## NEW ZEALAND TV AIRS THE CORONATION



Dear Sir,

The recent Coronation of His Majesty must have been, undoubtedly, one of the most memorable events in the life of all Bhutanese. I wonder how much of it we, who were unfortunate to have been away from the country at the time, may have missed. Here in New Zealand we could only scrape together bit and pieces of information about the Coronation. However, the news media which happened to mention it were full of praise for the Coronation celebrations and the country itself. The New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation on its main TV network showed a coverage of about 3 minutes. Bhutan looked beautiful even through the eyes of television: Long Live His Majesty.

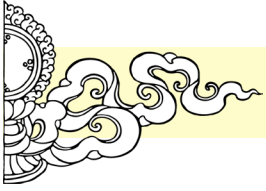
Yours sincerely, Thinley Gyamtsho. (Kuensel, June 26, 1974).

## INTRODUCTION OF BHUTAN'S FIRST PAPER CURRENCY



The ceremony held in Tashichhodzong, Thimphu on April 6, 1974, marked the introduction of Bhutan's first currency paper notes. These notes were formally presented in the presence of His Majesty the King and the Lhengye Shungtsho (Cabinet) by Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Chhoden, representing His Majesty in the Ministry of Finance. The notes, denominated in Rs. 10 and Rs. 5 (known as Ngultrums in Bhutanese), feature portraits of His late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, respectively. The Nu. 10 notes com-

memorate His late Majesty and depict Paro Dzong on the reverse side, while the Nu. 5 notes mark His Majesty's coronation in June of that year and feature Simtokha Dzong on the back. Each denomination, totaling Nu. 10 lakhs, bears the signature of Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Chhoden Wangchuck. The sizes of the notes correspond to those of Indian Rs. 10 and Rs. 5 notes, with the Nu. 10 note in purple with undertones of orange and white, and the Nu. 5 note in reddish-brown with undertones of orange and green.



## YOUNG KING ARTICULATES HIS VISION

### ***HIS MAJESTY MAKES HIS STAND DURING INFORMAL PRESS MEET***



*The press described His Majesty as a picture of “self-assurance and dignity” throughout the celebrations. They were highly impressed with His Majesty’s emphasis on the need for self-reliance. His Majesty reiterated that self-reliance and the preservation of Bhutan’s sovereignty and independence would be his aims.*

The coronation of His Majesty the King on June 2, 1974 marked an epochal moment, as a throng of journalists from across the globe gained exclusive insights into the enigmatic realm of Bhutan. Amidst the resplendent grandeur of the coronation, journalists seized the opportunity to unravel the mysteries long veiled from the world’s gaze. With meticulous care, the Coronation Committee extended invitations to approximately 50 journalists from India and beyond, ensuring they were accorded the highest level of cooperation.

One journalist, in particular, crafted a vivid portrayal of His Majesty the King, depicting him as a dynamic young leader who seamlessly navigates the intricate balance between duty and leisure within his bustling schedule. Through captivating imagery and personalized reporting, His Majesty's persona came alive on the pages of global publications. Concurrently, media coverage assumed a tone of earnest scrutiny and critical analysis, spanning a myriad of topics encompassing education, agriculture, international relations, and the historical evolution of Bhutan, thus offering readers a panoramic view of the Kingdom's progressive trajectory.

The engagement of His Majesty with the press during the coronation celebrations underscored his exceptional leadership qualities, defying his tender age, and illuminating his profound vision for Bhutan's advancement. Central to his objectives were the principles of self-reliance and the preservation of Bhutan's sovereignty and independence. His unwavering commitment to these ideals exemplified his dedication to ensuring the prosperity and autonomy of Bhutan amidst global complexities. Through his resolute actions and declarations, he not only affirmed Bhutan's unique identity but also conveyed a resounding message to the world regarding the nation's aspirations and enduring values.

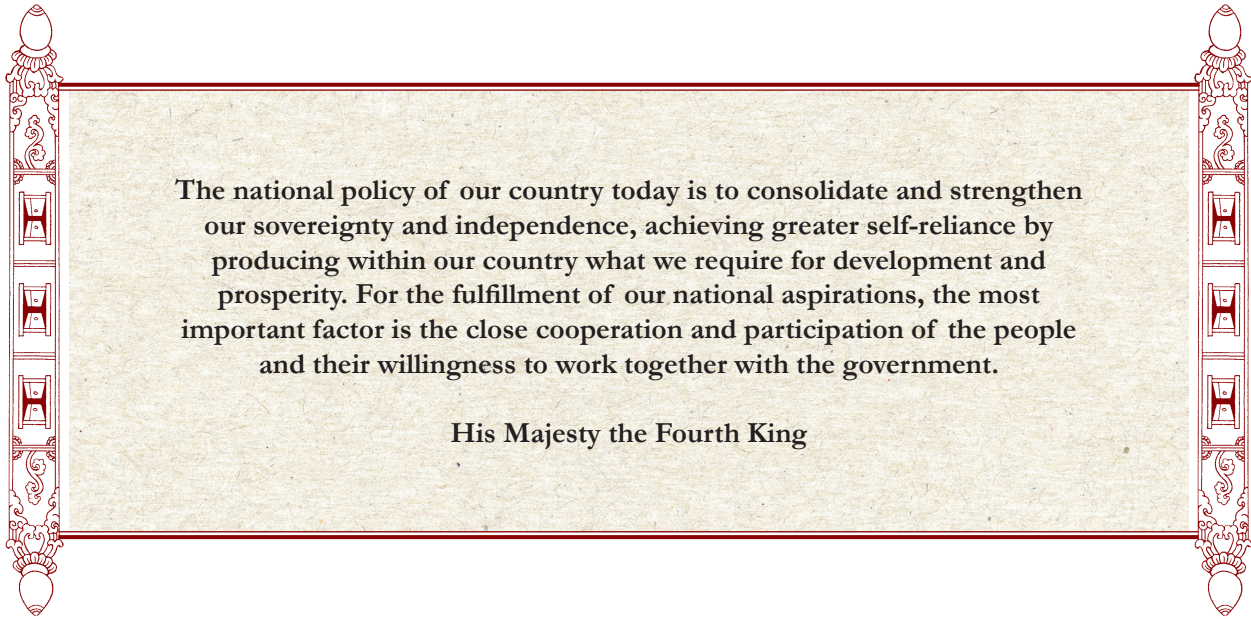
The focal point of journalistic attention was His Majesty's address at Changlingmithang Stadium on June 3, marking his inaugural public speech to the nation. Described as commanding and inspirational, His Majesty's words resonated deeply, particularly his heartfelt homage to "our good

friend India." The subsequent awards ceremony, honoring Heads of State and esteemed dignitaries, further underscored His Majesty's aura of self-assurance and dignity throughout the festivities. Journalists were notably impressed by His Majesty's steadfast emphasis on the imperatives of self-reliance and sovereignty as the cornerstones of Bhutan's ethos.

Numerous editorial pieces hailed His Majesty as "Young but Able" and an "Enlightened leader," tracing the seamless transition of Kingship following the demise of His late Majesty in 1972, without any disruption to progress and development. They underscored the firm and capable hands that continued to steer the helm of national leadership in Bhutan.







His Majesty's fervent focus on self-reliance, security, and sovereignty transcended the realm of media discourse. It was ingrained deeply within the Fearless Lion's heart. His unwavering commitment to these principles echoed in every national gathering and meeting with the populace, where he articulated the paramount importance of these values and the collective responsibility of the people in their attainment.

During the National Day celebrations at Gelephu in 1978, His Majesty eloquently articulated the nation's policy to consolidate sovereignty for achieving economic self-reliance, prosperity, and the well-being of its citizens. His call for unity

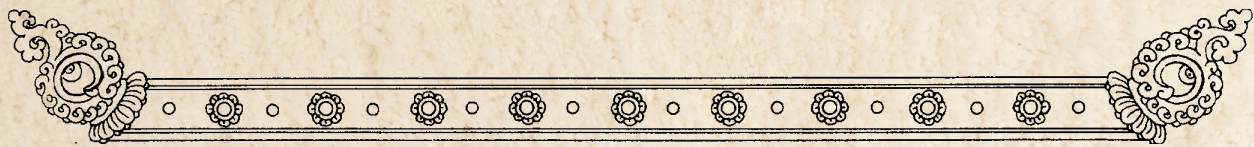
and collaboration between the government and the people resonated profoundly, emphasizing their collective agency in steering the country towards progress and enduring happiness.

Indeed, His Majesty's relentless emphasis on reinforcing Bhutan's sovereignty and independence, coupled with the pursuit of enhanced self-reliance through domestic production for developmental needs and prosperity, remained central to the nation's aspirations. Recognizing that the nation's greatest asset lay in its people, His Majesty envisioned a future where every district would stride towards self-sufficiency, laying the foundation for a resilient and prosperous Bhutan.



The young King had said he would be happy, "if Bhutan remains an independent and sovereign country, if people are happy and united and self-sufficient." "I don't think there is anything else a King can achieve."

John Scofield, National Geographic, 1974



## **AN ERA OF PEACE, PROSPERITY AND PROGRESS**

The tale of the world's youngest monarch guiding one of the globe's most economically challenged nations undoubtedly captured attention far and wide. Yet, what lay ahead for the world and the transformative vision of Bhutan's new Custodian, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, remained largely veiled. With a blend of sagacity, fortitude, and empathy, the new steward of Drukyl gradually steered his nation into uncharted territories, of peace and prosperity. Notably, he bestowed upon the world a truly invaluable treasure: Gross National Happiness.

## SOVEREIGNTY



His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck had conveyed during the Coronation address and the informal meet with the media that one of his most important aspirations was ensuring sovereignty and strengthening it.

Diplomacy and Bhutan's culture were two of the tools His Majesty employed for this very significant aspiration. While Bhutan maintained and emboldened its relation with India, bilateral and multilateral ties were developed with other countries.

Promotion and preservation of Bhutan's unique culture was emphasized as His Majesty was confident that culture could safeguard Bhutan's sovereignty by fostering internal cohesion, projecting soft power, fostering diplomatic relations, preserving heritage, and shaping national identity. His Majesty knew that embracing and harnessing the richness and diversity of cultural expression strengthens a nation's resilience, enhances its influence, and reinforces its autonomy and self-determination in an interconnected world.

## DIPLOMACY



As a youthful Monarch assumed the mantle of governance, a plethora of tasks awaited attention. Bhutan found itself amidst the Third Five Year Plan (FYP), marked by ambitions and aspirations. Despite Bhutan's membership in the United Nations since 1971 and its burgeoning relationship with India, the safeguarding of sovereignty remained a paramount concern, not to be assumed lightly.

In the eyes of the visionary young King of Bhutan, diplomacy emerged as a pivotal avenue. It possessed the transformative potential to fortify sovereignty while concurrently paving the path for collaborative development ventures. And it began immediately.

**I am confident that the strong bonds of friendship and understanding which developed between our two peoples in those critical 4 days will grow ever stronger with the passage of time. Bangladesh and Bhutan are close neighbours in South Asia. Traditionally, there have been ties of trade between the two countries. It is the sincere wish of my Government and people to develop and strengthen cooperation in economic and other fields between our two countries in the years to come.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King, December 28, 1975, Dhaka**

*On September 5, 1973, the Indo-Bhutan boundary strip maps were signed at a brief ceremony in the chamber of the Foreign Minister. The signing of the maps denoted the acceptance of the boundary between the two countries. On behalf of Bhutan, the maps were signed by Dasho Sonam Rabgey, Chief Survey Officer, while on behalf of India, His Excellency Mr. A. B. Gokhale, Representative of India in Bhutan, signed. Others present on the occasion included Mr. R. C. Arora, Director, North Division, Ministry of External Affairs, and other members of the Indian team. Mr. T. P. Sreenivasan, First Secretary at India House, and from the Bhutanese side, the Foreign Minister, His Excellency Lyonpo Dawa Tshering.*

India was central to any relation that had to be established. Thus, apart from His Majesty himself, several Bhutanese leaders visited India, which was reciprocated by visits of Indian leaders.

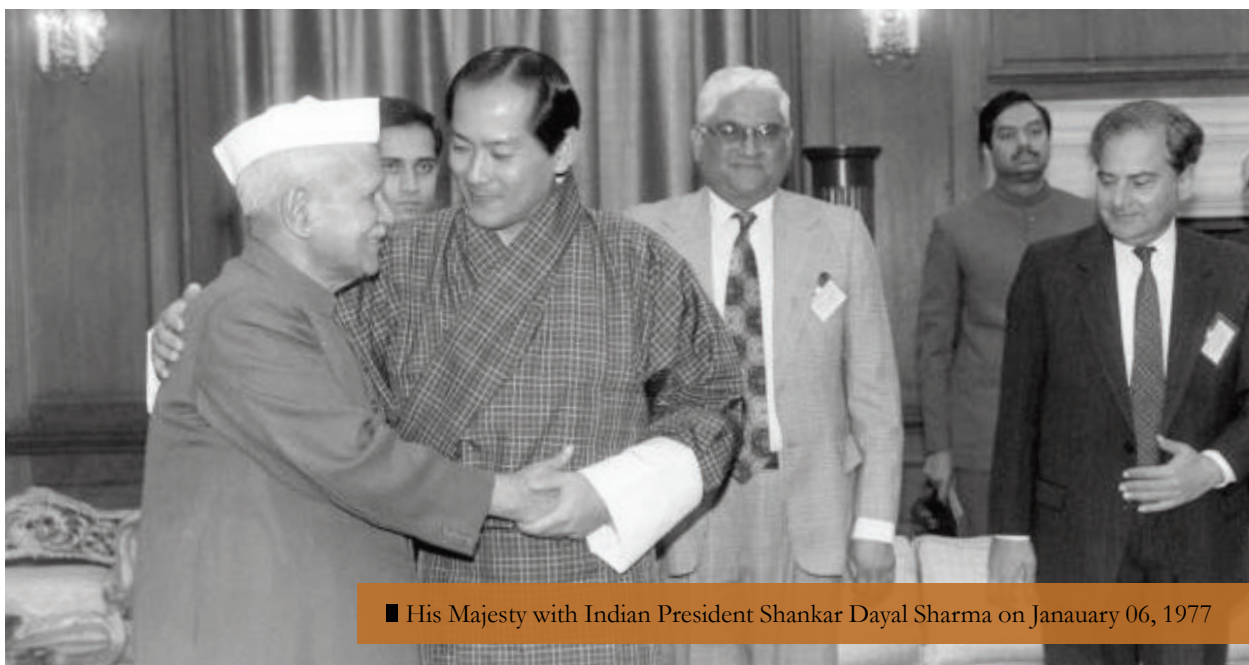
His Majesty the King paid a four day visit to New Delhi between March 26 and 29, 1978. The visit, second since the Janata Party Government came to power in March 1977, was in response to an invitation by the President of India, Mr. N. Sanjiva Reddy.

“In our national quest to modernize our country and achieve economic self-reliance, we have received the full and unstinted co-operation of India, during the past two decades. The bonds of cooperation in economic and other fields continue to grow to our mutual advantage. The generous support and assistance which India has

extended to Bhutan is greatly appreciated by all my people,” His Majesty said.

Referring to the visit to New Delhi earlier, His Majesty said he had fruitful and constructive talks with the Prime Minister Mr. Morarji Desai and his senior colleagues in the Government on matters of common concern and interest. “The dialogue which was initiated then was continued when the External Affairs Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Thimphu last November. As a result of these dialogues, there is a much better understanding and awareness of each other’s views and sensitivities on major issues.”

Between 1972 and 1980, Bhutan had a series of visitors, such as Sir Patrick Shaw, High Commissioner for Australia in India and others.



■ His Majesty with Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma on January 06, 1977

With my father's premature passing away, the responsibility of guiding the destiny of Bhutan has fallen upon my shoulders. Like my father before me, it shall be my constant endeavor to further strengthen the firm bonds of friendship between India and Bhutan.

His Majesty the Fourth King, December 17, 1974, New Delhi

The establishment of the United Nations office in 1979 marked the beginning of a new chapter in the country's foreign relations. Over the subsequent years, Bhutan embarked on a concerted effort to expand its diplomatic footprint, forging meaningful relationships with a multitude of nations and international organizations.



■ His Majesty with Crown Prince Naruhito when His Majesty went to Japan for the funeral of Emperor Hirohito in February, 1989



■ South Asian leaders at the fourth SAARC Summit meeting on December 29, 1988 in Islamabad, Pakistan

While bilateral ties were formed, Bhutan's membership of the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Colombo Plan, facilitated Bhutanese officials to interact with other leaders, ultimately leading to the establishment of bilateral ties.

Diplomatic milestones abounded as Bhutan cultivated ties with several countries, charting a course towards mutual understanding and cooperation. Among these pivotal partnerships were landmark agreements with Bangladesh in 1973, Kuwait and Nepal in 1983, and the Maldives in 1984, among others. Notably, Bhutan's diplomatic horizons expanded exponentially in 1985, as it established diplomatic relations with Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, fostering a network of global partnerships. The years that followed witnessed a flurry of diplomatic engagements, with Bhutan

extending its reach to encompass Japan and Finland in 1986, South Korea and Sri Lanka in 1987, and Austria in 1989, among others. These diplomatic overtures underscored Bhutan's commitment to fostering mutually beneficial relationships across continents.

Towards the North, Bhutan embarked on a historic journey of dialogue and cooperation with China, as evidenced by the pivotal meeting between Foreign Ministers of Bhutan and China in New York in 1983. A Bhutanese official-level delegation visited Beijing, China's capital, from 17 to 20 April 1984 for the inaugural round of boundary talks between the two countries.

Upon arrival in Beijing, the delegation was welcomed by His Excellency Mr. Gong Dafei, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, and several members of the Chinese delegation. The two-day official talks were

preliminary in nature, during which both sides deliberated on principles and modalities for future negotiations. In the Joint Communiqué issued following the talks, both delegations expressed their full satisfaction with the first round of discussions. They hoped for an early settlement of the boundary between the two countries based on sovereign equality, mutual benefit, and mutual accommodation.

During their four-day visit, the Bhutanese delegation also met with H.E. Premier Zhao Ziyang and Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Wu Xueqiang of China. Sightseeing trips were organized for the delegation to iconic landmarks such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Ming Tombs, and a Buddhist Lamasery.

A Chinese delegation visited Bhutan in April 1985, where Liu Shuqing, the delegation's leader expressed his impressions.

Most outsiders have the impression that Bhutan is poor and one of the least developed countries. However, we were struck very favorably the moment we stepped out of the plane by everything we saw. The houses are larger and well-maintained, and the people are dressed neatly and colorfully. We had the opportunity to visit a village house in Paro, and we were impressed.

We have also learned that under the leadership of Bhutan's late King and His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan has made significant progress in various fields, guided by the goal of self-reliance.

We are pleased with this progress and extend our congratulations.

Bhutan has emerged from its isolation and expanded contacts and relations while preserving its culture and identity. I understand that Bhutan is known as the land of the Thunder Dragon. I certainly find the Bhutanese courageous and industrious, and under the wise and dedicated leadership of His Majesty, I am confident Bhutan will achieve increasing prosperity each year.

Mr. Liu Shuqing

His Majesty's message on May 14, 1979, when the UN Resident Office was inaugurated in Thimphu, was simple. "It has been eight years since our country joined the United Nations as

its 128th member. My late father, recognizing the potential benefits offered by the various agencies of this esteemed body for the advancement and prosperity of our nation, paved the way for



Bhutan's progress and modernization. He viewed the United Nations as an international platform through which our sovereign Buddhist state could contribute, in its own unique way, to global

understanding, peace, and justice. It was through his unwavering dedication that Bhutan proudly became a member of the United Nations."

**Our happiness on this occasion stems not merely from the anticipation of further assistance but from a genuine appreciation of the numerous benefits that our people have already derived from UNDP.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King**

In November 1985, His Majesty graciously received the Ambassador of the European Economic Community, who had journeyed to present his credentials. With a regal poise befitting the occasion, His Majesty shared a profound insight into Bhutan's historical narrative, revealing how the Kingdom emerged from centuries of dormancy only in the 1960s.

His Majesty said that having languished on the sidelines during the epoch of burgeoning development that swept across Asia, Bhutan yearned to embrace progress and usher in the blessings of scientific and technological advancement while cherishing the opulence of its cultural legacy.

In a testament to the growing stature of the European Community on the global stage, His Majesty extolled its pivotal role among the pantheon of economic entities. "The Member-States of the Community have fostered enduring bonds with developing nations, bearing witness to a noble tradition of humanitarian stewardship," His Majesty said with a discerning eye.

Ever the astute statesman, His Majesty implored the European Community to assume a more proactive stance in bolstering the economic fortunes of the less fortunate nations, particularly those ensconced within the throes of underdevelopment. "We beseech the Community to wield its influence in catalyzing the economic prosperity of nations such as ours, languishing in the shadows of progress," His Majesty beseeched, his words resonating with a poignant urgency.

"Your Excellency, you are no stranger to our country. We are aware of your profound and enduring interest in Bhutan. Therefore, we are confident that you will spare no effort in promoting friendship and fruitful cooperation between Bhutan and the European Community. In return, we assure you of our full cooperation in fulfilling your noble mission," His Majesty said.

Ties with leaders were also maintained through the exchanges of messages and felicitations. And Bhutan offered a safe haven for peaceful talks.



■ His Majesty with Cuban President Fidel Castro during the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) meet at Cuba in 1979

Talks between representatives of the Sri Lanka Government and the Tamil United Liberation Front, along with five other Tamil groups, began positively in Thimphu on July 8, 1985. The Foreign Minister of Bhutan, who presided over the talks on the first day, formally welcomed all the delegates on behalf of His Majesty the King. The delegation expressed gratitude to His Majesty the King and the Royal Government and people of Bhutan for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for the meeting.

The discussion regarding the organization of work for the meeting took place in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, characterized by mutual understanding and accommodation. Substantive discussions commenced the following day.

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As the decade drew to a close, Bhutan's diplomatic prowess continued to flourish, with significant milestones including the establishment of diplomatic relations with Thailand in 1991, Bahrain in 1992, and Singapore and Australia in 2002. The culmination of this diplomatic odyssey under His Majesty's reign came with Bhutan's diplomatic ties with Canada in 2003, symbolizing the country's unwavering commitment to fostering global partnerships.

His Majesty's visionary diplomacy not only expanded Bhutan's global footprint but also laid the foundation for enduring relationships built on principles of mutual respect and cooperation. Through strategic engagement and dialogue, Bhutan emerged as a respected voice on the world stage, embodying the values of peace, harmony, and collaboration.

### Late Indian Prime Minister Composes Poem for Bhutan

As Foreign Minister, Late Prime Minister of India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Bhutan in 1977 at the end of November. Moved by the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to him by the people and the government of Bhutan, he composed a song in praise of Bhutan, her people and His Majesty. When a Minister of the Royal Government commented that the weather was somewhat cold, Mr. Vajpayee responded, "Yet it is cold, but the warmth of friendship and hospitality makes the cold bearable."

The Indian Foreign Minister stirred many a Bhutanese heart with his simplicity and correct manner, along with his ready wit. He freely mingled with the people, shaking hands all around and affectionately patting children. The scenic beauty of the country inspired the poet in him. He was so moved by what he saw that he composed a song in praise of Bhutan, her people, and His Majesty.

The lyrics, written to the tune of a popular Hindi song, portray Bhutan as the land of Gods and its people as hardworking and industrious. The men excel in archery, while the women carry themselves with grace. The poem emphasizes that freedom is dearer to them than life itself, and pride pulsates in the heart of every child. The monarchy is cherished, and the King is depicted as young and kind, with a fire burning in his heart.

The song, composed in Hindi, was recited at the dinner hosted by the Indian Foreign Minister at the residence of the Indian Representative on November 20. His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, HRH Ashi Sonam, ministers, and government officials attended the dinner.



■ His Majesty with late Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee



■ His Majesty the King with King Charles III, who visited Bhutan in 1998 when he was the Prince of Wales

The bond between Bhutan and the United Kingdom is steeped in a rich fabric of historical engagements dating back to the 18th century, underscored by enduring cooperation in Bhutan's progressive development journey. This alliance is further elevated by the pivotal role played in shaping the intellectual landscape through the education of numerous Bhutanese scholars in the distinguished institutions of the United Kingdom. Moreover, the profound camaraderie shared amongst the esteemed members of the Royal families of both nations adds an extra layer of warmth to this enduring relationship.

**“One of the most fascinating aspects of Bhutan is that it is one great genuine example of sustainability ....This country understands and incorporates the sense of the sacred into harmonious life... I pray that it lasts,” His Majesty King Charles told a gathering of British citizens working in Bhutan. “You have been provided a model which does not exist anywhere else... When you leave here perhaps you’ll bring something back so we can understand this harmony.”**

**King Charles III, February, 1998**



## CULTURE: THE BEDROCK OF SOVEREIGNTY

In the context of Bhutan, a nation whose physical size belies its monumental cultural heritage, His Majesty the King long recognized the pivotal role of culture as a bastion safeguarding sovereignty and nurturing national identity. In a world often dominated by larger geopolitical forces, His Majesty saw Bhutan's cultural distinctiveness as its most potent asset—a form of soft power that not only enriches its societal fabric but also serves as a shield against external influences.

Bhutan did not have the economic prowess or military might for assertion; but its unique cultural identity stood and continues to stand as an indomitable force, fostering resilience and fortitude. His Majesty's foresight in championing cultural preservation wasn't merely about safeguarding traditions; it was a strategic imperative aimed at securing the very essence of Bhutanese sovereignty.

Neither was this recognition of culture's paramount importance merely a matter of sentimentality; it was and remains a pragmatic acknowledgment that in a rapidly changing global landscape, where borders blur and ideologies clash, a nation's cultural identity is its most enduring armor. Thus, Bhutan's investment in preserving and promoting its cultural heritage wasn't just a nod to tradition—rather a forward-looking strategy, ensuring that the Kingdom remains impervious to external pressures and steadfast in its sovereignty.

The incorporation of culture as an independent article within the Constitution stands as a poignant testament to its profound significance. Throughout the public consultations held with the citizenry on the draft Constitution, His Majesty eloquently expounded upon this matter, underscoring its utmost importance and relevance.

**With regard to Culture under Article 4, firstly, we have mentioned in our Constitution the importance of preserving and protecting cultural heritage, and secondly, we have incorporated the provisions regarding the promotion and strengthening of our cultural heritage. The Dragon Kingdom of Bhutan is a very small country with rich cultural heritage. If the neighbouring countries in the north and the south, who have a population of about 2.4 billion, pose a threat to our national sovereignty and security, we have no other defence but our unique cultural identity.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King during public consultation on the draft Constitution in Paro, 9th November, 2005, Trashiyangtse 28th May, 2006 and in Tsirang, 8th February, 2006**



*During a Royal Audience on December 22nd 1986 to senior officials, His Majesty said. “The country cannot be economically assimilated, politically complacent and culturally influenced. Prosperity, modernization, and development will not bring satisfaction, if tradition, culture and religion are lost. This will also weaken the social fabric and destroy societal norms.”*

The following are extracts from John Elliot’s (former reporter of the Financial Times and the first to write about GNH) article, “The King of Bhutan’s hopes in 1987 for Gross National Happiness,” which he posted on his blog on November 27, 2015. He writes about His Majesty’s concerns.

“In formulating the country’s sixth (the latest) economic plan we stress culture more – it was always there but, in the last 26 years of development work, we never took any serious step on it because we felt no need to take any initiative”. Development over 26 years had affected Bhutanese way of life. “We took it for granted that no special attention was needed”.

Bhutanese people were very carefree – that was a social factor. So special action was needed where there was a problem when development work had harmed the way of life. Stressing the need for culture and tradition within the civil service, the King said that there was now a government department to look into that – no-one had been responsible before.

A new problem in the last 14 years had been that “our own people started stealing gold thangkas and ransacking and selling in Darjeeling and Nepal”. That was “unthinkable 10 to 14 years ago” because it was sacrilegious. Also numerous monasteries had been ransacked and antiques had been stolen from village homes. Villagers started selling their valuables and handicrafts so much that some of the best religious items had been lost.



■ Cataloguing of Chhokey, one of the measures to preserve culture began

Culture transcended mere adornment in national attire or visits to cultural landmarks. It embodied a tapestry of time-honored traditions and values, intricately woven through the annals of generations, imparting to Bhutan and its people a distinctive and irreplaceable essence.

During the public consultation on the draft Constitution in Bumthang on May 21st 2006, His Majesty said. “Since there are students participating in this consultation meeting, I suppose I have to tell you little bit more on Bhutanese culture. You should never think that by wearing gho and kira, and by visiting Lhakhangs with kabney and rachu, you have understood what our culture is and that you have preserved our culture. It is very important that you should always think and understand how our culture will benefit the Kingdom of Bhutan and how it should be protected and preserved henceforth.”

His Majesty grappled with the weighty responsibility of safeguarding the rich legacy bestowed upon him. Contemplating the delicate balance between propelling Bhutan into the modern era while safeguarding its cherished traditions occupied his thoughts. According to John Elliot, as he sat in the presence of His Majesty, he sensed the earnest contemplation of a young leader wrestling with the complexities of navigating the inevitable transition towards openness, all the while steadfastly committed to preserving the essence of Bhutan’s cultural heritage.

### **Kasho/Edict to Special Commission**

Our leaders and ancestors have considered our religion and etiquette as the backbone of our country and we have been enjoying peace and happiness with Mahayana Buddhism as our religion. It has been 24 years since we began our development plans and programmes for the public welfare, and it has benefited our people enormously. But I am saddened by the fact that our people copy the culture of other countries despite the existence of our distinct culture and etiquette, which is better than any other country's.

If we do not think well at this juncture, we cannot preserve our religion and culture. This, as you know, would certainly affect our sovereignty. If we are to remain sovereign for all times to come, it is important for us to serve our country with loyalty and dedication. Our government and public should think as one and protect our identity, culture and etiquette.

Therefore, our National Assembly has decided several times that our government must promote our etiquette and culture as was done in the past. But our government has not identified any agency for that matter, and existing departments are not able to take on the responsibility due to many planned activities. Therefore, in order to find ways of promoting our identity, culture and etiquette, and solve the problems relating to the above matter, I hereby establish the Special Commission with Minister Tamzhing Jagar as the head of the Commission, which will work as per my specific orders.

Issued on this 6<sup>th</sup> Day of the 6th Month of the Wood-Ox Year (23 July 1985).

**Druk Gyalpo**





## **GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS**

Emerging from the venerable halls of the Samtenling Palace, Gross National Happiness (GNH) stands as a profound contribution from His Majesty to the global community. Initially met with measured contemplation among the echelons of global powerhouses, development experts, and academic circles, GNH gradually permeated through the fabric of development discourse. Once embraced, it underwent rigorous scrutiny, analysis, and debate within the corridors of development literature, ultimately earning widespread recognition and endorsement.

Presently, GNH enjoys broad adoption by numerous nations and holds a significant position within the United Nations framework. Its foundational principles have been instrumental in shaping pivotal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reflecting a paradigm shift towards holistic and sustainable development practices.



## THE PATH TO GENUINE HAPPINESS

The brilliance of wisdom emanating from His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck transcended Bhutan's borders, casting its radiance far beyond the confines of the Himalayan Kingdom. Like the illustrious leaders etched in history, His Majesty is immortalized for myriad reasons, foremost among them being the pioneering concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

As Bhutan embarked on its journey of modernization in the 1970s, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo eloquently voiced notions of happiness, contentment, and wellbeing. By 1979, His Majesty had not only disseminated these ideals to the Bhutanese populace but also engaged with journalists, introducing the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

A reporter from the Financial Times who was then based in India, John Elliot is said to be the one with whom His Majesty spoke at length about GNH.

Elliot talks about his interview with His Majesty. "We are convinced we must aim for contentment and happiness," the King told me, he says adding that His Majesty put GNH above the more usual economic targets of GNP, and listed the GNH parameters. However, it is excerpts from Elliot's "The King of Bhutan's hopes in 1987 for



Gross National Happiness," which he posted in November 27, 2015, that tells us more about the interview. At the inaugural day of the international GNH conference in Paro on November 5, 2015, the seasoned journalist revealed an intriguing discovery: the notebook utilized during his pivotal interview with His Majesty. He imparted his insights from that conversation to the assembled audience, offering a unique glimpse into the genesis of Bhutan's renowned philosophy.

Based on a speech he delivered at the conference, Elliot later posted this on his blog.

## Elliot's Post

“When Bhutan’s King Jigme Singye Wangchuck first started talking in the 1970s and 1980s about Gross National Happiness as the guiding principle for development of his tiny remote Himalayan Kingdom, people elsewhere thought the idea rather quaint and unreal. Now the idea of GNH is being embraced in various parts of the world in a search for a better and more sustainable way to manage affairs ranging from the protection of the environment to worker participation in companies, and from organic farming and corporate social responsibility to government purchasing policies.

I began by explaining that the King, who announced in 2005 that he was abdicating in favour of his son and is 60 this year, had talked at length to me about his worries and dreams and his hopes for GNH. As he spoke, I quickly realised these were the concerns of a 32-year old who had a few years earlier realised the enormous challenge of being in charge of this small secluded nation at a time of great international change – and an awareness of how some other countries had got it wrong.

I had discovered when I came back again to Bhutan in 2011 on my first return visit after 1987, my FT article is regarded in the country as a significant piece of historical record. “We are convinced that we must aim for contentment and happiness,” His Majesty told me.

“Whether we take five or ten years to raise per capita income and increase prosperity is not going to guarantee that happiness – a lot of things go into it including political stability and social harmony, and the Bhutanese way of life, as well as economic development.”

Later he said, “We have seen many countries which have done economically very well, but none which has a modern society and kept a strong tradition and culture. We have seen examples of cultures being eroded with extreme modernisation”.

“We want to continue both as a modern trading nation with the best modern technology, but we would like to blend that with our system and culture.” “I think we can do it. We have to do it if we are to have GNH and a quality of life that is good for Bhutanese persons.....We can do it because we have a small population, endowed with great mineral and other national resources, and we have water resources – the fastest cleanest rivers in the world.”

The first time the King had mentioned GNH to foreign journalists was in Bombay in 1979, though he is reported to have talked first about it in Bhutan 1972. He was in Bombay, on his way back from a Non-Aligned Movement conference in Havana, when an Indian journalist asked him, standing at the airport, about Bhutan being a poor country.

The King replied that instead of just focusing on GNP, it might be more useful to measure Gross National Happiness.

The next recorded time he spoke about it was to a New York Times correspondent, Michael T. Kaufman, who visited Bhutan and whose report appeared on April 29, 1980 (and again with a brief mention in a November 1980 article).

The King was reported saying, “There is a gross national product but there is also gross national happiness”.



# WEEKEND FT

Saturday May 2 / Sunday May 3 1987

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John Elliott visits Bhutan, where the search for gross national happiness co-exists with worldlier concerns about GNP

## The modern path to enlightenment

RED RIBBED books clanging against and hitting bells, filed in a long line across the Himalayan

uniformly in both the widely-worn national dress and the religious architecture.

this part of south Asia, forming an official 25 to 30 per cent of Bhutan's total population (official estimates put them at 40-50 per cent).



■ Elliot's article

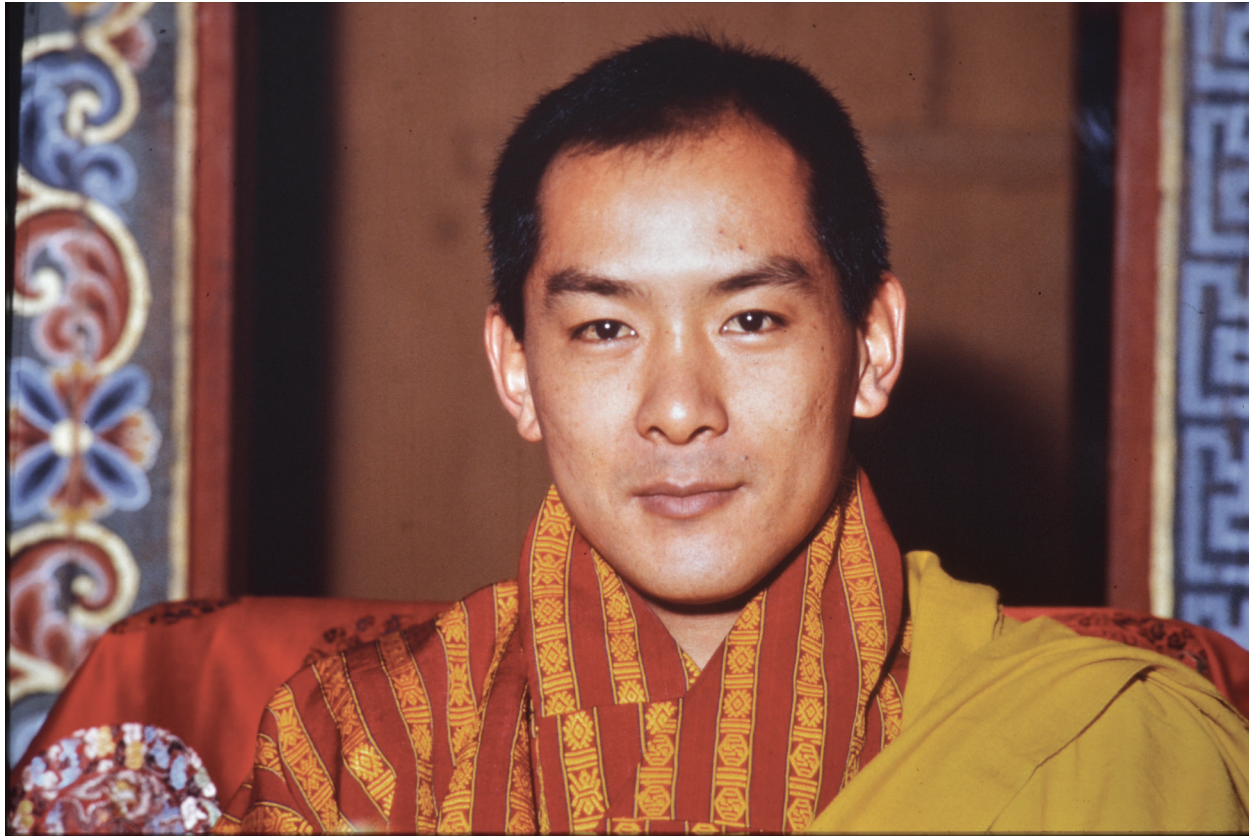
A couple of years ago I was contacted by an American journalist who thought that an article I wrote in the Financial Times in 1987 was the first to record the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan's search for "Gross National Happiness". Some sources suggest the phrase was coined in 1972, but my report (above) of an interview with the then 32-year old King Jigme Singye Wangchuck certainly happened around the time that he was developing his utopian idea.

John Elliot, November 5, 2008

What originated in Bhutan has evolved into a global ethos, with happiness recognized as a universal pursuit. The United Nations itself acknowledged this paradigm shift by declaring March 20 as the International Day of Happiness in 2012, underscoring the global consensus on the primacy of happiness and well-being in human lives.

A Kasha issued by His Majesty in 1986 galvanized Bhutan's Planning Commission to prioritize the populace's happiness and comfort as the yardstick for evaluating developmental achievements. GNH was enshrined in Bhutan's Constitution, affirming the state's commitment to fostering conditions conducive to the pursuit of collective happiness.





At its core, GNH asserts that genuine progress stems from the harmonious integration of material prosperity and spiritual fulfillment. Rooted in Buddhist principles of karma, compassion, and mindfulness, GNH underscores the imperative for governance to prioritize the welfare of all sentient beings.

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo's visionary synthesis of these principles led to the conceiving of GNH, a concept that has revolutionized global development discourse. Against the backdrop of mounting environmental crises and unsustainable growth, GNH offered a holistic paradigm, emphasizing good governance, sustainable development, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship.

The UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs) contain many tenets of GNH. In recent times, a series of global challenges have surfaced, span-

ning economic growth, environmental preservation, and the well-being of both body and mind. These pressing issues have shed light on the inherent limitations of capitalism and consumerism. Leading nations are awakening to the significance of Gross National Happiness (GNH), recognizing it as a beacon for a more balanced and fulfilling society.

GNH champions the preservation of our natural surroundings, advocates for sustainable and inclusive development, fosters cultural enrichment for holistic well-being, and elevates the importance of social cohesion.

Notably, esteemed bodies such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), along with other international institutions, have embraced happiness as a pivotal societal metric, further underscoring its significance.

I believe that while Gross National Happiness is inherently Bhutanese, its ideas may have a positive relevance to any nation, peoples or communities – wherever they may be. I also believe that there must be some convergence among nations on the idea of what the end objective of development and progress should be. There cannot be enduring peace, prosperity, equality and brotherhood in this world if our aims are so separate and divergent – if we do not accept that in the end we are people, all alike, sharing the earth among ourselves and also with other sentient beings, all of whom have an equal role and stake of this planet and its players.

His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who was Crown Prince, in February 20, 2004, at the closing day of a seminar on GNH at Thimphu

Evolving from its inception, GNH delineated nine domains and myriad sub-indexes, indicators, and variables to gauge and foster societal well-being comprehensively. Today, GNH stands as a beacon of multidimensional development,

seeking the delicate equilibrium between material progress and spiritual contentment—a testament to His Majesty's enduring legacy as the Architect of Gross National Happiness.

Even Shangri-la must change. When King Jigme Singye Wangchuck ascended the throne in 1972, Bhutan suffered from some of the highest poverty, illiteracy, and infant-mortality rates in the world — a legacy of the policy of isolation. “We paid a heavy price,” the King would say later. His father, Bhutan’s third King, had begun opening up the country in the 1960s, building roads, establishing schools and health clinics, pushing for United Nations membership. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck would go much further. With the self-confidence of a ruler whose country has never been conquered, he has tried to dictate the terms of Bhutan’s opening — and in the process redefine the very meaning of development. The felicitous phrase he invented to describe his approach: Gross National Happiness.

Brook Larmer, National Geographic, March 2008



## **SELF-RELIANCE**

Self-reliance stood as the cornerstone of His Majesty's illustrious reign. With measured precision and foresight, His Majesty navigated Bhutan through various stages of development, personally overseeing each facet of the Five Year Plans (FYPs). Recognizing that economic advancement is indispensable for national resilience, His Majesty spearheaded numerous transformative projects, the enduring impact of which continues to enrich Bhutan to this day.

### Kasho/Edict to Planning Commission

Since it is time to begin the work for our Sixth Plan, I am commanding the Planning Commission to frame policies, and plan our programmes in such a way that we can achieve our goals. The policy should be compiled to include all the systems of community and economic development, and our political system. Moreover, our policies should be made according to the need of time and we should think deeply about the future activities that are important for our country.

Moreover, it was decreed that we should frame such policies, the execution of which will not affect our political system, our traditional etiquette, culture and religion. Having thought of our country's objectives and interests, it is hereby decreed that our policies and plans should be made according to the following orders. Our policies should altogether support the economic development, culture, religion and political system in order to achieve the objectives of our country and to strengthen and safeguard our identity. We should find ways of improving the per capita income from the internal resources to achieve the objective of self-reliance. ....The objective should be to increase the revenue according to the percentage of revenue received as expenditure for the development works within the planned period by the Planning Commission. We should protect our intact environment in order to enjoy a better health. Every individual must understand the need and importance of the objectives of the government and bear equal responsibility to promote the system of co-operation between our people and government. Our government should be able to bear the responsibility of executing the functions for the benefit of the people and the country, and our people also should support in creating a strong and trustworthy government.

Further, it has been decided that the basis for the evaluation of the achievements of the objectives of the Sixth Plan is to see whether the people are happy and live a comfortable life. This policy decree clearly shows our government's endeavour for economic development and the peace of our country. It indicates what our government should do, what development path our country should take and how impartial laws and security of our country should be maintained.

Issued on this 15<sup>th</sup> Day of the 7<sup>th</sup> Month of the Fire Tiger Year (27 September 1986).

Druk Gyalpo





## HIS MAJESTY'S ADDRESS AT SIBSOO

His Majesty the King embarked on an official visit to Deothang, Bumthang, and Mongar for the first time in December 1973. This marked the inaugural major tour of the country. Similarly, His Majesty the King returned to Thimphu on January 8, 1974 after completing his first official tour of Southern Bhutan districts of Sibsoo, Chirang, Samtse, and Geylegphug. At Sibsoo, His Majesty addressed the crowd that had gathered.

“It has not been so many years since development projects were first started in our country. Even so, in those few years, our nation has advanced a great deal, and notable progress has been achieved.

Initially, our Government initiated and executed the development of the larger towns and areas around the dzongs in the country. I now feel that we must aim at the development of our villages. Most of the population consists of farmers and cultivators, and the Government's attention is firmly focused on these people and the general improvement of agriculture. If we concentrate and work hard towards agrarian achievement, we can entertain the highest hopes of becoming self-sufficient in food grains. Therefore, our Government is giving the highest priority to agricultural development.

You must never give rise to the thought that every measure of development and every effort will be taken and made by the Government alone. Every bit of effort being made by the Government most definitely requires the support and cooperation of the people. If the Government and the people combine their efforts and resources in the field of ag-

riculture, then not only will you all benefit, but the nation will find greater security.

You, the citizens of Southern Bhutan, must never regard yourselves as aliens because not only you but your forebears also were born and raised in Bhutan. As such, all of you are Bhutanese. Regarding yourselves thus, you must look to the betterment and progress of Bhutan. All of us must remain united as one people, one nation, and forge ahead together.

In these times, we hear of strife, wars, disease, floods, and famine in other countries, but in the midst of all this turmoil, we here enjoy peace and prosperity, for which there are two reasons. Firstly, we have kept firm faith in God, and He has blessed us with peace and prosperity. Secondly, we have maintained strong unity between the Government and the people.

My real purpose in coming to Sibsoo today is to look into the problems and the difficulties of the people here. I wish to meet your village heads and elders and discuss these problems with them and try to discover how best we can help you. I am extremely happy to have met you all.”

## FEELING THE NATION'S PULSE



His Majesty's unwavering commitment to self-reliance was underscored by his profound recognition of the paramount importance of addressing the diverse and pressing needs of his people. Embracing a policy deeply rooted in the welfare and empowerment of his subjects, His Majesty's governance prioritized initiatives aimed at fostering self-sufficiency and resilience within the populace. Through meticulous planning and strategic implementation, he endeavored to cultivate an environment where every individual could thrive independently, bolstered by a robust infrastructure of support and opportunity. In realizing this vision, His Majesty sought not only to fortify the economic and social fabric of the nation but also to nurture a sense of collective empowerment and cohesion, ensuring that each citizen could contribute meaningfully to the flourishing of their community and the nation at large.

In order to feel the needs and pulse of his people, His Majesty embarked on a series of transformative journeys crisscrossing the length and breadth of the nation. Central to his sovereign odyssey were the meticulously orchestrated National Day celebrations, serving not only as grand spectacles of patriotism but also as profound avenues of connection between the monarch and his subjects. Year after year, these majestic festivities unfurled in diverse districts, each hosting a tableau of vibrant culture and spirited camaraderie.

In the midst of these celebrations, His Majesty wielded his presence with purpose, traversing through bustling markets, verdant fields, and bustling thoroughfares, immersing himself in the heartbeat of his people's lives. With an attentive ear and discerning eye, he engaged directly with citizens from all walks of life, listening intently to their aspirations, concerns, and triumphs. These annual pilgrimages were more than mere ceremonial gestures; they were profound exercises in empathy and problem-solving. By immersing himself in the rich tapestry of his kingdom's diversity, His Majesty gained invaluable insights into the immediate needs and challenges faced by his people. Through these firsthand encounters, he not only empathized with their struggles but also gleaned inspiration for innovative solutions.

Indeed, amidst the kaleidoscope of festivities, His Majesty's keen gaze discerned the seeds of progress and prosperity. From the hushed whispers of remote villages to the bustling fervor of urban centers, he beheld not just the challenges but also the latent potential waiting to be unleashed. These annual sojourns thus became transformative crucibles wherein monarch and subjects converged in a shared vision of progress, unity, and collective empowerment.

## A JOURNEY OF ALL-ROUND PROGRESS



Upon His Majesty's ascension to the throne, Bhutan stood poised at the threshold of its Third Five Year Plan (FYP), heralding the dawn of a transformative epoch. Assuming the esteemed mantle of Chairman of the Planning Commission, His Majesty embarked on a resolute journey, steering the meticulous execution of each plan period with unwavering dedication, thereby laying the bedrock for comprehensive development across every echelon of Bhutanese society.



■ His Majesty with his subjects

His Majesty's indomitable commitment to Bhutan's developmental trajectory was not a new-found pursuit but rather a lifelong dedication nurtured from a tender age. Having collaborated closely with his late father within the esteemed corridors of the planning commission, His Majesty assumed the chairmanship of the commis-

sion in 1971. Upon the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's ascension to the Throne in 1972, Bhutan stood at the dawn of the Third Five Year Plan (FYP), with each successive plan period presenting increasingly formidable challenges amidst the burgeoning demands of a rapidly evolving populace.

The advent of decentralization marked a pivotal juncture in Bhutan's developmental narrative, particularly underscored during the Fifth FYP. Concurrently, the Kingdom bore witness to the ambitious realization of monumental projects such as the Chukha Hydropower Project, the establishment of the Penden Cement Authority Limited, and the inception of Druk Air, all emblematic of Bhutan's unwavering march towards progress and prosperity.

While the benevolent support of India and United Nations agencies continued to serve as pillars

of Bhutan's developmental edifice, the forging of bilateral ties with other nations offered an expansive vista for seeking additional avenues of assistance. Notably, Bhutan's accession to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1982 ushered in a new era of financial access and collaboration. However, amidst this evolving landscape, India remained steadfast as Bhutan's principal development partner and preeminent provider of official development aid, underscoring the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two nations.



■ His Majesty plays Khuru with the people, 1993

Each FYP was tailored to address specific priorities, reflecting the evolving needs of Bhutanese society. The initial FYPs focused on bolstering road infrastructure and essential social services, while subsequent plans emphasized advancements in communication, healthcare, education, agriculture, and economic diversification. Notably, the fifth FYP emphasized industrial expansion and decentralized development initiatives, while later plans underscored sustainable development, private sector efficiency, and cultural preservation.

Under His Majesty's stewardship, Bhutan witnessed an unprecedented surge in development indicators. A comparative analysis between 1974 and 2006 vividly illustrates this progress. Enrollment in schools skyrocketed from 13,410 students in 1974 to approximately 151,260 in 2006. Likewise, the number of health facilities surged from 56 to 715 during the same period. Road infrastructure witnessed a remarkable expansion, with motorable roads extending from 1,332 km to 4,544 km by 2006. The surge in electricity generation, tourism, and other sectors further exemplifies Bhutan's remarkable trajectory under His Majesty's reign.

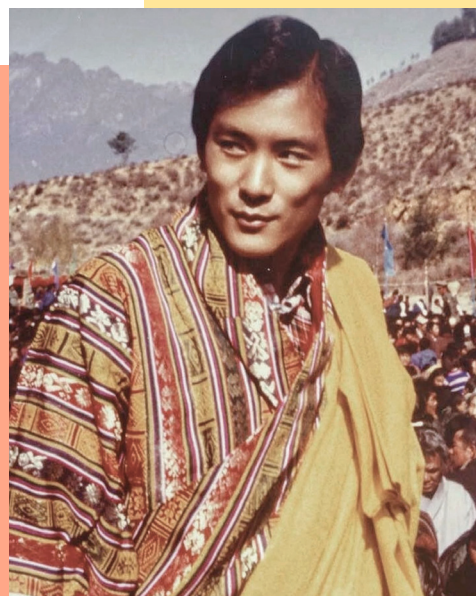
Additionally, His Majesty's tenure witnessed the initiation of several groundbreaking projects outside the ambit of the FYPs. Landmark initiatives such as the Chukha Hydropower Project and the Penden Cement Plant underscored Bhutan's commitment to harnessing its natural resources for sustainable development. The Chukha Hydropower Project, initiated in 1974, paved the way for subsequent hydropower ventures, positioning hydropower as a cornerstone of Bhutan's revenue generation. Similarly, the establishment of the Penden Cement Plant in 1979 marked a significant milestone in Bhutan's industrialization

journey, contributing to the nation's self-sufficiency in cement production.

Moreover, His Majesty's visionary leadership ushered Bhutan into the digital age, with the introduction of digital telecommunication networks, internet services, and satellite television in the late 1980s and 1990s. These technological advancements not only connected Bhutan internally and globally but also facilitated the integration of Bhutan into the increasingly interconnected world.

In essence, His Majesty's reign epitomized an era of unparalleled development and progress, laying the groundwork for Bhutan's emergence as a modern, resilient nation poised for continued growth in the 21st century.

However, as mentioned to the media during the coronation celebrations, His Majesty's vision was clear – “Self-Reliance.” Gradually, the journey towards it began. On the development front, encapsulated in this document are some of the major ones, which still continue to benefit Bhutan.



## ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS



Established in 1968, the Bank of Bhutan on October 7th, 1971, forged a strategic partner with the State Bank of India. The accord conferred upon Bhutan the prerogative to acquire shares from the institution upon the agreement's denouement. In its capacity as India's premier commercial bank, SBI was enlisted to lend its expertise in capital management, propelling Bhutan towards economic empowerment and fiscal stewardship.

A decree issued by His Majesty on February 18th, 1972, heralded the reconstitution of the Bank of Bhutan (BoB) under a freshly minted royal charter. Swiftly thereafter, on March 1st, the collaborative endeavor sprang into vibrant fruition. The bedrock of this alliance was laid with a paid-up capital of Nu. 2.5 million (M), to be apportioned between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the State Bank of India in a ratio of 3:2. The financial anatomy of this symbiotic venture mandated contributions of Nu. 1.5M and Nu. 1M from the respective stakeholders, marking the genesis of a mutually beneficial partnership poised to navigate the currents of progress and prosperity.

In 1974, the Food Corporation of Bhutan was established, its primary mandate extending beyond mere sustenance to the noble pursuit of fostering food security while bolstering trade avenues for the populace. In due course, FCB assumed a pivotal role in extending vital micro-credit facilities, empowering individuals and communities alike on the path to economic resilience.

Mirroring this trajectory of innovation, the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan emerged one year post-coronation, heralding a new era of

comprehensive protection and prosperity. Originally conceived to provide insurance services, its purview expanded manifold, encompassing ventures in real estate development, housing construction, and the facilitation of affordable accommodations for civil servants—a beacon of equitable progress illuminating the nation's horizon.

Likewise, the genesis of the Bhutan National Bank (BNB) on July 25th, 1980, under the guise of the Unit Trust of Bhutan (UTB), epitomized a pioneering stride towards financial inclusivity. Initially seeded with an endowment of Nu. 2.5 million from the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan, UTB embarked on a noble mission to cultivate a culture of thrift among the populace, channeling resources judiciously into ventures of societal benefit.

Meanwhile, in 1982 the Royal Monetary Authority (RMA), was established as custodian of the nation's monetary sovereignty. Conceived through the landmark RMA Act of 1982, ratified by the august 56th session of the National Assembly, RMA assumed its august responsibilities on April 1st, 1983, from the issuance of the national currency to the vigilant stewardship of external reserves and foreign exchange operations.

In consonance with the above progress, the Bhutan Development Bank Limited (BDBL) emerged through the auspices of a Royal Charter in January 1988, fortified by the patronage of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Tasked with the noble mantle of a development finance institution (DFI), BDBL endeavored to catalyze transformative growth trajectories across the na-

tion, thus nurturing the seeds of economic vitality and societal advancement.

The foundation of formal retirement income security was initiated in 1962 with a gratuity scheme followed by Government Employees Provident Fund (GEPF) in 1976 that covered all civil servants, corporate employees and members of the Armed Forces. Considering the overall welfare of government employees during old age, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo issued a Royal Kasho to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Royal Civil Service Commission in 1998 to review the existing retirement benefit schemes.

Accordingly, the Government Working Committee (GWC) with technical support from UNDP, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World

Bank, carried out the study that resulted in the separation of GEPF operation from Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan Ltd. (RICBL) and the establishment of National Pension and Provident Fund (NPPF). The NPPF was established as an autonomous agency on March 30, 2000.

In August 1993, the Royal Securities Exchange of Bhutan (RSEB) was established. It officially opened for trading on 11th October 1993. It was established as a non-profit making and quasi-public organization under the aegis of the Royal Monetary Authority (RMA), to encourage wider spread of share ownership in the enterprises, mobilize savings, provide platform to raise equity capital for new ventures and to provide liquidity to the existing shareholders.



■ His Majesty with members of the National Assembly, 1987

## TOURISM



■ Lars-Eric Lindblad who led the first tour group to Bhutan

In the autumn of 1974, the inaugural troupe of travelers graced the serene realms of Bhutan, alighting in Phuntsholing on October 3rd. Their seven-day odyssey marked a watershed moment in Bhutanese annals, heralding the nation's inaugural step onto the global stage of tourism. Thus commenced an odyssey that would transform the Bhutanese landscape, both literally and metaphorically.

This seminal event not only catalyzed Bhutan's tourism industry but also led to a cultural cross-pollination of unprecedented scale. Foreign visitors, entranced by Bhutan's tapestry of traditions, basked in the splendor of its natural vistas, fostering a tapestry of understanding and camaraderie amongst disparate cultures. The influx of visitors precipitated a metamorphosis, spurring the creation of bespoke amenities tailored to their discerning tastes – from boutique hotels to culinary havens, and an intricate network of transportation arteries.

This burgeoning sector not only buoyed Bhutan's economic fortunes but also emerged as a vanguard for cultural preservation and environmental stewardship. As guests imbibed the essence of Bhutanese heritage and beheld the unspoiled grandeur of its environs, a newfound reverence for conservation took root, echoing the Kingdom's ethos of harmony with nature.



In essence, the arrival of those pioneering voyagers in 1974 unfurled a new epoch for Bhutan – one characterized by heightened global integration, economic prosperity, and intercultural dialogue, while underscoring the imperative for sustainable tourism practices and ecological custodianship. Guided by the visionary ethos of "High Value, Low Volume" tourism policy, enshrined by His Majesty, Bhutan metamorphosed into a coveted haven for the discerning traveler, emerging as a bastion of exclusivity in the global tourism pantheon.

In October 1991, a watershed moment transpired with the privatization of the Bhutan Tourism Corporation (BTC), heralding a new era of private-sector dynamism and innovation. Under the sagacious stewardship of His Majesty, this deliberate approach catapulted Bhutan into the echelons of premier foreign currency generators, while steadfastly preserving its cultural patrimony and environmental treasures for posterity.

**His Majesty's concerns were about tourism. That was the big issue then, just like the issue now might be the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, and TV programs changing the culture of Bhutan. The issue then was tourism because you had just started letting tourists in and the Tiger's nest had just been closed because of too many people going there. And the tops of the mountains had just been closed because of people thinking that their traditions were being spoilt. There had been a lot of theft, I believe, of various treasures. His Majesty was thinking about how to look after this great inheritance that he had received. How to steer Bhutan into the modern world, while at the same time maintaining traditions.**

**John Elliot to Kuensel, 2011**

## DRUKAIR



■ Drukair gets an airfield in 1968

A pivotal juncture in Bhutan's aviation saga dawned upon the Kingdom, etching its presence onto the global aviation atlas. The inauguration of the airfield, in 1968 capable of hosting the Dakota aircraft, marked an epochal stride in Bhutan's aviation narrative – a testament to the visionary leadership of His Majesty the Third Druk Gyalpo. The arduous task, aided by the benevolent support of the Indian government, culminated in the inauguration ceremony on March 23, 1968, graced by Shri Morarji Desai, Deputy Prime Minister of India.

On April 5th, 1981, a seminal proclamation by His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck paved the azure skies for Bhutan's national carrier, Drukair, heralding a new era of connectivity and progress. With the humble inauguration of operations from Paro, featuring the nimble Dornier 228-200, Drukair commenced its historic journey, bridging the aerial chasm between Bhutan and Kolkata.

Under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Chhoden Wangchuck, Drukair embarked on its maiden flight to Kolkata International Airport on February 11, 1983, infusing the Kingdom's development trajectory with newfound momentum. Subsequent milestones, including the inauguration of flights to Kathmandu and Bangkok, underscored Drukair's unwavering commitment to facilitating global connections, transcending geographical confines.

The evolution of Drukair, from its modest inception with a solitary aircraft to the introduction of cutting-edge jets, epitomizes Bhutan's unwavering march towards modernization and global integration. As Drukair continues to soar across international skies, it remains an indispensable conduit for cultural exchange, tourism influx, and global outreach, embodying the aspirations of a nation bound by the promise of progress and connectivity.

**Kasho/Edict To the Minister of Communication**

Till this day, by the grace of our god and due to the blessings of our guardian deities, Druk Air has remained safe. Henceforth, it is important for Druk Air to take care of the passengers and to serve our country continuously. The choice to send or withhold the plane should not be influenced by daily schedules and urgency of matters since the airport at Paro is very small, surrounded by high mountains and as it is risky during bad weather.

The pilot and all the employees should work according to the standard aviation operating procedures, and safety and security regulations, without negligence. After the landing, the engineers and mechanics should check the machines and repair wherever necessary with care and promptness. Therefore, the rules of coordination and reminders for the above persons should not only be on paper, but the Minister of Communication, Director of Druk Air and Director of Security and Investigation of the Druk Air should see to it that the work is done properly.

If Druk Air meets an accident for the reason that you have acted in contravention to the above regulations and this decree, the risk to the lives of all the passengers lies on the Ministry of Communication and the concerned officials, without exemption. Therefore, you must keep these things in mind and follow them properly from the very beginning.

Issued on this 21st Day of the 8th Month of the Water-FemaleBird Year (7 October 1993).

Druk Gyalpo

## PENDEN CEMENT AUTHORITY LIMITED



Following initial deliberations with India, the Royal Government of Bhutan bestowed its trust upon the Cement Corporation of India (CCI) as the consultant for the momentous Nu. 70 Million cement Project, destined to grace the verdant landscape betwixt Phuntsholing and Samchi, nestled alongside the Indian district of Jalpaiguri.

In a sublime ceremony that echoed the solemnity of historic undertakings, an agreement enshrining the terms and tenets of this auspicious collaboration was solemnized within the hallowed halls of Tashichhodzong on July 26, 1974. Presiding over this pivotal moment was His Royal Highness Paro Penlop Namgyel Wangchuck, Minister for Trade, Industry, and Forests, representing the Royal Government, whilst CCI's Chairman, the distinguished Mr. B. V. Raju, lent his signature to the covenant of cooperation.

The advent of the captive power plant for Penden Cement, boasting a formidable 3 MVA capacity, heralded a new dawn in early November 1980. Swiftly thereafter, the resplendent hum of clinker production graced the third week of the same month. With resolute determination, the Raw Mill commenced its rhythmic cadence on November 7, 1980, followed in harmonious succession by the Coal-Mill and Kiln, along with their attendant auxiliaries, on November 19, 1980.

Amidst a jubilant atmosphere suffused with palpable anticipation, Penden Cement, standing as the epitome of Bhutan's largest and most capital-intensive industrial endeavor, was ceremonially unveiled on February 5, 1982. Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck graced the occasion as the Chief Guest of the inaugural ceremony. The grand inauguration heralded not merely the birth of an industry, but rather a profound gateway to a new era of socio-economic prosperity, symbolizing the resolute stride of Bhutan towards unparalleled development and progress.



## THE ULTIMATE INDUSTRIAL EXERCISE CHUKHA HYDROPOWER CORPORATION



The beginning of Bhutan's ambitious endeavor to harness clean energy finds its seminal moment in the construction of the Chukha Hydropower Project. Amidst the backdrop of strategic discussions, the visionary roadmap for this monumental project began to unfurl during the historic visit of Indian Minister for External Affairs, Sardar Swaran Singh, on February 4, 1974. It was during this auspicious occasion that India extended its unwavering commitment to participate in the construction of the Chhuka Hydroelectric Project, marking a pivotal milestone in the burgeoning partnership between the two nations.

With meticulous deliberation, it was unanimously agreed that a delegation from Bhutan would journey to New Delhi in March to iron out the basics of the agreement, signaling a resolute step towards the fruition of this transformative endeavor. Emphasizing the profound significance attached to the project, it was underscored that Bhutan held the Chukha Hydropower Project in the highest regard, with India graciously pledging its full cooperation to ensure expeditious progress.

The subsequent visit of the Indian power minister, P. Ranwchandran, on April 7, 1979, marked yet another chapter in the saga of collaboration. During an audience with His Majesty the King, assurances were tendered regarding the timely commissioning of the monumental Nu. 150 crore Chukha Hydel Project by 1984, a pledge emblematic of steadfast commitment and shared vision.

True to these assurances, on October 21, 1984,

Indian President R. Venkataraman inaugurated Bhutan's crowning achievement—the formidable Chukha Hydro Electric Project. Already burgeoning as the nation's premier employer and exporter, this monumental initiative was poised to redefine Bhutan's energy landscape. The project, with its first generator commissioned in September 1986, and culminating in the installation of the fourth and final unit, boasted a staggering total capacity of 336 megawatts.

As testament to the foresight and strategic acumen of Bhutanese leadership, Thimphu retained a strategic portion of this prodigious output for domestic consumption while harnessing the remainder to power industries across regions hungry for energy, stretching as far as Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim, and even the southern reaches of Orissa, thus igniting a beacon of progress and prosperity that radiated far beyond the borders of the Land of the Thunder Dragon.

With the advent of the Chukha Hydropower Project, the Bhutanese economy experienced a monumental leap forward, setting the stage for the establishment of other transformative hydropower initiatives. Even today, revenue from hydropower stands as the cornerstone of Bhutan's economic prosperity, serving as the primary source of income for the nation.

During the project's inauguration, President Venkataraman eloquently remarked that the endeavor symbolized the steadfast friendship between India and Bhutan—a bond that was first forged in the 1950s between King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.



■ His Majesty with Indian President R. Venkataraman and Mrs. Venkataraman in October 21, 1984

His Majesty the King, in turn extolled Indo-Bhutan relations to have attained a “state of full maturity” with the culmination of the power project. Chukha, as the largest and most triumphant venture between the two nations at the time, not only solidified India’s pivotal role as a partner in Bhutan’s development but also served as a harbinger of subsequent hydroelectric endeavors, such as the Kurichu hydroproject, which commenced construction in 1995 and reached completion in 2001, marking yet another milestone in Bhutan’s journey towards sustainable energy.

Commissioned in September 2001 and commencing commercial operations a year later, this 60 MW project stands as a testament to the enduring partnership between Bhutan and India. With a total cost of Nu. 5,600 million, funded by the government of India, Kurichu emerged as a beacon of progress and prosperity, generating power worth Nu. 547.2 million in sales by 2005—a tangible testament to the transformative potential of hydroelectricity in fueling Bhutan’s economic growth.

## ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE SECTORS FORMED



His Majesty, ever cognizant of the pivotal role of the private sector in the nation's march towards progress, catalyzed a transformative initiative that would resonate through the annals of Bhutan's economic history. On April 17, 1980, at His Majesty's behest, a congregation of private sector entrepreneurs and visionary businessmen convened, birthing what would later evolve into the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

In the august confines of the Conference Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives from every district assembled under the banner of the Business Committee, charged with the solemn duty of charting the course for this nascent association. Amidst this gathering of entrepreneurial minds, the foundation stones of the association were laid, and the mantle of leadership passed to duly elected office bearers, paving the way for a new era of collaborative enterprise.

Preceding this historic rendezvous, His Majesty graciously granted audiences to the Business Committee on April 16 and March 14, underscoring the imperative of symbiotic cooperation between the government and the private sector in realizing the lofty goals of economic development. His Majesty's vision, resplendent in its foresight, envisioned an association that not only safeguarded the interests of its member firms but also served as a bulwark for the promotion and protection of commercial endeavors, fostering an environment of equitable opportunity for all aspiring entrepreneurs.

## INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION ESTABLISHED



In February 1978, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Forests reported having identified numerous viable industrial projects for Bhutan, focusing on utilizing domestic resources initially. While finalizing a long-term industrial plan was on, a short-term action-oriented strategy was devised to address infrastructure challenges.

External expertise was to be initially involved, with a training program to transition to Bhutanese management. Surveys, including for a ropeway and lead-zinc beneficiation plant, had been approved. Additional surveys for tea plantation, essential oils extraction, gum rosin synthesis, and horticultural processing units were planned for 1978-79.

The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) was to manage industrial projects, including dolomite mining near the Penden Cement Project, aimed at boosting sales to India and improving mining standards. Other projects discussed included magnesium carbonate manufacturing, model sawmill, integrated wood processing unit, and commercial plywood manufacturing.

## BOARD OF INDUSTRIES CONSTITUTED



In July 1973, the government started a seminal initiative by establishing the Board of Industries, with His Royal Highness Namgyel Wangchuck, Minister for Trade, Industry, and Forests, as its Chairman. Under his august leadership, the Honorable Deputy Home Minister, Dasho Dhondhup, and the Industrial Adviser assumed roles as Vice-Chairman and Secretary, respectively, alongside a cohort of other members.

With a resolute gaze fixed upon the horizon of industrial progress, the Board embarked on a strategic course, leveraging allocated funds from the budget earmarked for the Industrial Development Corporation. A meticulous array of surveys unfurled, each thread interwoven with the grand tapestry of establishing large-scale industries. Armed with the insights garnered from surveys, feasibility reports, and comprehensive project assessments, the Board deliberated upon the pivotal question of sectoral placement—whether industries should find anchorage within the auspices of the government or be entrusted to the private domain.

For those destined for the halls of the government sector, the Board meticulously charted the

course of resource mobilization, threading the delicate needle of financial viability. Discussions ensued regarding the constitution of separate entities or the integration of ventures into existing departmental frameworks, with decisions tailored to the unique needs of each industry. In cases where symbiotic relationships with other government departments were evident, the Board wielded its judicious hand to determine departmental management modalities.

Meanwhile, for private sector endeavors, the Board wielded its authority to delineate the contours of government participation, expertly calibrating the extent of involvement in each venture. Approving data collection mechanisms and overseeing centralized trading activities, the Board served as the vigilant custodian of undertakings infused with government capital, incessantly seeking avenues for improvement and revival.

Amidst the cadence of progress, the Board convened with regularity, its deliberations punctuating the temporal canvas once every two or three months.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIVISION ESTABLISHED



While Bhutan may have been in nascent stages of development compared to other nations, His Majesty's foresight transcended temporal constraints. It was with visionary acumen that he established the Science and Technology Division, in April, 1984. This division bore the noble mandate of shepherding Bhutan's scientific and technological progress, ensuring seamless alignment with the socio-economic development policies and paramount priorities of the Royal Government.



## COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY LAUNCHED



In a pivotal stride towards embracing modernity, Bhutan embarked on its journey with computer technology by inaugurating an integrated Computer Training Course in Thimphu on January 24, 1985. Comprising a cohort of 17 individuals drawn from diverse departments and ministries, these trailblazers embarked on a transformative odyssey. Their voyage commenced with a rigorous two and a half-month foundational training in Calcutta.

Under the expert guidance of two tutors hailing from the Computer Maintenance Corporation, Calcutta, and bolstered by the wisdom of a Technical Adviser versed in Computer Methods from a government of India Enterprise, the trainees embarked on a comprehensive nine-month training program. This intensive regimen not only equipped them with the requisite skills but also imbued them with the vision to navigate the burgeoning realms of computer technology with finesse and acumen.

## BHUTAN TELECOM ENTERS



The ICT sector in Bhutan underwent a remarkable evolution since the inception of the first telephone network in 1963. However, it wasn't until 1998 that a fully digital national telecommunication network, interlinking all twenty Dzongkhags (districts) and major urban centers, came to fruition. Over the years, there was a discernible surge in telecommunication penetration rates, with fixed-line teledensity witnessing a substantial rise from 2.8% in 2002 to 5.3% in 2006, while mobile teledensity surged to 12.3% by December 2006.

Behind the above was Bhutan Telecom Limited (BTL) standing at the forefront of telecommunications and Internet provision, embodying a commitment to connectivity and progress since its inception on July 1, 2000. Born from the transformation of the Department of Telecommunications, established in 1970, BTL evolved into a pioneering entity, shaping Bhutan's digital landscape and fulfilling the visions of Bhutan's Kings. From its earliest endeavors in 1963, supporting the First Five Year Plan's developmental initiatives, to its current state as a beacon of technological advancement, BTL has undergone a remarkable journey. Today, it stands as the primary provider of telecommunications, offering fixed line telephony, GSM Mobile services under the renowned B-Mobile brand, and Internet Services through DrukNet. Uniquely, it holds the distinction of being the sole provider of fixed line telephone services in the country.

BTL's infrastructure epitomizes modernity, boasting a comprehensive digital microwave and optical fiber backbone network that spans the entire nation. This network, meticulously expanded over the years, now reaches even the most remote corners of Bhutan, transcending commercial constraints to ensure connectivity for all. In a testament to its dedication, B-Mobile extends its services to all 205 Gewogs, reaffirming its commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

## TELEVISION



During the silver jubilee coronation celebrations on June 2, 1999, from the historic Changlithang grounds, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, informed the people that Bhutan would be opening up to Television. Heralding it as a “Light of the Cyber Age,” His Majesty cautioned the people of the need to use television sensibly. Launching TV formally was Her Majesty, Gyalum Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck, who spoke about the merits and demerits of TV.

### Her Majesty Gyalum Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck's Address

Our Nation celebrates His Majesty the King's silver jubilee and as we stand poised to enter a new millennium it is indeed an auspicious time for us to establish one of the most effective mediums of information for our people. I believe the decision to launch TV at this juncture once again reflects the pragmatic approach of the Royal Government in promoting the socio-economic development of our country.

Establishing TV has always been the Royal Government's development objective but it was not a priority objective for a least developed country, which only emerged from self imposed isolation and embarked on a process of planned development decades ago. In the development of the media, importance was given to radio and print media as TV was both irrelevant and unaffordable in the face of development needs. Until a few years ago, many of our villagers could not afford to buy radios, nor could many of our people read print media.

Today after the successful implementation of the 7th Five Year Plan by the Royal Government, the goal of providing many of the essentials and amenities have been achieved. The living standards and health of our people has been greatly enhanced and our literacy rate has also risen. Along with an increased thrust for knowledge, recreational needs have risen. TV has become more affordable and relevant with the progress we have achieved. The differing views on TV center around its many virtues and the dangers of its corrosive impact on the values of society. Here in Bhutan, we are neither blinded by its disadvantages nor oblivious to the opportunities it has to offer. Having pursued for 25 years a philosophy of development aimed at promoting Gross National Happiness, through harmonious balance and spiritual and material growth, we know that the strong fabric of the Bhutanese society can withstand and be enriched by the winds of change.

## FIRST ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR GRADUATES



A 17-day orientation program in Thimphu began from June 27 to July 14 aimed to inform and educate graduates about government plans and policies. Nearly 60 graduates from 1975, 1976, and 1977 attended regularly. Motivated by His Majesty the King's concern, the program revealed a lack of awareness among graduates about national development activities. The curriculum included lectures on development plans, foreign and domestic policies, and industry. While all graduates from the specified years attended lectures, the 1977 cohort also participated in workshops led by the Department of Agriculture and the Health Directorate. The program's success spurred the Ministry of Development to plan a more comprehensive orientation for the following year.



■ His Majesty at Sherubtse College, 1990

### **Kasho/Edict To the Minister of Health and Education**

Bhutan is a very small and landlocked country. Our government should not create a situation where any educated Bhutanese cannot get an opportunity of joining a service of his choice according to the policy of making every Bhutanese a productive citizen. Nevertheless, the citizens should also serve our country with full dedication.

The sole responsibility of our people is to safeguard the sovereignty of our country and endeavour to attain fruition for all time to come by serving our country with solemn oath and allegiance. And, since the stability of our country lies in the hands of our youth, it is very important to enable them to bear the responsibilities efficiently and effectively. So, in order to develop our youth, our government has been coordinating the programmes of counselling and guidance of our youth.

The Youth Guidance and Counselling Centre established by the Ministry of Health and Education in Thimphu with different programmes should be made accessible to about one hundred thousand of students in the schools ranging from primary schools to colleges. Further, for the continuity and sustainable promotion of such programmes, there is a need to ensure self-sufficiency. Although our government is to spend Nu 3 million for the advancement of education in the eighth five-year plan, youth guidance and counselling, and development programmes cannot be implemented with this amount. Moreover, according to our policy of achieving self-reliance, we have to spend our revenue on regular administration. Therefore, it is decreed that a permanent trust fund be established, for which the government will invest US\$ 1 million to make the Centre self-reliant. Further, you should seek for maximum of foreign aid.

Issued on this 13th Day of the 9th Month of the Earth-Tiger Year (2 November 1998).

**Druk Gyalpo**

*Following this, on June 16, 1999, the Bhutan Youth Development Fund was inaugurated, with the commitment to making every youth a leader.*

## SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN HEALTH



In an edict issued to the Deputy Minister of Health and Education on March 11th, 1997, His Majesty expressed that one of the most important and planned development objectives of Bhutan is to bring up a productive community by promoting the physical health of the children and the citizens of Bhutan.

His Majesty the King in all his compassion for the people, underlined that the government has to ensure provision of health services to the people continuously, while focusing on self-sufficiency. Reiterating that it is extremely important to become self-sufficient, His Majesty commanded that in order to enable the regular production of medicines on our own without any obstacle in future, steps should be taken to set up a trust fund for production of medicines with the beginning of the 8th Five-Year plan. “For this matter, it is decreed that the Finance Ministry should grant US\$ 1 million for creating a trust fund. The department of health should take steps to find additional capital, and the interests of the trust fund should enable us to produce medicines yearly on a regular basis,” the Kasho stated.

Following this, the Bhutan Health Trust Fund was formally launched on 12 May 1998 at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva. Today it provides, free and uninterrupted supply of essential.

### **His Majesty speaks about the risks of borrowing**

While pursuing development, Bhutan had to borrow. Yet His Majesty the King approached this path with judicious discernment. Recognizing the potential ramifications, His Majesty exercised caution, wary of excessive reliance on external sources. Excessive borrowings was in stark contrast to one of his paramount visions – that of fostering self-reliance. For His Majesty, the pursuit of self-sufficiency remained an enduring aspiration, a beacon guiding the nation's trajectory toward independence and resilience.

His Majesty was pleased to make the following comments on external aid. His Majesty stated that Bhutan is fortunate and grateful to receive financial assistance from India. However, to continuously rely on external assistance for the bulk of the Government's financial requirement is not a pleasant situation. Moreover, reliance on foreign aid will adversely affect the sovereignty of the country. Drawing the example of the budget, His Majesty pointed out that Bhutan required Nu.4.44 million for the year 1979-80. Likewise, similar amounts are required each year, of which the bulk has to be sought from external sources.



His Majesty stated that while the public in general were unaware and unconcerned, he regretfully noted that the Government officials were neither conscious or worried by the facts. His Majesty stated that self-reliance cannot be achieved by raising taxes alone. In fact, the question of self-reliance was not raised in the Assembly for the purpose of increasing taxes only. The whole question of self-reliance was raised so that both the Government and people would carefully consider possibilities of increasing Bhutan's resources through the development of trade, commerce, agriculture, livestock, forest, industry, etc.

His Majesty clearly stated that the decision whether Bhutan should become a self-reliant and strong state or a weak dependent state lay with the National Assembly. If the National Assembly was indifferent to the present condition, and preferred that the existing system of receiving increased assistance from external sources be continued, the Government would frame its policies along that line. On the other hand, if the National Assembly wanted to achieve self-reliance and ensure the continued sovereignty of Bhutan, it was time to take strong measures towards self-reliance.

**Translated resolution adopted by the 51st session of the National Assembly held from 18th to 29th November 1979.**

During the next session (52nd session) of the National Assembly, His Majesty commanded the Planning Commission to submit a detailed report on countries which have granted aids, the quantity and form, the benefit derived by the country from such aids and the government's policy on the issue.

**In the contemporary world of changing political systems, it is not often that one comes across a personality like His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck... In a reign characterized by personal sacrifices, His Majesty placed Bhutan at the vanguard of modern Nations.**

**His Excellency I.K. Gujral, former Prime Minister of India**



## THE SPECIAL PROJECTS



■ His Majesty with the people during a tour in 1986

Amidst the tide of progress and development, His Majesty, cognizant of the persistent needs and challenges faced by certain segments of the populace, embarked on a poignant journey of special initiatives. These endeavors, meticulously crafted under his guiding hand, served as a beacon of hope for rural communities grappling with regional disparities and neglect.

Strategically nestled within the most marginalized and overlooked corners of the realm, these initiatives represented a synchronized effort across governmental departments to bestow upon these areas the essential fabric of civilization—roads, schools, healthcare, and agricultural support. It was a testament to His Majesty's unwavering commitment to the welfare of his people, a commitment that transcended the confines of bureaucratic red tape and administrative rigmarole.

Operated outside the conventional framework of Five-Year Plans, these bespoke projects drew

upon a distinct allocation within ministerial budgets, a financial strategy emblematic of His Majesty's resolve to streamline governance and prioritize the tangible needs of his subjects. By 1981, the seeds of progress had been sown, with eight such special projects unfurling their wings across the nation, promising a brighter tomorrow for the marginalized and downtrodden.

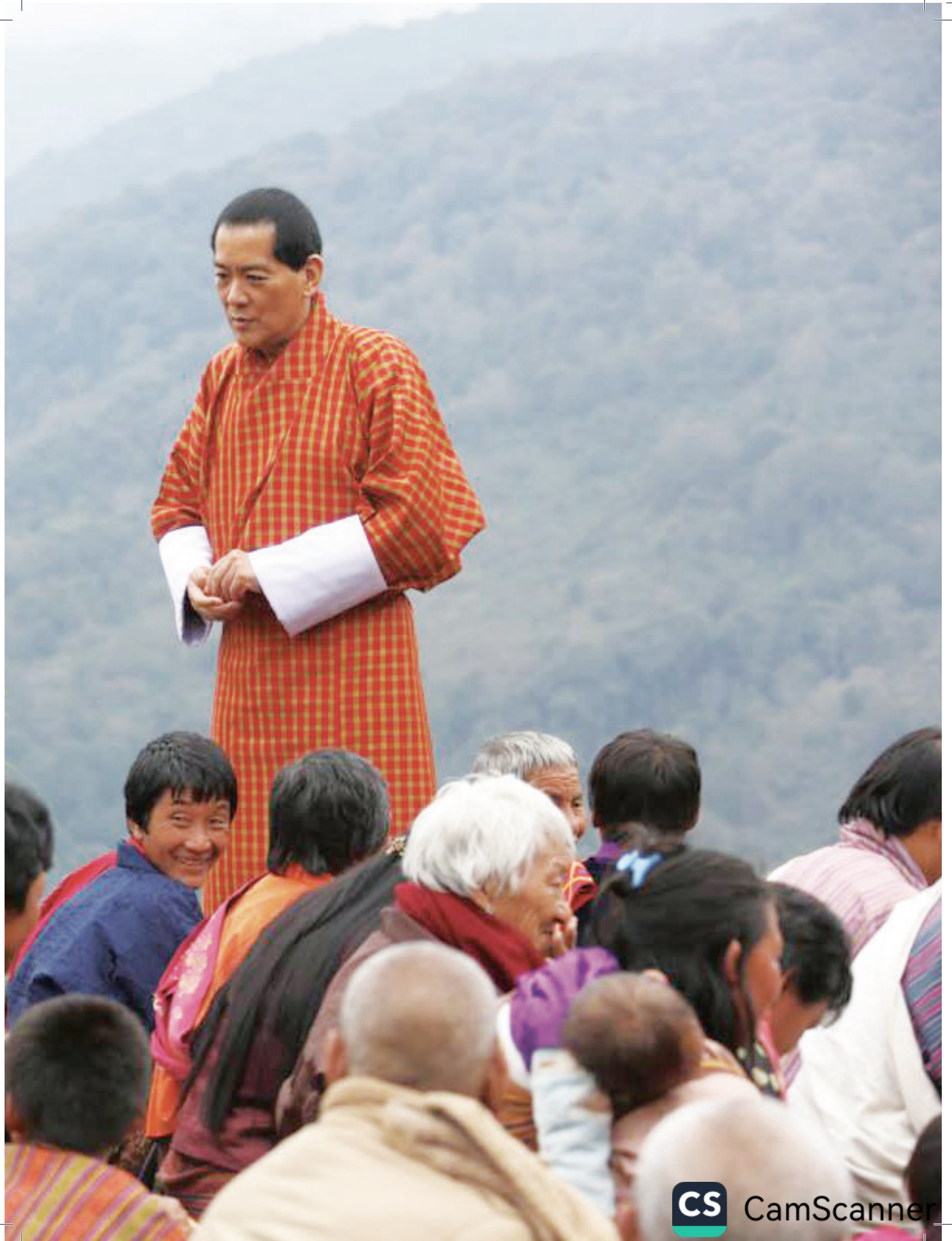
Yet, even as these endeavors flourished under Royal Command, the bedrock of regular government programs remained unshaken in their steadfast dedication to the rural sector. The principles and policies underpinning these projects spanned a spectrum, from the noble ideals of national unity to the empowering ethos of people's participation, each a testament to His Majesty's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to the upliftment of his beloved Kingdom.

Some principles of these special projects were:

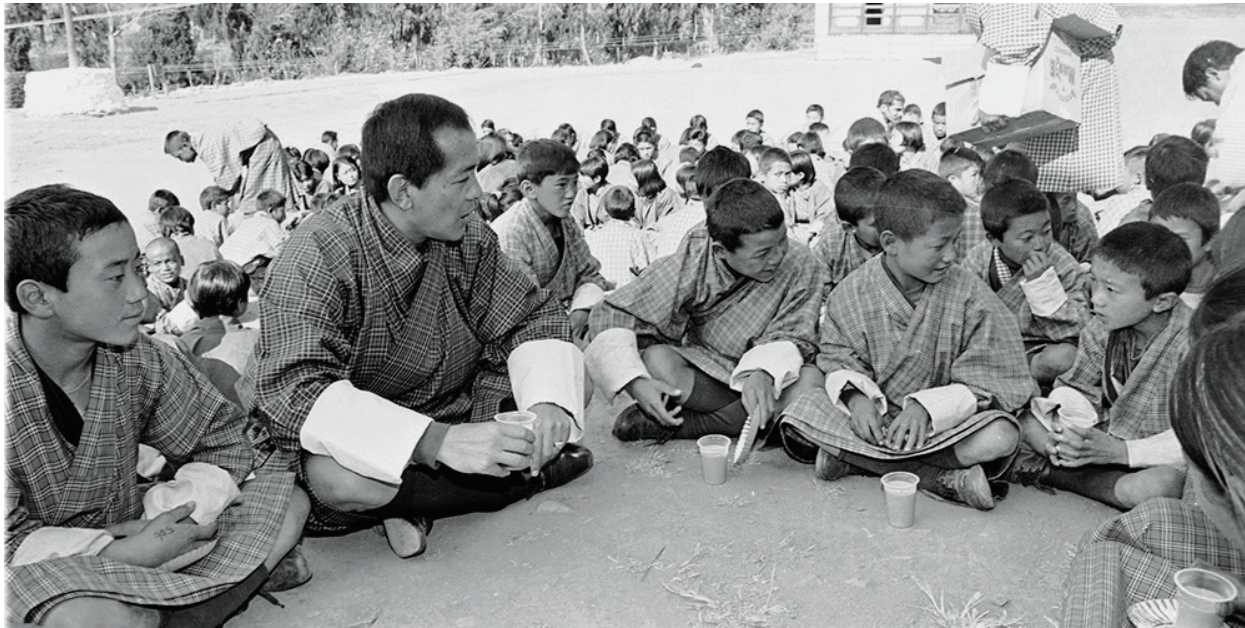
The Special Projects were cherished endeavors, nestled deeply within His Majesty's heart, serving as living manifestations of the Throne's most profound passions and aspirations.







## FOSTERING COHESION AND INTEGRATION THROUGH EDUCATION



■ His Majesty at Khasadrapchu School

The Government placed paramount importance on the advancement and broadening of Bhutan's education system. Concomitantly, measures were enacted to forestall the specter of "educated unemployment" from looming over the horizon. While higher education was meticulously tailored to cater to the specific demands of the workforce, the Government remained steadfast in its commitment to ensuring universal access to primary education for every child.

Central to the fabric of the education policy was its unwavering emphasis on nurturing effective social integration. In a land with diverse communities, each adorned with its unique tapestry of languages and cultures, deliberate endeavors were

undertaken to weave a bond of cohesion and unity across the nation's diverse populace.

The future prosperity and eminence of Bhutan hinged upon the solidarity of its people. It was His Majesty's unwavering conviction that true unity could only be realized when every Bhutanese shared a collective vision for a harmonious and cohesive society. With this noble aspiration in mind, children from the eastern, western, northern, and southern reaches of the Kingdom were brought together in schools scattered across the verdant expanse of the nation, fostering bonds of camaraderie and understanding that transcended geographical division.

## IMPROVE RURAL ECONOMY AND SELF-RELIANCE



Agriculture and Animal Husbandry stood as the veritable pillars of the nation's economy, captivating the livelihoods of a vast swath of the populace. Recognizing their paramount importance, these sectors were bestowed with the highest echelons of priority in the realm of developmental endeavors.

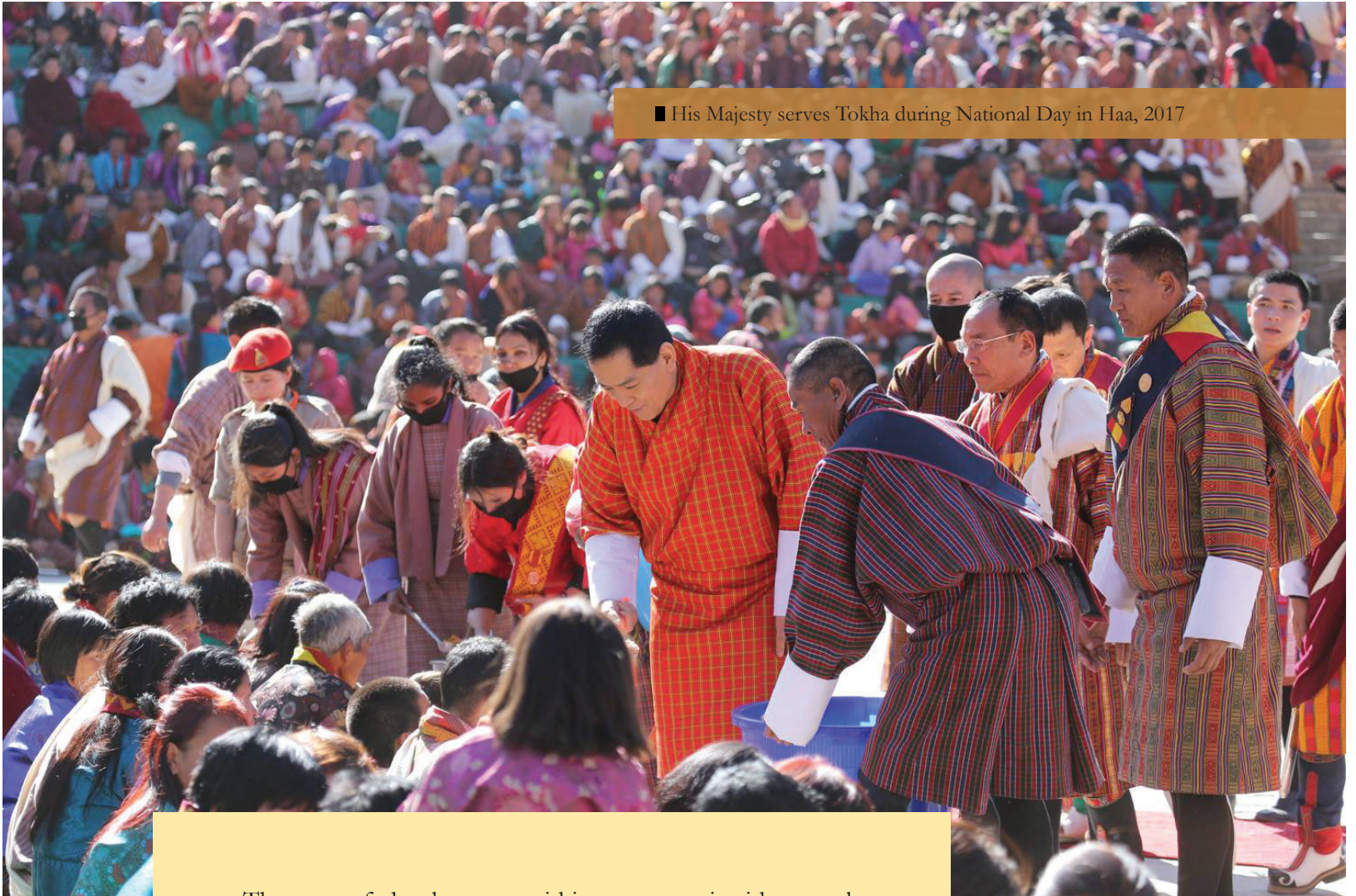
In a bid to augment productivity within this pivotal domain, a constellation of extension farms, veterinary dispensaries, and livestock development facilities were meticulously established. These bastions of service offered an array of modern tools and implements, novel seed varieties, fertilizers, plant protection measures, and comprehensive livestock care services.

In the pursuit of alleviating water scarcity and broadening cultivation horizons, the Government embarked on a concerted effort to construct and refurbish irrigation channels, either directly or through subsidized initiatives. His Majesty, in his unwavering dedication to agricultural prosperity, championed the provision of incentives to farmers for the cultivation of cash crops such as oranges, cardamom, ginger, asparagus, pineapple, and the like, whenever deemed viable and opportune.



■ His Majesty serving the people

## ENHANCE INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



■ His Majesty serves Tokha during National Day in Haa, 2017

The pace of development within a country is either accelerated or determined by its communication system. Roads, bridges, wireless networks, telephone, and postal services had been established in nearly all parts of the country. It was His Majesty's policy to provide adequate communication infrastructure wherever justified, based on factors such as population density, agricultural activities, timber extraction, and the local community's desire to maintain or construct roads.

## UTILIZE RESOURCES JUDICIOUSLY



The government's commitment to rural development had not resulted in neglecting the country's trade and industry, as the benefits of these sectors also extended to rural communities. Mobilizing all internal resources was crucial for the nation's goal of economic self-reliance.

Recognizing forests as the greatest resource, the government emphasized careful extraction, processing, and export of timber while implementing effective measures for its conservation.

The exploitation of mineral resources had received special attention, with feasibility studies underway for various mining projects. Industrial estates were established in Phuentsholing, Gelephu, and Samdrup Jongkhar to facilitate planning and provision of necessary facilities for entrepreneurs.

## IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE



His Majesty on several platforms underscored the imperative for the public to possess a lucid comprehension of and deep appreciation for each government endeavor. Nothing should be imposed capriciously; rather, individuals must be thoroughly apprised of both the merits and demerits of any undertaking prior to its execution.

In tandem, the need of the government to exhibit heightened attentiveness and receptivity to the opinions, needs, and grievances of the populace was important. Avenues, including the National Assembly, Dzongkhag Yargey Tshogchung meetings, frequent excursions of government officials to rural locales, and the National Voluntary Service, were fostered to facilitate more seamless communication between the government and the citizenry.

The Dzongkhag Yargey Tshogchung began to emerge as a recurrent forum for discourse between the government and the people. During these sessions, His Majesty engaged with local representatives, elders, and residents to delve into rural issues and promptly redress their concerns. It was often from such interactions that special projects and command works were conceived and brought to fruition.

To Dzongdas, Gups, Chhimis and the People

According to the policy of executing development works by the government and people together, in close co-operation, the government has been paying Nu 15.00 for man and Nu 13.00 for woman for contributing 15 days of labour force from every household. However, some households send people who cannot work. In this regard, if the people cannot contribute physically according to the Labour Contribution Act, it will be very difficult to accomplish many development projects, which directly benefit the public. Therefore, it is very important to send people who are between the ages of 17 and 50, who are physically strong to accomplish our planned development projects on time. The members of Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchung and gups are responsible to check and coordinate this matter. Although it is a heavy burden on the government to announce and increase the wages for household labour contribution, the Druk Gyalpo has decreed that the wages be increased to Nu 25.00 per day without any gender distinction with effect from 2nd July 1993 for the benefit and welfare of the poor people.

Issued on this 19th Day of the 4th Month of the Water-Female Bird Year (8 June 1993).

Druk Gyalpo

## AUGMENT NEED BASED PLANNING



His Majesty held a steadfast conviction that any program devised for the betterment of the populace could only thrive and bear true significance if the people themselves perceived its necessity and advantages, and willingly embraced and participated in its implementation. Thus, it became the overarching ambition of the Royal Government to formulate and implement initiatives tailored to rural areas in response to the expressed needs of the people, thereby guaranteeing their enthusiastic and tangible engagement.



■ His Majesty visiting a health centre

The onus for executing all special command projects and endeavors was jointly borne by the Government, furnishing funds, materials, and expertise, and the people, who lent their invaluable labor. This collaborative effort epitomized the ethos of shared responsibility and mutual commitment to the collective welfare of the nation.

### To the Auditor General

The important responsibility of auditing the appropriateness of the accounts of income and expenditure of the government money and property, maintained by the ministries, departments and corporations of both civil and armed forces falls on the Royal Audit Authority. Therefore, while discharging your functions, it is important to investigate thoroughly and impartially without being carried away by your own desires and without considering other's status, whether high or low. It is for this reason that the Royal Audit Authority has been established as an autonomous body and not affiliated to any ministry or department of the government.

The power to rule the country has been given to the Cabinet of Ministers as per the resolution of the 76th session of the National Assembly. Henceforth, all the problematic reports should be directly sent to the Cabinet Ministers instead of sending them to the concerned ministries, departments and corporations. Further, the audit report of the Judiciary should be sent to the Chief Justice, and that of the armed forces' to the Ministry of Finance as it looks after the budget of the three wings of the armed forces.

With regard to the submission of report to the Druk Gyalpo, it should be done only when there is a specific order to that effect as before. It is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers, ministries and departments to acknowledge the submitted audit report according to the law on time.

However, if anyone does not react properly, the Royal Audit Authority should remind, interrogate and investigate thoroughly and strictly without fearing anyone. Further, it is decreed that the status of the Royal Audit Authority shall remain autonomous, as it should be free of fear and doubt during investigations.

Issued on this 15th Day of the 1st Month of the Earth-Female Rabbit Year (2 March 1999).

Druk Gyalpo





**FROM THE ARCHIVES – A KING’S NOBLE SPIRIT**



His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, adorned with the epithet of the Bodhisattva King, embodies a profound resonance with compassion and virtue. His soul, steeped in the essence of benevolence, resonates with an unparalleled grace. Amidst his devoted stewardship of his nation, he extended his gaze beyond borders, embracing the world empathetically. He conveyed words of felicitation and solace alike, to leaders and citizens, sharing in their triumphs and tribulations with boundless empathy and solidarity. These messages transcended the established borders of Bhutan's diplomatic relations. It resonated across continents and showcased the grace of a leader steeped in boundless compassion.

In April 1979, His Majesty the King sent a message of condolence to Mr. Josip Broz Tito, President of Yugoslavia, on the demise of Mr. Edvard Kardelj. In his message, His Majesty said, "On behalf of my Government, people, and on my own behalf, I would like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Yugoslavia and the bereaved family on the sad demise of His Excellency Mr. Edvard Kardelj, Member of the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and member of the Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. His passing away is a great loss not only to Yugoslavia but to the entire international community."

Upon receiving His Majesty's message, President Tito responded with the following words: "Please accept Your Majesty, my warmest thanks for your friendly message sent to participate in our pain caused by the irretrievable loss which Yugoslavia suffered with the passing of Edvard Kardelj, Member of the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Presidency of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia."

In September 1976, His Majesty the King expressed condolences on the passing of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung of China. In the text message sent to H.E. Mr. Hua Kuo-Feng, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, His Majesty wrote.

"On behalf of my Government and people, and on my own behalf, I would like to offer our deepest condolences to the Government and people of China, and to the members of the bereaved family, on the passing away of the great Chinese leader and statesman Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. He was one of the true giants of the 20th century, and his demise is a great loss not only to the people of China but to the whole of humanity. We offer our sincerest sympathies to the people of China at this moment of great sorrow."

Just as the Third Druk Gyalpo raised funds to assist flood stricken people of Bangladesh in 1971, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo went all out to assist the people of India, when a cyclone hit the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

In a message to His Excellency Shri Morarji Desai, Prime Minister of India, His Majesty said, "My people and I are greatly distressed to learn about the great loss of life and property caused by the recent cyclone in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Please accept our most sincere sympathies."

To raise funds for the relief of the cyclone victims, the Bhutan-India Friendship Association organized a variety program on the Action Plan for the International Year of the Child, 1979, on May 23, 1979, at the Luger Cinema Hall in Thimphu. The total proceeds from the two shows of the program were over Nu.7,000, and a total of 1,45,383.50 was collected from government and private contributors.



■ His Majesty with Late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

In 1980, His Majesty conveyed condolences to Japan and the people. “On behalf of my Government, people, and myself, we would like to offer our condolences to the Government and people of Japan on the untimely and sad demise of H.E. Mr. Masayoshi Ohira, Prime Minister of Japan, on June 12, 1980. In his death, Japan has lost an eminent leader, and the world has lost a great statesman,” His Majesty wrote.

One of the most poignant was after the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated. On October 31, 1984, the last day of the 61st session of the National Assembly of Bhutan, the members were shocked by the news of the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi. His Majesty the King addressed the Assembly and expressed his deep grief over the tragedy. His Majesty said that Mrs. Gandhi had been a close friend of Bhutan since

**After an attempt was made to assassinate former US President Ronald Reagan in 1981, His Majesty wrote to the President. “We are greatly relieved to learn of Your providential escape from an assassination attempt. We are happy to learn of the good progress you are making in the hospital. My people and I pray for your speedy recovery and long life.”**

the Late Majesty's times—a friendship that had grown in warmth and cooperation over the years of her term as Prime Minister of India.

His Majesty stated that Indo-Bhutan relations had reached new pinnacles of understanding since his own coronation. Mrs. Gandhi had been aware of Bhutan's development goals and needs and had extended every assistance possible to overcome the difficulties of the development process.

His Majesty compared the loss of Mrs. Gandhi to the loss of an immediate family member and said that Bhutan's grief over her untimely death and sympathy with her son Rajiv Gandhi, the government, and people of India were very personal.

His Majesty reminded the assembly of Mrs. Gandhi's concern over the passing away of the Late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and her warm presence at his cremation in Bumthang.

His Majesty announced his departure for New Delhi to attend Mrs. Gandhi's cremation on Saturday, November 3, and commanded the traditional religious ceremonies to be carried out in the monastic centers all over Bhutan. His Majesty also commanded three days of mourning and flags at half-mast for 21 days in memory of Mrs. Gandhi's close friendship.



In a personal letter dated September 27, 1958, Mrs. Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) shared her heartfelt impressions of Bhutan with Her Majesty Ashi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck. Reflecting on her father's sentiments, she expressed a deep connection to the mountains and the profound sense of peace they evoke. Mrs. Gandhi praised Bhutan's abundant natural beauty, noting its special quality beyond compare.

## YET ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY ACT



“State of Kuwait was one of the first three countries to establish diplomatic relations with Bhutan back in 1983 and it provided huge financial support for Bhutan’s development in the form of loans and grants.

Fast forward 7 years, Kuwait was invaded by Iraqi forces in 1990 and the Gulf War followed. By the end of the war, most of the government buildings in Kuwait were destroyed and official records burnt down. The Emir of Kuwait was now clueless about his financial transactions – loans, grants, charity – as all the records turned into ashes. He requested government’s all over the world to provide whatever data they had about Kuwait’s financial transactions with them.

But will a person who owes you money remind you that he has taken money from you?

Four weeks later, they received a trunk full of documents. It was the FIRST set of documents provided by any foreign government upon Kuwait’s request. The Emir was surprised to know that it came from Bhutan – one of the poorest nations of the world at that time. The trunk came with a note of apology from the Bhutanese King – ‘apology for the delay in providing the requested documents as they had to import photocopiers from India’.

The Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, was so touched by the honesty and humbleness of the King of Bhutan that he sent him a BMW car as a gift. The King of Bhutan, being the simple man he is, decided not to use the car for himself and gave it to the Bhutanese diplomatic mission in India and reverted to the Emir of Kuwait with a note of thanks. As a token of love and respect,



■ Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the 3rd Emir of Kuwait

he also sent a handcrafted wooden table with Emir’s name engraved on it.

Emir of Kuwait had been receiving expensive gifts and souvenir from many state heads but this was for the first time that he got such a simple gift – so simple yet so special. He was deeply impressed by the simplicity of the King of Bhutan.

But the story is not over yet. Now Emir being Emir, sent a fleet of 5 BMWs as a return gift to the King of Bhutan.

Yes. 5 brand new BMWs. 2 of these were given to foreign diplomatic missions of Bhutan. 2 were reserved for visiting foreign dignitaries. And 1 was given to the office of BBS (Bhutan Broadcasting Service).”

By Ruchir Shukla, India



## RESETTLEMENT KIDU

Kidu occupies a sacred realm in Bhutanese culture, epitomizing the profound bond between the Sovereign and the subjects. Across Bhutan's annals, Kings have extended Kidu in diverse forms, including the bestowal of land without charge. His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck exemplified this tradition by allocating several acres of land to hundreds of landless individuals. Moreover, he initiated the resettlement of entire communities, ensuring access to basic amenities and fostering improved livelihoods.

In 1972, representatives of the National Assembly from Zhemgang district alerted authorities to pockets of famine in certain regions, prompting the Government to initiate foodgrain air-drops. Responding to a directive from Her Royal Highness Ashi Dechen Wangmo Wangchuck, Mr. Keiji Nishioka, a Colombo Plan Expert, conducted a thorough assessment of the Kheng area, highlighting the substantial costs entailed in its development. The region, characterized by rugged terrain and unproductive soil, compounded by the practice of shifting cultivation, remained vulnerable to recurrent famine.

In February 1975, His Majesty the King undertook a visit to Trongsa and Zhemgang, during which he mandated the voluntary relocation of some of the most impoverished residents of the Khen area to the Geylegphug region as an immediate intervention. The rehabilitation initiative encompassed an expanse of 1,350 acres of untapped land. Here, 270 families, totaling approximately 1,400 individuals, were granted free land for cultivation and assisted in constructing their own permanent residences. The Department of Agriculture, acting under the directives of His Majesty the King, looked after the project, with an estimated expenditure of Nu. 60 lakhs.

The land for cultivation was allocated based on the size of the family and the quality of the soil. A medium-sized family was granted four acres of high-quality land, while exceptionally large families were allocated up to seven acres of less fertile land. The Rehabilitation project received a significant boost during His Majesty's visit to Geylegphug in November of the previous year. During this visit, His Majesty personally interacted with settlers residing in temporary hutments and arranged a communal meal for them. His Majesty emphasized the prioritization of village construction, ensuring that it was completed first.

Out of the total area of approximately 1,500 acres, 1,080 acres were designated for cultivation, with the remainder allocated for the construction of permanent houses. The settlement area was divided into four villages: Serjom, Pemayuling, Norbuling, and Tashiphu. Serjom and Tashiphu accommodated 60 and 40 houses, respectively, while Norbuling and Pemayuling each had 80 houses. The cultivation land was situated adjacent to the permanent houses in each village.

Each family were provided with 10,000 square feet of land to construct a permanent residence. Additionally, they received 50 feet of planks and roofing material free of charge, along with Nu. 500 in cash.

Work included land development, house construction, bank protection, road construction, and provision of irrigation and drinking water facilities for the new settlers. Following an assessment of land and water resources, the areas of Chisopani (350 acres) and Jangkhurung (1000 acres) were chosen.

Feeder road construction connecting the rehabilitation scheme areas with the Trongsa-Geylegphug highway was another work, followed by bank protection work due to continuous threats from Theore Khola. Additionally, construction of a channel from Theore Khola and laying of irrigation pipes to irrigate approximately 1,000 acres of land were done.

A Primary School building was also constructed. Health facilities and daily necessities were provided to the new settlers, with the Department of Health Services assigning a compounder and the Food Corporation of Bhutan (FCB) arranging for food commodities.

Two general shops and dispensaries were temporarily functioning in two camps. Furthermore, a community hall was established for settlers to discuss grievances with government officials, and for officials to convene meetings for effective execution of work.

Likewise, 56 families from Lhuentse and Mongar were resettled at Gyelpoizhing in December 1976. The following year, in 1977, His Majesty granted land to another 200 landless people from Lhuentse. Granting of free land to the landless continued as part of Kidu.



## DECENTRALIZATION

From the poignant addresses to the Nation during the auspicious Coronation and subsequent occasions, His Majesty conveyed a steadfast belief in the empowerment of the populace. With resolute conviction, he uttered the immortal decree: “The destiny of the nation lies in your hands.”

Yet, endowed with an extraordinary foresight, His Majesty ingeniously wielded decentralization not merely as a catalyst for progress, but as the cornerstone for Bhutan’s evolution into a democracy. Astutely, he disbursed authority to the citizenry, local administrators, and the executive, precisely at opportune junctures. Bhutan’s decentralization paradigm resonates globally as a paragon, epitomizing both developmental efficacy and the ennoblement of its people.



## EMPOWERMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY



At the heart of His Majesty's visionary approach to development lay a profound belief in the empowerment of the people. This ethos found eloquent expression in His Majesty's Coronation address of 1972, wherein he impassionedly conveyed to his subjects: "Your participation in the journey of development is paramount. A collective effort between the government and the people shall pave the path to prosperity and fortitude."

Such sentiments echoed in His Majesty's address at Sibsoo in 1974, where he reiterated the pivotal role of collaboration between the government and its citizens in fostering development initiatives. These were exemplified through the initiation of intensive valley development projects (IVDP) in 1972, marking a transformative chapter in Bhutan's developmental narrative. The IVDP, launched in Samtse, Trashigang, and Tsirang, epitomized the synergy between government policies and community engagement. Subsequent endeavors, such as the Khamdang Integrated Project in 1976, showcased His Majesty's unwavering commitment to grassroots development.

However, the need for decentralization was also echoed after the extensive eastern tour in March 1981. During meetings with leaders and the people, His Majesty highlighted that despite two decades of Planned Development, the country was still far from achieving its goal of self-reliance. The disparity between government expenditure and internal resources had reached alarming levels. Therefore, as an initial step towards self-reliance, the Government was determined during the Fifth Plan to reduce the gap between maintenance expenditure and internal resources. While this task posed significant challenges, it was essential for the Government to sustain the vast infrastructure of essential services that has been established.



■ His Majesty with local leaders

**Kasho/Edict To the Speaker of the National Assembly**

The National Assembly is the highest body to discuss and decide the laws and important policies of our country. It is important for the people to elect their representatives who are dedicated to our country and who can serve our country with commitment for the advancement of people's welfare.

It was for this reason that the Chimis' Selection Rules has been amended in 1968 and 1981. It was also to promote full participation of our people in the decision-making process and to define the responsibilities of the National Assembly as per the need of the time. Therefore, the amendment should be included among the matters to be discussed and decided in the 73rd session of the National Assembly.

Issued on this 21st day of the 5th month of the Wood-Pig year (18 June 1995).

Druk Gyalpo

His Majesty emphasized that achieving the national goal of self-reliance necessitates significant actions at the Dzongkhag level. Therefore, the Government introduced a novel approach to the 5th Plan. A crucial aspect of this plan was the implementation of Dzongkhag level planning and decentralization.

Unlike the 4th Plan, where a single plan was devised centrally and executed by central agencies, the 5th Plan involved detailed Dzongkhag Plans tailored to the specific needs, priorities, and characteristics of each Dzongkhag. These plans aimed to enhance local development and strengthen Dzongkhag administration. Under decentralization, efforts were made to empower Dzongkhags with greater responsibilities and capabilities in both formulating and implementing their plans. In this regard, His Majesty and Royal Government officials visited all Dzongkhags, engaging with Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchungs to ensure alignment between formulated plans and the needs and priorities of the people, in line with the national objective of self-reliance. His Majesty explained to the people that the success of the Dzongkhag Plan depended entirely on their participation.

Such need and success of initiatives like the Khamdang project prompted His Majesty to formalize decentralization policies in 1981, culminating in the establishment of the Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchung (DYT). This marked a significant departure from centralized governance, as power and responsibilities were devolved to district-level administrations.

The establishment of the Gewog Yargay Tshogchung (GYT) in 1991 ensured the evolution of decentralization into a cornerstone of Bhutan's governance framework. Strengthened administrative capacities and regulatory functions at the local level underscored His Majesty's commitment to grassroots empowerment.

In a landmark move in 2002, local leaders were elected through universal suffrage, further democratizing decision-making processes. This transformative shift facilitated a transfer of power from the government to the people, epitomizing His Majesty's unwavering dedication to participatory governance.

Today, decentralization stands as a testament to His Majesty's visionary leadership, enshrined in Article 22 of the Constitution. This constitutional provision underscores the paramount importance of empowering local governments to facilitate direct participation in socio-economic and environmental management.

In essence, decentralization embodied His Majesty's enduring legacy of inclusive governance, fostering sustainable, equitable, and harmonious development that resonates with the aspirations of all Bhutanese.

## EXERCISES FOR DECENTRALIZATION



On November 6, 1978, the Chhimis and Dzongdas from all districts convened for an audience with His Majesty in Thimphu. Also in attendance were the heads of various departments and other officials. The focal point of the discussion was primarily on the developmental activities both initiated and in progress across the districts. Various challenges and public demands were also brought forth during the meeting.

Dzongdas were encouraged to assume a more significant role in ensuring the success of developmental endeavors in their respective areas. Emphasizing the necessity for a greater self-reliant attitude among the populace, it was stressed that active participation in development schemes, particularly in maintaining completed projects, was crucial. Utilizing available resources to their fullest potential and fostering community involvement in implementing developmental initiatives were highlighted priorities.

With only two years remaining in the 4th Five-Year Plan, preparations were already underway for the 5th Five-Year Plan. Dzongdas were tasked with actively participating in the planning process by determining the projects needed in their districts, considering the level of public contribution feasible.

**Our country's primary objective is to strengthen our sovereignty in order to achieve economic self-reliance, prosperity, and happiness for our nation and its people. At this crucial stage of development, it is imperative for the Government and the citizens to collaborate closely in all developmental endeavors to realize economic progress, attain self-sufficiency, and reinforce our national sovereignty. This collaboration is crucial, as some individuals may perceive external aid and technical assistance as easily accessible. Consequently, there may be a temptation to become complacent and rely solely on external assistance to achieve our objectives and fulfill our national aspirations. However, it is essential to recognize that excessive dependence on outside aid will ultimately undermine our national goals and aspirations. Today, the paramount concern for the future of our nation is the active participation of our citizens. The fate of our country rests in our collective hands. I am fully convinced that if both the people and the Government collaborate with determination, loyalty, and unity, we can successfully advance together.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King**



## **GUARDIAN OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Preserving and safeguarding the environment held an eminent position within His Majesty's overarching priorities. Witnessing neighboring nations exploit their natural riches recklessly and without regard for sustainability, His Majesty was steadfast in ensuring Bhutan steered clear of such pitfalls. For His Majesty, the environment transcended mere utility; it was the sacred sanctuary of myriad flora and fauna, the lifeblood of water sources, and Mother Nature's benevolent bestowal upon Bhutan.



During His Majesty's reign, Bhutan's conservation and environmental policies blossomed, laying the groundwork for its global reputation as a steward of nature. The visionary initiatives undertaken by His Majesty positioned Bhutan as a beacon of environmental preservation.

One pivotal moment in Bhutan's environmental journey occurred in 1972, when His Majesty mandated that households obtain permits from the Department of Forests to extract wet firewood. This marked the beginning of a concerted effort to safeguard Bhutan's precious natural resources. Subsequently, in 1974, His Majesty designated several areas as wildlife sanctuaries, a testament to his commitment to protecting the country's rich biodiversity.

The year 1979 witnessed the introduction of the Social Forestry Program by His Majesty, aimed at fostering community involvement in forest management and promoting tree planting on private lands. This initiative not only empowered local communities but also contributed significantly to Bhutan's afforestation efforts.

In 1981, a Royal Command was issued, prohibiting forest fires for grazing purposes, except for specific nomadic communities under strict governmental supervision. This directive underscored His Majesty's resolve to combat deforestation and preserve Bhutan's pristine forests.

A series of laws and legislations further solidified Bhutan's commitment to conservation. The Mines and Mineral Management Act of 1995, the Pasture Development Act of 1991, the Forest and Nature Conservation Act of 1995, the Environment Assessment Act of 2000, and the Biodiversity Act of Bhutan 2003, all bore testament to His Majesty's dedication to environmental sustainability.

In 1992, recognizing the need for a specialized body to oversee environmental initiatives, His Majesty established the Environment Committee, later elevated to the National Environment Commission (NEC). The NEC, entrusted with conducting Environmental Impact Assessments for all projects, played a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable development practices.

Empowering local governance structures, His Majesty granted Gewog Yargay Tshogchungs (GYTs) authority to manage community forests, identify protected areas, and devise strategies to address local environmental challenges in 2002. This decentralization of environmental management underscored His Majesty's belief in grassroots participation and community-led conservation efforts.

By the time His Majesty abdicated the Throne in 2006, over 26 percent of Bhutan's forest land had been declared protected areas, a testament to his enduring legacy as a champion of environmental stewardship. Through His Majesty's visionary leadership, Bhutan emerged as a shining example of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, inspiring nations worldwide to prioritize conservation and sustainability.

In short, one of the foundational pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is environmental conservation. While the reverence for nature has been woven into the very fabric of the Bhutanese consciousness since time immemorial, guided by the profound ethos of GNH, which aspires to cultivate a society where humanity thrives in symbiotic harmony with the natural world, Bhutan has fervently pursued environmental stewardship since its inception. Remarkably ahead of its epoch on the global stage, Bhutan's proactive stance on environmental protection stands as a testament to its visionary leadership.

Central to Bhutan's environmental policy is the commitment to sustainable and judicious development, delicately balancing economic prosperity with the imperative of ecological preservation. A cornerstone of this approach is the veneration of its lush forests. Rejecting the allure of short-term gains from exploiting its abundant natural resources, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, in his wisdom, championed the preservation of pristine landscapes for posterity. Enshrined within the constitutional framework of the nation is the solemn pledge to maintain at least sixty percent of its territory under perennial forest cover. Bhutan has not only met but exceeded this target, with over seventy percent of its land cocooned in verdant foliage, nurturing a kaleidoscope of biodiversity.

These emerald havens serve as more than mere repositories of natural splendor; they are vital lifelines, bestowing essential ecosystem services upon each corner of the realm. Moreover, they emerge as crucial reservoirs of freshwater, sustaining the cascading rivers that power Bhutan's hydraulic energy infrastructure. Beyond catering

to domestic energy needs, Bhutan's hydroelectric prowess extends to the export of surplus power to its neighboring giant, India, constituting a substantial portion of the nation's revenue stream.

In an era where the specter of climate change looms large, Bhutan's forested realms emerge as stalwart guardians against the encroaching menace of greenhouse gases. Through their unparalleled carbon sequestration capacity, Bhutan's forests serve as a formidable bulwark against global warming. Embracing a paradigm of quality over haste in economic growth, Bhutan has kept its carbon footprint remarkably low. In a world increasingly fixated on the elusive goal of carbon neutrality, Bhutan stands as a beacon of inspiration, having achieved a rarefied status of carbon negativity.

Here, the land breathes in more carbon dioxide than its inhabitants exhale, exemplifying a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. As an unwavering testament to its environmental stewardship, Bhutan resolutely declares its commitment to perpetuating this carbon-negative legacy for generations to come.

**It is rare to find a nation, today or in the history of our globe, whose people share a clear and dynamic vision rooted in their cultural heritage and common values.**

**It is even rarer to encounter a nation which, by the strength of her conviction, initiates a new paradigm for the transformation of its society - sometimes called "development" - that challenges the world to reconsider established methods of measuring change. This unique nation is the Kingdom of Bhutan, and the ultimate source of its uniqueness rests singularly in the leadership of His Majesty.**

**Ms Mieko Nishimizu, Former Vice President, South Asia Region, World Bank**





### **Phobjikha Valley**

In an exquisite display of environmental stewardship, His Majesty the King seamlessly balanced the essential needs of his people with the delicate ecosystem of Phobjikha valley. Recognizing the importance of both electricity and the sanctity of the Black Necked Cranes' winter haven, a visionary solution was crafted. Underground cables silently ushered in light to the valley, preserving its tranquility while ensuring the safety of the cherished avian guests. This approach illuminated the valley and showcased His Majesty's commitment to sustainable progress. A harmonious coexistence between development and ecological preservation flourishes, which has made Phobjikha valley, also a Ramsar site a destination for tourists.

During the planting season of April to June 1979, a tree planting initiative called Social Forestry was initiated under the direction of the Forest Department, in compliance with a Royal Decree. The primary objective of the program was to provide valuable tree seedlings to as many farmers as possible, with coordination through the District Dzongdas' offices. Each participating household was allocated 10 seedlings for planting on their registered land. Evaluations were conducted in November/December to monitor the progress of the program. Upon the maturity and potential sale of the trees, 50% of the sales revenue was allocated to those responsible for planting them.

Even today, June 2 is celebrated as the Social Forestry Day.

## CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE



The importance attached to the environment is visible in the Constitution. Article 5, Section 3 says: “The Government shall ensure that, in order to conserve the country’s natural resources and to prevent degradation of the ecosystem, a minimum of sixty percent of Bhutan’s total land shall be maintained under forest cover for all time.”

*During discussions on the draft Constitution with the people of Trashiyangtse on December 28, 2005, people were not really aware of the importance of this aspect.*

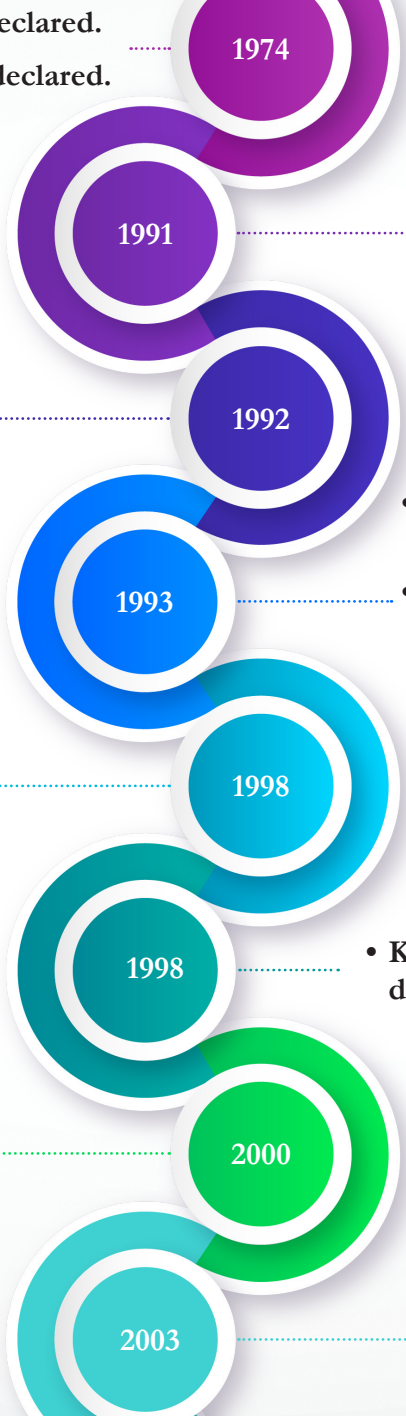
*His Majesty the King said: “The main asset of Bhutan is our water resource. In order to have good water resources forest is very important. Therefore, in our Constitution if we do not enshrine the provision maintaining at least 60 percent of forest cover, once democracy starts, there are chances that political parties will exploit our forest to the great extent by making various policy as they have only five years tenure....if our government for maximizing the revenue and to convince the people cuts the forest and sells them, it will be a serious problem for our country.”*

After becoming King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck became increasingly interested in economic development and traveled extensively throughout the country. He also has traveled a great deal outside of Bhutan, attending international meetings and personally representing his country in New Delhi on frequent occasions. A young, vigorous head of state unafraid to break from the bureaucracy and constraints of his office — including his trips to the countryside where the Druk Gyalpo could be seen "serving the people" — Jigme Singye Wangchuck presented the monarchy as progressive and symbolic of national unity.

Andrea Matles Savada, Library of Congress, 1991

## OTHER MILESTONES



- 
- Jigme Dorji National Park declared.
  - Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary declared.
  - Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment established.
  - National Environment Commission established.
  - Toorsa Nature Reserve established.
  - Jow Durshing National Park (Black Mountain), now known as Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park established.
  - Phrumsengla National Park established.
  - Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary established.
  - Khaling Wildlife Sanctuary declared.
  - Environment Assessment Act passed.
  - Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary established.
  - The Bio-diversity Act of Bhutan, 2003 passed.

## JUDICIARY



In Bhutan's judicial framework, the monarch has traditionally stood as the ultimate arbiter, presiding over the apex court of appeal. Thus, it comes as no surprise that His Majesty has issued a multitude of decrees spanning a spectrum of legal domains and judicial matters, many of which are collated within this compendium.

"The tranquility and prosperity of a nation hinge upon the equitable, robust, and impartial administration of laws. Hence, the selection of competent, unbiased, and virtuous individuals as Judges is of paramount significance..." articulates His Majesty in the decree concerning the "Appointment of Judges" (1989). Undoubtedly, the cornerstone of effective governance lies in the establishment of a judiciary whose integrity is beyond reproach. Similar to all institutions, whether public or private, the bedrock of this trust resides in the stewardship of its judicial leadership.

The reverence bestowed upon the judiciary in Bhutan is vividly exemplified through the series of decrees, (kashos) issued by His Majesty the King. These kashos, emanating from the highest echelons of authority, underscore the paramount importance accorded to justice within the Bhutanese legal framework.

To His Majesty, justice transcended mere legal formalities; it embodied the essence of equity and fairness. Each kasho symbolized a commitment to uphold these noble principles, ensuring that every citizen received due process and equal treatment under the law. For His Majesty, the judiciary served as the bastion of societal harmony and progress, where disputes were resolved with impartiality and integrity.

Through these decrees, His Majesty reaffirmed the centrality of justice in fostering a cohesive and prosperous society. Equity, as envisioned by His Majesty, was not a mere abstract concept but a guiding principle that permeated every facet of governance. It encapsulated the belief that a just society thrived on the foundation of fairness, where the rights of all individuals were safeguarded and upheld.

In essence, the issuance of these kashos by His Majesty epitomized a steadfast commitment to the ideals of justice and equity, ensuring that the judiciary remained a beacon of hope and trust for all citizens of Bhutan.

### **The National Legislative Committee**

In order to strengthen the Judiciary of Bhutan, there is a need to administer it appropriately. According to sections 10 (b), 13 (c) and (d), 14 and 14.1 and 15 (b) of the Civil and Criminal Procedure Code of Bhutan, 2001, a National Legislative Committee should be established.

Therefore, the Druk Gyalpo has constituted the National Legislative Committee by appointing the Chief Justice of Bhutan as the Chairman of the Committee, and two judges of the High Court, the head of the Office of Legal Affairs and Secretary of the National Assembly as members of the Committee for three years. The members are hereby commanded to carry out their responsibilities according to the above sections fairly and professionally.

Issued on this 30th Day of the 6th Month of the Water-Sheep Year (27 August 2003).

Druk Gyalpo

## GLOBAL ACCLAMS



For a leader strongly grafted on the virtues of humility and simplicity, the allure of power and accolades holds little sway. Yet, the world could not ignore the remarkable deeds of an exceptional soul dedicated to humanity's upliftment. The works and contributions of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, addressing the most pressing global challenges was far too noble to be left acknowledged.

However, upon receiving the accolades, His Majesty always deflected praise, asserting that the honor belonged not to him, but to the nation he sculpted and its cherished inhabitants.

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and the people of the Kingdom of Bhutan were the recipient of the first 'Champion of the Earth' award in 2005 instituted by United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). It did not stop there.

In 2006, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo was awarded the prestigious World Wildlife Fund J. Paul Getty Award for Conservation Leadership.

Established in 1974 as The Getty Prize by the late U.S. billionaire businessman J. Paul Getty, the award was later renamed the J. Paul Getty Award for Conservation Leadership. In July 1983, former US President Ronald Reagan, in awarding that year's winners in the Rose Garden of the White House, described the Getty Prize as "the Nobel Prize for Conservation."

According to a statement by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the King's efforts resulted "in the establishment of government policies and laws that have substantial positive impact on conserva-

tion and help ensure environmental sustainability in Bhutan, and by example globally as well".

Receiving the award, His Majesty had said. "This award belongs to the government and the people of Bhutan and not to any individual for we have all worked together to conserve our environment."

On February 13, 2011, His Majesty, was inducted into the Kyoto Earth Hall of Fame for his outstanding contribution to the protection of the global environment.

On February 24, 2011, in a ceremony attended by around 600 people, including Their Imperial Highnesses Prince Akishino-miya and Princess Kiko-Sama and prominent citizens of Japan, Her Royal Highness Princess Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck received the hall of fame award on behalf of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

"The Fourth Druk Gyalpo was among the earliest world leaders to become conscious of the mounting pressures of development on the bountiful, yet fragile ecosystem," Her Royal Highness said in her address to the gathering.

"As a result, Bhutan is more green today than it was at the beginning of Bhutan's developmental process some 50 years ago. Bhutan has a forest cover of 72 percent, with almost 50 percent of the country declared as protected areas that host an array of flora and fauna, including some of the rarest and threatened species in the world," Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck said. "Such achievements emboldened Bhutan to pledge before the world at the COP 15 that it will forever remain carbon neutral."

In the acceptance speech that was read out by Her Royal Highness, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo said that he looked upon the award as a recognition accorded to his people and country for their efforts to live and progress in harmony with the natural habitat, and that he dedicated it to the people of Bhutan and all those, who have been steadfast in their support and commitment to preserve the natural environment in Bhutan and the world.

In 2022, His Majesty the Fourth King was awarded the 2022 Blue Planet Prize by the Asahi Glass Foundation of Japan. Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck received the prestigious prize on behalf of His Majesty the Fourth King in Tokyo on 5th October 2022 during the Prize Award Ceremony that was attended by Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince and Crown Princess Akishino of Japan,

representatives from the government and scientific community of Japan and other dignitaries.

The Prize was awarded in recognition of His Majesty the Fourth King's visionary leadership and the contribution to environmental conservation made by His Majesty the Fourth King's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness which has found scientific recognition and wider adoption worldwide.

During the Prize Acceptance Speech, Her Royal Highness said that His Majesty has decided to accept the Prize not because of His contribution to solving environmental problems nor for the credit given to him as the author of GNH but because it is a befitting tribute to Bhutan's commitment and the sacrifices and unstinted support of the Bhutanese people to preserve ecological balance.

**In 2006, His Majesty the King featured as one of the Times 100 individuals recognized.**

**King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, great-grandson of Bhutan's first hereditary monarch and once the world's youngest King (when he came to power in 1972), rules his people more in the spirit of Buddha than of more worldly princes. To this day there is not a traffic light in the Himalayan Kingdom, by law everyone must wear traditional 14th century clothing and the number of tourists allowed into the country over the past 10 years is lower than the number of fans who pile into a college football game. Television and the Internet have, it is true, arrived with the 21st century, and a few superluxe hotels are now coming up around Bhutan, but what hits you when you touch down in its only airport is the silence.**

**King Jigme—who gave up absolute power in 1998 and last year sent every household in the land a new draft constitution that allowed for his impeachment—is setting a quietly revolutionary precedent.**

**If most politicians are inherently suspect because they seem so eager to grab power and so reluctant to surrender it, what does one make of a leader who voluntarily gives up his position, as if placing his people's needs before his own?**

**Pico Iyer, Monday, May 08, 2006. The Times**



■ HRH Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck receives the Asahi award on behalf of His Majesty

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck said, 'Bhutan is a very small country and we need all the success we can get. We cannot afford any failure at all. We want our people to be educated and highly productive. We want them to be professionals in every field they take up.... We want to develop as rapidly as possible, but nevertheless what is important to us is that the pace of development and the ability of Bhutanese people to stay abreast of that pace....We also at the same time do not believe that more money means more development...Whatever changes we bring about in Bhutan, so long as it is in the best interest of the country, the final decision lies with the Bhutanese people. And that is how it should be. Everywhere else dramatic changes have taken place. What is at stake here is the survival of the Bhutanese people and our religion. We are really the last bastion of Himalayan Buddhism.'

Barbara Crossette, *So Close to Heaven: The Vanishing Buddhist Kingdoms of the Himalayas* (1995)



## THE ROYAL WEDDING



■ His Majesty with Their Majesties the Queen Mothers

In 1979, His Majesty entered into holy matrimony with four sisters in an intimate ceremony. The formal union of His Majesty and Their Majesties the Queens, namely Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, Ashi Tshering Pem Wangchuck, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck, and Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck, took place amidst the majestic walls of Punakha Dzong on October 31, 1988. The grand public celebration, known as Tashi Ngasol, unfolded within the sacred halls of Punakha Dukhang on the same auspicious date, officiated by the venerable late Dilgo Khyentse (1910-1991) and the 68th Je Khenpo Tenzin Dondup.

Their Majesties trace their lineage to the illustrious spiritual aristocracy of Sersang Lamas hailing from eastern Bhutan. They proudly descend from Lhasa Tsangma, who sought refuge in Bhutan during the tumultuous upheavals of the Tibetan court in the ninth century. The saga of

their ancestry, intertwined with the regal matrimonial rites, finds immortalization within the pages of “Of Rainbows and Clouds: The Life of Yab Ugyen Dorji as told to his Daughter” authored by Her Majesty Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck.

The illustrious lineage of the late Yab Ugyen Dorji, tracing back to Choley Trulku Yeshey Ngedup, the final Druk Desi before Bhutan’s transition to a monarchy, enriches the tapestry of their familial heritage.

His Majesty and Their Majesties the Queens have been blessed with ten offsprings, each a testament to their enduring love and devotion. His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was born on February 21, 1980.

All the Prince and Princesses play pivotal roles in the nation’s development, leading important public institutions and civil society organizations.



## BEYOND BASKETBALL - THE KING AND SPORTSMAN

His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo was renowned not only for his prowess on the basketball court but also for his versatility across various sports. While basketball showcased his skills prominently, it was merely one facet of his athletic repertoire. His Majesty excelled in soccer, tennis, and archery, demonstrating a remarkable proficiency across a spectrum of disciplines. In the realm of archery, His Majesty's team clinched numerous trophies in matches held within the country, further attesting to his multifaceted sporting prowess.



### Golf

His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo was also the driver of golf. Shortly, after the Tashi Tsethang (Golf Course) was opened, His Majesty the Third King passed away. His Majesty the Fourth King was the first Bhutanese to take a personal interest in golf. He not only opened the course but was also the main driver for the sport. Because of the royal patronage, it was not long before the course took shape. Trees were planted around the perimeter and the area was transformed from barren land into one of the most beautiful golf courses.

### Tennis

In what was described as an exciting match, His Majesty the King, along with Dasho Lhendup Dorji, won the doubles title in the final Chimithang Tournament held at Changlingmithang on May 15, 1978, defeating Dasho Thinley Dorji and Mr. R.B. Basnet.

### Archery

His Majesty's team won the final match of the All Bhutan Archery Tournament 1978. The next year His Majesty's team won the National Archery Knockout Tournament.



In 1980, the final match of the 7th Autumn National Knock-out Tournament was played between His Majesty's team and Development XI. His Majesty's team emerged victorious.

His Majesty's team also clinched victory in the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Memorial Shield, defeating RBA 'A' in the finals held at Changlingmithang playground on June 2, 1983.

The tournament, which commenced on May 25, saw participation from a total of 13 teams. These teams included His Majesty's team, as well as representatives from Paro, Wangdi, Chapcha Sub-Division, Ministries of Communications and Tourism, Trade, Industry & Forests, Home and Police, and Yangchenphug Central School. Additionally, both the Royal Bhutan Army and the Royal Body Guard fielded two teams each.



### **Basketball**

His Majesty the King was the highest scorer in the basketball finals in 1986. The Royal Body Guards clinched the national championship in a closely contested match against a local team, the "Turks," on June 23.

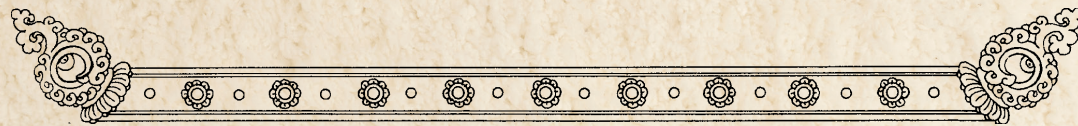
### **Football**

In a thrilling showdown, witnessed by a multitude of spectators, the Crown Prince XI emerged victorious over Army XI with a commanding

scoreline of 5 goals to 1 in the final clash of the Namgyal Wangchuck Trophy Soccer Tournament at Changlingmethang on August 28, 1971. Under the astute leadership of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, who assumed the role of goalkeeper, the Crown Prince XI asserted their dominance from the outset. Employing strategic passes and swift attacks, the team orchestrated a masterful display, showcasing impeccable coordination while maintaining remarkable flexibility and individual skill.



■ His Majesty the King joins the people in a tug of war game



## THE CRAFTING OF THE CONSTITUTION

As Bhutan embarked on the threshold of governance evolution, the imperative for a bespoke constitutional framework became evident. With the constitution-drafting committee duly constituted, the meticulous endeavor commenced. Drawing inspiration from the finest provisions across diverse global constitutions, the process unfolded. Upon the culmination of the drafting phase, earnest consultations ensued, spanning every district of the realm. Furthermore, leveraging the power of the internet, the draft was disseminated for input, ensuring inclusivity even for those beyond immediate reach.

**Each word has earned its sacred place with the blessings of every citizen  
in our nation. This is the People's Constitution.**

**His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck**

## A PRELUDE TO DEMOCRATIC DAWN



**The Constitution must go beyond mere words and become the golden pillar, which will support and enable the political system to safeguard the sovereignty of the country and the rights of the people. The Constitution must create a political framework that will make democracy effective in our country. It is of utmost importance for us to utilize this opportunity to frame a Constitution that will ensure a dynamic system of governance, which will uphold the principles of democracy. The important objectives to be borne in mind while drafting the Constitution are sovereignty of the country, the security of the country, the national interest and the welfare of the people.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King**

The Constitution, hailed as the cornerstone of governance, stands as the epitome of a nation's ethos and aspirations. It delineates the intricate web of relationships within the state, elucidating the rights, duties, and prerogatives of both the governed and the governing.

On September 4th, 2001, His Majesty the King convened a momentous assembly, gathering the Council of Ministers, the Chief Justice, and the Chairman of the Royal Advisory Council to deliberate on the imperative task of formalizing a Constitution for the Kingdom of Bhutan. Despite the absence of a written Constitution, Bhutan functioned under a tapestry of legislative frameworks governing the monarchy, government, judiciary, and the National Assembly.

Recognizing Bhutan's strides in development and political maturity, His Majesty underscored the paramount importance of institutionalizing a Constitution to nurture and safeguard the prosperity, tranquility, and equilibrium of the nation and its populace. With a firm directive, His Majesty entrusted the Lhengye Zhungtshog to assemble a committee comprising government dignitaries, National Assembly Members, and distinguished citizens to undertake the drafting process.

The culmination of this endeavor in 2004 marked the dawn of a constitutional monarchy, enshrining a bicameral Parliament system, an independent Judiciary, and the establishment of autonomous constitutional bodies such as the Anti-Corruption Commission, Audit Authority,

Civil Service Commission, and Election Commission. Following extensive nationwide consultations, the Constitution was formally ratified by the newly formed Parliament in 2008.

With meticulous orchestration, a Drafting Committee, comprising representatives from diverse echelons of society, was assembled. This august assembly, chaired by the Chief Justice, embarked on the solemn task of delineating Bhutan's constitutional tapestry. In the hallowed precincts of the Tashichhodzong's Throne Room, on November 30, 2001, His Majesty inaugurated this sacred endeavor.

The Drafting Committee, emblematic of Bhutan's pluralistic fabric, epitomized His Majesty's unwavering faith in his people's sagacity and dedication. Their arduous labor culminated in the submission of the initial draft to His Majesty on December 9, 2002, and subsequent iterations ensued, punctuated by meticulous deliberation and refinement.

In a resplendent demonstration of transparency and inclusivity, the Draft Constitution was dis-

seminated far and wide, resonating with every Bhutanese heart, both within and beyond borders. Commencing from Thimphu and traversing the length and breadth of the nation, His Majesty and the Crown Prince, adorned with the mantle of public consultation, traversed to all dzongkhags, soliciting the collective wisdom of the populace.

As the fervent debates echoed through the hallowed halls of the Parliament, the Constitution metamorphosed into a living testament to the aspirations of the Bhutanese people. Finally, on a momentous day – July 18, 2008 – amidst the sanctified ambiance of Tashichhodzong's Kuenrey, His Majesty Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, alongside esteemed parliamentarians, affixed their signatures to the Charter of the Nation.

Thus, the Constitution, crafted by the hands of the Bhutanese people, ratified by sovereign and subjects alike, emerged as the beacon illuminating Bhutan's trajectory towards democratic enlightenment.

The Draft Constitution was distributed to every Bhutanese within and outside the country. On March 25, 2005, it was uploaded on the internet and a day later distributed to the people. From October 26, 2005, His Majesty began the public consultations with the people starting from Thimphu and covered seven dzongkhags. The Fifth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who was then Crown Prince, conducted the first public consultation at Lhuntse on December 24, 2005. The Crown Prince covered 13 dzongkhags. The Draft Constitution was translated and read in three dialects, Dzongkha, Tsangla and Lhotshamkha.

After the first parliamentary elections in 2008, parliamentarians discussed and debated provisions of the draft Constitution from May 9 to 29, 2008. On July 18, 2008, the Constitution was adopted with His Majesty Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and members of the Parliament signing the Constitution.



While the people were unhappy about Bhutan's impending transition to a democracy, there were also questions raised on some aspects of the draft Constitution, which His Majesty the King explained in detail. Some of the examples are below.

### ON THE NEED FOR THE KING TO ABDICATE AT 65



*"If a King continues to occupy the Throne till death then as the King grows old he will not be able to carry on his duties to the nation. After we introduce the democratic system, it is more important for a King to carry more responsibility without any hindrance. Therefore the provision that a King should step down at the age of 65 years was included for the benefit of the country and I personally decided that it should be included in the Constitution."*

*"It will never be a good time for an heir to ascend to the Throne when a King has just passed away and when the entire country is mourning. There could be no better time to enthrone a King when a country is enjoying peace and stability."*

*"If we do not include this provision in the Constitution, future Kings may not be willing to step down and hand over the Throne. For example, 30 years from now, I will be 80 years old. At that age, I would neither be useful to the country nor to the people. I may not even be useful to myself."*





■ His Majesty the King signs the Constitution

## ON NATIONAL REFERENDUM



*“Our Constitution has been drafted after a detailed study of the constitutions of many different countries, including the countries that had Constitutional Monarchies. Our Constitution is different from other constitutions of the world because we have drawn the strengths from them.....If the people wanted their King to be good and capable, the people should select the one whom they can trust, and then only the fidelity of father-son relationship could be maintained between the King and its citizens for all times.*

*Therefore National Referendum is appropriate to choose the people’s King. ....With greater responsibilities mandated by the Constitution, the people should think positive and be progressive. The provisions on National Referendum would give you more advantages than disadvantages. If a King is capable he will not be forced to step down even after ten times of national referendum. Therefore, there is nothing to be worried and be apprehensive about it.”*



## **FOSTERING DEMOCRACY - A NOBLE ENDEAVOR**

As Bhutan stood poised on the brink of its inaugural democratic elections, a momentous spectacle unfurled. In a remarkable departure from the annals of modern human civilization, Bhutan bore witness to the staging of mock elections for the very first time. Despite some apprehensions among the populace regarding the new paradigm of governance, their steadfast allegiance to the monarchy remained resolute. Yet, there was no deterring a visionary leader who had foreseen this epochal transition. Thus, in the historic year of 2008, Bhutan conducted its maiden democratic elections.



■ His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo meets people during the mock elections of 2007

In contemplating the epoch of His Majesty's reign, marked by a distinct emphasis on empowering the populace, decentralization, and an array of governance reforms, including the meticulous crafting of the constitution and the eventual abdication, it becomes evident that His Majesty had long envisioned a paradigm shift in governance—a transition towards the establishment of a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy.

From the outset of assuming the revered mantle of Kingship, His Majesty underscored the importance of people's involvement in development. He firmly believed and professed, "The destiny of the nation lies in the hands of the people....". His Majesty envisioned empowering grassroots communities with governance and authority. As early as the 1980s, he harbored the aspiration for Bhutan to evolve into a constitutional democracy.

The institution of decentralized planning provided His Majesty a platform to chart the course towards democracy. The establishment of the Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchung (DYT) in 1981 and the Gewog Yargay Tshogchung (GYT) in 1991

facilitated people's participation in development and laid the groundwork for the democratic transition.

On June 10, 1998, His Majesty issued a Kasha, further delegating his executive powers with the establishment of the Council of Ministers, marking a pivotal moment in Bhutan's journey towards democracy. A year later, on July 26, 1999, the National Assembly enacted the Lhengye Zhungtshog Act 1999, ushering in another significant stride towards democracy. The establishment of the Lhengye Zhungtshog, with elected ministers, marked a historic departure from tradition and underscored His Majesty's unwavering commitment to democratic principles.

The subsequent edict to draft a written Constitution in September 2001 and the formation of the drafting committee marked crucial milestones in Bhutan's democratic journey. Concurrently, His Majesty ensured the gradual introduction of democratic practices, such as universal suffrage for local leaders and public discussions on the Constitution.



In an emotional but thoughtful discussion with the students of Sherubtse College in January 1991, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck said that it was time for Bhutan to adopt democracy as a form of government and that the “destiny of the country lies in the hands of the people.”



By October 2005, His Majesty initiated public discussions on the Constitution, culminating in the historic declaration during the 2005 National Day Celebrations, where he announced his impending abdication and the onset of democratic elections in 2008.

However, it was not easy for His Majesty and the then Chhotse Penlop, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, to convince the people. Most questioned why Bhutan needed a different form of governance when the Monarchy worked very well?

**Monarchy is not the best form of government for Bhutan as it has many flaws. The democratic system also has its own flaws. The major flaw of monarchy system is that an heir, whether capable or not, is enthroned as the King.....In times to come if the people are fortunate, the heir to the Throne would be a dedicated and capable person and be a good King. Otherwise the heir could be a person with mediocre ability or even an incapable person.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King**

For many Bhutanese, the concept of democracy was initially viewed as a duty owed to their King. In the lead-up to the historic elections of 2008 and amidst discussions surrounding the draft Constitution, a sentiment of skepticism and even aversion towards democracy pervaded the populace.

“The recent mock elections in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan have revealed a stark truth: most Bhutanese harbor no fervor for democracy. Their allegiance lies firmly with their monarch, who, paradoxically, is the proponent of demo-

cratic ideals,” remarked the New York Times in its June 14, 2007 edition. “It will require considerable persuasion from both Kings IV and V to sway Bhutan’s citizenry towards anything other than unwavering loyalty to their sovereign and his governance,” the article continued.

Similarly, an Al Jazeera report of March 24, 2008, captured the sentiments of a Bhutanese individual, who expressed astonishment at the sudden embrace of democracy: “This notion of democracy caught us off guard. We firmly believe in the adage, ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’ Many of

us were content with the continued reign of our King.”

Nicholas Rosellini, the then UN resident coordinator in Bhutan, reflected on the nation’s progress and the cautious approach towards democracy: “Bhutan has made remarkable strides. However, with progress come challenges, and this is where the concept of democracy comes into play. Given the tumultuous situations in neighboring regions, the populace remains apprehensive about embracing democracy fully.”

In an article dated April 22, 2007, the Financial Times recounted the concerns of Leki, a 45-year-old farmer’s wife, who feared the repercussions of democratization: “I harbor no doubts: my allegiance lies with my King,” she asserted. “The prospect of democracy worries me, as it may place power in unworthy hands.”

Thus, Bhutan’s transition to democracy stands out for its unique approach of decentralizing power, initiated directly from the leadership. This departure from the conventional path of democratization, characterized by resistance from abso-

lute monarchs, underscores the singular nature of Bhutan’s journey. Moreover, the legitimacy of democracy in Bhutan was bolstered by its inception through royal decree, a regime that enjoyed widespread acceptance among the populace.

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**The highest achievement of one hundred years of Monarchy has been the constant nurturing of democracy.**

**His Majesty the King, 2008,  
Address to First Parliament.**

འཇུག་ལྷན་འཇུག་པའི་འཇུག་པོ་

In March 2008, Bhutan scripted a historic milestone with the successful conduct of National Assembly elections, signifying the fruition of His Majesty’s visionary endeavors to embed democratic principles within the fabric of Bhutanese society.

**We should not be deterred by the fact that democratic political systems have not been working in some countries. The principles and ideals of democracy are inherently good and a democratic system is desirable for Bhutan. If the lessons of some democracies are not encouraging it is not because the concept of democracy is flawed. It is because of mismanagement and corruption by those who practice it.**

**His Majesty the Fourth King, June 04, 2002**

Under his leadership, electricity and modern medical care reached Bhutan's remotest areas; the country established a hydropower industry and navigated the perilous geopolitics that come with its geography — a landlocked plot, home today to about 753,000 citizens, that is wedged between India and China, the most populous nations on earth. In 2006, the King shocked his subjects by unilaterally ending Bhutan's absolute monarchy, leading an effort to draft a constitution and institute free elections, a process that culminated, in 2008, with the country's first general election. But the King's most celebrated contribution is in the realm of what might be called political philosophy. It was he who formulated Bhutan's signature quality of life indicator, Gross National Happiness, an ethos of environmental sustainability, cultural preservation and "holistic" civic contentment that has made Bhutan a fashionable name to drop in international development circles and among New Age enlightenment seekers.

Jody Rosen, New York Times magazine, October 30, 2014

One of the questions constantly asked to His Majesty the Fourth King was about why the change now. His Majesty replied that the best time to introduce change was when things were going well. Canadian writer, broadcaster and environmental activist David Suzuki, who attended a 2012 international conference on Gross National Happiness, told participants: "Now that was the reasoning of a truly wise man."

French diplomat and scholar Thierry Mathou described the elections as "a new and logical step in an ambitious program of guided political, economic, and administrative change initiated by the third Druk Gyalpo (King) back in the mid-1950s. Contrary to most countries with Monarchies where royals have resisted democratic politics, Bhutan's Monarchy has always been the leading force of change."



During the Mock elections of 2007 in Bhutan, His Majesty was present in Lhuntse. Engaging with approximately 568 voters from the 24 villages of Kurtoe gewog, His Majesty reiterated the crucial significance of people's involvement in the democratization process. On April 21, 2007, in what was a symbolic moment, His Majesty led people to participate in the mock elections from Jigme Namgyel Nagtshang, the ancestral home of Jigme Namgyel, the esteemed father of Bhutan's inaugural King. 82-year-old Kencho Tseten was the very first person to cast votes for the mock elections.

Anticipating the transition to democracy, groundwork for the forthcoming political epoch commenced with the reaffirmation of the Royal Audit Authority's autonomy in 1999 and the establishment of the National Legislative Committee in 2003 to fortify the Judiciary. In 2005, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Election Commission were instituted, signaling a proactive stance against corruption and the facilitation of

transparent electoral processes, respectively

Subsequently, His Majesty established key constitutional bodies and enacted vital legislations to fortify democratic institutions. The establishment of the Election Commission in December 2005 and the conduct of National Council elections in December 2007 paved the way for Bhutan's first parliamentary democracy.

### The Election Commission

The Draft Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan that was framed to ensure the present and future interests of the country has been distributed nationwide and consultations with our people in the 20 Dzongkhags on the Constitution are already taking place. Once the Constitution is adopted and the introduction of parliamentary democracy takes place, it is of paramount importance to ensure that elections are conducted properly.....

The office of the Election Commission is a very important Constitutional post and it is imperative to build a strong foundation for implementing the functions of this post while we are in the process of establishing democratic practices and norms in our country.

The Chief Election Commissioner must carry out his responsibilities with the highest level of loyalty and dedication to the government and the people without any distinction or discrimination between regions, dzongkhags and gewogs, and establish a strong electoral system for the present and future interests of the country.

In keeping with the provisions of the Constitution for a minimum of two and a maximum of seven members in the National Assembly for each dzongkhag, on the basis of population, the Chief Election Commissioner must finalize the constituencies for the election of National Assembly members. Towards this end, the Office of the Election Commission must review and finalize the boundaries of the dzongkhags and gewogs together with the concerned ministries and departments. The Office of the Election Commission must also finalize the electoral rolls and election schedules as well as make full preparations for the supervision, direction, control and conduct of elections to the Parliament and local government. The Election Commission must conduct training and familiarization for the people in the electoral process during the next two years in 2006 and 2007 so that the first general elections in the country can be carried out successfully in the year 2008.

Issued on this 30<sup>th</sup> Day of the 10<sup>th</sup> Month of the Wood-Bird Year (31 December 2005).

Druk Gyalpo





## OPERATION FLUSH-OUT

Amidst the flux of change sweeping through Bhutan, a fresh challenge, posing a grave threat to the nation's security and sovereignty, emerged. Indian militants, fleeing the pursuit of Indian armed forces, clandestinely crossed the porous border, establishing encampments within Bhutanese territory. In a remarkable display of peace-seeking resolve, His Majesty undertook a bold step, personally venturing to the militants' encampments to engage in dialogue with their leaders, earnestly advocating for a peaceful resolution and imploring them to vacate Bhutanese soil. Regrettably, these entreaties fell on deaf ears, leaving Bhutan with no recourse but to resort to force. In an unprecedented move in modern history, His Majesty led the Bhutanese forces from the frontlines, orchestrating a swift and decisive operation that resulted in the expulsion of the militants from their encampments within a matter of days.

# Bravely fought the King

## THE ISSUE:

Of all the heads of state in the world, only the king of Bhutan could have personally led his troops into battle.

**T**HE king of Bhutan did a yeoman's service to his country. For long, the serene and idyllic Himalayan country had served as a haven for various insurgent outfits from India. ULFA and NDFB from Assam, KLO, KPP from North Bengal are the main groups who have had their camps spread all over the country. Operating from their hideouts in Bhutan, the terrorists were playing havoc with the lives of innocent villagers.

Ostensibly, Jigme Singye Wangchuk was under pressure from the government of India. But the king acted sensibly. He appealed to the outfits to wind up their camps and leave the country for good. Unfortunately, this fell on deaf ears.

Egged on by nationalistic spirit, the king undertook the responsibility of leading his army. He braved enormous risks with remarkable courage and aplomb to confront the militants. The king was largely successful in dismantling many camps – some even in the remote areas – flushing out the leaders of the various outfits. The government of India is happy with Bhutan's role and has promised full cooperation. The king in turn requested proper manning of the border areas. The king's role is laudable. He

was also concerned about the security of the innocent population while carrying out Operation Flush Out. That he led his troops into battle proves his military prowess. He is perhaps the only king to have led his army into battlefield.

PB SAHA,  
29 December,  
Kolkata.

## Friend of India

**T**HE battle embarked upon by the Royal Bhutan Army against the anti-Indian insurgents is praiseworthy. The Bhutan King left no loopholes in accomplishing this difficult task. The army seized a large amount of arms and ammunition from the insurgents which has undoubtedly weakened the latter's power and confidence. The king has also gone a step ahead by temporarily suspending all Thimpu-Dhaka flights so as to prevent the insurgents from escaping. Hats off to this tiny nation for this earnest endeavour. The gesture far outweighs those of the so-called democratic nations like Pakistan and Afghanistan who

instead of dismantling the terrorist camps based on their soil support them so that they may continue to create problems for India.

PUBALI NEOGY,  
31 December, Kolkata.

## Lesson for all leaders

**G**ONE are the days when kings or heads of states personally led their troops into battle. Tipu Sultan is a shining example of such bravery and concern. Now, rulers remain far away from the battlefield, ensconced in the cosy



sofas of their drawing rooms or official chambers.

The army feels inspired and confident when led by the head himself. The King of Bhutan and his son put up a brave fight – without bothering about their own safety – against the insurgents from India who took shelter in inaccessible jungles. He has thus become a role model. There is a lurking apprehension in some quarters that the Indian Army had helped him. But there is no gainsaying that the Bhutan King set the ball rolling and faced the insurgents who were armed with modern weapons. This episode should instill confidence in the Indian

Army and it should try to track down Veerappan, the elusive brigand. Men like President Bush and other chicken-hearted heads of states should emulate the Bhutan King.

TARAKDAS MAJUMDER,  
31 December, Salt Lake.

## Bharat Ratna Jigme?

**J**IGME SINGYE WANGCHUK, the warrior king of Bhutan, led his army to flush out insurgents, smashing their well-fortified camps. Heavy exchange of fire between the militants and

the army took place in Panbari and other places. The king also handed over the captured militants to the Indian Army and police. Wangchuk is the only king and head of state in the world to have taken such action by himself. India should award him for such a friendly act.

SRIDHAR CHANDRA  
MAITY,  
2 January, Kolkata.

## Ray of hope

**H**ATS off to Jigme Singye Wangchuk Dorji for the marvellous job of personally destroying the breeding ground of terrorism in the jungles of Bhutan! Bhutan, a small kingdom in the lap of the Himalayas, has set an example for its counterparts such as Pakistan and Bangladesh. Operation Flush Out is a befitting reply to militant outfits whose bases are in India.

Since the last few decades, terrorism has become a grave problem for South-east Asian countries. India has been at the receiving end of much trouble from Pakistani insurgents. Bangladesh, too, adds fuel to the fire as it is a haven for terrorists who carry out their activities under the indirect help of the government. Terrorism has reached such an alarming height that it seems that all roads to peaceful solution have come to an end. In such a situation, the action taken by the Royal Government of Bhutan is a ray of hope.

JAYDEV BISWAS,  
1 January, Shyamnagar.

In the annals of Bhutan's storied past, where the fabric of her resilience is woven, the sagas of valourous Kings unfurl like banners in the wind. As His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo steered Bhutan's course toward prosperity and political evolution, a formidable challenge loomed on the horizon, testing not just the nation's security but the very essence of her sovereignty.

During the hallowed halls of the 74th National Assembly session in 1996, echoes of concern reverberated from Southern Bhutan, where reports of militant incursions cast shadows upon the tranquil landscape. From the labyrinthine jungles emerged the specters of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and the Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO), each harboring aspirations as diverse as the lands from which they hailed.

## THE NOBLE COMMANDER IN-CHIEF MARCHES FORTH



His Majesty beheld this encroaching peril with a vigilant eye, cognizant of the threat it posed to Bhutan's prosperity, peace, and territorial integrity. Concerned for the safety of those dwelling along the borderlands and mindful of the economic repercussions, His Majesty embarked on a diplomatic odyssey, seeking a peaceful resolution to the escalating crisis. His Majesty personally visited the camps of the militants, walking through dense, inhospitable terrains, under the scorching sun and the incessant downpours.



The situation steadily deteriorated, marked by a surge in violence perpetrated by militants against Bhutanese citizens and their vehicles. In response, the government commenced dialogue with the militants in 1998, urging them to peacefully vacate Bhutanese territory. Despite several rounds of negotiations yielding no tangible progress, His Majesty took decisive action on August 2, 1999, issuing a decree underscoring the imperative of fortifying security measures in the southern regions to address escalating security concerns.

In 1999, His Majesty embarked on two visits to New Delhi, India, engaging in discussions with senior Indian leaders to address the burgeoning crisis. During the National Day celebrations at Kanglung in 2000, His Majesty candidly apprised the populace of an impending dilemma. "Should all diplomatic endeavors by the Royal Government to resolve this issue through peaceful means falter, and should the militants persist in their refusal to vacate our sovereign land, we will have no recourse but to deploy our security forces to ensure their departure," His Majesty declared.

On September 15, 2003, His Majesty undertook another visit to New Delhi, focusing on deliberations concerning an imminent military intervention. In discussions with the then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and other senior leaders, His Majesty reaffirmed Bhutan's unwavering commitment to mutual understandings, emphasizing the mutual pledge to prevent the exploitation of each other's territories for activities detrimental to national interests.

During the 81st session of the National Assembly in 2003, it was resolved that a final round of negotiations would be conducted with the mili-

tants. Should they persist in their refusal to depart from Bhutan peacefully, the government would be left with no recourse but to initiate a military offensive against them.

In accordance with the directives of the National Assembly, dialogues were initiated with various insurgent factions commencing in October 2003. From October 28 to 31, 2003, discussions were held with representatives of the ULFA, followed by engagements with leaders of the NDFB from November 27 to December 1, 2003. Regrettably, the leaders of the KLO declined to participate in these talks.

Despite the earnest efforts to secure a peaceful resolution, the ULFA and NDFB dispatched only mid-level representatives to the negotiations. When implored to vacate Bhutanese territory peacefully, they asserted their inability to comply. The ULFA contended that abandoning their camps would jeopardize their quest for Assam's independence, deeming it a suicidal course of action. Similarly, the NDFB reasoned that relocating from their current encampments would necessitate their establishment in other parts of Bhutan. With diplomatic avenues exhausted, military intervention emerged as the sole viable option.

As negotiations faltered and violence persisted, the gravity of the situation crystallized. With unwavering resolve and a heart burdened by the welfare of his people, His Majesty stood poised at the precipice of history. Addressing the nation with a solemn vow, he declared, "If all peaceful endeavors fail, and the militants refuse to heed our call, we shall be compelled to defend our homeland."

A 48-hour ultimatum was issued to the militants, urging them to vacate the country peacefully. Regrettably, they obstinately refused to comply. Thus, on the eve of December 15, 2003, as dawn kissed the horizon, the clarion call of duty summoned His Majesty to the forefront of battle. With valor coursing through his veins and duty as his guiding star, His Majesty led the gallant soldiers of Bhutan into the crucible of conflict.

Remarkably, within a mere three days of the op-

eration, all 30 principal camps and 35 training facilities were obliterated. A substantial cache of weaponry, comprising 841 arms and 144,000 units of ammunition, alongside cannons, anti-aircraft guns, and missiles, was seized. Additionally, 485 militants were apprehended and transferred unharmed to the custody of the Indian Army. Notably, women and children present at the camps were safely handed over to Indian civil authorities. Tragically, 11 Bhutanese soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice.



■ The 108 stupas at Dochula constructed by Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck after the 2003 operations

This decisive military intervention marked Bhutan's first engagement in warfare in 138 years of uninterrupted peace. Comprising the Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Body Guards, and dedicated militia volunteers, the Bhutanese forces had never before discharged their weapons with lethal intent. Despite facing battle-hardened and formidable adversaries, the soldiers, inspired by His Majesty The King, fought with unwavering zeal and a profound sense of sacrifice, ultimately emerging triumphant.

In a testament to the indomitable spirit of Bhutan, the forces of darkness were vanquished, and the flames of liberty kindled anew. Within the span of three days, the tendrils of insurgency were quelled, and the bastions of peace restored. The sacrifices of Bhutanese heroes, imbued with the spirit of their noble sovereign, ensured victory in the face of adversity.

This historic chapter, etched in the annals of Bhutanese lore, bears witness to the unyielding courage of a monarch who led from the front, undeterred by the perils that beset him. His Majesty's selfless valor and resolute leadership stand as a beacon of inspiration, illuminating the path for future generations.

In the history of modern history, where Kings seldom tread the fields of battle, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo emerges as a paragon of courage and sacrifice. His indelible legacy, inscribed in the annals of time, serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of Bhutan and her noble sovereign.

What struck the world as remarkable was His Majesty's lack of jubilation upon his return from the campaign. Despite the successful conclusion of the military expedition, there was no air of celebration. His Majesty, upon arriving back in Thimphu, expressed disdain for the festivities arranged by the ministers and prohibited any glorification. Instead, he chose to mourn the loss of lives on both sides, recognizing it as an unavoidable and solemn duty to his nation.

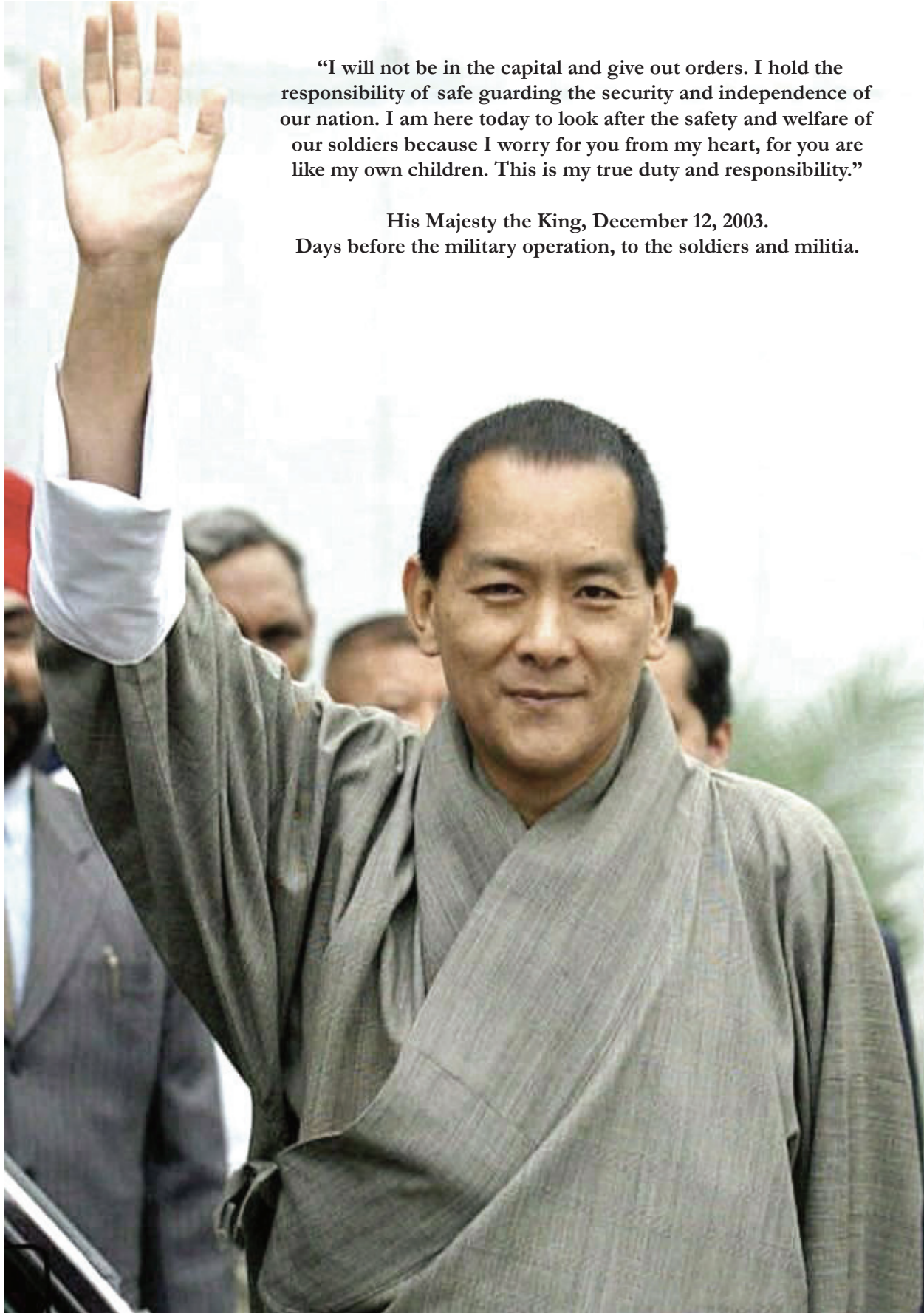
This subdued approach epitomizes His Majesty's profound character, reflective of his subtle adherence to Buddhist principles. Prayers and butter lamp offerings were held at Tashichhodzong, dedicated to all those who perished in the conflict.

Her Majesty Gyalum, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, commissioned the construction of the 108 khangzang chortens from 2003 to 2007, along with the Druk Wangyel Lhakhang in June 2008 at Dochula. These monuments stand as enduring reminders of the event, situated on the crest of Dochula, offering panoramic views of the nine majestic snow peaks of North and Eastern Bhutan, set against a backdrop of sprawling bluish-green valleys.

The Druk Wangyel Lhakhang and the 108 chortens serve as tributes to the sagacious leadership of the Wangchuck dynasty as a whole, with a particular emphasis on the wise stewardship of the Fourth King.

*An Indian newspaper said: "Gone are the days when Kings or heads of states personally led their troops into battle. ...Now, rulers remain far away from the battlefield... The King of Bhutan and his son took up a brave fight - without bothering about their own safety - against the insurgents from India who took shelter in inaccessible jungles. He has thus become a role model..."*





**“I will not be in the capital and give out orders. I hold the responsibility of safe guarding the security and independence of our nation. I am here today to look after the safety and welfare of our soldiers because I worry for you from my heart, for you are like my own children. This is my true duty and responsibility.”**

**His Majesty the King, December 12, 2003.  
Days before the military operation, to the soldiers and militia.**

## NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DISCUSSIONS ON THE ISSUE



### Excerpts on discussions about the militants during the 80th National Assembly Session, June 25, 2002

His Majesty informed the National Assembly that the Lhengye Zhungtshog had deliberated extensively in February to address the country's security challenges. Three key decisions were reached and submitted for consideration. Firstly, talks with both the chairman and military commander-in-chief of ULFA were deemed essential to avoid delays caused by their absence. Secondly, the Royal Government would only discuss closing ULFA's main camp, understanding that its relocation would prompt other camps to close and militants to leave Bhutan. Lastly, if ULFA leaders refused to relocate their headquarters, military action would be inevitable.

His Majesty emphasized the importance of the decisions in ensuring national peace and security, urging the Assembly to discuss and adopt a clear resolution on tackling the militant problem. Additionally, it was decided in the past that separate talks with ULFA and Bodo were necessary, considering the potential for successful negotiations with the latter. Talks with NDFB representatives had already taken place.

While ULFA was the primary concern among the militant groups, it was recognized that all shared the same objectives. If military action became necessary, it would encompass all militants within the country.

Following extensive deliberation, the Assembly acknowledged the need for a peaceful solution but endorsed one final round of talks with ULFA leaders. However, failure to remove their main camp would necessitate military action in line with the Assembly's resolution.





■ Bhutanese military forces at Deothang

### **Discussions about the militants during the National Assembly Session, June 28, 2003.**

Representatives from 20 Dzongkhags and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry raised concerns about militants from Assam, West Bengal, and other regions in southeastern Bhutan. They acknowledged His Majesty's efforts in addressing security challenges but expressed worry over ongoing threats to sovereignty. Advocating for swift military action if peaceful measures fail, they pledged full support to assist the Royal Government. Recent sightings of armed Bodo militants in Kangpara had heightened anxiety, prompting calls for immediate military intervention, aligned with the 80th session's resolution.

Military action became necessary, leading to the relocation of affected residents to safer areas, with other Dzongkhags offering support. The Minister for Home Affairs updated the Assembly on efforts to expel Indian militants. Four rounds of talks with ULFA leaders resulted in an agreement to close four camps by December 2001. However, ULFA maintained eight camps with 1,560 militants, while NDFB operated eight camps with about 740 militants.

The Royal Government engaged in talks with NDFB leaders but faced resistance, with ULFA and NDFB expressing intent to continue militancy until Assam and Bodoland gained independence. His Majesty stressed the importance of understanding India's concerns regarding militants, emphasizing the need to persuade ULFA to remove their main camp within the year. Failure could lead to grave consequences, potentially involving military action and security risks for civilians traveling through Assam and West Bengal.

After four days of deliberation, the Assembly urged His Majesty not to visit affected areas and instructed enhanced security measures. They emphasized continued engagement with the Indian government and urged the new Bhutanese government to persuade ULFA leaders to close their main camp. If negotiations failed, military action would be necessary to expel militants.



## **ABDICATION - A TIMELESS EPOCH IN BHUTAN'S HISTORY**

Amidst the grandeur of the 2005 National Day celebrations in Trashiyangtse, a momentous proclamation resonated through the air: His Majesty declared his intent to abdicate, paving the path for elections to be held in 2008. Yet, a mere year later, another proclamation shook Bhutan and the world to its core as His Majesty announced his imminent abdication. The news reverberated with a sense of astonishment. However, amidst the shockwaves, His Majesty exuded unwavering confidence in the capabilities of the then Chhotse Penlop, His Royal Highness Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, to lead Bhutan into a promising future.

The abdication of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo stands as an act of unparalleled significance, resonating deeply within Bhutan and beyond. Merely two years after showcasing the awe-inspiring spectacle of a monarch leading his troops in defense of the nation's security, His Majesty once again captured global attention with a decision of profound magnitude.

During the National Day celebrations of 2005 in Trashiyangtse, His Majesty revealed to his people the impending transition in governance. Along-

side the announcement of the nation's inaugural national elections under a parliamentary democracy in 2008, His Majesty stunned the audience with yet another revelation. "I wish to inform our beloved people that the Chhoetse Penlop will ascend the throne as the Fifth Druk Gyalpo in 2008," His Majesty declared. "Acknowledging the paramount importance for a monarch to acquire invaluable experience in serving the nation to the utmost, I shall delegate my responsibilities to the Chhoetse Penlop before the year 2008."



■ The Fourth King and members of the Royal Family during the National Day celebrations at Trashiyangtse in 2005

The international press echoed the astonishment felt across Bhutan, with headlines proclaiming, “Abdication Shocks Bhutanese”, as news spread of the monarch’s unprecedented decision to step aside in favor of his son ahead of the anticipated democratic elections.

A year later, on December 9, 2006, His Majesty convened the Lhengye Zhungtshog and other key figures for a momentous announcement. An edict formalizing his abdication was solemnly declared. “The time has come for me to entrust my duties to Trongsa Penlop Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck,” the decree proclaimed. “I am confident that Bhutan’s future under the reign of a new monarch and a democratic system, as enshrined in our Constitution, will be one of unparalleled progress and prosperity.”

The transition was formally proclaimed on December 14, 2006, amidst a palpable atmosphere of emotion. Cabinet members and distinguished guests, including the Chief Justice and the Speak-

er of the National Assembly, were left speechless by His Majesty’s announcement, awestruck by the gravity of the moment.

Reflecting on the decision, His Majesty reminded all present that the groundwork for this transition had been laid during the National Day celebrations of 2005. With Bhutan enjoying unprecedented peace, stability, and economic progress, and with strong relations established with neighboring India and international partners, His Majesty emphasized that the timing for such a monumental shift was ideal.

Acknowledging the necessity for the Crown Prince to acquire practical experience in governance, particularly with the advent of parliamentary democracy in 2008, His Majesty expressed full confidence in the abilities of the Fifth Druk Gyalpo. Stressing the decision’s merit over familial ties, His Majesty affirmed that only the best interests of the nation guided his actions.

**Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo told me that the old king had been planning Bhutan’s political transformation for years. “The preparation goes back to 1981—that’s when he introduced the decentralization process. He always wanted full democracy, but he does things systematically. He’s a master strategist.” A conversation with Prince Namgyel, the last surviving son of the second King of Bhutan, left me with a similar impression. An impeccable old man with closely cropped white hair, he told me, “His late Majesty said, ‘If they ask for democracy, don’t give it to them, because it will be too late: better to give it to them before they ask for it.’ That is what has happened.” Prince Jigyel put it another way: “When the clear sky breaks, the storm will come. That’s the way my father looks at this. He saw the clear sky, and he made the transition.”**

**Patrick French, April 13, 2009, Vanity Fair**

Having dedicated 34 years to the service of his country, despite the constitutional allowance for a longer reign, His Majesty’s abdication at the youthful age of 51 epitomized a selfless commitment to Bhutan’s welfare. Indeed, this act of self-sacrifice adds another luminous facet to the illustrious legacy of a monarch revered as “the jewel amongst men”.

After having studied the political systems of other countries, I have repeatedly thought that we urgently need an appropriate and permanent system of government according to the need of a small country like ours, to safeguard our independence with continued peace and prosperity.

His Majesty the Fourth King, June 10, 1988.

In the 1970s “long before “positive psychology” became a boom in the West, King Jigme, suggested that nations be measured by “gross national happiness”; the rich are not always happy, after all, while the happy generally consider themselves rich.” In 2005, “he launched an even more radical idea: self-deposition. To urge his people toward independence, he announced that he would step down two years from now (his son would officially take over) and that his country would hold its first national democratic elections. King Jigme — who gave up absolute power in 1998 and sent every household in the land a new draft constitution [in 2005] that allowed for his impeachment — is setting a quietly revolutionary precedent. If most politicians are inherently suspect because they seem so eager to grab power and so reluctant to surrender it, what does one make of a leader who voluntarily gives up his position, as if placing his people’s needs before his own?”

Pico Iyer, Times, April 30, 2006

As a Monarch who transcends the past, the present, and the future, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck is not departing but leaving behind much of himself in the Bhutanese people. If we expect His Majesty to influence changes from behind the scene it will not happen. But it is our responsibility to make sure that his selfless sacrifices was not made in vain and that the ultimate teaching of impermanence remains our strength. ... We do not mourn the departure of His Majesty as our Monarch but celebrate the achievement of his destiny. Fortunate are the people who beheld such a leader. Precious is the leader who receives such a tribute. May the spirit of this tribute live on, in the body, speech and mind of all the people of Bhutan, “for all time to come”...

Kuensel, December 16, 2006

## THE LAST KASHO – ABDICATION

### Kasho/Edict

As I had announced during the National Day celebrations last year about my abdication, and also briefed the Lhengye Zhungtshog on this decision, the time has now come for me to hand-over my responsibilities to Trongsa Penlop Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. While we prepare ourselves for parliamentary democracy in 2008, we must all pledge with our body, speech and mind to be unwavering and steadfast in our efforts to strengthen the sovereignty and security of Bhutan, to secure the blessings of liberty, ensure justice and peace in our country, and enhance the unity, happiness and well-being of our people for all time to come.

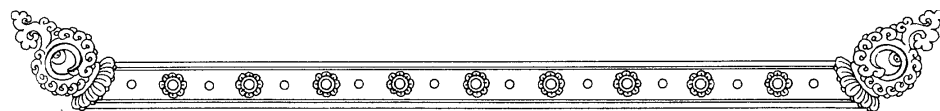
In taking note of the progress that our nation has made over the past 34 years, I would like to state that whatever we have achieved so far is due to the merit of the people of Bhutan. I, therefore, wish to express my gratitude to the Clergy, the officials of the Royal Government, the members of the business community and our security forces, and to all the people of the 20 dzongkhags for their unfailing support and loyalty to me and our country. I am confident that a very bright and great future lies ahead for Bhutan with the leadership of a new King and a democratic system of government that is best suited for our country, as enshrined under the Constitution.

I have every confidence that there will be unprecedented progress and prosperity for our nation in the reign of our fifth King. As I hand over my responsibilities to my son, I repose my full faith and belief in the people of Bhutan to look after the future of our nation, for it is the Bhutanese people who are the true custodians of our tradition and culture and the ultimate guardians of the security, sovereignty and continued well-being of our country.

May the blessings of Ugyen Guru Rimpoche, the father of our nation Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and our Guardian Deities continue to guide the destiny of our country and protect the future of the glorious Palden Drukpa!

Given at Tashichho Dzong on the 20th Day of the 10th Month of the Fire-Dog Year, corresponding to the 9th Day of December 2006.

Druk Gyalpo



## THE LEGACY CONTINUES

A foundational and profound aspect characterizing Bhutan's lineage of monarchs lies in their remarkable capacity to inherit the visionary legacies of their predecessors, seamlessly interweaving them with their own aspirations for the nation's holistic well-being. While abdicating, His Majesty the Fourth King expressed his unwavering conviction, foreseeing an era of unparalleled progress and prosperity under the reign of the Fifth King.

We have witnessed the prophetic words of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo transform into reality, as His Majesty the King chisels the visions of his predecessor based on the demands of the times and the winds of change. Through unprecedented actions, His Majesty has fortified Bhutan's goodwill and sovereignty, championed the protection of our Environment and Culture, and demonstrated to the world the prowess of great leadership in the face of grave challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic. On December 17, 2023, His Majesty unveiled Bhutan's most ambitious economic initiative, the Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC), which would propel Bhutan to the ranks of the developed world, telling the people, "I will do everything in my power to realize this vision." "I will put my own life on the line. And I will do it for your sake. Because you are an extraordinary and noble people. You are extraordinary in your devotion to one another and your love for the country."

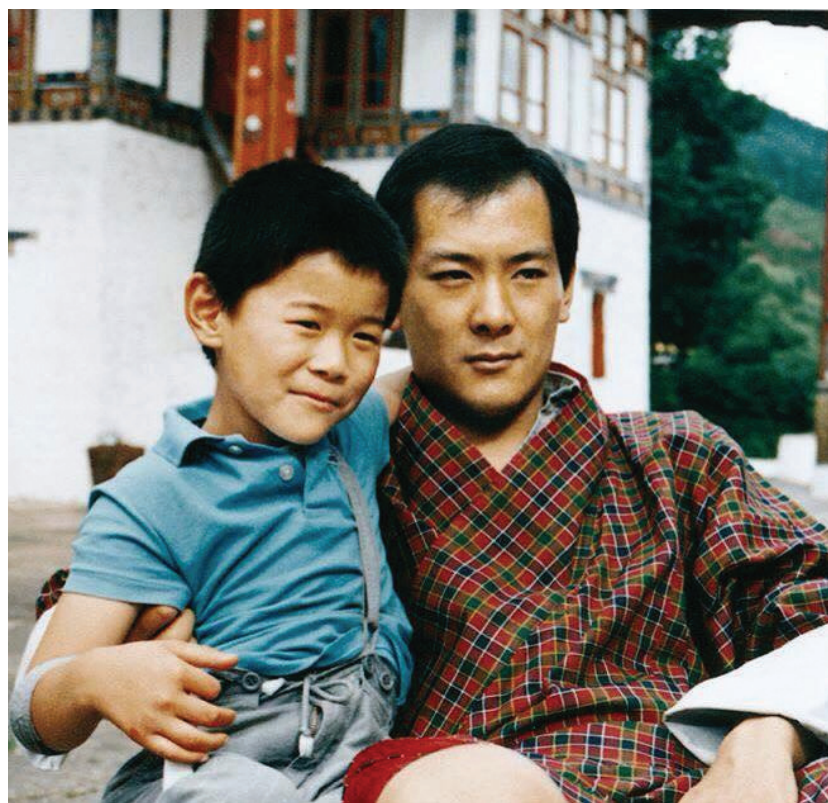
These words and deeds stand as powerful symbols of the "unwavering conviction" that the Fourth King spoke of in his successor.

From a young age, His Royal Highness (HRH) Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was groomed with the skills essential for leadership. Educated both domestically and internationally, he absorbed a wealth of national and global knowledge. As Chief Patron of the Scouts Association of Bhutan, he guided youth in preserving traditional values and shaping their role in the nation's future. In 1999, he inaugurated Bhutan's first juvenile rehabilitation complex, spotlighting emerging social challenges. His deepening commitment to social issues culminated in his first National Day address in Trongsa on December 17, 2000.

In 2001, HRH chaired the midterm review of the 8th Five Year Plan in Dagana, followed by an inaugural official visit abroad in August of the same year, at the invitation of the Indian government. Representing Bhutan at the 27th United Nations General Assembly on May 8, 2002, during a special session for children, HRH played a crucial role in shaping a "World Fit for Children."

On June 25, 2002, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo awarded HRH the Red Scarf at Samtenling Royal Cottage, signifying a pivotal moment. Expressing his dedication to serving the nation, he emphasized his alignment of goals and aspirations with those of his country. By then, HRH had cultivated the exceptional qualities required of an extraordinary leader.

Ascending the Throne of the 16th Trongsa (Chhotse) Penlop on October 31, 2004, he assumed a position primed for leadership in many respects.



### Sovereignty

In 1974, during his coronation, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo declared safeguarding Bhutan's security and sovereignty as a top priority. Throughout his 34-year reign, the King remained steadfast in championing this cause. Today, sovereignty remains a cornerstone of His Majesty, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck's vision.

In February 2007, shortly after his enthronement, His Majesty embarked on a historic visit to India, marking his inaugural international journey as the Fifth Druk Gyalpo. What unfolded during this pivotal visit reshaped the trajectory of Bhutanese history, particularly in matters of security and sovereignty. A transformative era dawned upon the Indo-Bhutan relationship as the 57-year-old Treaty of Friendship underwent a profound revision, culminating in the signing of a new Treaty.

This landmark agreement not only embodies a





■ His Majesty the King and His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo at the Inauguration ceremony of the 2nd Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition at Paro, 2016

fresh chapter in bilateral relations but also lays the groundwork for comprehensive economic collaboration, fostering mutual prosperity in the long term. Furthermore, it extends cooperation across diverse domains including culture, education, health, sports, and science and technology. Notably, the revised Article II, grants Bhutan greater autonomy in shaping its foreign policy and acquiring non-lethal military assets, all while safeguarding India's strategic interests.

In September 2014, Bhutan made a significant stride onto the world stage by joining the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, marking a wa-

tershed moment in its history. Since then, Bhutan's armed forces, including the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), have embarked on missions across Africa as UN Peacekeepers.

This noble commitment not only underscores Bhutan's steadfast dedication to fostering global peace and security but also reinforces its identity as a sovereign nation. By actively engaging in international peacekeeping efforts, Bhutan not only contributes meaningfully to the global community but also strengthens its own security fabric and reaffirms its place among the community of nations.



■ His Majesty the King, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi , when the Indian PM was granted Bhutan's highest civilian award, the "Order of the Druk Gyalpo" at Thimphu on March 22, 2024

### Indo-Bhutan relation and Diplomacy

India has long been a cornerstone of Bhutan's developmental journey, with the reign of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo marked by a deepening of bilateral ties. Through numerous visits, both by the Fourth Druk Gyalpo to India and by Indian leaders to Bhutan, a robust foundation was laid, a legacy that endures with ongoing high-level exchanges.

Continuing this tradition, His Majesty the King has forged strong ties with India, predating even his ascension to the throne as the Fifth King of Bhutan. His inaugural international visit in August 2001 as Crown Prince, at the invitation of the Indian government, underscored the early beginnings of this relationship. During the 12-day sojourn, His Majesty engaged in substantive dialogues with key Indian dignitaries, including the then President, Shri K.R. Narayanan. Subsequent

visits further cemented these bonds, including a memorable honeymoon in Jaipur following the Royal Wedding of 2011 and an honorable role as Chief Guest during India's 64th Republic Day celebrations in 2013. Notably, in November 2017, Their Majesties, accompanied by His Royal Highness Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck, embarked on a historic visit to India, signifying Bhutan's future King's inaugural international journey, thus reaffirming the enduring friendship between the two nations.

Just like the Fourth King, His Majesty's international engagements have not been confined to India and extended to various nations, fortifying longstanding ties while enhancing Bhutan's security and sovereignty. Noteworthy among these was the commemorative visit to Japan on November 15, 2011, marking the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

In moments of grief and solidarity, His Majesty, accompanied by Her Majesty, paid respects at the funerals of global leaders, including His Excellency Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore in March 2015, and His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in Thailand in November 2016.

Moreover, His Majesty has graciously hosted and granted audiences for esteemed dignitaries from diverse nations. Notable encounters include meetings with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in April 2016, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, and

His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf, the King of Sweden, in June 2016.

Under His Majesty's reign, Bhutan has expanded its diplomatic footprint, forging ties with new allies. Landmark moments include establishing relations with Belgium in January 2009, Brazil in September 2009—marking Bhutan's entry into South America—and most recently, the State of Israel in December 2020, exemplifying Bhutan's evolving global presence. Of late, His Majesty has embarked on unprecedented visits to various countries in the Middle East and beyond.

**My grandfather said, “The destiny of Bhutan is intimately bound with that of India and it is in our mutual interests to further the bonds of friendship and understanding.” And, many decades later, in a modernizing Bhutan, my father declared, “India is the cornerstone of our foreign policy”. To these profound assertions of intimate bonds I would like to state, “Indo-Bhutan Friendship is indispensable for the future success of Bhutan.”**

**His Majesty the King, January 26, 2013**

## Culture

Culture, an invaluable cornerstone of Bhutan's identity, has long been revered as the bedrock of sovereignty under the reign of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

This reverence for culture persists under the stewardship of his successor, as articulated by His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who in several addresses have said that the people are the guardians of Bhutan's cultural heritage and holds the responsibility for its preservation and promotion. The dawn of the Royal Highland Festival in the ethereal expanse of Laya, in 2016, the restoration of the fire-scarred Wangduepho-

drang Dzong, and the majestic revival of Drugyel Dzong (Fortress of Victory) are some examples that stand as luminous testaments to His Majesty's unwavering commitment as a vanguard of cultural heritage.

Additionally, the establishment of Dessung, conceived by His Majesty the King, serves as a formidable instrument in revitalizing and amplifying Bhutanese culture, particularly the cherished values of volunteerism, empathy, compassion, and discipline. Especially amid the challenging backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, desuups have emerged as stalwart leaders on the frontlines, extending assistance to individuals in myriad ways.



■ His Majesty and HRH Gyalsey during the 2023 Royal Highland Festival at Laya

**It is your duty to ensure that we set aside differences and live as members of a single family. Our greatest strength comes from unity. You must also remember that you are the custodians of our national identity. It is your responsibility to pass on our common national identity, which transcends ethnic, spiritual, and regional differences, to the next generation.**

**His Majesty the King, June 7, 2016**

Furthermore, whenever natural calamities or man-made disasters such as floods and fires destroy lives, these dedicated volunteers swiftly mobilize, venturing to the forefront to safeguard lives and protect properties. Their selfless actions epitomize the essence of service and solidarity, embodying the noble spirit of Dessung that resonates throughout the fabric of Bhutanese society.

**His Majesty embodies what Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel said 400 years ago: “my resolve is such that until the task is accomplished, I will persevere even if lightning should strike from above, the space in-between collapse, or the earth below move.”**

**Former UN Resident Coordinator, Gerald Daly**

## Kidu

A quintessential pillar upheld by every Monarch is Kidu – a sanctified covenant between Sovereign and Subject, dedicatedly directed towards the welfare of the most marginalized echelons of society.

Following in the illustrious footsteps of his father, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has invigorated the spirit of Kidu, venturing into uncharted realms of compassion and benevolence. On September 24, 2007, His Majesty issued a command to the National Land Commission Secretariat (NLCS) to decisively address lingering land disputes. This directive catalyzed the inception of the National Cadastral Resurvey Program (NCRP), a transformative initiative aimed at resolving land issues comprehensively.

The findings of the survey paved the way for an

unprecedented wave of land Kidu. From 2010 to February 2018, His Majesty's noble decree saw the bestowment of a staggering 133,287.765 acres of land to 123,265 deserving beneficiaries across 171 gewogs nationwide.

In a testament to his unwavering commitment to societal well-being, His Majesty commanded the formation of the National Rehabilitation Program (NRP) in 2011.

Further, in a visionary stride toward enhancing the efficacy of Kidu, His Majesty instituted transformative reforms, among which was the establishment of the Kidu Foundation under the auspices of the Office of the Gyalpoi Zimpon (OGZ) on April 3, 2011. This pivotal move broadened the horizons of Kidu, extending its embrace to encompass crucial domains such as education, healthcare, elderly welfare, and monthly stipends for the most marginalized segments of society.



As King, I feel privileged to carry out the noble work of Land Kidu. I undertook this responsibility as sacred, having received it from my Father, who has himself carried out this noble duty for many years.

His Majesty the King, December 17, 2016, Trongsa



## THE SPRING OF GOODWILL



■ His Majesty the King addressing members of the Diet - the Japanese Parliament on November, 2011

The Kings of Bhutan have been pivotal ambassadors, generating global goodwill. From the many, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck's 2011 visit to Japan stands out.

Following Their Majesties' visit to Japan from November 15-20, 2011, interest in Bhutan surged, deeply moving many Japanese, especially in the wake of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. In 2013, Bhutan welcomed 4,015 Japanese tourists, with peak arrivals in 2012 largely attributed to the visit, which generated significant publicity and awareness of Bhutan.

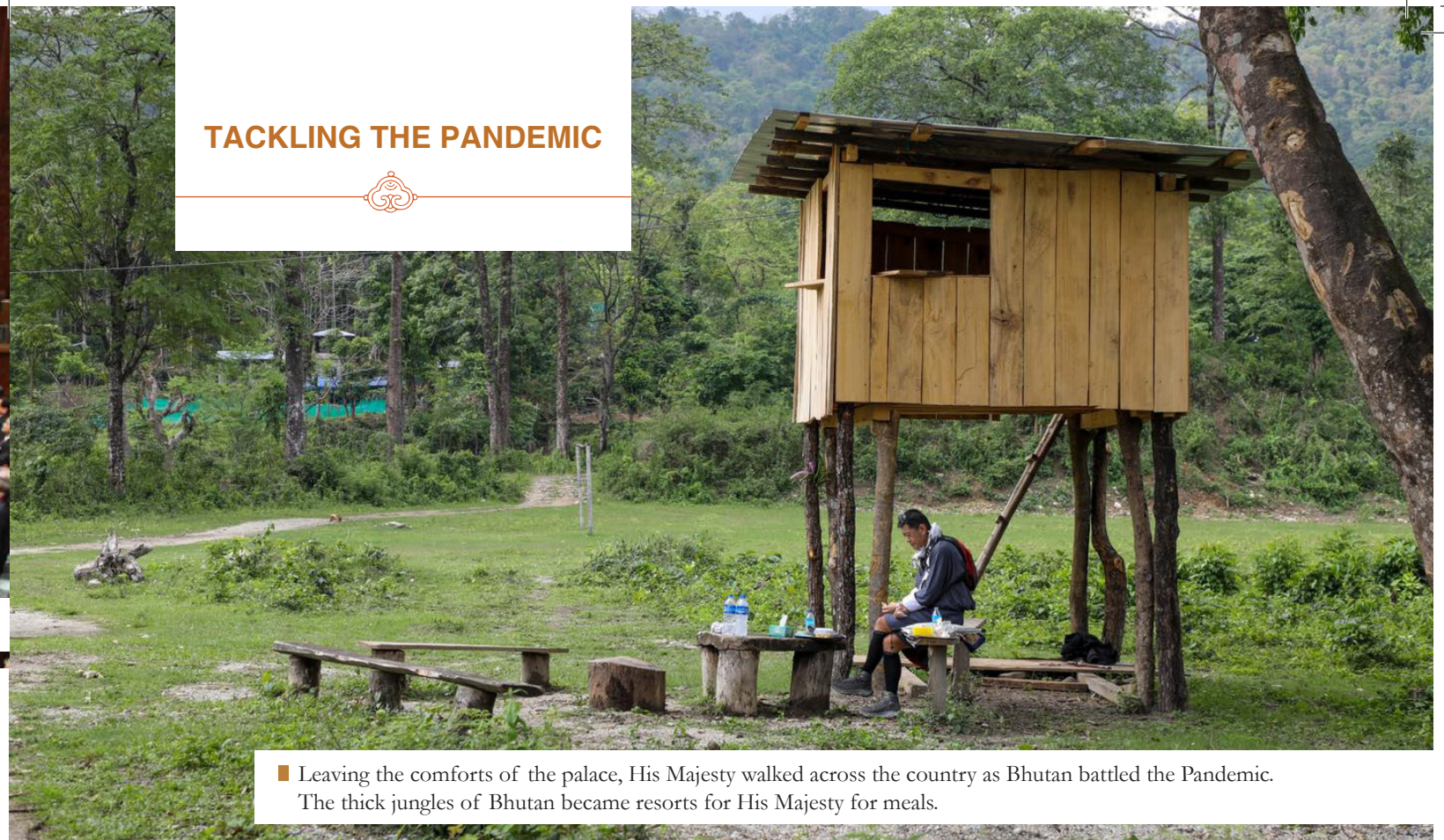
A Japanese school teacher, deeply moved by the Royal visit, had diligently saved for her old age until she was diagnosed with cancer in early 2011. By August, her doctor gave her just six to twelve months to live. And she left all her savings for His Majesty the King. Her last will read: "His Majesty The King of Bhutan visited Japan with the Queen and lamas in 2011, shortly after the earthquake disaster. At the time, I listened to the speeches He (His Majesty The King) made in the district affected by the earthquake, as well as, the National Assembly Hall, and I cannot tell you how many Japanese were encouraged by his words at the time ...I was moved to tears by His

Majesty's words and grateful to him for putting his hand together and offering prayer with his lamas at the sites affected by the earthquake."

"At the time of the disaster in eastern Japan, I, of course, contributed some money to the victims. However, this gift to Bhutan is slightly different from those feelings. It is not the feeling that I would like to contribute for the people who have suffered but more than that, I would like to show my appreciation to the person who inspired me. Therefore, it has come to me that I would like to give my savings to the Kingdom of Bhutan led by His Majesty. Therefore, I am happy if I am able to help for the educational or medical care in that country," the will read.

She says, "Please receive my heart with this small amount of money and in the few remaining days of my life, I earnestly hope that my wish can be fulfilled. Although I am not particularly religious, I sometimes feel that I will be reborn in Bhutan in my next life." She passed away in 2012, leaving in her will to His Majesty The King, a sum of USD 159,006 (Nu 9.92 million). The money has been used by His Majesty's Kidu office to set up the Abe Scholarship in honor of the Japanese lady.

## TACKLING THE PANDEMIC



- Leaving the comforts of the palace, His Majesty walked across the country as Bhutan battled the Pandemic. The thick jungles of Bhutan became resorts for His Majesty for meals.

In the recent annals of human civilization, no foe has been as dangerous and faceless as the Covid virus, heralding a global pandemic. Great, powerful, and wealthy nations faltered as thousands of their people perished. Yet, in the small and humble nation of Bhutan, the virus could not wreak the same havoc. For at the helm stood His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who bravely took to the frontlines, leading and guiding his people through this dire battle.

Lives and livelihoods were saved, and the world

has hailed Bhutan's handling of the pandemic as "exemplary." But without the wisdom, empathy, and compassion of His Majesty, the story could have been tragically different.

Responding to the urgent need, His Majesty established the National Resilience Fund (NRF) in April 2020, initiating the Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu (DGRK). Through DGRK, monthly stipends were provided to individuals, and borrowers received crucial support.

So when the Covid-19 pandemic struck and Bhutan's enormous neighbour in the south, India, seemed to have been caught up in it like a tornado, Jigme Khesar Wangchuk knew it was time to live up to the 'Chayig Chenmo' or code of law written for Bhutan and its leaders in the 16th century, by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. According to the code, the Bhutanese king was no ordinary king, he was also their Bodhisatva of compassion, whose primary responsibility was the well-being of his people. He was their Dharma Raja, healing from the front.

Jyoti Malhotra, The Print, June 29, 2021

This initiative provided monthly stipends and a one-year loan interest waiver from April 2020 to March 2021, aiding 52,644 beneficiaries with Nu 2.25 billion. As the pandemic persisted, His Majesty extended the DGRK for another 15 months from April 2021. Efforts to replenish the NRF aimed to mitigate economic and developmental disruptions. In an unprecedented move, the NRF was fully funded through His Majesty's Kidu

Fund and the Sungchob Fund, with 15,640,000 shares auctioned between June 15 and July 15, 2021. These were savings of His Majesty and his predecessors meant for national emergencies.

Bhutan's fight against the pandemic became a beacon to the world, showcasing that true leadership matters. It was a testament to how visionary leaders can overcome any hurdle.

**Wearing a baseball cap and knee-length traditional Gho robe, carrying a backpack, Bhutan's King has walked through jungles infested with leeches and snakes, trekked mountains and quarantined several times in a hotel in the capital. For 14 months, he has been travelling by foot, car and horse to remote hamlets to oversee measures to protect his tiny kingdom of 700,000 from the coronavirus outbreak that has flared up in neighbouring India.**

**Al Jazeera, June 25, 2021**

### **Self Reliance and the Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC)**

His Majesty the Fourth King held self-reliance as a cornerstone of his visionary agenda and dedicated himself tirelessly to its realization. Across diverse sectors spanning agriculture, hydropower, tourism, and beyond, His Majesty meticulously explored every avenue for economic advancement, with the overarching goal of positioning Bhutan as a self-sufficient nation and a respected member of the global community.

Continuing this noble legacy, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, has elevated sustained economic growth to the forefront of national priorities. The journey toward economic resilience commenced as early as 2007 with the establishment of Druk Holding Investments (DHI), the government's commercial arm, entrusted with the solemn mandate "to hold and manage the existing and future investments of

the Royal Government for the long term benefit of the people of Bhutan".

As the largest and only government-owned holding company in Bhutan, DHI has shares in 21 different companies operating in the manufacturing, energy, natural resources, financial, communication, aviation, trading and real estate sectors. Of late, DHI has diversified its portfolios and is engaged in special projects, like digital asset mining and technology.

The economic visions of His Majesty the King and His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo converge in the Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) project, a visionary undertaking conceived by His Majesty the King to propel Bhutan towards sustained economic prosperity and eventual development into a modern economy. GMC epitomizes Bhutan's steadfast dedication to sustainability, mindfulness, and economic progress, serving as a conscientious response to the imperative for





**Now Bhutan's current 'Dragon King', Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, has followed up on his father's commitment to happiness by unveiling plans to build the Gelephu Mindfulness City. With a vision to showcase Bhutan's innovation while blending it harmoniously with their strongly held traditions, the new mindfulness city is described as "the world's 'Modern Buddhist Lifestyle Destination' for spirituality, wellness and rejuvenation."**

**Forbes, January 30, 2024**

a more discerning approach to global development. Spearheaded by His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, this ambitious initiative builds upon the foundational principles laid by his esteemed predecessor, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, emphasizing a holistic approach to national well-being and the pursuit of sustainable development.

Crafted by the Landscape and Urban Design Team at BIG, the master-plan of GMC encompasses a comprehensive array of elements. These include the establishment of a cutting-edge international airport, the integration of railway connections, the construction of a hydroelectric dam, the creation of dynamic public spaces, and the development of a unique architectural identity inspired by the nine domains of Gross Nation-

al Happiness (GNH): Psychological Wellbeing, Health, Education, Living Standards, Time-Use, Ecological Diversity and Resilience, Good Governance, Cultural Diversity and Resilience, and Community Vitality. Embracing GNH as its guiding philosophy, GMC symbolizes a profound commitment to nurturing harmony and equilibrium across all aspects of Bhutanese society, ranging from economic prosperity to environmental stewardship and cultural preservation. Positioned strategically and connected to South- and South-east Asia, GMC aims to become a cornerstone for the nation's future development while unlocking economic opportunities for its populace.

Through strategic investments in green technology, education, and infrastructure, the region endeavors to pave the way for sustainable growth.

## Technology

While the Fourth King laid the groundwork by establishing the Science and Technology Division in 1984 and pioneering computer technology in 1985, the technological landscape has undergone a profound evolution since then. In the eloquent words of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, technology has transcended its former role to become an "indispensable tool" in our modern era, poised to address multifaceted challenges and elevate various aspects of society.

Under His Majesty's visionary leadership, Bhutan has seamlessly integrated into the technologically driven global milieu. A landmark moment arrived in June 2022, marked by the inauguration of the

Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super FabLab (SFL) at the TechPark in Thimphu, alongside the expansion of the FabLab network across Bhutan, propelling the nation to the esteemed position of being the third country boasting a Super FabLab.

Further underscoring Bhutan's technological prowess, on October 13th, 2023, the Bhutan National Digital Identity system was unveiled, heralding the advent of the world's first digital identity framework grounded in the principles of Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI). Empowering individuals with sole ownership over their digital identities, this innovative system operates through a digital wallet, wherein individuals retain full control over whom they choose to share their information with, revolutionizing the paradigm of digital identity management.



■ HRH Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck at the inauguration of the Super Fab Lab

**Blockchain, Fintech, Quantum Computing, Artificial Reality, Virtual Reality, Metaverse, Robotics, Machine Learning and Web 3.0 are just some of the rapid and sweeping changes brought about by technological advancements that we are beginning to see. Breakthroughs in nanotech, biotech and genomics will transform the future. What deeply concerns me is whether our people will be in a position to take advantage of these opportunities. Or if we will be left behind due to our inability to adapt.**

**His Majesty the King, December 17, 2021**

### **Gyalsung**

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo's visionary educational endeavors were crafted to foster a sense of unity among students from all corners of the realm, nurturing deep bonds of camaraderie and friendship. In fact the concept of one nation, one people, was at the bosom of the Fourth King. Unity was important both for sovereignty, economic growth and in cases of emergencies.

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck has woven all the above in Bhutan's National Service, the Gyalsung Program, where young Bhutanese from diverse backgrounds will come

together to coexist for a year. Beyond mere training, this initiative seeks to forge enduring bonds that withstand the trials of time, strengthening the quintessential Bhutanese spirit. These individuals, united in purpose, stand as pillars of their nation's legacy, ready to answer the call of duty with unwavering resolve, should it resound.

Announcing the launch, His Majesty said that one of the most important national objectives is to empower every single child in Bhutan for success. The Gyalsung, is envisioned to provide youth of Bhutan direction and encourage them to be “strong, independent thinkers, capable of serving the country.”

**Bhutan's future will be mirrored by the strength and capabilities of our youth. For our children to excel, they must adhere to the highest standards, and have capability, integrity, discipline, 21stcentury education, unity and solidarity.**

**His Majesty the King**

## Interactions with Graduates

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo has always stressed that the destiny of the country lies in the hands of the people. He also called for participation of the people and met graduates.

His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck continues the cherished tradition set forth by his predecessor, embodying a profound commitment to the development and empowerment of Bhutan's youth. Speaking directly to graduates at the National Graduates' Orientation Programme each year, His Majesty imparts invaluable wisdom and guidance, drawing upon his own experiences and insights gained over the years.

In a poignant address to graduates on August 17, 2018, His Majesty reflected on the significance of this annual engagement, emphasizing its enduring importance in his life. Following in the footsteps of his father, His Majesty utilizes this platform as a conduit to illuminate graduates about the myriad opportunities and challenges facing the nation. Moreover, he articulates his visionary aspirations for the country and delineates

the pivotal roles that each individual can play in realizing these aspirations. Through these interactions, His Majesty fosters a sense of empowerment and purpose among the youth, instilling in them a deep sense of responsibility towards the betterment of Bhutanese society.

## Pangbisa Royal Academy

In 2016, another visionary initiative of His Majesty came to fruition. The Royal Academy at Pangbisa, Paro was established on February 21, 2016, coinciding with the birth anniversary of His Majesty and commemorating the 60th birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. A gift from His Majesty to celebrate the legacy of The Fourth Druk Gyalpo's service to the nation, especially in education, the Academy is testament to His Majesty's recognition of the critical role education plays in enriching the lives of people and society. It provides modern, world class Bhutanese education that focuses on the five areas of development- cerebral, physical, social, emotional and spiritual. It is a school that promotes a culture of excellence in all aspects of student life.

I have made it a point to be at the National Graduates' Orientation Programme each year since the age of 21. I am 38 this year, so I have had the privilege of speaking to graduates for many years now, and this opportunity is very precious to me.

His Majesty the King, August 18, 2018





### Democratic Consolidation

While his father-initiated Bhutan's democratic journey, His Majesty the King is dedicated to its ongoing advancement, considering a robust democratic system crucial. He emphasizes the populace's support as vital for democracy's long-term efficacy. His Majesty encourages everyone to embrace greater responsibilities, recognizing the ongoing quest for a flourishing democracy.

A vibrant democracy necessitates a dynamic system aligned with people's aspirations. His Majesty underscores the historical collaboration between Kings and the populace, leading to Bhutan's Con-

stitutional Democracy today. He urges people to prioritize and uphold this endeavor as their paramount duty, recognizing democracy's link to national achievements and Bhutan's future well-being. In one of the addresses, His Majesty said, "The King, country, and people of Bhutan have a common aspiration for our democracy. We aspire for a democracy with rule of law, democracy with unity, democracy with integrity, democracy with talent and meritocracy, democracy that is responsible, and democracy that serves."

Under His Majesty's reign, Bhutan has seen four peaceful parliamentary elections till date, marking significant milestones in its democratic journey.

As a King, my biggest and sacred responsibility is to build a strong and vibrant democracy. In order to do that I have to depend on you until I retire. That is why we must work and serve together to make it exemplary, so that it will be appreciated by all.

His Majesty the King, October 22, 2008.

## Environment

Nature conservation has also been at the bosom of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. It has found its way into the Constitution. At all times 60% of Bhutan's area should be under forest cover. The importance of Nature and the Fourth King's aspirations has been emboldened by His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

Today, Bhutan has committed to be a carbon neutral country and under His Majesty's supervision, Bhutan is embarking on Green development.

Further, as patron of the environment, Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck unwaveringly dedicates to ecological stewardship. Her Majesty's regal influence as the Royal Patron of Environment is pivotal in Bhutan's sacred mission to safeguard nature. Additionally, she holds the prestigious title of Honorary Member of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US), underscoring her global stature in environmental advocacy. In May 2012, amidst international dignitaries gathered to celebrate the Montreal Protocol's 25th anniversary, Her Majesty was honored with the

esteemed title of Ozone Ambassadorship by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

In 2017, a pivotal moment unfolded as Bhutan commemorated the 30th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol. And in 2017, Her Majesty unveiled Bhutan's environmental jewel—the Bhutan for Life initiative. This groundbreaking collaboration between the government and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), valued at USD 43 million (Nu 2.8 billion), symbolizes Bhutan's unwavering dedication to sustainable prosperity and ecological harmony.

Meanwhile, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on March 13 2019, presented a Special Recognition Award to His Majesty for three major human development achievements in Bhutan: championing Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a holistic development paradigm; his leadership on the environment and climate action and His Majesty's guidance, which ensured a smooth transition of the system of governance and strong democratic foundations to be established in Bhutan.



■ His Majesty with Her Majesty Gyaltsuen who is the Royal Patron of the environment



■ His Majesty with local government leaders

### Decentralization

As a fervent advocate of decentralization, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo prioritized the Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogchung and Gewog Yargay Tshogchungs. Recognizing the pivotal role of grassroots leaders in bolstering democracy and advancing development, the Fourth King placed great emphasis on their contributions. Continuing this legacy, His heir, the Fifth Druk Gyalpo, elevated decentralization to greater heights.

In October 2016, Bhutan marked another milestone in its democratic journey as His Majesty personally bestowed dhars and kabneys upon gups elected in the second local government elections. Addressing them at Semtokha Dzong, His Majesty underscored the paramount importance of people's participation in nurturing a vibrant

democracy. He stressed that active and meaningful engagement in elections, village zomdus, and local governance is essential for the success of local governments.

Highlighting the significance of local governance, His Majesty emphasized that despite being perceived as the lowest tier, local governments are in fact the most vital, being closest to the people.

In December 2016, His Majesty further reinforced this commitment by awarding patangs to Dzongkhag Tshogdu (DT) Chairpersons. These gestures not only acknowledge the crucial role of local governance in achieving national development goals but also aim to fortify the processes of decentralization and democracy. While symbols of authority, His Majesty consistently reminds that with power comes the weighty responsibility to serve the nation and its people diligently.



Some will think that the main goals of the Gelephu project are to attract investments, boost trade and businesses, and create employment. While these remain important, the larger vision of all our endeavours is to serve and protect our three precious jewels: our inheritance- Bhutan, our spiritual legacy of Ugyen Guru Rinpoche and Zhabdrung Nawang Namgyel, and thirdly, the future of our children. It is our sacred responsibility to safeguard our three jewels.

His Majesty the King, December 17, 2023, Changligmithang





■ His Majesty the King with His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo

### Leaders who serve

True leadership shines brightest during times of crisis, where leaders step onto the frontlines. His Majesty the Fourth King exemplified this as he led Bhutanese forces against militant threats. In a different era and crisis, the Fifth King, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, faced the Covid-19 pandemic head-on, displaying true leadership. Just as his father engaged militants directly, His Majesty personally assessed pandemic measures across the nation, rallying the people and prioritizing lives and livelihoods. With unwavering resolve, he echoed his father's gallant spirit, dedicating himself to enhancing the lives of his people, redefining leadership since 2006.

Further, in the leadership of His Majesty and His Majesty the Fourth King, we witness that their noble thoughts never stray to personal ambitions, as their spirit intertwines with the essence of the

nation itself, thus ceasing to be individuals but embodiments of the country's hopes and dreams.

In the true spirit of great leaders, their dreams are for the collective and they live their lives in service of those dreams. They foster an environment of trust and inclusivity, where individuals feel valued and motivated to contribute their best. Their legacy is not measured solely by their achievements but by the lasting impact they have on the lives of others and the world around them.

Just as His Majesty the Fourth King, His Majesty is not just a symbol of hope. He is the very essence of it; not just a beacon of light illuminating the dark, but the source of that light. His love for his people is deeply rooted in the core of humanity itself. He stands as the pillar of reassurance, support and the ultimate sanctuary of his subjects. He is more than the North Star, for he illuminates his country and people at all times.




## THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE CONVERGE



■ His Majesty the King, His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo and HRH Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck

In the tender embrace of yesterday, beneath the benevolent rule of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, we danced within a dream of boundless joy and bliss. As the sun ascended anew, under the resolute guidance of His Majesty the King, majestic visions emerged that brought us unprecedented joy and painted the horizon with hues of hope and unyielding confidence. And tomorrow, under the vigilant gaze of His Royal Highness the Gyalsey, Bhutan will traverse into an epoch of unparalleled fulfillment and the profound realization of our collective destiny.



Their Majesties the King and Queen,  
His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo,  
HRH Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel  
Wangchuck, HRH Gyalsey Ugyen  
Wangchuck and HRH Gyalsem  
Sonam Yangden Wangchuck

## EPILOGUE

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo now leads a serene existence, gracing the public sphere solely during moments of national significance. It is unfathomable to grasp the depths of his sorrow when he lost his father at the tender age of 16, just as it is challenging to envisage his sentiments upon assuming the mantle of governance. Yet, he left no doubt regarding his leadership prowess; instead, he exemplified the essence of true leadership.

During his illustrious 34-year reign, he masterfully steered the nation he inherited into the realm of modernity. Through a deliberate process of decentralization, he bestowed empowerment upon his people, laying the groundwork for Bhutan's transition from absolute monarchy to democratic constitutional monarchy. He meticulously erected the edifice of democratic institutions, culminating in the drafting of the nation's paramount law—the Constitution.

Beyond the borders of Bhutan, he issued a clarion call to global leaders and thinkers, cautioning against the perils of an erroneous developmental trajectory. Pioneering the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), he advocated for a

holistic approach to development, transcending mere economic metrics.

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo distinguishes himself for different reasons, notably for the valor with which he led Bhutanese forces in repelling Indian militants who encroached upon Bhutanese soil, jeopardizing its security. On December 15, 2003, he personally commanded Bhutanese forces in the audacious Operation Flushout—an act of leadership seldom witnessed in modern times.

In 2006, at the youthful age of 51, he stunned the world by voluntarily relinquishing his throne, transferring authority to his heir and son, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

Numerous epithets have been bestowed upon the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, a testament to the multifaceted nature of his endeavors. Yet, no epithet can encapsulate the essence of his Majesty more aptly than "selfless" and "sacrifice." For 34 years, he toiled tirelessly, selflessly and made innumerable sacrifices in service of his nation and its people. Truly, he stands as a towering embodiment of benevolence and devotion.

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### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Crafting this book was a formidable journey and I do not know if I have done justice to such a profound theme. Everytime I was in doubt, the boundless inspiration I always draw from His Majesty the King kept me going.

Further, I thank Queen Mother, Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck for blessing the book with the preface.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Royal Office of Media (ROM), family members, especially my wife, Dorji Wangmo, whose steadfast encouragement never faltered in the face of adversity. Additionally, I express my profound appreciation to Tshering Tashi for his invaluable contributions, particularly in sourcing kupars, and to the former Chief Justice, Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye, whose expertise and guidance were indispensable throughout this endeavor.

As we “Embrace a Leader’s Majestic Legacy,” we embrace the Wangchuck Dynasty.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Without the generous support of individuals and companies, we could not have brought this book to fruition. We sincerely thank everyone who supported us.

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