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ISSUE

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# The Raven

Your  
Monthly  
Guardian



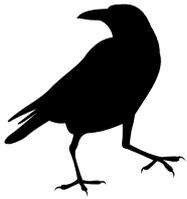
"Those who wanted  
Bhutan to move closer  
to China were  
a minority,"  
excerpt from Lyonpo  
Om Pradhan's new book



**YES  
BUT  
NO**

Exclusive Pedestrian Day Survey

While 60.9% Bhutanese support the initiative  
only 34% want it to continue



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The first ever detailed scientific survey conducted in the country, which interviewed 1,000 households, shows that about 60.9 percent of Bhutanese support the initiative but only 34% want it to continue.

**INTERVIEW**

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Many people say that these measures have hurt many 'mey nyamchus' (common folk). Mey nyamchus cannot build houses, they will never buy cars. It's only some people who just make noise.

**DIPLOMACY**

**46 India, China and Bhutan**

"There were strong views among some prominent members of the then Bhutanese leadership that Bhutan should move closer to China rather than India, especially from ethnic and cultural points of view. These persons, who fortunately were in the small minority, failed to comprehend that when it comes to safeguarding a nation's sovereignty and independence, ethnicity or racial policies and approaches may not prove to be in one's true interests,"

# The Raven



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**The Raven** 

**O**ur heart-felt felicitations to His Majesty the King, and Her Majesty the Queen, on the first anniversary of the Royal Marriage. The Raven is proud to launch on such an auspicious occasion.

And a warm welcome to our readers, sponsors, and advertisers!

Many have wondered why Bhutan would need another print publication in the market when the existing ones are struggling.

It is only fair to think so given that it is not only in Bhutan, but the world over where print is struggling. The reasons vary, but nevertheless, these are challenges that those of us in the writing/journalism business will have to face and work with. In Bhutan we rely heavily on the government for the right policies to support the freedom and protection of those in this business. On the other hand, we will have to rely on the support of readers, sponsors, and advertisers to survive.

Technology has revolutionized the way we get our information, the way we communicate, overcoming all kinds of physical barriers no matter where we are. In the course of this we come to realize that while we may not be culturally, ethnically, or religiously the same, or that we may not even share the same interests, there are some universal values and truths that we share. To name a few – we all want good leaders, good government, transparency, social justice, basic human rights, and respect for civil liberties. We also come to learn of our differences and disagreements and that while some may be tolerant of our views and thoughts, others may not. That in this world no two people think alike and that while we agree on some, we can disagree on others. But the goal of The Raven is not to focus on our differences, because people have different tastes, preferences, likes and dislikes, as there are more than one way of looking at things. We will instead focus on the things we agree on; the universal values that bring us together as humans. We will try and see how we can work together through discussion, dialogue, education and awareness to improve the issues that confront us. By doing this we hope to improve the lives of those who live on the fringes of our society. There are many who don't have the opportunities some of us have; such as opportunities to the basics things in life; an education, or the ability to express themselves or speak out.

The Raven will bring to you the stories of the lives of the Bhutanese from all cross-sections of our society so that we come to a better understanding of our people, problems and issues that confront us. By doing that we hope that we strive for the socio-political changes that are necessary for making our society better.

Why The Raven? The Raven has deep significance in Bhutan. It is our guardian deity and national bird, and according to the Ten Amazing Facts about this bird, Ravens are considered the most intelligent of birds, displaying high learning ability and use of logic for solving problems.

We have many well wishers so we certainly will strive to meet their expectations. A great deal of hard work has gone into the production of our first issue and we look forward to the journey we will take with you; a process in which we will certainly learn a great deal ourselves.

Stay with us.

**Sonam Ongmo**  
(Editor-at-Large)



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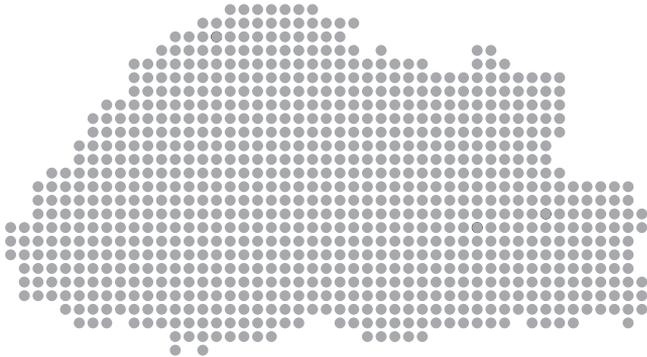


Chimmi Dolkar: A consultant by profession and presently studying in The Netherlands.



Karma Singye Dorji organizes journeys and adventures in Bhutan and is the author of 'Dreaming of Prayer Flages: Stories & Images from Bhutan.'

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## TRASHIGANG

## A school caught between pigs and GNH

The Education ministry is faced with a strange Gross National Happiness test after the Khaling high school in Trashigang decided to give up rearing pigs as authorities there found it was against GNH values. The district education officer said the school did not want to rear a pig and slaughter it later for food. But the School Agriculture, Feeding and Environment (SAFE) division of the education ministry feels rearing pigs is not against GNH. Moreover, the division is also unhappy with the school decision. The pigsty costing at least Nu 300,000 is among other animal rearing program of the minister which where started to help with the feeding program in schools. "They were built with great difficulties and they decided to discontinue and dismantle them without informing us," the division head Chador Wangdi told Kuensel. The ministry has even issued a circular saying that rearing pigs or other animals is not against GNH values and should not be stopped.

## BUMTHANG

## Caught for carrying blankets and mats from Chinese border

In one of the few reported cases of illegally importing goods from the northern border, four men where caught by the Royal Bhutan Army at Kaktong army base early last month and was handed over to the police for carrying Chinese goods. The men along with eight horses where carrying blankets, mats and tea leaves from Thingkala where they kept their yaks.

## MONGAR

## The Phallus Festival

Tourists coming to Bhutan are taken aback by the detailed depiction of the male organ on walls and the phallus-wielding atsara during festivals. But here is a surprise treat for even Bhutanese - the annual phallus festival at Chali in Mongar. The villagers carrying phalluses walked around their cattle sheds and threw ash on the animals to ward off evil as part of the three-day Kharam festival last month.

Tshewang, a farmer, joined his friends to the forest on the first morning of the festival hunting for the right tree branches that can be carved as phalluses which are later hung from roofs and erected in fields.



The Raven wishes His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema a very auspicious first wedding anniversary.



# quotes



I used to admire her in my younger days and found that she is as beautiful as she used to be.

'The constitution of Bhutan mentions the word, 'constitutional' 15 times. It is used as an adjective. It means that the government is controlled or limited by the constitution.



Right up the hill side from Paro in Bhutan on a pony towards a little Pagoda. It paints a wonderful memory.

Over and over again, as we struggled for words to describe what our eyes are seeing, Nima Dorji, our guide, smiles indulgently, "Nice, no" he asks. Nice, yes.



We must pay homage to the souls.



**LYONCHEN JIGMI Y THINLEY** On veteran Indian actor Vijayanthimala Bali while at the Indian state of Odisha early last month



**SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE LYONPO SONAM TOBGYE** On the making of Bhutan's constitution.



**ENGLISH ACTOR JOANNA LUMLEY** On the best journey she has ever taken. She authored 'Joanna Lumley in the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon'



**BOBBY GHOSH** Editor at Large, Time Magazine on his recent Bhutan trip.



**ERIC RIPERT** French Chef and author, he is also a Buddhist. He said this in Bhutan on the respect one should have for animals killed for meat.



## On private TV

 I am still stumped as to why BICMA is not giving permission for the private TV stations: *Ugen Tsechup Dorji, Chairman, Singye Group of Companies on Facebook.*

## Stuck in redtape

 Had put up an official letter to BICMA requesting for information on my application, one and a half months back. Till now, no reply: *Tensin Dakpa, Promoter of the private television station, Bhutan TV, on Twitter.*

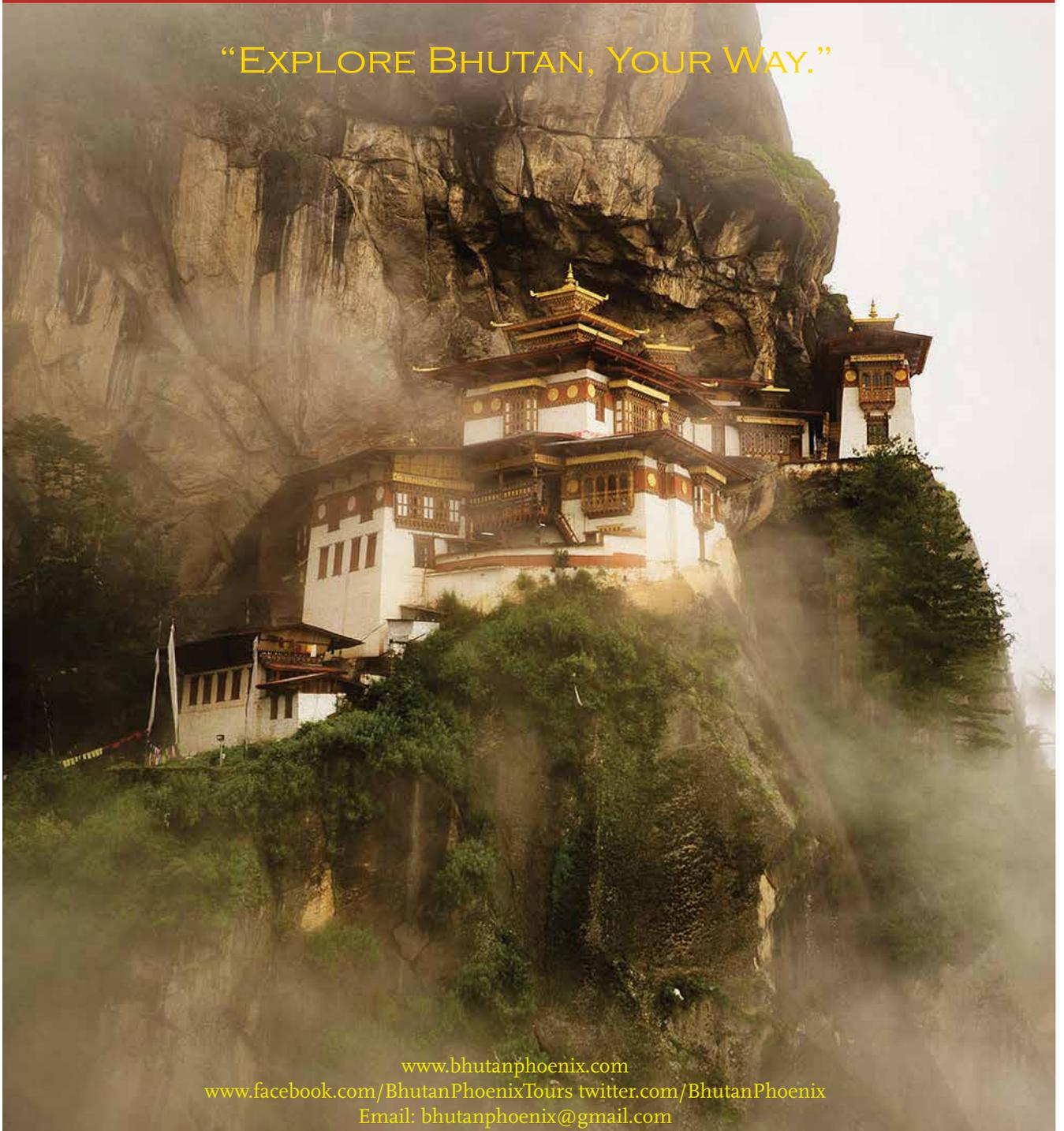
## PedDay Blues

 Walk! the PM says and the nation walks. Welcome to democracy: *National Council Lawmaker Sonam Kinga on Twitter.*

# BHUTAN PHOENIX TOURS AND TREKS



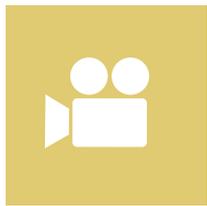
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CINEMA



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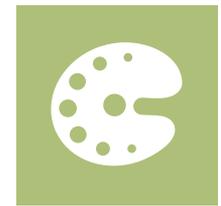
MUSIC



PLAY



DANCE



ART

# highlights

**KEY** ● Date ● Time ● Place ● Venue



## SPORTS

### BOXING COACHING

- OCT 1ST WEEK
- ▼ CHODEN LHSS, YANGCHENPHUG HSS, PELKHIL HSS, THIMPHU

The Bhutan Boxing Federation is conducting a basic boxing coaching for students.

## FESTIVAL

### JAKAR TSHECHU

- OCT 21 TO 25
- ▼ JAKAR DZONG, BUMTHANG

Organized by the Dratsang Lhentshog, the prestigious Jakar Tshechu is a five-day festival attracting people from other dzongkhags too.

## CONFERENCE

### A BHUTAN+10

- OCT 15 TO 19
- ▼ THIMPHU

The conference on gender and sustainable mountain development in a changing world, organized by ICIMOD aims to bring together mountain women and men, researchers, policy makers, and development practitioners from the Hindu Kush-Himalayas region and around the world for a comprehensive update, and new agenda setting after the Rio+20 meet.

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERPLAY OF ECONOMICS POLITICS AND SOCIETY FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

- OCT 15
- ▼ ROYAL THIMPHU COLLEGE, THIMPHU

Organized by the RTC and the Gross National Happiness Commission, the conference will provide a space for discussions on the various thematic pillars for inclusive growth paths - policies, processes and institutions. The conference theme is closely aligned to the overall goal of the eleventh five year plan of Bhutan - Self Reliance and Inclusive Green Socio-Economic Development.

## BOOK LAUNCH

### THE ROAR OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

- OCT
- ▼ THIMPHU

An excerpt of this book, written by the Druk Holding and Investments chairman, Lyonpo Pradhan, is published in this issue of The Raven.

## EXAMS

### ROYAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION EXAMS

- OCT 12 TO 14
- ▼ THIMPHU SCHOOLS

About 1100 graduates in the country will sit for the Civil Service exam after making through the preliminary exam. There will be a briefing at the Nazhoen pelri hall on Oct 9.

**COVER** STORY

**EXCLUSIVE**

## **PEDESTRIAN DAY SURVEY**

In the first ever detailed scientific survey conducted in the country by the Centre for Research Initiative for The Raven, a 1,000 households were interviewed on the PedDay. The survey that used 40 enumerators on September 15 and 16 this year shows that about 60.9 percent of the Bhutanese support the initiative but only 34% want it to continue. 54% want it to be lifted altogether.



In a first ever detailed scientific survey conducted in the country by the Centre for Research Initiative for The Raven, a 1,000 households were interviewed. The survey that used 40 enumerators on September 15 and 16 this year shows that about 60.9 percent of the Bhutanese support the initiative but only 34% want it to continue. 54% want it to be lifted altogether. These numbers show how some ideas may be great in concept but harder to implement given the ground realities of people's lives.

Of the Pedestrian Day supporters 62.6% were male compared to 59.3% women. More women (56.2%) supported the lifting of PD compared to men.

About a month ago, the government must have realized the inconveniences this rule was causing some, particularly working mothers who had young babies at home. Bestowing its leniency it issued a circular allowing breast-feeding mothers to stay and work from home.

For Thimphu's Rinchen Kuenphuen School which has seven breastfeeding mothers this year this meant that school was as good as "out" on Tuesdays. Principal Dema became a desperately worried woman. She called the Thimphu Thromde after a government circular was issued. The final exams were nearing and teachers taking off Tuesdays was going to affect the school in a big way.

The Thromde replied that owing to the nature of their job teachers were expected to attend school. But while principal Dema is relieved the many teacher-mothers across the country are not. The exception is applicable to all civil-servant breast-feeding mothers creating confusion and making it rather tricky for the education ministry

to enforce this rule. It is clear that an ill-thought rule implemented without good research on implementation is now causing a great divide in opinions on who should and shouldn't stay home.

On social media, one joked that babies born on Tuesdays would grow faster while another said that they would sprout legs immediately after birth because they would have to walk on Tuesdays.

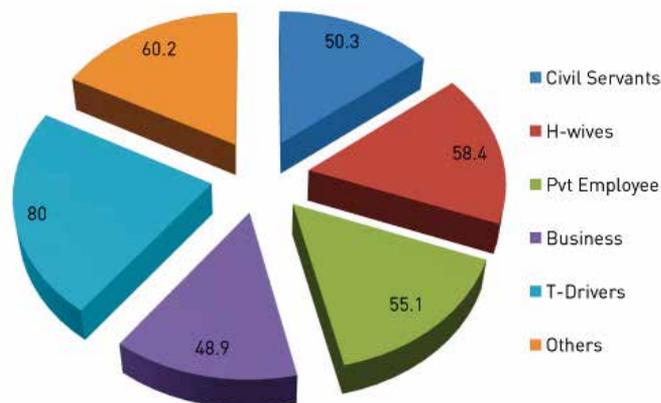
The Pedestrian Day was introduced with good intentions, nobody can deny that. As prime minister Jigmi Y Thinley said, "Bhutanese all over will walk for their health and promote [the] joy of walking together with friends, family and colleagues, and thereby promote interaction and community vitality." The practicality of such a decision on the ground seems to have created a great deal of confusion, inconvenience and

constraints for civilians.

How did Ped-day come about? Coinciding with the World Environment Day on June 5 this year, the Government thinking it was acting in good faith and making a sound environmental decision passed an executive order declaring Tuesdays as Pedestrian Day. What has created controversy in this rule is that it has to be observed in all 20 districts as a measure to sensitize the public on environment and to reduce carbon footprint. From 8am to 6pm, the core town area including cities like Thimphu and Phuentsholing have to be a pedestrian zone. Only service vehicles such as ambulances, fire brigades, armed force vehicles, buses, taxis (odd and even numbers once a month) and bicycles would be plying the city roads.

The plan was shaped by five implementing agencies – the National Envi-

## PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WANTING THE PED DAY TO BE DISCONTINUED





**THE WALKERS**  
 Bhutanese people  
 love walking  
 but they do not  
 want it to be  
 forced on them

ronment Commission Secretariat, the Thimphu City Corporation, Road Safety and Transport Authority, Thimphu Traffic Division and Bhutan Post.

The Pedestrian Day is not a new idea, a similar initiative was introduced by the agriculture ministry in August 2008 curiously called “the HEHE (Helping Environment, Health and Economy) walk”, expected to save 300 liters of fuel every Tuesday - yes the HEHE civil servants had to walk on Tuesdays. The ‘no vehicle day’ lasted only for a year after the enthusiasm dwindled and as Lyonpo Pema Gyamtsho told a newspaper in February this year, “unsafe walk ways and traffic do not inspire pedestrians.”

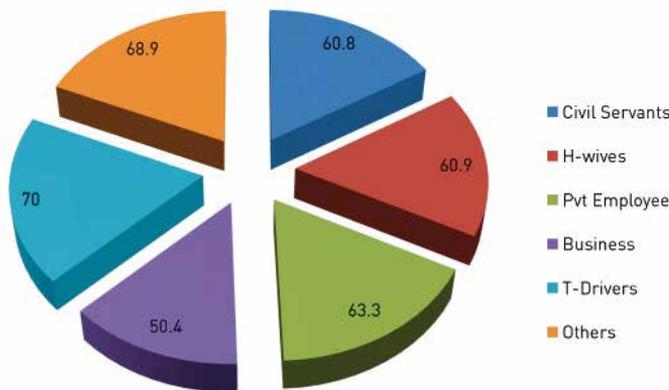
Despite that, four months later the cabinet, which included the agriculture minister, passed the Pedestrian Day rule, much to the chagrin of many urban Bhutanese. People have pointed out that not only was move implemented

without proper consultation but the implementors like the policemen have the onus of trying to enforce something that brings them into constant conflict with civilians.

One person on social media said that he saw a mother with some kids in the car fighting with a policeman on Ped-day. “The mother,” he/she said, “was red in the face.” Another person said that she had just arrived from the airport and her house, which was one minute from the no car zone, was not even allowed to take her car there. She was stopped by the cop a minute away and had to carry Luggage and all and walk to her house. “Thank god, my house wasnt five or ten minutes away,” she said.

The business community, meanwhile, is planning to protest if the government doesn’t take appropriate action to address the loss incurred to big and small businesses due to Pedestrian Day.

**PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORTING THE PED DAY**



Shops in towns are forced to stay closed for lack of customers, trucks importing and exporting goods are stuck at border towns causing huge losses, and construction materials cannot move on Tuesdays. Fifty-two unproductive days in a year is not a joke, they say. All in all, it seems that a not so well thought out good intent can actually turn out to seem bad in the end.

Contrary to the benefits listed by the



government, the media cites immense public dissatisfaction for the manner in which the initiative was implemented. Ultimately, Bhutan Broadcasting Services (BBS) organized a live public debate. In the SMS and online poll organized as a part of the debate, an overwhelming 2,847 votes were cast against the PD while only 1,315 supported it.

After this, Bhutan Information Communication Media Authority (BICMA)

questioned the validity of the BBS SMS voting. It was during this public debate that an official from the National Environment Commission (NEC) said that 70% of the people interviewed by the commission supported Ped-Day.

It is apparent that people who participate in an online or SMS poll are those who have access to the internet or a mobile phone, and most likely have cars. Also it is likely that the respondents

are only English speaking who have a strong opinion on the issue. Meanwhile the NEC survey in Thimphu said that of the 500 people interviewed 316 said 'yes' to the pedestrian day, and 94 said 'no' and 90 were neutral.

When a researcher for this survey approached the NEC for their study, only two MS Excel sheets that had the number of vehicles and people counted during a pedestrian and non-pedestrian day

**THE SURVEY BASICS**

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
Supporting pedestrian day	60.9% (657)	32.6% (352)	6.5% (70)	100% (1079)
Discontinue pedestrian day	54% (573)	34% (361)	12.1% (128)	100% (1062)
Support mothers working from home	78.3% (817)	20% (209)	1.7% (18)	100% (1044)

WHILE THE BBS POLL WAS ACCUSED OF BEING HIJACKED BY THE ANTI-PD LOT THE NEC SURVEY, CRITICS SAID, COULD NOT BE TAKEN AS THE TRUTH AS THE COMMISSION IS PART OF THE PED-DAY INITIATIVE

were provided. The data had no detailed information on public opinion. But NEC has counted a total of 3,419 cars at Chubachu Junction, 1,149 cars at Memorial Chorten, 3,368 cars at Vegetable Market and the Dzong stretch on a pedestrian day. It was random count without any methodology.

While the BBS poll was accused of being hijacked by the anti-PD lot the NEC survey, critics said, could not be taken as the truth as the commission is part of the Ped-Day initiative.

Considering the public interest for an independent understanding of Ped-Day, the Centre For Research Initiative conducted the survey on September 15 and 16 in Thimphu. The primary sampling units were clusters stratified by population size availed from the National Statistic Bureau (NSB) and the household selection was administered through simple random sampling.

Of the 72 enumeration areas listed by NSB, 30 were selected by Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) based on assumption that 35 households will be

surveyed per cluster by a four member team in a day.

Random route procedures were used to select sampled households. Unless an outright refusal occurred, interviewers made up to three attempts to survey the sampled household. To increase the probability of contact and completion, attempts were made at different times of the day, and on different days. If an interview could not be obtained at the initial sampled household, a simple substitution method was used.

All the 1,000 respondents were above the age of 18. Of the respondents 49% (529) were male and 51% (550) female and only 15.5% were not educated. Within the educated level, 81% had a qualification higher than primary level. Of the total respondents 35.4% (383) were civil servants, 19.9% (215) were housewives, 21.2% (229) private employees, 12.8% (139) business people, 0.9% (10) taxi drivers and 9.5% (103) others. 50.4% of the respondents used their own car for daily transportation, while 22.6% used taxi, 16% the city bus, 8.9% walked home,



while the remaining 2% took a lift.

Without a doubt Ped-Day is something good for taxi drivers and so their support to it was the highest at 70 percent. About 63.3 percent of private employees and 61 percent of civil servants and housewives also supported the idea. The lowest support came from the business sector at 50.4%.

But even as good as it could get for them about 80 percent of the taxi drivers said Ped-Day should be lifted for the primary reason that the imposition of even/odd number-plying rule and insurgence of taxis from other district made it competitive and affected their income. Also 58.3 percent of the housewives, 55 percent of private employees, 50.3 per-

cent civil servants and 48.9 percent of the business/shopkeepers wanted PD to be discontinued.

In the wake of criticisms, the government has relaxed PD rules allowing vehicles carrying tourists, patients and corpses to ply through the no vehicle zone.

But none of these relaxations has

FOR THOSE WITH DISPOSABLE INCOME TAXI FARES ARE HARDLY SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT AND THERE IS ALWAYS A TAXI. IT IS THE LOWER-INCOME GROUP THAT PAYS A STEEP PRICE.

the others. The Superintendent of Police for the Traffic Division, Major Passang Dorji said that it has created “extra work” for them. “But it doesn’t mean we are not going to do the job. It is the decision of the govt. and we will see that it is followed properly by the public.”

The traffic division has had to arrange for extra manpower on Tuesday’s, as the existing number of traffic police has not been enough. An additional of 25-30 police personnel were deployed by the RBP to meet the Ped-Day demand. Police watching the entry and exit points of no ply zones are kept on a six-hour shift from 6 am to 12 pm and 12 pm to 6 pm. Though the police and armed forces vehicles are allowed to move around, the RBP has also imposed some self-restriction on vehicle movement.

The Road Safety and Transport Au-

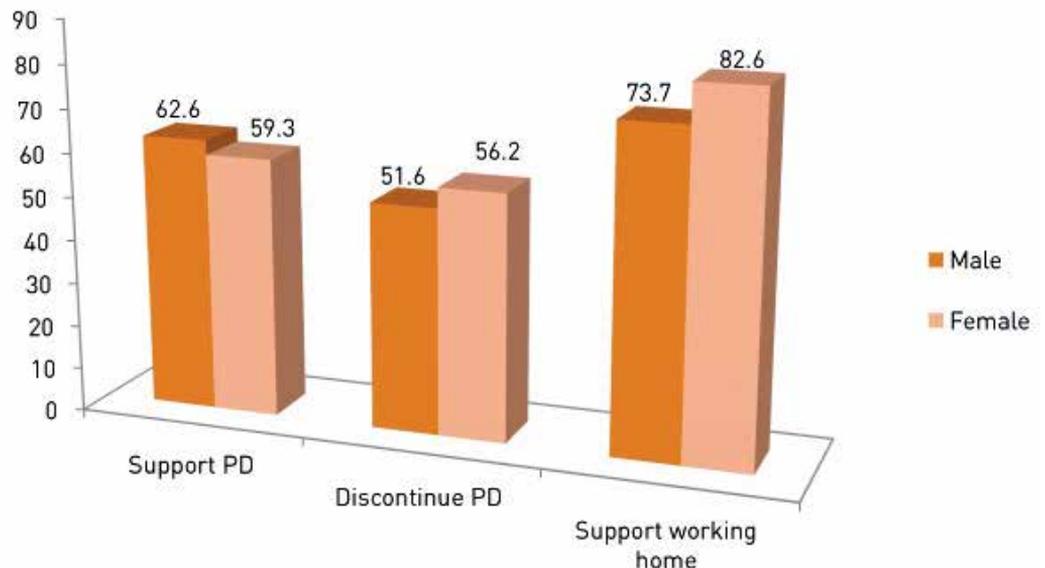
thority has been monitoring the road to see that taxis do not over charge on pedestrian days. Yet, some taxis overcharge. Parents with small school-going children, sometimes in different schools, have complained that they spend about Nu 500 on taxis on Tuesdays. But RSTA Director Lam Dorji said that is because “Bhutanese are not organized. If they find out the bus routes, they will save themselves the headache, time and money.”

For those with disposable income taxi fares are hardly something to worry about and there is always a taxi. It is the lower-income group that pays a steep price.

If most are taking taxis, “who is really doing the walking?,” asked Tshering Yangzom who runs the Tiny Toes day care center.

The rule has health benefits, good

**PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BY GENDER**



environmental implications; reduces fuel consumption and pollution. However, it has come down very poorly at the implementation level because i) it was not done in proper consultation with the people or sought how effective it would be ii) did not take into consideration the costs that it would incur through law enforcement, businesses, productivity in work iii) nothing goes down well if it is forced.

It is now being viewed as a top down execution without any economic benefit to Bhutan for the average Bhutanese. Ped-day could've been implemented in many other ways.

For one, certain streets in the main town could be cordoned off on a Sunday so that people are encouraged to walk through town.

But as it is now, it seems that on the

list of things that were not taken into consideration cited in the survey were the lack of adequate public transport services, unregulated taxi fares, business losses, inconvenience to parents with small school going children, problems during illness and death, emergency and hampering inter-district travel. The views from business respondents came very strong with some of them saying that the nation's economy freezes on Tuesdays.

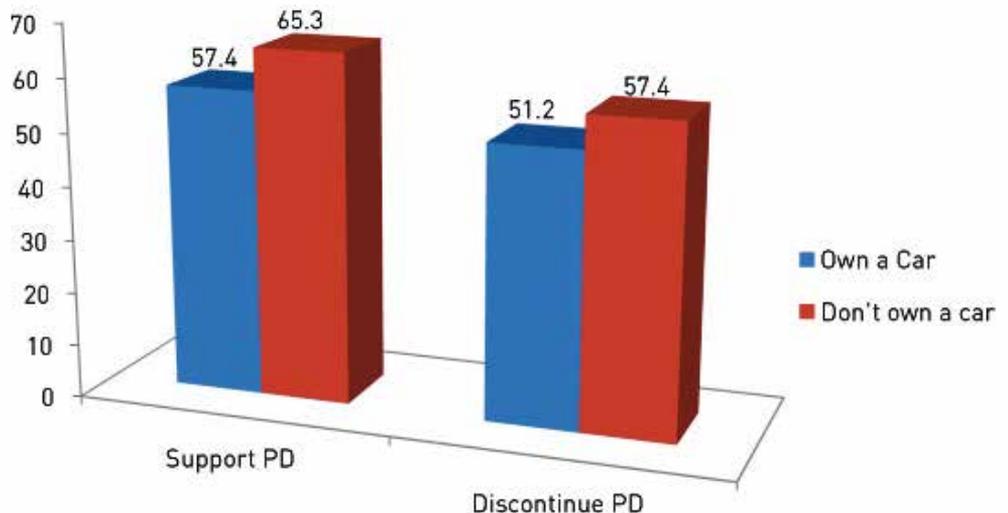
During the monthly press meet in July, the agriculture minister said what it was difficult to consult on the pedestrian day, because one person's convenience will be another person's inconvenience.

The prime minister backed the comment saying that for him, who has started cycling to office, the attempt is an inconvenience.

"I am 62 years old, and for me to learn to ride a bicycle at this age is not convenient, to ride from Babesa to my office is not convenient, it's physically challenging yet I have decided to go through it," he then said. If that is the case then it seems that everyone, including the Prime Minister, agrees that it is an inconvenience - so why do we continue to have it? 🐦

*(Study authors: Gyambo Sithey and Kesang Thinley of the Center for Research Initiatives, Changangkha, Thimphu [cribhutan@yahoo.com](mailto:cribhutan@yahoo.com). [www.cri.com.bt](http://www.cri.com.bt), additional reporting by Raven Team)*

## PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS BY CAR OWNERSHIP





A traditional house in Pongchaling, a village above Kagtong, Lower Kheng



# KHENG COLOURS

STUDENTS IN THE REMOTE VILLAGE OF KAGTONG  
EXPLORE AND DOCUMENT LIFE AND CULTURE IN THEIR  
VILLAGE USING MODERN DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY.



Neighbour Kezang is grinding maize using her hand mill. Photo by Sangay Wangchuk, 13, student of Kagtong Community Primary School



**Markus Wild,**

*A Swiss photographer and teacher, has been regularly working in Bhutan since 2005. For HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan he is engaged in the fields of culture and education. For a project on cultural diversity in Bhutan he is conducting a participatory photo documentation in four remote communities. Students and Non Formal Education (NFE) learners are taught in digital photography to explore and document life and culture of their village.*



Tshering Wangmo  
sharing photos with  
teacher Prakash  
Gurung

The eyes of Tshering Wangmo, a 13-year-old student of Kagtong Community Primary School begin to shine when she gets to hold the small black digital camera for the first time. A group of children is sitting in a circle around me and I'm impressed how carefully they listen when I tell them how to handle the camera and how to take good pictures. They are eagerly waiting to take their first photos.

The arduous trek through the mountainous landscape of Zhemgang's Lower Kheng have led me along rivers, through forests and passing by villages surrounded by fields and orchards. The natural environment reminds me of my home country Switzerland but there is a big difference: when I walk through these pristine forests with their incredible richness of species of plants and animals and with the lack of disturbance or destruction by all the negative side effects of development I begin to realize what modern countries like Switzerland have lost.

Bhutan is famous for its extraordinary biodiversity. Less well known however is its cultural diversity. In fact there is a fascinating variety of languages, customs and traditions in the different regions of the country. They all together contribute with their distinct and often unique local traditions to the rich Bhutanese culture.

From the end of the road in Pantang it takes me two days to reach Kagtong. During a former visit at the Community Primary School the principal and the teachers agreed upon my proposal to conduct a participatory photo documentation on local culture at their school. This activity is part of a project on "Leveraging and Preserving Bhutan's Cultural Diversity" (details see below).

The local Primary Community School has 105 students from class PP till VI, all day scholars. Within two weeks some 25 children from classes IV to VI would be learning how to explore and document life and culture in their own village by using a photo camera.

While working in remote villages with students on the topic of local culture I develop a growing respect towards the profound knowledge and experience the villagers have in order to live in harmony with their natural environment. Their



Pema Dorji's father is helping to make a new roof. Photo by Ugyen Dema, 12, student of Kagtong Community Primary School

traditional houses, all the self made objects that people use in their everyday life, their spiritual relation to the land and the beings living within reveal a deep knowledge and understanding about how to live respectfully with and from nature. This knowledge has been developed and handed down over generations.

However, with the arrival of roads and electricity and with modernisation many aspects of traditional culture are at risk of getting lost.

The participatory photo project is connecting the school with the villagers as experts of their local culture. The assignments enable the students to learn about their own local culture, to see it in a new light and to better value and respect local specialists and knowledge keepers.

At the same time the students learn how to use digital photography in a creative and benefiting way.

Everyday the students have other topics to cover and to explore: they have to take pictures and to get information from their relatives –as experts on their local traditions- on the construction of traditional houses, the usage of plants, on rituals and ceremonies, stories and legends, sacred places and many other aspects of their local culture.

Thinley Wangmo, after two weeks of intensive work has compiled an impressive amount of interesting and good photographs. With lively gestures she explained about all the details in the pictures she took. She – like all the other children- is still closely related to everything and everyone in the village, so she has a lot to share when talking about the content of each of her photos.

I am busy writing down all the information that the students share with me. In return I would give tips to each of the young photographers how they could further improve their newly



Overview of Kagtong  
Community Primary  
School





A school class from Thimphu is visiting the Photo exhibition "Life in Ngangla Through the Children's Eyes" at the Tarayana Centre, May 2011



Villagers are making a new roof using bamboo poles and banana leaves



acquired photographic skill. This is the agreement: I would share my knowledge on photography and the students, information local culture.

Two weeks later Tshering Wangmo is among three other students from Kagtong Community Primary School who are chosen to accompany the photos to a big exhibition in Thimphu: "Life in Ngangla Through the Children's Eyes". For everyone of the group it is the first visit in the capital.

At the opening event in the gallery of the Tarayana Centre, Sangay Dorji (12), one of the two boys in the group, delivered a speech in front of Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, ministers and many other dignitaries. The photos impress the visitors as the children explain about their work and life in their village. Later on, urban students also arrive to the life of far away Kheng.

## PHOTO ESSAY

↑



↑

Walking home  
after school

→

A farmer from Kagtong  
with freshly harvested  
cabbage

**W**ith road access and penetration of global forces like the media and international markets, many communities are in transition and their distinctive cultural practices are in serious danger of being lost. Therefore, the project “Preserving and Leveraging Bhutan’s Cultural Diversity” (LCD) was planned with the overall goal to capitalize on Bhutan’s cultural diversity so that it can contribute to poverty alleviation, livelihood improvement and enhanced local ownership for cultural wealth, through capacity building, inter-cultural dialogue and preservation measures. The LCD project is run in four selected communities in remote places of Bhutan by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan and funded by the European Union. 



# WHAT IS NEW

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# Trends



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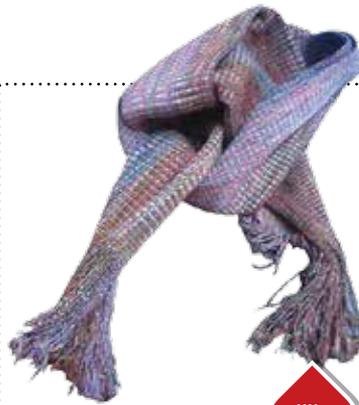
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# It must be love

As the United Nation observes the International Day for Rural Women on October 15, the story of a village woman and her dedication to her paralyzed husband tells us what this day is all about. **Peky Samal** writes

**D**evi Maya Ghalley from Samtse was just 18 when she was engaged to Kumar Ghalley 27. He was from the same village and was a robust man; full of life. At that time Kumar Ghalley worked as a mechanic for the Royal Bhutan Army while she, given her lack of education, remained the traditional dependent housewife. But life has its surprises and one never knows when the roles of dependency are reversed. In a relationship it is all about supporting each other through the ups and downs of a married life but that doesn't always happen.

On June 28, 1994, one month into her marriage with Kumar Ghalley, tragedy struck.

Kumar Ghalley was test-driving a vehicle he had repaired with two of his colleagues, when the vehicle met with an accident. He was rushed to the Thimphu Hospital where the examining doctor told him that his spinal cord had been dislocated and that his chances of survival were slim.

But Kumar Ghalley, a man with a fiesty and indomitable spirit, pleaded with the hospital to refer him to India. He was first taken to Kolkata and then to Pune, his medical expenses borne by the government of Bhutan.

He recalled the journey as "hurtling between life and death". He traveled as a bundled up mass of flesh in tarpaulin; he was bleeding and pus had collected in his sores.

Maggots had infested his wounds and even the street dogs sniffed him over, he said.

Such was his condition.

At Pune, he was kept at the Spinal Cord Injury Center for three years. When Devi Maya first heard of the tragedy, she was shocked and deeply aggrieved. But, she said, she pulled herself up together realizing that strength was what was required of her and waited patiently while her husband underwent treatment.

When he finally returned home, he was a ghost of his former image. He had lost so much weight it was like he had shriveled up. Paralyzed from his waist-down he now needed attention like a baby.

Devi Maya took it upon herself to assume the role of mother and wife. "I could not leave him alone when he needed me and had no one else," she said.

Kumar Ghalley says he is blessed to have her as his wife. "She's very hardworking and wise," he said with deep respect for the woman by his side.

Sometimes family can be a blessing in times of tragedies rallying behind you to give you support and strength. But while some are blessed with that, others like Kumar are faced with not just one challenge but also the challenge of having to accept relatives that abandon you when you are at your most vulnerable state. Apparently Kumar's relatives did not want to take it upon themselves to have to bear this burden of taking care of a vegetative relative. It can be very trying and people who have no resources at their disposal; people who are ignorant and lack the understanding that love and a kind



word is all that is needed at such times, are no where to be found. It was Devi Maya who stood by him and nurtured and cared for him.

Even today, she continues to feed and bathe him. She takes him to the toilet, dresses him, massages his limbs and makes sure that he is comfortable and not in pain. Perhaps because of the all the love he is receiving, Kumar is confident in Devi Maya's love. He is outspoken and gregarious and demonstrates some independ-

ence moving around in his wheelchair. He exudes confidence and radiance and there is not a trace of self pity in him.

Thanks to Devi Maya, Kumar spends his time meaningfully; praying, reading, watching television, chatting with neighbors and enjoying the scenery outside his home which is a small four-room army quarter that was given him by the government.

He received his pension of Nu 0.2 million and receives a Royal

“I have to devote all my time to my husband, so where's the time to wish for children?”



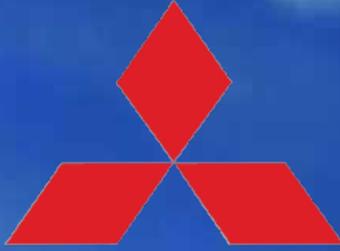
**CONFIDENT LOVE**  
Devi Maya with  
her husband,  
Kumar Ghalley

Kidu of Nu 1,000 a month.

Asked if she ever regrets her decision to stay married to Kumar, Devi Maya says sometimes she does feel sad about the state of affairs, but she steels herself and fights back the negative feelings. She obviously loves Kumar to dedicate her life and time to him, and she fortunately also has the support of her family. Both say that their life, otherwise, is pretty much like any other couples. They have their share of disagreements and fights but the good thing is they always make up.

Devi Maya feels that Kumar Ghalley is sometimes a tad too impatient when she has several chores to attend to at once, but she says, “it is understandable”.

Asked if she ever nurtured the wish to become a mother, she smiles, “I have to devote all my time to my husband, so where's the time to wish for children?” to which Kumar responded with a big smile, “sometimes she drops great pearls of wisdom from her mouth.” Devi Maya is clearly a wise woman. She knows that happiness, at the end of the day, comes from giving much of yourself in dedication to a loved one. 



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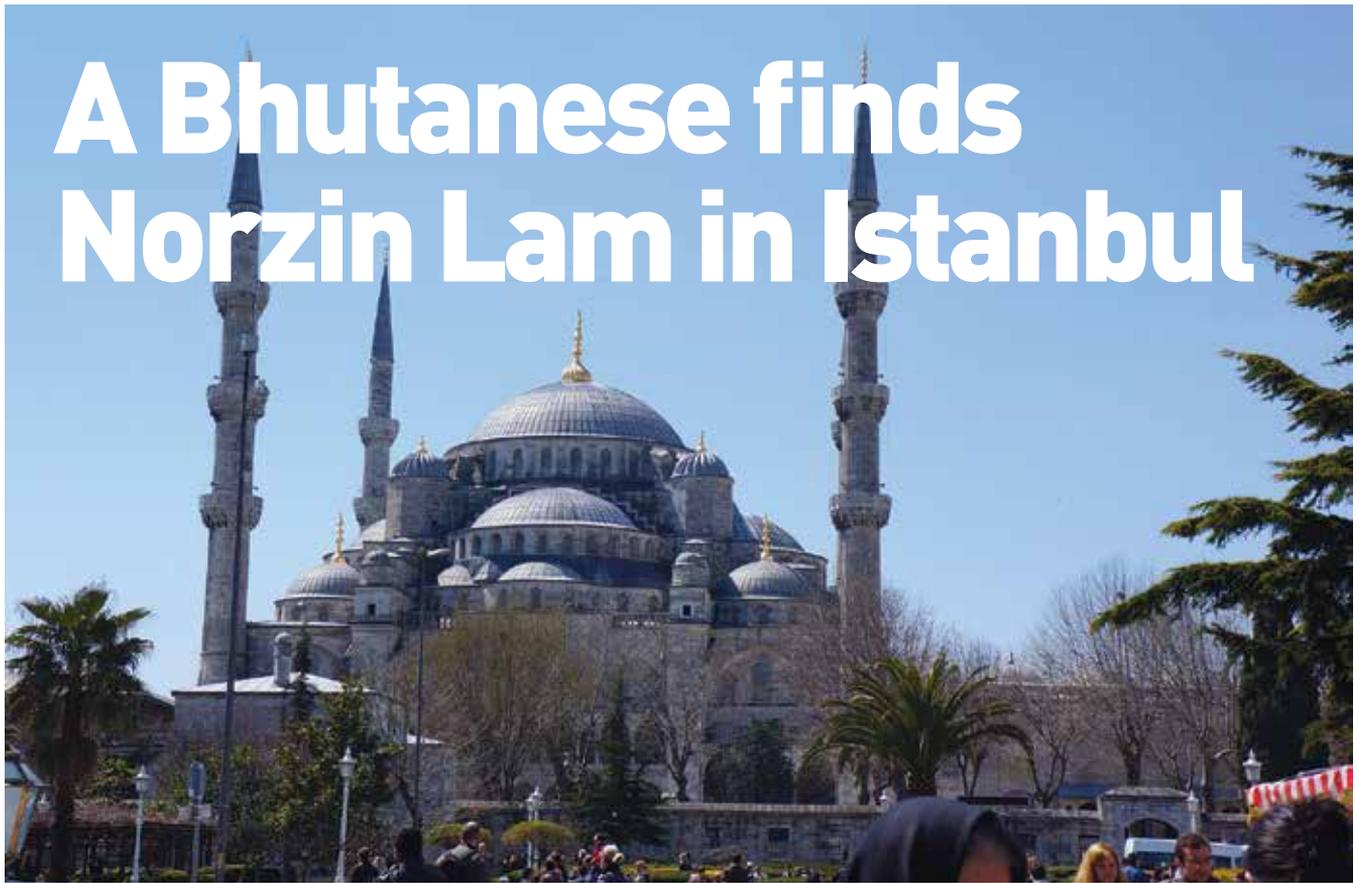


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# A Bhutanese finds Norzin Lam in Istanbul



I will unashamedly admit, that while the un-abiding of traffic rules in Bhutan and India can drive me nuts sometimes, in Istanbul I found myself at home and realizing I had missed this craziness in Europe. **CHIMMI DOLKAR** writes

**T**urkey has always been on my bucket list of travel destinations. So when I got an Istanbul opportunity from the International Institute of Social Studies in the Hague where I study, I didn't want to miss being in the world's only city that stands on two continents, Europe and Asia. And one can't blame Napoleon Bonaparte

for saying "If the earth was a single state, Istanbul would be its capital."

I was the only Bhutanese student in the group and my only Turkish connection has been watching the 'Turkish Spa' display board while driving past Hongkong Market in Thimphu.

Despite the looming threat of assignments and exams, I decided to enjoy the seven days out of Eu-



**THE BLUE MOSQUE** is visited by people of all religions

rope, with four great friends and loads of fun.

Before the trip I went through several travel books on Turkey, hoping to download as much information on Istanbul as I could. After all, it is a far cry from Bhutan, and my knowledge of this place was limited to knowing it as a member of the European Union or a place where "East meets West."

## TRAVEL

We reached Istanbul around midnight after a tiring five-hour transit wait at Munich. It is a time when most retire for the day leaving the travelers of ungodly hours to the mercy of unpredictable cabbies. But in Istanbul, the taxi drivers, it seems, weren't done for the day. With no taxi-meters we haggled a good price to get to the city. Since our time in Istanbul had back to back meetings and workshops nearly every day, we planned our seven days meticulously, highlighting the places we could not miss; The Blue Mosque, the Topkapi Palace, the Ayasofya and the Grand Bazaar topped the list.

Although Turkey is a member of the EU, it is not like other European destinations. It has many elements to it, which reminded me of how much more "Eastern" it was, than "Western". Europeans don't haggle, and they follow traffic rules. The Istanbul traffic on the other hand, had me thinking of home - drivers with no respect for traffic rules and people run-

ning across the streets even when the lights turned green. It was so un-European that in the beginning my European friends were frazzled and disoriented by the blaring horns. But to me it seemed like the office hour rush along Norzin Lam had arrived.

Eventually, my friends seemed to ease in and move with the flow. They certainly seemed to learn that 'when in Rome...' and so like the rest, they followed suit in breaking every traffic rule by jay-walking and even learning to negotiate their movements with oncoming vehicles. I particularly enjoyed the feeling of once again 'owning the road', as some pedestrians do back in Bhutan, where the vehicles are compelled to stop to give way to pigeons, dogs, the occasional stray cow, and the unperturbed pedestrian. After Den Haag- Dutch for Hague- I will unashamedly admit, that while the un-abiding of traffic rules in Bhutan and India can drive me nuts sometimes, in Istanbul I found myself at home and realizing I had missed



Musicians at Taksim Square

My European friends were frazzled and disoriented by the blaring horns. But to me it seemed like the office hour rush along Norzin Lam had arrived



this craziness in Europe. For me Istanbul, to put it straight, was like “Delhi, 50 years from now”- the people looked the same and the traffic behaved the same. The world is really such a small place that people are the same everywhere.

The Sultan Ahmed Mosque called Sultanahmet Camii, in Turkey is more famously known as the Blue Mosque because of its blue interior tiles. The Mosque is to

many foreigners, what Taksang is to the world, its most prominent landmark that defines Bhutan. Given our limited leisure time it was nice that this monument was only a ten-minute-walk from our hotel. A part of the six minarets and eight domes could be seen partially from the hotel seeming to tease us with its partial view. In the walk leading up to it we passed several other smaller mosques; Is-

↑  
**THE GATE**  
dividing two  
continents

stanbul has many other mosques, small and big allowing you to easily confuse yourself and have you figuring out which is the real Blue Mosque. We found ourselves posing in front of a few thinking it was “The Blue Mosque” only to be told that it was the wrong one.

The Blue Mosque was built from 1609 to 1616 – probably around the time Semtokha Dzong was being built – by Sultan Ahmed

## TRAVEL



### WITH FRIENDS

The writer (in the middle) with her classmates

What has made the Mosque such an attractive piece is probably because of its architectural features. It sees the coming together of distinct features from the centuries old Ottoman and the Byzantine Church styles.

For students like us it was good to know that the entrance to this magnificent monument was free. At the entrance we were provided with a plastic bag to carry our shoes and since we were women we were told to cover our heads with a blue shawl which they provided. Inside,

the view was absolutely breathtaking, the walls were painted with a myriad of colors and the ceilings had motifs intricately designed with ceramic tiles of which there are 20,000, all handmade. The ceilings of the prayer area and the main dome were awe inspiring- it brought about an inner peace akin to what I always experience when visiting our very own Punakha Dzong.

Our largely chatty group became quiet as we walked by the walls adorned by 50 different tulip designs. We walked around im-

Our largely chatty group became quiet as we walked by



mersing in the centuries old history of each tulip. It felt good to be away from the traffic, the bustling crowd and I found myself relishing the coolness and respite from camera toting tourists; myself included.

Our second highlight was the Topkapi Palace, which is a short stroll away from the Blue Mosque. The Palace is enormous and it would have taken us the whole day to just cover it; what with its 4 courtyards, numerous Gates, Kiosks, Privy Chambers, Harems, Audience Halls, Gardens, and a

Circumcision Room. Built in the 15th century, the Palace was the residence for the Ottoman Empire for nearly 400 years. As a museum today, the Palace attracts thousands of visitors each day, all eager to see the valuable collections of jewelry, weapons, porcelain and other treasures that are on display. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is being described as one of the best examples of palaces of the Ottoman period.

The trip to Hagia Sophia- Agasofya, in Turkish meaning ‘Holy Wis-



**DELIGHT**  
One cannot miss  
the sweet stalls

dom’ was not successful since we had to wait a long time to get in, which we could not afford given time constraints. It was a pity walking away from the once basilica, then a mosque and now a museum without getting to explore its beauty. But our spirits were lifted as we entered the Grand Bazaar, one of the largest covered markets in the world. The Grand bazaar is like a miniature city in itself – bustling with people, lights, noise and the huge choice of great buys one

## TRAVEL



Bosphorus River at night

can find. I wouldn't call the goods cheap since it depends on how well you negotiate with shopkeepers. I loved this place and if given a choice, I would have spent the whole day here. This to me, once again showed how more Asian than European, Turkey was. The need to haggle convinced me even more. My companions seemed to enjoy watching me do my "Asian" thing, bargaining for an intricately decorated blue coloured hookah; this, I am sure, is an art in itself that must have existed from even before the days the Blue Mosque came into existence.

The boat ride across Bosphorus River is something one should also take. It is not as tumultuous as our mountain rivers but more meandering and serene. The river is hugely significant because it literally divides Turkey from Europe, making it the only country to reside on two continents. I felt special on

the boat ride- a Bhutanese at the cusp of two continents, giving me a weird feeling of being everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Equally, my two Colombian friends, who had never been to Asia, were absolutely thrilled having set foot on the Asian continent for the first time, even more so without the hassle of immigration or visa formalities!

Although we could not visit all the historical sites and many other places, one thing worth mentioning is the Turkish Cuisine. It is as important as its history. In our seven days there we made it a point to have something Turkish every day. We always started off with Turkish tea, served black with yu-murtali ekmek or French toast, spicy Turkish sausage and bread. The exciting array of dishes ranged from soups, pilafs, doner kebabs, with amazing mezze and breads followed by the 'infamous' Turkish

Since my trip was organized by our institute, I was saved the trouble of booking flights or scouring for cheap hotels.

### TRAVEL DETAILS



#### By Flight

From The Hague to Istanbul, transit at Munich – Air Lufthansa



#### Stay

**Grand Onos.** Centrally located 20 minutes from Blue Mosque and 15 minutes from Grand Bazaar. Price: €200-300 per person per night.



#### Climate

Best time to Travel - March & April, October & November – since the temperature is ideal – neither too hot or cold.

delights– those sweet dishes can be a taste of heaven for people with a sweet tooth like me. We would normally end the tiring day with a glass of raki – an alcoholic beverage that when mixed with water turns milky white in color.

What I took from Istanbul are memories of streets laden with goods, aroma of spices, sticky baklava and old men sitting leisurely while hookahs inside dark tiny shops. With all the haggling skills I displayed, I am now the happy owner of a beautiful blue hookah, even though it will never be put to use – after all I am back in the land of Tobacco ban. Although it sits on my mantelpiece, it still serves a purpose, a reminder of a wonderful trip with my friends to a part of the world that I would have otherwise never ventured over to on my own.



# *A Death*

Karma Singye Dorji



There was a  
muffled curse,  
followed by the  
report of a gun

## FICTION

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**T**HE RAVEN shot across the sky like a tiny black missile. In the valley far below, the small military transport vehicle with the gold snowflake insignia of the Royal Guards careened in and out of the looping road in the mountains, spilling gravel as it went. When it came to a sudden skidding stop, the thick brown cloud of dust caught up with the open transport car, making the uniformed men cough and flail their arms about in front of them. There were four of them: A senior officer, a Colonel by rank, sitting in the backseat flanked by two junior officers on either side of him. The Colonel was unarmed but the other two officers wore standard-issue holstered handguns. The driver in the front was impassive in the way that military men are trained not to betray emotion. "You may step out of the car now, sir," said the officer to the left of the Colonel as the man to the Colonel's right hurriedly swung a leg over the side of the car and stepped out. The Colonel looked over at the man who had spoken, making a mental note of the insolence in his voice. Then, he reached over to the back of the car to grab his water canteen, and heaved over to the side of the vehicle and got out. The officer who had spoken wore the three small flowers of a captain's rank on the shoulders of his uniform. He stepped out quickly as well, keeping his eyes on the Colonel's back. Then, coming around the back of the open car he hissed something fiercely at the other officer. The Colonel, nearing the bushes, made out a few words carried on the wind. "...It's in the orders Lieutenant." "But, sir..." "...No if, and, or buts, Lieut..." Minutes later there were the splashing wet sounds of the kind that can only be made by a man who has held his bladder too long. The two officers exchanged a look. Then, the younger of the two officers drew his weapon out of its holstered case and walked with quick, decisive steps toward the bushes, parted the tall clump of ferns, and disappeared.

There was a muffled curse, followed by the report of a gun. Overhead, the raven circled the sky and shrieked.

**T**he Colonel never forgot the day when, so many years earlier, when he was still a boy, his father had taken him to see the Amazing Spider-Woman at the traveling fair.

Her eyes were black and kohl-lined and, on the middle of her forehead, she wore the traditional vermilion dot. The rest of her body was a grotesquely flabby ball, like large black overripe fruit. The big burlesque men with their glistening handlebar mustaches and oily exposed torsos heaved tall wooden planks onto the stage and stood supporting them, their muscles heaving with the effort.

The turbaned ringmaster strode about the stage in front of the audience with a loud speaker shouting: "Come out, come out, and meet your admirers!" Suddenly, as a shiver ran through the crowd, the bottom edge of the bright floral curtains closing off the back of the stage moved tremulously and the low, squat, ugly catastrophe of a living thing scurried across the dirty wood floor of the makeshift stage and, eyes averted, scampered quickly up the wooden walls supported by the men with the bicycle handlebar mustaches.

At the top she, it, or whatever it was, turned around and, balancing unsteadily, stared at the crowd with large, liquid terrified eyes. Next to him the Colonel's father shifted, spat at the ground, and snarled: "Nothing crueller than the cruelty of the low-born!" After that, his father took him to see the two-wheeled riders who entered a tall cone-shaped tower, another rickety wooden structure held together only by ropes. Revving the engines of their machines, the riders roared off at a thunderous pace whipping round and round within the confines of the giant cone, spiraling up to the very top until they were right under the noses of the gaping bystanders and screaming fans standing on the wide viewing platform. The riders never fell, as if the wheels had been



*“Oh, I felt like a trapped sparrow closed in by those gray and heavy walls”*

magnetized, as if, like the Spider Woman, they, too, had been cursed by the ability to defy gravity.

The Colonel's father took him next to the Candy Man. The old man was frail and wore round wire-rimmed eyeglasses with nothing about him to impress a young boy of 11. But the thick dirty strap around the old man's neck supported a square glass box of otherworldly delights. It was filled to the brim with pink, purple, white and green cotton candy puffs that looked like large indented magical fruit. To the end of his days the Colonel would remember the sweet musical sounds of the old man's tiny brass bell, the calling card he used to announce himself to the townspeople. The Candy Man was appropriately reverent to the Colonel's father. He dipped his head respectfully, joined palms at the chest and handed the boy many generous puffs of the multi-colored candy in paper cones deftly rolled from old newsprint. When the father tried to pay him for the treat, the Candy Man held out his hand, and palm facing out, shook it vigorously from side to side as if trying to shake his fingers off. “No, no, Excellency,” he said. “May the gods themselves protect you! This is a gift for the boy. May he too have a long and illustrious career, just like his father!”

All about the fairground the people of the border regions—the plantation owners, tradesmen, factory managers, shopkeepers, woodcutters, workers and people of the surrounding colonies—milled about happily, excited by the colorful circus in their midst. They loved this new Governor, the Colonel's father. He was so much more fun than the dour old man they had endured for several long decades in the past. That man was a religious fanatic, and each year his only contribution to the annual social calendar had been the commissioning of steadily droned Repentance Prayers blared over all the emergency loudspeakers so there could be no escape from the drudgery of self-flagellation.

As was the custom in those days, the Colonel's father ripped him out from his mother's womb and cut the umbilical cord himself with a rough knife before hanging the birth sac from the drooping branches of a weeping willow tree—an offering to The Raven for sparing the newborn's life.

In those early years, the Governor and the Amateur Interpreter of Dreams—a name the Governor gave his wife for her habit of searching for hidden meanings in her dreams—lived in a heavy gray fortress of a house. It was a place reviled by the Amateur Interpreter of Dreams but the Governor loved it because it was a symbol of his status as a rising star in the Royal Government of the Colonies.

“Oh, I felt like a trapped sparrow closed in by those gray and heavy walls,” she told the Colonel many years later. “The windows, though they let in the light, only served to heighten my loneliness.” This meant that when the Governor was off on official business, the Amateur Interpreter of Dreams, spent many long hours wishing she was back in her village, standing under the tall rafters of her ancestral home, beneath the sheltering roof of long sun-darkened shingles cut and laid by her great great grandfather's hand, under the rough trusses hewn by other long dead forebears. She wanted to return home where, in the perfect stillness of a summer afternoon, she could sense the first stirrings of a breeze lifting off the cool, milk-white coil of the river roiling far below in the deepest part of valley. Closing her eyes within the confines of the gray life-negating fortress she could almost imagine herself back home, feeling the breeze rising playfully up the valley before moving through the emerald stalks of grain swooning and swaying as if to the music of unseen gamelans. She imagined the breeze rustling through the papery leaves of the wild Badoo tree and entering her ancestral home like a whispering lover caressing her pale upturned face, teasing her silky black pageboy hair.





Sangay Thinley Dorji is a member of the Executive Committee of the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa. He is currently dividing time between teaching at Royal Thimphu College and his own enterprise.

## DEMOCRACY

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# WHY PEOPLE SHOULD VOTE

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**Sangay Thinley Dorji** contested for the National Assembly Elections in 2008 from Gasa

**B**ack in 2008 I was 26 years old and one of the youngest candidates to partake in the political transition of Bhutan. It was with much passion and dedication that I got involved in the process and I urged people I met both in urban and rural Bhutan to take an interest and get involved by learning about what was happening.

I was often met with a lackadaisical attitude; “politicking isn’t allowed in schools and institutions,” or “if you are a civil servant you need to be apolitical.” More often than not, the response in urban centers was straightforward - “we’re not interested in politics.” Their answers seemed to be based on the notion borrowed from their neighbors that political systems, political parties and politicians in general was something corrupt and dirty. In 2008, I spent much time talking particularly to the youth, focusing on the need to exercise their constitutional right and vote in order that we ensured a successful democracy.

Five years later, and the second parliamentary elections are just around the corner. In all these years since 2008, my thoughts have revolved around the importance of people, particularly the youth, educating and making themselves aware of politics in Bhutan. One reason is that as a college lecturer teaching Law I have realized that people, both young and old, can be empowered to make the right choices and decisions in determining their future in this country.

I tell my students, law governs pretty much everything we do in our lives. Every aspect of decisions we make under the notion of free will is actually a decision we make within the boundaries drawn and established by some form of law. If we are informed and educated in how this process works then we

can know when law and policy makers/ legislators are not doing a thorough job. We are in a position to question, point out their mistakes and seek answers.

I have been trying to identify and see a clear path to how all of this relates to us and how it affects us. Simply put, politics is the system through which we, the people, elect in our representatives to enact and amend laws to govern and establish the parameters within which our society, our communities, our households and us individuals function.

A big challenge for many of us - not only the youth - lies in overcoming our notion that engaging in politics and politicking is supporting one party and all its policies, because we know the people in that party or some members are friends. We need to strive for attaining a much wider scope for the term politics and politicking. We need to look at the character of the candidate, see whether his/her political ideology is in sync with ours; whether he/she is capable of leading and delivering on what is expected of him/her. We need to see a situation as simple as two friends discussing how the

current healthcare system/ education system etc. works, we have to educate ourselves on the law and policies that impact our lives, make a decision and take action through the cast of votes to play our part in the process of attempting to get who we feel or which party will represent our opinions and positions best at the national level.

As difficult as it may be to see one's choice lose to another or in my case (because I contested) to lose to another, at the end of the

day this is something we must accept with dignity because this is exactly how democracy operates. It does not mean that we turn against our opponent by ruining reputation or smearing public image. But, we continue to engage by ensuring that he/she does his/her job well as you would have. As much as one may want one's choice of party or leader it eventually operates on the premise of the rule of majority, indicative of the fact that the majority apparently did not share your choice.

As 2013 comes round the corner, my immediate concern is the voter turnout. Many people I have conversed with have stated their doubts over returning to their villages to cast their vote for the elections over the inconvenience and costs incurred. While I urge everyone to go and vote for their informed choice, I also hope that the Election Commission will see ways of ensuring convenience that every Bhutanese, no matter where they live, can cast their vote to make a difference.

To each and every Bhutanese who will vote in 2013, I urge you to ask yourselves, what is my politics? What kind of future do I want for the next generation and for Bhutan? And with that I urge you to go and cast that vote no matter how far you have to travel or what sacrifices you have to make. For that one vote can make all the difference in determining the hopes and dreams you have for the future of your country.



Many people I have conversed with have stated their doubts over returning to their villages to cast their vote





## WOMEN & LAW

Does the 1,300 cases of domestic violence registered between 2005 to 2011 indicate that this may just be a tip of the iceberg? **Tashi Wangmo** asks

# The law of contention – Bhutan and the Domestic Violence Bill

**W**hen Aum Sonam married she never imagined that her days would be numbered. She was essentially signing her own death sentence. As the years passed and she started a family with the man whom she had chosen, her life was confined to nothing but psychological and physical abuse. Yet, she couldn't leave him. She had become a prisoner to her own life and often wondered if there was ever a way out. She was too embarrassed to let her friends and relatives know of the horrors she endured. In November of last year, Sonam finally saw the end to her godforsaken life: She was stabbed to death by the man whom she had loved and trusted enough to have her children with.

For many women like Sonam, who suffered and succumbed to such abuses at the hands of their husbands (and also men who may have at their hands of their wives) there was really no hope. There was no where or no one they could turn to for justice

for all the wrongs inflicted upon them because this was not seen as a crime and there were no laws in place for such violence inflicted in their homes by their own loved ones.

Meanwhile Bimal Rai (name changed) from Sarpang felt that he was the unluckiest man to be alive when he constantly suffered beatings at the hands of his wife.

Many a time in the process of trying to defend himself he pushed and shoved her away causing her to get accidentally hurt. Before he knew it she had complained to RENEW. "But upon investigating the case, the staff at RENEW believed me when I told them that I was beaten first and then I retaliated," he said. When she filed for divorce following the report, he felt that his world had come to an end. He clearly cared about her still. But Bimal Rai should consider himself lucky that his fate didn't wind up like the man who was murdered by his wife in Hongtsho Thimphu. According to the WCPU she is still serving her sentence for "involuntary manslaughter."

But for the many victims who are out there, or relatives of victims, the latest developments in this area; the introduction of a new Bill that makes Domestic Violence a crime, there is now hope that come 2013 they can prosecute such violators.

Bhutan's biggest study on women and children released last year revealed that this was a shocking trend. Not only that, but from the 15,000 households surveyed by the National Statistical Bureau in 2010 68.4%

women said their husbands had the 'right' to beat them. This came as an unpleasant shock to many Bhutanese who never imagined that their women, who have always had the freedom to annul/divorce their husbands with no stigmas attached, would think this way.

So does the 1,300 cases of domestic violence registered between 2005 to 2011 indicate that this may just be a tip of the iceberg?

It was against this backdrop that when few male lawmakers thought Bhutanese women could misuse the Domestic Violence Prevention Bill, a public outcry, displayed through a Facebook signature campaign followed.

Housewives, working women and officials filled up the otherwise empty visitors gallery of the National Assembly to witness the final discussion on the Bill on June 6, after much lobbying on social media.

Earlier, the Bill was introduced by the Education Minister Lyonpo Thakur Singh Powdyel who is also the chairperson of the National Commission for Women and Children. Embarrassingly a majority of MPs, who are men, expressed their reservations and opposed the bill saying it was not gender sensitive and women-centric.

"Men are also victims of such violence, but non-governmental organizations aren't protecting them," the Trongsa MP Rinchen Dorji said, not understanding that a "Domestic" violence bill served victims of both genders.

It was an astonishing revelation of how far removed Bhuta-

## Bimal Rai felt like the unluckiest man to be alive when he constantly suffered beatings at the hands of his wife.

nese lawmakers from the realities of Bhutan's social problems. They said that the Bill ignored the protection of men as victims of violence; that there were already too many laws in the country; and that if the Bill was passed it would increase divorce cases and family problems. What was even more astounding was the Health Minister Lyonpo Zangley Dukpa's comment in parliament that having many laws would make it harder for implementation. Mongar MP Sonam Penjore supported the Health Minister saying implementation of the Bill would incur huge costs on the government. What he failed to realize was the huge social costs Bhutan has had to bear and will bear if such a bill was not introduced. Many of Bhutan's youth problems, particularly violence today could be a result of direct exposure to domestic violence in their childhoods. Officials can continue to blame television, it could be partially responsible for it, but it would take much more than television for young people

to lash out simply because of that. It is a result of much more pain and suffering inflicted upon their emotions as children – divorce, neglect and lack of acknowledgement from parents, physical abuse and exposure to domestic violence - that is perhaps a larger cause. Scientifically conducted research and studies have proven that children who are exposed to violence in early childhood are more prone to committing it. Not only that it impairs learning, development and destroys their chances of living in a safe and secure environment. (<https://www.srcd.org/documents/publications/SPR/spr9-3.pdf> children who witness domestic violence report)

The few women MPs vehemently defended the Bill citing that the Bill was gender neutral and in the interest of both men and women. MP Karma Lhamo said that the word ‘woman’ was mentioned only once in the preamble of the Bill whereas in the other clauses it said ‘the victim’ or ‘he/she’. MP Leela Pradhan reminded the House that the Bill is gender-neutral and for all victims of domestic violence, be it man or woman. Such discussions were revelatory of how much education was indeed needed of educated male officials who had been elected to office based on their understanding to make social changes in society to understand this important issue. It also showed that in a male dominated parliament it is difficult and tricky for women related issues/bill to be acknowledged, accepted and approved. And so after much objection from the male legislators it came

as a huge relief to the women when the Bill was unanimously endorsed with forty members voting in favor of the Bill, one against it and one abstaining. The Bill is to be further deliberated in the National Council during the winter session and hopefully by the beginning of 2013 it will be formally adopted as an Act in the Constitution of Bhutan. The general feeling is that the National Council will pass the Bill without any objection.

### What does the Bill mean?

Will it reduce instances of domestic violence? No single Act or a law exists in a vacuum. The public and society at large must work with the government and relevant organizations to advocate and change the attitudes and behaviors that has been committing and condoning domestic violence in our society. As is the case everywhere, most people are not aware of their basic rights and thus become victims. Not only that domestic violence also has great psychological impact on the victim. Because of the continued abuse they not only live in fear, but they eventually succumb to the repeated accusations that they deserve it. For instance, up until a few years ago before the establishment of civil society organization RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women) and the NCWC (National Commission for Women and Children) and the Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU) at the police stations, the incidences of domestic violence reported to the police was very low because

In a male dominated parliament it is tricky for women related issues to be acknowledged, accepted and approved.

the victims endured their suffering in silence. They not only didn't know that this was a crime – because it was not, at least in our society – but there were also no support centers to help them see a way out of it. They were also afraid of the social stigma of going to the police for being battered by a member of the family. However, it was only after the establishment of such centers that few of the victims of domestic violence have started coming forward to seek counseling and support.

### Breaking the ‘sacred bond of marriage’

Sonam Lhamo, a divorcee from a remote village in Mongar is one of the few who has raised her voice against domestic violence and stood up for women's rights in her village. Physically and verbally abused by her husband for more than three years, Sonam finally broke the ‘sacred bond of marriage’ as she puts it, and filed for divorce at the district court in Mongar. She says that wife battery is rampant in her vil-

lage with almost all women being beaten up by their husbands on a regular basis. "Wife beating is a normal and regular affair in the houses," said the 24-year-old. She is one of the few who could not take the beatings and complained against her husband at the district police station. Instead of applauding her decision, people in the village now consider her a 'bad woman' who cannot even take the beatings of her own husband and brought about shame and disgrace not only upon herself but the entire village.

Born and brought up in the village with no education, Sonam represents the typical vulnerable village girl further exploited by the violence inflicted on her. It is imperative that education, sensitization and awareness be created in all the villages and communities of Bhutan on domestic violence so that perpetrators will refrain and victims will know their rights. However, for Sonam, it was her awareness of her constitutional rights that led her to understand this was wrong. She was just someone that didn't deserve to be beaten by her husband.

"I have the right to lead a happy and peaceful life," she said. After the divorce and with a five-year-old son to take care of, Sonam trained for a few months at the Weaving Center in Mongar and is now back in her village making enough money to feed herself and her child from the sale of her weaving products.

## Voicing out

RENEW, established in 2004, was one of the leading organizations encouraging women to come out

and speak against crime. RENEW believes that gender-based violence stands in the way of achieving gender equality. It campaigns to prevent and eradicate Gender Based Violence (GBV) in pursuit of its mission to better the lives of victims and survivors of such violence. They also help integrate the victims back into their communities as independent, socially and economically productive members of society. RENEW provides shelter, counseling, legal counseling and reintegration services for victims.

According to statistics from RENEW and local police stations, of the 1,300 odd cases of domestic violence registered from 2005 to 2011, 29 were related to the victims.

Between 2008 and 2011, RENEW alone registered 1,007 victims with 836 constituting new clients and 69 repeat clients.

From January 2012 till July 2012, RENEW saw 213 cases of domestic violence and the WCPU in Thimphu registered 119 cases. However, both organizations

caution that these are only the reported figures and that there may actually be many more unreported cases.

The figures tell the story

It is very disturbing to note women feel that the violence inflicted on them is justified in instances when they neglect the children (54.5%), or if they demonstrate their autonomy, e.g. go out without informing their husbands (39.7%) or argue with them (39.5%). Moreover, one fourth of the women believe that their partner has a right to hit or beat them if they refuse to have sex with him or if they burn the food. Dr Menakshi of RENEW said that there should be "zero tolerance to domestic violence" and that there should be no excuse for any kind of violence in the household.

The study reveals that the presence and acceptance of domestic violence existed mostly among those living in the rural areas with little or no education. Officials from the RENEW and the WCPU in Thimphu said





## Seven men in 2011, and two men in 2012 complained of being abused by their wives

that educated women and those from affluent families were reluctant to admit or confess to violence inflicted on them by their partners/husbands because of their reputation in the society and stigma and embarrassment for exposing the darker side of their lives to the public. Captain Wangdi of the WCPU said that 90% of the domestic occurred in the poorer sections of the society with alcohol as the main cause for violence. He said that in most cases husbands under the influence of alcohol beat up their wives. However, again 90% of the cases registered were willing to compromise as both the parties (victim and perpetrator did not

want to undergo the legal hassles if forwarded to the district court. Most of the time, the WCPU counseled, negotiated/compromised in between and warned the perpetrators of the legal implications for repeated complaints. If a person brought a complaint for the third time the case was directly forwarded to the court without any negotiations.

Captain Wangdi said that prior to the Domestic Violence Prevention Bill, WCPU was acting on their own risk without any directives when they compromised and settled the case at the Unit. However now that the Bill has come into existence he said that there were clear instruc-

tions as to how to go about while dealing with domestic violence cases, even though it was nothing different from what they were previously doing.

While the majority of the victims are women, there are also men who have complained to the RENEW and WCPU of being abused by their wives. At RENEW, between 2008 to 2011, 18 men registered with the center, however, only one complained of being physically abused by his wife. The WCPU reported that seven men in 2011, and two men in 2012 complained of being abused by their wives. Their other complaints were that their wives were alcoholic, neglecting household chores, gambling and having extra marital affairs.

### Those who do not complain

Chimmi Dolma from Paro has been abused physically by her husband. He has neglected the family and also had extramarital affairs. "But I will never go and complain against my husband because he has threatened to kill me and our children if I do so," she said.

Chimmi runs a small clothing shop in the outskirts of Paro town and has three school going children. Her husband is a graduate working in one of the travel agencies in Paro and earns a good salary. However, for Chimmi and her children, they go without seeing him for days on end. "He comes home as and when he wishes and when I ask him about where he has been or about his work he will start the barrage of harsh and obscene words, slapping and beating me in front of the children that I have now learnt to keep shut and never speak a word to him." For Chimmi divorce is not an option and her worst fear is he might leave the family and marry his girlfriend.

## When children become victims

Domestic violence in the home impacts all members of the family, and while it is bad enough for the person being abused, the children suffer equally. The innocent bystanders who watch the destruction of love and security in the only place that should be affording it to them are often affected beyond repair. International studies have shown that children witnessing domestic violence (they need not necessarily be the direct victims) have their whole outlook on life and relationships change for the worse. The trauma and pain of witnessing violence may not be visible. It affects every aspect of their social and emotional development. It leads to problems in school, problems in their own relationships and how they deal with others, and hampers every

aspect of their psychological and physical wellbeing.

Dechen Om, a housewife, mother and a corporate employee realized that whenever she quarreled with her husband in front of their daughter, the otherwise talkative and hyper active 6 year old girl would remain silent and withdrawn for the whole day. 'It happened a couple of times and initially I didn't relate her withdrawal to our quarrels, until I overheard her telling her friend that she gets very scared when her parents shout at each other and fears that they might kill her,' said Dechen. She said that they made sure they quarreled less and never in front their daughter.

A study on drug abuse and domestic violence in Bhutan, conducted by the vice-principal of Jigme Namgyel Lower Secondary School in Thimphu, reports that 52.7 percent of high school students are exposed to drug abuse and domestic violence. Out of the 150 respondents, 79 students were exposed to drug abuse and domestic violence, with 51 percent boys and 28 percent girls. 61 percent of the families of the selected students did not want to talk on the issues of drugs, alcohol and violence with their

The study says that girls are exposed to drugs mostly because of their abusing male friends and family members. Some girls turned to alcohol or drugs as a way to cope with violence in their lives. The study, though conducted on a small scale revealed that there is a significant relationship between drug abuse, domestic violence and educational attainment. As per the Bill, domestic violence means "violence against

a person by another person with whom that person is, or has been in a domestic relationship', and, in this context, 'violence means any act, omission, or behavior towards a person which results in physical, sexual, emotional or economic abuse'. Will abusers now refrain from committing violent acts to their partners and will victims know their rights and stand up to their abusers? However, one must take into consideration that behaviors and attitudes don't change overnight, but hopefully the passing of the Bill will most certainly and positively make a potential perpetrator think twice before hitting his/her partner. "Domestic violence cases are an everyday affair at the Unit and we have been receiving at least one case every day since the establishment of the Unit in May, 2007," said Captain Wangdi.

As the Bill clearly states, it is with the government and concerned civil society organizations responsible to enact on the Bill and make it fully functional, effective and doable. Various sections of the society are now concerned about the effective implementation of programmes and activities and preventive measures to combat domestic violence.

With the introduction of this bill another legislation was born in the country. Some laws, like the DV Bill, are essential to the overall wellbeing of our society. As the Education Minister Lyonpo Thakur Singh Powdyel rightly said while introducing the Bill, the Bill would give legal teeth to all men, women and children to protect themselves from such violence. 

**D**oubtful claims to sovereignty or suzerainty by neighbors

Till the 1960s, the official, economic and military capacities of the Bhutanese leadership to enhance the kingdom's international relations were severely limited by the country's geographical isolation, lack of modern communications and general economic backwardness. As it is, Bhutan being a landlocked country, with enormous mountainous barriers, was far away from mainstream international commercial and political activities. Its leadership and officials may also have been unaware or unconcerned with the world beyond the immediate border regions. They seem to have had no need to venture beyond relations with bordering countries, and that too, only when its own interests mattered.

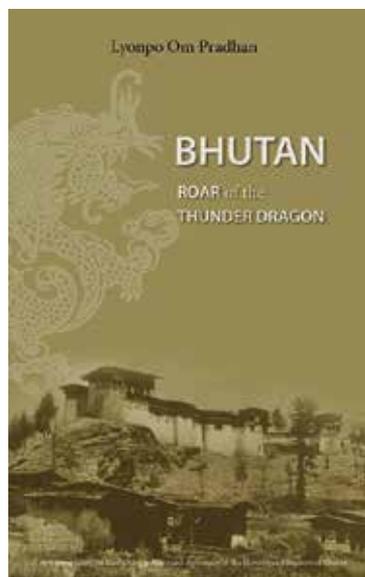
There was almost a complete absence of all forms of communications starting with motor roads, telephones and news media. Even for communications within the country this was possible to some extent only from 1956-57 onwards when wireless sets powered by generators run on imported petroleum carried on human or animal backs to various centers, began to replace mail runners.

Motor roads were constructed into the interior areas of Bhutan from the Indian border from 1961 onwards. Nationwide and viable telephone services were possible only when the Japanese assisted Bhutan with satellite and digital communications as late as the 1980s. The earlier system set up in a tardy fashion was only to meet basic official needs after development plans were begun and could

# India, China and Bhutan

Those who wanted Bhutan to move closer to China where a minority, exclusive excerpts from Lyonpo **Om Pradhan's** new book.

“There were strong views among some prominent members of the then Bhutanese leadership that Bhutan should move closer to China rather than India, especially from ethnic and cultural points of view. These persons, who fortunately were in the small minority, failed to comprehend that when it comes to safeguarding a nation's sovereignty and independence, ethnicity or racial policies and approaches may not prove to be in one's true interests,” In exclusive excerpts from his upcoming book ‘Roar of the by the Thunder Dragon’ Druk Holding and Investments Chairman Lyonpo Om Pradhan, who as a senior diplomat led Bhutan's first border talks with China in the summer of 1984. He tells about how Bhutan cautiously shaped its foreign policy.



The first was the fear of China and the possibility of this giant neighbor compromising Bhutanese sovereignty



**COVER JACKET**  
The Roar of the  
Thunder Dragon,  
256 pages

hardly be termed functional or modern, and even then not available for private use. Up to 1985, the Bhutan embassy in Delhi had to communicate with Thimphu by wireless, and this communication



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**LYONPO OM  
PRADHAN  
REPRESENTING  
BHUTAN AT THE  
UN**

was extended to the Permanent Mission of Bhutan to the United Nations in New York through “tel-ex” by the Delhi embassy. As the Bhutanese Ambassador in New Delhi in 1985, the author recalls informing Thimphu about Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s tragic assassination through the embassy’s wireless facility as phone calls were not possible.

Radio broadcasting began in the country in 1973 as a “youth broadcasting” service through the personal initiative of Karma Tenzing, a graduate from the United States and an officer of the Ministry of Trade, Industries and Forests who seemed to do it out of sheer nationalistic and patriotic feelings. A few years later the government converted this service to a national one and named it Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS). Bhutan also did away with its own restrictions on satellite television and the Internet as late as 1999.

During and prior to the rule of the third King there were certain historical legacies and threats, though considered distant and

even absurd today, could not be easily ruled out and had to figure in the strategies followed by Bhutan’s leaders.

The first was the fear of China and the possibility of this giant neighbor compromising Bhutanese sovereignty. In 1910, when China intervened in Tibet it declared that the Himalayan region including Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh were parts of China. This fear of China could be said to have manifested in the Treaty of Sinchula with the British, which essentially made Bhutan a “protectorate” of Britain. Henceforth, Bhutan’s relations with the outside world would be conducted on the “advice” of Britain, and after the 1949 treaty, by independent India. The concerns over Chinese intentions were again enhanced after the Chinese army intervention of Tibet in 1951 and the violent suppression of the Tibetan revolt in 1959 after which Bhutanese-Tibetan relations of the past effectively came to an end. Bhutan closed its borders and avoided doing anything to antagonize China.

After the 1962 Sino-Indian war over their boundaries, China may have become much more amenable and enthusiastic in giving recognition to Bhutanese sovereignty if only to compromise the 1949 Indo-Bhutan Treaty and India’s foothold in the kingdom. At the same time, India may also have been more forthcoming in recognizing and giving more substance in its relations to Bhutanese sovereignty. There was therefore some advantage in Bhutan’s geopolitical situation in strengthening its sovereignty.

A more substantive relationship with the Chinese at the time would have been inconceivable for Bhutan. Given the Chinese threats and its announced views of the Himalayan kingdoms, the absorption of Bhutan into Tibet, and therefore, China, loomed as a fearful possibility. The Cultural Revolution of Chairman Mao Zedong would have destroyed all of Bhutan’s traditions and the young monarchy. Bhutan would have no longer existed as a distinct cultural and political entity. While considering this possible relation with China in the early 1960s it should be remembered that this was not mere conjecture. There were strong views among some prominent members of the then Bhutanese leadership that Bhutan should move closer to China rather than India, especially from ethnic and cultural points of view. These persons, who fortunately were in the small minority, failed to comprehend that when it comes to safeguarding a nation’s sovereignty and independence, ethnicity or racial policies and approaches may not prove to be in one’s true interests. One needs to simply look at the histories of Asia,



Africa and Europe. The Indians and the Pakistanis, the Japanese and the Koreans, the Chinese and the Japanese, the Chinese and the Tibetans, the Chinese and the Taiwanese, the Kuwaitis and the Iraqis, don't really get along politically despite racial and cultural similarities. In the 21st century, Africa has faced history's most serious problems in Rwanda, Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda and elsewhere. Again, if Bhutanese consider themselves closer to Tibetans, it should be remembered that the latter have demonstrated attitudes of condescension towards Bhutanese. So a one-sided approach will not succeed. Therefore in national politics, the urge to reach out to other peoples based on preconceived notions that ethnicity and race will better serve one's interests may not be the best of politics for a nation,

and leaders and people with such notions should be simply ignored and not permitted to play any significant national role. A nation has to base its international politics on safeguarding its vital interests of sovereignty, independence and security—no matter with which entity or race or ethnicity its leadership may have to deal with. In Bhutan's case this has been glaring. India, rather than Tibet or China, has served Bhutan's interest the best.

### Setting the stage for Indo-Bhutan relations

King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck ascended the throne in 1952 when Bhutan, Tibet and the region as a whole were going through trying times. In the north, the Chinese intervention in Tibet had acquired a

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**HIS MAJESTY THE THIRD DRUK GYALPO AND HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN WITH J B PRADHAN, THE AUTHOR'S FATHER**

violent and ominous character resulting in the fleeing of the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans into India. The Chinese communists of the times seemed to be in no mood to make any compromises on their claims over Tibet. At the same time they were bent upon integrating the Tibetan region into the "motherland" by all means, including militarily. The Cultural Revolution in China attempted to achieve this through the destruction, and if this was not possible, the dilution of Tibetan religion, culture, language, geographical boundaries and demographics. Thousands of Tibetans fled their homeland and scattered all over the Indian subcontinent and beyond to Europe, the United States and Canada. The Cultural Revolution resulted in the tragic destruction of Tibet's ancient civilization that had for centuries influenced Bhutan and the Himalayan region including Mongolia and parts of China. The "it looks like me" revered statue of Guru Rimpoche in Samye, Tibet, was also destroyed during this period. The Tibetans expected support from an international community that knew or cared very little about them or their struggle. The United States, through its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), made some half-hearted attempts to provide training and arms to the Tibetan resistance movement but as soon as they felt that their interests were not threatened and Tibet was of little importance to them politically and economically, they dropped even the token assistance being provided. In fact, the resistance put up by Tibetans with CIA assistance may have only helped to make the Chinese

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reactions harsher. When US aid was abruptly cut off, the Tibetans suffered more as a result.

Neither was Nehru's India in any mood to aid the Tibetans militarily or in the United Nations. In fact, India initially inherited the British view that Tibet was an autonomous region under Chinese "suzerainty" as opposed to "sovereignty"—a legal position that British diplomats had devised to avoid Chinese wrath but seemingly to show some sympathy for Tibet's cause. India, of course, now fully recognizes the sovereignty of China over Tibet, as does China regarding India's Sikkim. From the Indian perspective, Indian diplomats seemed to have had this concept that India's sphere of influence should be paramount south of the Himalayan range and that of China in the north. This was a colonial concept, but the hangover may persist in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's government in India after 1947 was in a dilemma on how to react to the developments taking place on the yet-to-be demarcated borders of the Himalayas with China. Nehru seemed basically an idealist who believed that the Indians and Chinese, the two great civilizations and peoples of Asia, and who had both emerged from the yoke of colonialism, could not afford any rivalry. Now, as independent developing countries he expected that both would concentrate on socioeconomic development and deal with neighbors and other countries on the basis of respect for each other's sovereignty and national pride. He

was so carried away by the idea of friendship and cooperation that the term "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" was coined. Nehru's expectations were shattered in 1962 when the Chinese invaded parts of northern India and disputed India's concept of the borders with China as inherited from the British.

India, Bhutan and Nepal have to be nevertheless given the credit for the help provided and the generosity shown to the waves of Tibetan refugees. India has given a lot of space for Tibetan refugees to sustain their religion and culture in Dharamshala and other parts of India. In the case of Bhutan, those Tibetans who wanted to integrate into Bhutanese society found it easy in view of the ethnic and cultural similarities. Officially Bhutan could not afford to antagonize the Chinese, and hence, had to curb all political activities of the Tibetans that were directed towards China. Internationally, Bhutan could say nothing about Tibet's status even if it wanted to, and politically it became expedient to accept Chinese claims over Tibet. After all, where did Bhutan stand when powers like the United States, the erstwhile Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, India and all major nations acquiesced to the fait accompli in the face of China's evolving global economic and political clout.

Despite the 1949 Treaty with Bhutan, the Government of India was unclear on how it should deal with Bhutan under the circumstances, especially with the Chinese takeover of Tibet and claims over the Himalayan region. Besides Bhutan and Nepal being a consideration, what was more important were the Chinese claims of what India considered



## Despite the 1949 Treaty with Bhutan, the Government of India was unclear on how it should deal with Bhutan.

its territories like the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA)—later renamed Arunachal Pradesh by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India, and Aksai Chin. The Indian army which had just emerged from the partition of their country and the grant of independence by the British, was still not well trained and equipped to meet a threat like that of Mao Zedong's revolutionary China.

In the case of India's relations with Bhutan, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru provided an unambiguous interpretation in his public speech in Paro on September 23, 1958. He declared:

"Some may think that since India is a great and powerful country and Bhutan a small one, the former might wish to exercise pressure on Bhutan. It is, therefore, essential that I make it clear to you that our only wish is that you should remain an independent country, choosing your own way of life and taking the path of progress according to your will. At the same time, we two should live as friendly neighbors helping each other. Freedom of both Bhutan and India should be safeguarded so that none from outside can do harm to it."

## BOOK EXCERPT

This statement of Nehru's has proved to be enduring for Indo-Bhutan relations, and was quoted by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh during his visit to Bhutan in May 2008.

An outsider's assessment of the thinking within the Indian leadership at least till now shows that India decided to accept Chinese claims north of the Himalayas, that is, in Tibet. As for Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim, India felt that these should be under its sphere of influence both in international relations and security considerations. The problem for India was and still seems to be, is that China has not conceded to this view of the region, and neither have these Himalayan entities all gone the way India wanted. Indira Gandhi's government managed to annex Sikkim by taking advantage of the political upheaval in that country begun by Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa. Nevertheless, China put off recognizing this annexation for a long time but has now given in to the fait accompli in exchange of India's consistent stand recognizing China's sovereignty over Tibet. India avoided dealings with Taiwan and supported mainland China's seat at the United Nations just as trade and economic links between the two giants grew, and the enhanced position and role of China on the world stage. This was formally done during Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to China in 2003 and further confirmed when the Chinese presented India with revised maps showing Sikkim as a part of India.

Nepal has always tried to resist or minimize India's influence while still expecting all the trade and transit advantages in India,

emphasizing when it could that this was an international right of landlocked countries. At the same time, Nepal from time to time attempts to play off India and China to its advantage, and which sometimes has backfired. It also refused to accept any defense arrangements with India vis-à-vis China and instead made attempts to import Chinese weaponry including ground to air missiles, which India felt was not in keeping with the treaty relationship between the two countries. This attitude of Nepal has resulted in constant friction in Indo-Nepal relations, and at times has reached serious proportions when at one time Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi even decided to close down all transit routes and trade between the two countries—reportedly “to teach Nepal a lesson.”

The most recent attempt by Nepal to play off India and China came when the newly elected Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, or more popularly known by his revolutionary name, Prachanda, snubbed New Delhi and made his maiden visit to Beijing in August 2008. When undertaking the boundary negotiations with China, these same principles seemed to find no place in negotiations with the Government of India. The Bhutanese cabinet in the 1970s frequently questioned the Survey Department as to how the boundaries with India had been finalized without explicit cabinet consent let alone through deliberations and approval in the National Assembly. This discussion in the cabinet never resulted in a satisfactory conclusion except to be informed that the basis would be the boundary line finalized with the British, which were most likely unilaterally drawn

## Nepal has always tried to resist or minimize India's influence

up by colonial surveyors as in the case of most boundaries in the sub-continent. On the other hand, the border discussions and the periodic outcomes between Bhutan and China have rightly been subjected to lengthy debates in the National Assembly with displays of large detailed maps and sand models at the Royal Bhutan Army headquarters in Lungtenphu, Thimphu. For the sake of mentioning it, the author had been made responsible by the fourth King to lead the border negotiations with China for the first time in Bhutan's history in the summer of 1984. 

*(Lyonpo Om Pradhan, who served in the Royal Government of Bhutan for 34 years, presently heads Druk Holding & Investments, as its Chairman and lives in Thimphu, Bhutan. The book was edited by Tashi P Wangdi of KMedia)*

## WHAT IS YOUR QUIRK

Actor Namgay Tshering popularly known as Azha Namgay

### age

I am 55 and life is good.

### Place

I come from Punakha, it is much warmer there. But now I am based in Thimphu.

### Life

Life is a pendulum of joy and sorrow. But we have to find the right path, the middle path.

### Career

I am an artist, I like to paint and draw. But I would rather focus on my acting career now.

### Food

As a Bhutanese I love ema datshi and rice. I dislike non vegetarian food.

### Entertainment

I love watching wrestling on television and Hindi movies. Most of the time I listen to Bhutanese music.

### First Movie

Seday was my first movie and I have many fond memories associated with it..

### Philosophy

Prefer to walk alone, and walk tall.

### Style

Bhutanese fashion has come a long way, it is a part of one's personality. It is good that Bhutanese love wearing our traditional dress.

### Quirk

Small school children irritate me sometimes. They pass comments on how short I am.



The Raven takes a look at the underdog of mushrooms

## KNOW YOUR FOOD

# JILLI NAMCHU



Packed with anti-oxidants, the Jilli Namchu may not be what it seems from its slimy facade

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Nutritional value per 100 g (3.5 oz)  
Nutritional composition, dried.

#### CALORIES

Energy	293.1 kcal (1,226 kJ)
Fat	0.2 g
Protein	10.6 g
Calcium	375 mg (38%)
Iron	185 mg (1423%)
Phosphorus	201 mg (29%)

#### CARBOHYDRATES

Got a good source of energy.

#### PROTEINS

Great source of fiber for digestion

#### VITAMINS

Provide thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, vitamin B-6, folate and ascorbic acid.

#### MINERALS

Provide minerals like iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, zinc, copper, manganese and selenium.



**F**orget your sangay shamu, sisi shamu, or your jichu kangru, make way for the jilli namchu. It maybe slimy, rubbery and kind of tasteless, but if prepared in the right way - one way is with chilies and cheese - it can be delicious.

But that is not the only reason why we recommend you should be eating this fungi. It is because there is one thing you can probably count on and didn't know about this underdog of mushrooms. The jilli namchu is packed with significant medicinal properties that would do every Bhutanese a load of good. Jilli Namchu, directly translates as Cat's Ears for its thin rubbery texture, and is abundantly available in Bhutan most of the year. Known for its resilience to withstand temperatures below freezing point, this 'wallflower' of mushrooms is traditionally recommended for hemorrhoids/piles in Chinese medicine. It has properties that cleanses both stomach and intestines, and is

used against gastrointestinal distress. Some believe Jilli Namchu, scientifically known as *Auricularia*, to be good for lung infections as they remove irritations and soothe the lung surface, as well as used for treating conditions like hemoptysis (spitting blood) and diarrhea. It is a rich source of antioxidant that has anticancer and anti-inflammatory actions, which may help in many types of chronic maladies.

Modern medicine is making further discoveries in its properties. It has been shown to inhibit blood clots by obstructing the platelets. Ingesting small doses regularly has shown to be therapeutic in preventing cardiac arrests and strokes. It has been found to have anti-tumor, anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-parasitic effects and has also shown some results in treating diabetes and jaundice. Although it can be quite bland, this mushroom also has therapeutic properties to lower cholesterol and triglycerides (natural fat in tissue- has



**GOOD AND AFFORDABLE**  
The mushroom is good for cleansing the stomach and intestines

adverse effects when taken in excess). Due to its gelatinous consistency, it was traditionally mixed with eye medicine and used as a salve to treat eye infections. Some believe if boiled in milk or vinegar it can be used to treat throat ailments. It also acts as an astringent.

However, due to its anti-fertility properties, women who are pregnant, lactating or intending to conceive should avoid it. Though there is no extensive empirical study done, it is advised people taking prescribed medicine should not consume the mushroom as it might cause undesired drug interactions.

Jilli Namchu is pale brown in colour, and grows about 6 cm across. It is best eaten young when it is gelatinous and pliant. As it grows older, the mushroom grows black and hard. However, it does not have a poisonous doppelganger like other mushroom species. It is known to grow singly as well as in groups on old wood. Probably because it is abundantly available, it is not valued by the Bhutanese mass. The nutritional value is the same whether fresh or dry. Though the mushroom lacks strong taste, it is a perfect combination/accompaniment for any vegetable or meat item as it absorbs the flavors of other foods.

### Popular names for *Auricularia*

- **Jews Ears** - because of its texture and size.
- **Judas' Ear** - for the apostle who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. He hanged himself on an elder tree, the origin of the name (auricular-judae means 'the ear of Judas')
- **Black Fungus**- described as 'an Indian with bones in it'. 



## REVIEW RESTAURANT



# Upstairs



**WHERE**  
City Mall, Chubachu

**SPECIAL**  
Illy Coffee

**TIMING**  
10 am – 10 pm

**CONTACT**  
# 7799751, upstairs\_restaurant@yahoo.com

**EXTRA**  
WiFi, Books, Magazines

**T**himphu has more Momo joints, Indian restaurants, supposedly Chinese and local fast food restaurants than it can handle. On the other hand there are also higher-end restaurants that specialize in one, or a *melange* of world class (read expensive) cuisine but costs what it does, mainly because they have the upper hand of being scarce. This is when discovering UPSTAIRS comes as, not only a relief but as a most sumptuously pleasant surprise.

First thing you notice as you go UPSTAIRS is the lobby-lounge at the entrance, right next to the *Illy* coffee stand. The restaurant inside has a warm and inviting atmosphere despite the large area the floor covers (seats approx. 180-200). The interior, decorated by a friend of the owners from Sikkim, is neither traditionally Bhutanese nor western but does make an impression. The space is immediately stylish but casual, and the music just loud enough to lift the spirits and low enough to have a conversation over. During the day the natural light streaming in through the wall to ceiling sliding doors (that open onto a long breezy deck) lends just the right amount of sunlight to brighten the inside of the restaurant. There is also a large private or VIP dining room in the back available for reservations. UPSTAIRS is the quarter portion of a grand, 2

### AMATRICIANA

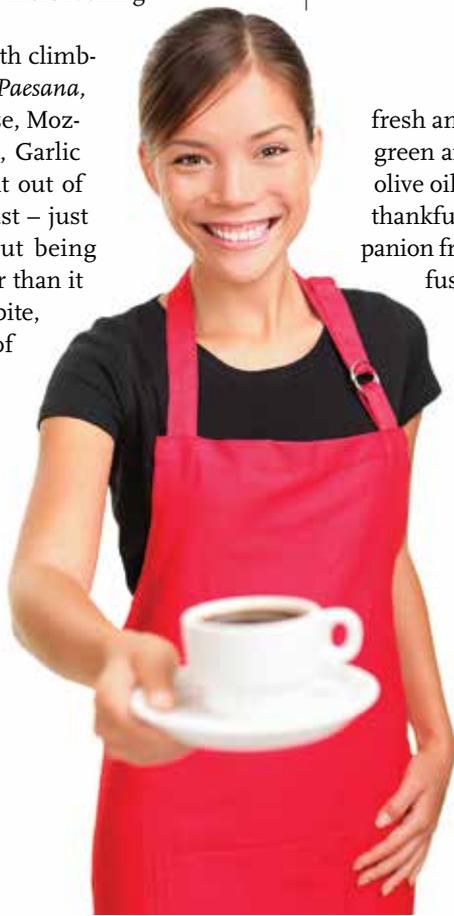


The *Insalata Pasgaling*, a very simple green and fresh salad, boiled eggs dressed in extra virgin olive oil, salt, and vinegar was perfection.

floor venture (approx 30,000 sq. ft – carpet area of 23,000 sq. ft - dedicated to a supermarket, a food court, retail shops) The owner Thinley Dorji, is a young, experienced entrepreneur.

It appears that UPSTAIRS may have initially started out as an attempt to add more variety to the budding restaurant culture in Thimphu. But, as it turns out, the Italian part of an unnecessarily ambitious menu - especially the large variety of Pizza - seems to be the star of UPSTAIRS. Perhaps UPSTAIRS should have been an Italian restaurant? But the proprietor probably knows what he's doing - he may not have wanted to pigeon-hole himself and limit customers looking for other things to eat.

Nevertheless the pizzas are worth climbing up the stairs for. My pizza, the *Paesana*, with a fairly light tomato sauce base, Mozzarella, Bacon, Spinach, Zucchini, Garlic and Parmesan came to us straight out of the oven; the pie had a perfect crust – just the right amount of crisp without being burnt or brittle – tasted even better than it looked. The silence after our first bite, interrupted only by a few moans of pleasure, said enough. Our starter, the only *Antipasto* on the menu of hard-boiled eggs, pickled eggplant, brochette olives, and fresh tomato slices was as expected;



ILLY COFFEE



PAESANA

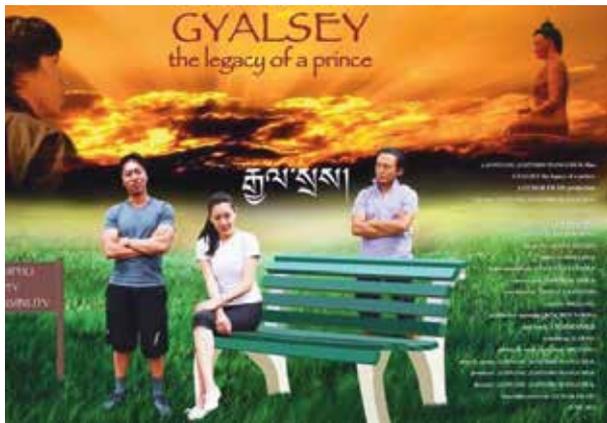


INSALATA PASGALING

fresh and flavourful. The *Insalata Pasgaling*, a very simple green and fresh salad, boiled eggs dressed in extra virgin olive oil, salt, and vinegar was perfection. You can also be thankful for the very generous portions. My excited companion from The Raven, chose the *Amatriciana*, a classic no-fuss spaghetti in a tomato, bacon, onion and parsley sauce, which was too bland for my taste. I would say then that the pasta took a back seat to the rock-star pizza. For dessert I had the Tiramisu & Chocolate Crêpe which was not the most elegant in presentation, but it tasted better than it looked. What must be appreciated is that this restaurant uses local produce largely. You can tell that the food at UPSTAIRS wasn't created to impress culinary greats with fancy presentations or to win awards, but more to promote a hearty meal in casually stylish surroundings at reasonable prices. Judging by the feedback from the growing no. of regulars, UPSTAIRS seems to have achieved that. (By Kesang. P. Dorji) 🐦



## REVIEW MOVIE



# Gyalsey

## The Legacy of a Prince



### DIRECTOR

Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk

### CAST

Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk, Sonam Choden Tenzin, Sonam Wangyel

### SYNOPSIS

Gyalsey is the story of how romantic love transforms into love and compassion for all sentient beings

**A**lthough the title Gyalsey, suggests that the movie may be about the legacy of a prince, the story is neither that of a prince or a reincarnate. It is really the story of a young man, Jamyang and his dedication to love and friendship and to the people around him.

The movie, which is perhaps one of the few Bhutanese movies that has attempted to develop its characters professionally, opened to rave reviews when it was released last month. Gyalsey is without a doubt a refreshing getaway from the over verbalized scripts in popular Bhutanese cinema. Instead of relying on dialogue the effort put into the development of scenes and focusing on building the characters makes the story line stronger.

The 2 hour 35 minute movie, is a first attempt by newcomer director Jamyang Jamtsho. With Gyalsey he can be assured he has secured himself a firm position in the rankings of a good filmmaker in Bhutan's burgeoning film industry. Although it may be his first time, film making and the film industry is nothing new to Jamyang. He starred as the young Dalai

In most Bhutanese movies a recurring theme has been about the war of the classes. Gyalsey, meanwhile, has moved away from this.



**SANGAY AND JAMYANG TAKING A JOYOUS MOUNTAIN SCOOTER RIDE**

Lama in Seven Years in Tibet with Brad Pitt, one of the biggest names in Hollywood. It is no wonder then that he was already familiar with the art of acting and film-making.

Jamyang as the lead actor is a breath of fresh air. The character is naïve but focused, young but sensitive, loves his thukpa over spaghetti, takes regular morning jogs, and is prone to rendering random acts of kindness. His genuinely good nature secures him the girl of his dreams Sangay, played by Sangay Choden Tenzin.

In most Bhutanese movies a recurring theme has been about the war of the classes. Gyalsey, meanwhile, has moved away from this and focuses more on the virtuosity and the ability of two good people, no matter what class of society they come from. It is really a love story between two classes of society and how dedication and love can override classes and boundaries set by people. With Gyalsey's release Director Jamyang has indeed raised the bar for creative and good film production in Bhutan. 



**KOBELCO**

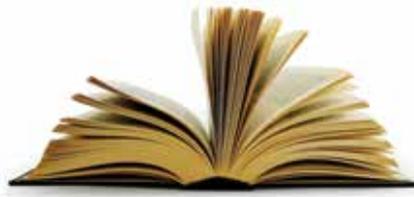
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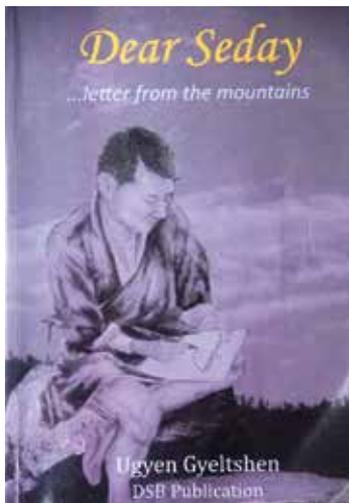
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## REVIEW BOOK



### **Dear Seday** **...letter from the mountains**



**AUTHOR**  
Ugyen Gyeltshen

**PUBLISHER**  
DSB Publications

**A**nother Bhutanese, Ugyen Gyeltshen, tries his hand at writing with his new book, *Dear Seday*, out in the market.

*Dear Seday*, a novel based in eastern Bhutan where Ugyen is originally from tells the story of a boy raised in humble village settings coming of age.

Nadola, the protagonist in the story, has been raised on the farms in the heartlands of rural Bhutan. Although he is the only child his upbringing has not been one of privilege. Through Nadola's story he depicts the hard life and upbringing that is typical of most Bhutanese children on Bhutanese farms. He successfully portrays how families in rural Bhutan have difficulty sending children to school even though education is free.

There are scenes and incidents in the book which may resonate with the lives of most children who may have grown up in villages outside of Thimphu. In one when Nadola first goes to school his father buys him a pair of black leather school shoes popularly known as the "naughty boy's shoes" in Bhutan. Although he is excited at owning his first pair of

There are scenes and incidents in the book which may resonate with the lives of most children who may have grown up in villages outside of Thimphu.

formal shoes, he is also aware that his father will have to work hard at paying off the loan to the shopkeeper from where the shoes were availed on credit.

The book is peppered with familiar stories of most village boys; the tireless routine of having to help out in the fields with backbreaking labor - ploughing fields, herding cows and other household chores - from a tender age. But it is also a story of how, with the sacrifices that his parents make to send him to school, Nadola's life turns around with education.

The book is a collection of letters written on a cold rainy night after Nadola sees the girl of his dreams, Seday, in a red Maruti Esteem car at the Lathongla Pass. He frantically begins to write down 15 years of his life to his high school crush- finding courage in the pen to finally jot down his emotions, while his shy self could not all those years.

The book, as is evident, is not so much about Seday, but what she means to him. Seday serves as a line that still connects him to his past, which he is desperately holding on to- perhaps she depicts hope. Yet, we wonder why Nadola finds it difficult to move on after 15 years.

Finally at 32, he meets her again. Does he tell her or use his letter to convey what he feels? You feel that twinge of uncertainty, ever present at the cusp of change, life and love.

Though the book evokes long lost memories of prayers before meals and eating simple food, the reader wishes that the author had paid more attention to language. The handling of characters is immature and the importance rendered to Seday does not come through. However, Ugyen is honest in his depiction of rural life and his own insecurities. 

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# My brother

With barely a few years between them you would think they siblings are 'thick as thieves', but **Deki Zam** and her younger brother, Yeshey share a slightly different relationship.

**D**eki Zam and her younger brother do not have a wide age gap between them. They are not only close in age but also close friends. But given Yeshey's mild Learning Disability (MLD), which sets him back mentally by several years, the few years of age difference, however, appear generational even.

Deki is not only an older sister, but a protector and nurturer to this 5'7" man whose mental condition is still that of a 10-year-old.

Over a cup of coffee one evening, Deki recalls growing up with her brother at Draktsho, a center for special needs children and youth that her mother started from her garage with the help of a Thai woman living in Bhutan. At that time Deki herself was young and didn't really know what was wrong with her brother. To Deki, Yeshey was a normal child but her mother kept impressing it on her that her brother was a 'special' child.

"Teaching him was very difficult, almost impossible. I used to teach him mathematics and moments later, he would have forgotten everything. I used to get so frustrated that I ended up crying," she said.

But Children like Yeshey with a typical verbal and IQ performance

the 50-70 range, which is one or two standards below average who have MLD have difficulty retaining anything in their memory. It was after many unsuccessful attempts, poor performances at school early on, his inattentiveness to learning because of his inability to comprehend and reason basic concepts or instructions that Yeshey's mother pulled him out of school. Instead, she decided that she would focus on teaching him some alternate life-skills that might prove valuable and help him later on in life. This was how she started teaching him cooking and tailoring and later expanding these basic skills to other children who suffered from disabilities. All Deki remembers when they were children was that her brother was slow to learn and that he was poor in his studies. But her time with him as a child was not without fun. She recalled all the times they went fishing together, enjoying watching horror movies together while huddled under the same blanket. How is one expected to understand that he is any different from you when he enjoyed the same things that I did. That he laughed and cried at the same things I did, she said.



*All I know is he was bad in studies*

There were times when Deki's mother - single and working, had to leave the country for work Dur-

ing these periods the three of them were left in the care of relatives. But while Deki would stay with relatives in Thimphu, Yeshey would be sent off to the village to be with grandparents. "It was already a burden for my relatives to look after two children, so to add my special brother would have been unfair to even the kindest relatives", Deki said. "But understanding the illness and what he was suffering from makes it unbearable to think of leaving him with anyone for a night, we miss him too much, he is the gel that binds our family."

But while Deki and her other brother have grown up, Yeshey has been left behind. He will remain the young ten year old for the rest of his life. Growing up with a special needs sibling is hard and while Deki did everything she could to support him at home, she kept his life away from her friends knowing too well that many people were ignorant of understanding this disability. While Yeshey stayed under the protective eye of his mother and siblings, Yeshey tried to live her life as normally as she could. "when I was younger I partied - that is perhaps the one thing I never could do with my brother," she said regretfully. She has also never been able to take him out for coffee with friends worrying how he could make a fool of himself in front of people who may not have the ability to understand his handicap. "I did not talk about him so much to other people - thinking they would not understand It was a private thing for me. I craved the support of someone who was in the same boat as me.

There are many reasons for learning disabilities. For Yeshey, the real reason is not known but

he did have a difficult birth and at 3 months of age he underwent a major surgery . But Yeshey has his own life. He has friends from the Draktsho Center and enjoys his Hindi Television serials. He apparently wakes up by 6:30 am, prepares breakfast with some help and feeds his granny first. He seems to enjoy it that everybody sits together for breakfast. After breakfast Mother, daughter and son leave for work next door. Yeshey follows a routined schedule which seems to be good for him. It gives him a sense of security and stability. He goes about his work at the tailoring cell with other children with disabilities. There they make souvenirs and other items like bags. After work, he goes off to meet his friends who live in the same area. He is usually home for dinner, and lies on the couch curling up with their cat Candy till his favorite television show (the Hindi Serials) comes on. This has been his schedule for as long as Deki can remember. Yeshey, Deki says, loves to cook and make a mean gulab jamun. He loves Indian food and Nepali cuisine and is fantastic at mimicking people and animals. He does a real good mouse impersonation. "Meet him once and soon after you leave, he will mimic you exactly", Deki laughs, with a hint of pride in her voice.

Few years ago, Deki began volunteering for Draktsho as a counselor. Her mother taught her to be patient with the students. "In the beginning it got very frustrating almost to the point of losing my temper, now I am better at it. It's not the easiest job in the world but I am doing it and I am happy to continue", Deki says, her eyes tearing slightly which she tries to

hide behind a smile. She gets her inspiration from her mother, who as a single woman with three small children- one a special needs one - managed to provide for all of them. She was previously in the hospitality industry which she quit to support her mother in bringing greater awareness on special needs care.

With society changing fast Deki says that she is fiercely protective of him now because she can see him changing. "I am worried he will get hurt. As he is getting older, he is more emotional and easily affected when people label him. Just a few days ago, a salesgirl called him 'tsagay' which upset him for days." However, Deki is quick to point out that people generally say good things about her brother, but what goes on behind is something they will never know. With her youngest brother married, she knows she will have to be the main source of support for Yeshey after their mother. Deki is clearly ridden by worries how her brother will deal with life if she marries and starts a family of her own. Right now, Yeshey has no concept of what marriage is, but he has begun to understand the importance of 'having' someone. Deki is deeply religious and she has tried to understand why her brother is the way he is. Buddhism attributes people born with disabilities to be serving out their karma. "It is a challenge to take care of a child with special needs or disability, but it is not a curse. Life would have been empty without Yeshey. If it was not for him, Draktsho would never have been born through which many families are getting help.

"To us, he is a blessing," Deki says choking and fighting back tears.





# “Bhutanese merry-making should end”

The Raven's Karma Choden talks to the **RMA Governor**

In the last couple of months Daw Tenzin, the first Governor of the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan has come under fire for his handling or comments on the Rupee Issue. He has been widely criticized for closing the non-resident accounts and suspending housing and vehicle loans. In these past few months he has come to represent many things to many people. To some, he is the harbinger of bad economic times for Bhutan. To others he is the man who could take tough decisions. Seen to be fighting fire with fire, he has publicly antagonized the National Council, refusing to submit to their instructions.

He has stuck to his guns for what he claims to be the benefit of the country. He blames the careless borrowing culture of the affluent and the middle class for “sleepwalking with the rupee into disaster”, yet he seems to be willing to be the one guy to take the onus of putting the measures in place for the overall benefit of the economy, even if it meant causing momentary pain to all. In this exclusive interview with The Raven's Karma Choden, Governor Daw Tenzin said that the rupee is not “air that is freely

available.”

The Government has been saying that it's the Bhutanese who caused the rupee crisis. Doesn't people become consumerist when government policy allows it?

It is a combination. Now in Bhutan there is so much growth in the middle-income group and they tend to borrow to enhance their income. So this group triggers import by borrowing from banks for housing, personal loans and vehicle purchase. Anything above 30% in calculating the household-to-debt ratio is considered high. For Bhutan it may be well over 150% meaning we are a highly indebted. But we cannot blame the banks for lending - it's us the people who make the banks lend. Of course, the discipline of responsible lending was not there.

On the other hand, the government has town plans for all 20 dzongkhags- if there were no plans, there wouldn't be any housing, and there wouldn't be any need for transport infrastructure and vehicle purchase. But, these are normal in any growing economy. Because when you are growing, you cannot see the limit.

**What do you mean when you say the discipline of responsible lending was not there?**

The present situation emerged because of the affluent and the middle-income groups, both grew their income through borrowing, so the borrowing culture is very strong in Bhutan. Many people also thought that rupee was a legal tender and that it is theirs without earning. Since Bhutanese were getting used to getting rupee easily, we had to put few measures in place; we had to calibrate everything now and then, including bank credit growth curbing, and import measures. We had to put in place many things and discipline our spending. Now, rupee is treated as a foreign currency and it will no longer be issued from bank counters for circulation. Rupee will follow the foreign exchange guidelines and will be exchanged from the foreign exchange window. Changes had to be made, and yes, rupee is available, but they will have to breathe in harder, since it is like any foreign currency.

**How much have we spent so far and how much are we in debt?**

The public debt, the money that the government borrowed for projects including hydropower, schools and hospitals, come close to Nu 60 billion. But these are all long term debt borrowed from the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank on low interest with a 30 year repayment



**People still say you are unfit for the job - what do you have to say?**



**BHUTAN IS AN import led country, with over 75% of our merchandise from India**

and 10 year grace period. For hydropower it's 10% but pegged to the earning when the project is launched. The most short-term debt is overdraft. The interest is quite high, so anytime we are ready with the money we have to liquidate. The greatest danger is the credit from the banking sector for private consumption. Today if you take a loan of Rs 3 lakhs, immediately it calls for rupee for import. So this is the key concern now for us. The recent IMF and World Bank mission stated that Bhutan is not in a balance of pay-

ment crisis, it is a structural imbalance crisis. Growth is still going to be there. As the Governor, my main worry is the debt and growth dynamics. We perpetually do not encourage the govt. to grow by borrowing.

**But how do you stop an average Bhutanese from borrowing to grow - considering every Bhutanese dreams of owning a home?**

But there is a limit. Until now, banks were highly exposed to industries and housing. In the name of home ownership,



individuals were getting into commercial buildings. Just now, there is no liquidity, so they cannot borrow. It's as simple as that. We will have to put more policy measures through interest rates, raise the rates higher so that they are not encouraged to borrow so much.

Many people say that these measures have hurt many 'mey nyamchus' (common folk). *Mey nyamchus* cannot build houses, they will never buy cars. It's only some people who just make noise. *(chuckling)*

**Still there are complaints that our hydropower projects are growing too fast - that it is the biggest reason behind the rupee outflow. What do you have to say?**

I am a true believer of hydropower potential because this is the only potential [the] Bhutanese can reap. Yes, the pace of the hydropower development maybe faster than what we could take [on]. But



## They may be top economists, but they are not central bankers

the rupee outflow is not necessarily through hydropower. The rupee outflow is through our collective consumption through the banking system without any rules and procedures.

**But there has been reports that RMA has accelerated the problem by withholding the dollars for hydropower development and releasing the equivalent in ngultrum to the government.**

Just to be clear, the reserve that RMA has built is through grant, aid, and concessional borrowings, not through export performance - meaning we didn't build up the reserve by selling. For hydropower there is money, through grant as well as loan. Axillary sec-

tors related to hydropower, for e.g. a town like Gaeddu, grew because of hydropower. This fast pace of urbanization is the main cause of rupee outflow, that has increased demand for housing, vehicle, grocery, clothing, etc. So when there was free access to bank credit, and when there was unlimited convertibility of ngultrum into Indian rupee- that slipped the whole thing actually.

**Following the rupee crunch, we have been hearing that Bhutanese business houses are depositing money in Indian banks. It is not only illegal but also a drain on the economy?**

Where will the Bhutanese take the ngultrum to deposit? Who will take ngultrum in the first place? Bhutanese currency is

not yet convertible...so, they cannot take the ngultrum and deposit it elsewhere. Even if they have converted the local currency into rupee, making a bank deposit in India is very tough. The regulation by the Central Bank of India is so tough that foreigners cannot open bank accounts easily. The issue of Bhutanese depositors taking money and flying away across the border is not true at all.

**I want to talk about the economic forum where Dr. Joseph Stiglitz and Dr. Hamid Rashid from UN-DESA spoke. Your absence there was widely discussed, especially when it concerned our country's rupee problem?**

First of all, that economic forum was my idea. I wanted to gather all the stakeholders and put an economic forum in Bhutan, but with Dr. Joseph Stiglitz and Dr. Rashid - their views are different from mine, and I did not have interest to attend. They do not have the native intelligence as I do; I am a Bhutanese, I am born here and I am the governor- I know the situation.

**But still, wasn't it still important to be there to provide a counter argument, especially as the governor?**

It was not necessary, because the best reaction is no reaction (*chuckling*)...many times when they talk things that do not make sense to me personally I don't want to go. You unnecessarily get

into a debate, which I didn't want to. Dr. Joseph Stiglitz is a renowned man and I didn't want to pull him down with an argument in a public forum.

**But shouldn't you have done that in the interest of the country? Because they said Bhutan doesn't have a crisis.**

Well, they were talking about the management reserve, which they do not understand. They were advising the government and the people to sell the foreign exchange to buy rupee. Yes, over 75% of our import is from India, but we cannot sell the convertible currency reserve - that should be our last line of defense for us. They may be top economists, but they are not central bankers. Central bankers know what we need to do.

**So you do not agree to Joseph Stiglitz's idea of selling our dollar reserves and maintaining it in rupees?**

No. Even the recent IMF and World Bank mission advised us not to sell our dollar reserve. That should be the last line of defense.

**What was the deal between you and National Council. Why did you refuse to go to the Council, when most institutions and officials have?**

They may be the apex law making body in the country, but that is their responsibility. Both the Privy Council and National Assembly financial committees came to RMA to study the rupee situation. We showed them the figures and briefed them for two hours. But the NC committee never set foot in RMA. Being the apex body they wanted all the information to be given to them and they wanted my board meeting files from 2007 till now. Board meeting files do not necessarily talk about rupee, and there are many things the central bank normally does

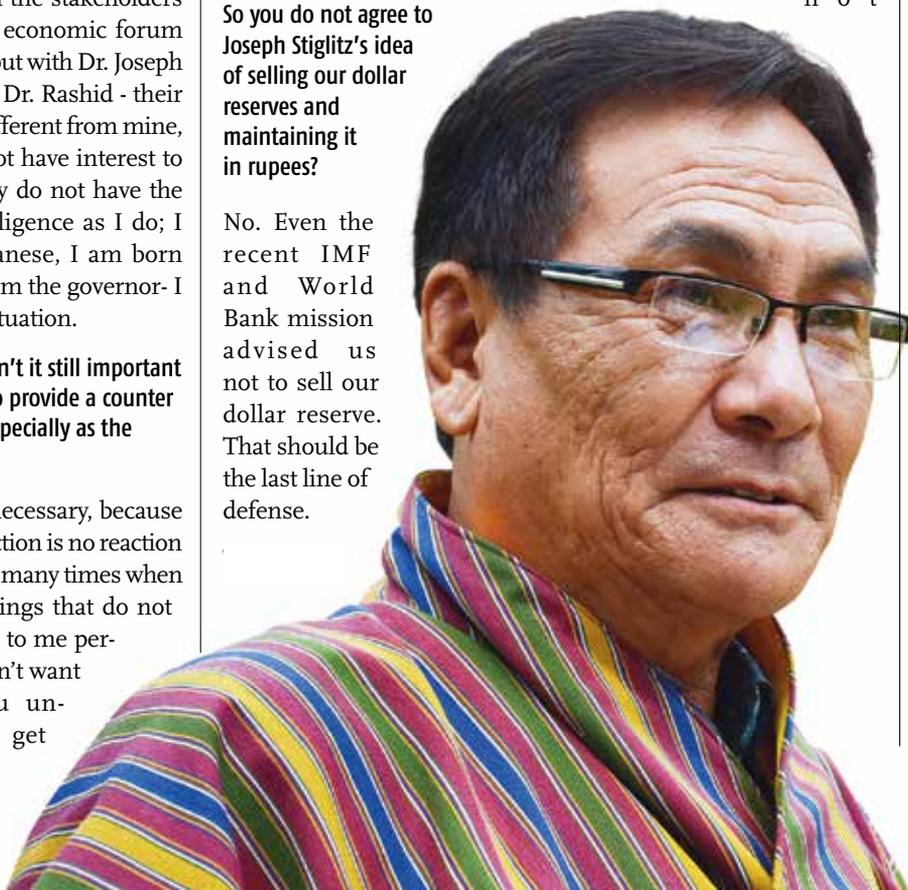
n o t

share. Internal documents cannot be shared externally and made public.

They said 'he refused to come' and that's why they could not finish their job. If they can't complete their job, maybe it is due to the lack of professional capacity rather than my refusal to come. First time they summoned, I was out of the country, so the deputy governor went before the NC. In that sense, the deputy governor was the governor during my absence. The second time, I was again on leave, and the deputy governor yet again represented me. Yes, they have the right to summon me, but does it necessarily have to be Daw Tenzin as the Governor? We opened the files and they can look at it. But they focused on the fact that I refused to come. In the beginning they said they were trying to do a review, later it seemed to me that they were trying to investigate me. If that is the case, send the case to the court and the court will issue an order and then I will go.

**You have earlier said that gossips and informal talk at bars doesn't sum up to expert analysis. Do you think there has been too much unwanted media attention on this issue?**

Yes, vested interests were trying to play up the media. For example, in Kuensel it was written the ngultrum is meaningless. We have the king, we have the flag...we are a sovereign nation, that is why we printed the ngultrum,



# “In celebration of the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13th Oct 2012.”

*“Building resilient communities together”- For Safe and Happy Bhutan*



*Figure – Various Hazards threatening the Land of GNH - Bhutan*

The Department of Disaster Management, MoHCA, as the National Co-coordinating Agency for all types of Disasters and Risk Management in Bhutan, takes this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude to His Majesty the King for providing the magnanimous Royal Relief and Kidu support to the affected families of the recent disaster events.

**Bhutan is highly vulnerable to various natural hazards and disasters, some of the past disaster events are:**

- Glacial Lake Outburst Flood of 1994  
17 lives lost  
Caused huge damage to infrastructure and agricultural properties
- Cyclone Aila precipitated flood of 2009  
13 lives lost  
Damage worth Nu. 722 Million
- Mongar Earthquake of 2009  
Magnitude – 6.3  
12 lives lost  
Damage worth Nu. 2501 Million
- Windstorm of 2010 & 2011  
Damage approx. Nu. 40 Million
- Sikkim Earthquake of 2011  
Magnitude 6.9  
1 life lost, 14 injured  
Damage worth Nu. 1198 Million
- Major Structural Fires of Wamrong & Chamkhar towns and Wangduephodrang Dzong

**Disaster Risk Reduction and Management is Every Body's Business !**

Disaster Management is not only about ad-hoc response but it is all about Pro-active planning and preparing for all the cycles of Disaster Management – viz., Awareness, Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness and Response - for which each and every individual/Agency shall be fully responsible and accountable.

The Department of Disaster Management, in our sincere efforts towards effective and efficient disaster awareness, mitigation, preparedness and response seeks for wholehearted collaboration, support and cooperation from all the relevant Stakeholders and the General public in reducing disaster risks in the Country of Gross National Happiness.

**Let us strive towards building Safer and Happier Bhutan !**

**The Department of Disaster Management joins the nation to celebrate the 1st anniversary of the Royal Wedding on 13th October. We offer our prayers for peace, prosperity and happiness to the Royal Couple.**

For more Information: Log in: [www.ddm.gov.bt](http://www.ddm.gov.bt) or, call 334944, 321004, 327319, 326910, 322945, or Hotline No. 233.

for good reason. Now, many people talk about the currency value, that ngultrum is a valueless currency and that we should de-peg from the rupee... the central bank and the monetary policy operates under the international monetary system...we are a signatory to the IMF articles of agreement, we are a member of the IMF, we follow the IMF arrangement and exchange restitutions.

**People still say you are unfit for the job- what do you have to say?**

Is it? Good, maybe there are people who are fit for the job. I have done the best that I can. Even the IMF and World Bank fully share the measures I have taken. If I am not fit for the job, yes they have the choice to bring someone else...*(chuckles)*... I did not bargain for it. Even in the media, they ask me that being the Governor, on moral grounds I should resign....I said yes. I never thought Bhutanese had any morals...if Bhutanese had morals, let us exercise moral responsibility collectively, isn't it?

**So if time comes, you wouldn't hesitate to take up moral responsibility and resign?**

Yes, why not? The current crisis was not made by me as the Governor, it was the collective merrymaking of all the Bhutanese...so why should I take the responsibility, we say let us all take the responsibility collectively.



## Do you think the vegetable import ban was the right move by the Govt.?

**You have said that earning INR is not RMA's responsibility, but isn't it RMA's responsibility to frame policies that leads to prudent earning or spending of INR?**

See, RMA is a custodian of the national treasury. Our job is not to generate rupee. Rupee generation and expenditure is done by the government and the private sector. RMA's job is to manage. Just now we are doing an overdraft, which is not the job of the RMA, but the government did not have much space to handle it, so we had to do it temporarily. Also we put the measures and systems in place, so that in future when the fiscal action comes through taxation, broadening the tax base and other quantitative limit comes into place, we will withdraw the restrictions. Even the overdraft of rupee from State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank- nowhere in the world does the Central Bank borrow from commercial banks to bail out private consumption.

**Then why did we do this in Bhutan?**

We had to do it. During such a crisis, you have to do the unprecedented thing.

**Would you say that this was one precedent you have set in RMA, after it became autonomous- besides your other systems precedence?**

See, the crisis gave an opportunity to the RMA to act as a central bank. Initially the central bank had only one instrument called the CRR- Cash Reserve Ratio. Now during the crisis, we introduced the policy rates on which the banks will peg

their lending rate. We also introduced the base rate, which gives transparency to the bank to set the lending rate- below which they cannot lend. We also introduced the last resort of lenders- when the banks are in trouble- they can come and borrow from us through that window. Of course, the heat was too much, but it gave the central bank to act professionally and in a manner a Central Bank does.

**RMA has been pushing Bhutan towards cashless transactions. How does it help Bhutan?**

Yes. As an importing country, we have to import, but import transaction in cash has a risk, has a cost, and a tax loophole. Until this year, most of the import transactions were done through cash, drawing huge sacks of cash...now when we make transaction through the banking system, stop the cash...we can trace the import and export figure, we can trace the cash outflow. Even printing ngultrum has a cost on the RMA, it is risky for people to carry large amounts of cash, and there is a tax loophole...people evade tax through cash.

However, no society can make its economy fully cashless. But now with electronic fund transfer, mobile banking, internet banking, point of sale (even at fuel stations), there will not be any cash leakage and mishandling of cash. For businesses, why collect cash by selling and next day deposit in the bank? If you use point of sale, money jumps from account to account. You just

have to pick up things and give to the buyer.

We also had to look at our own demography; the median age in Bhutan is say 22 years old and is around 42% of the Bhutanese population. This group is mobile, and techno-savvy. All young people drive and they wouldn't like to carry cash, so we put a point of sale at fuel stations, it is also safer for the fuel depositor and owners. The payment gateway is a wonderful thing- we designed that to give comfort, facility, service to all the Bhutanese so that you reduce your risk, and saves the central bank the cost of printing. Already the life of a currency is hardly five to six months. The way Bhutanese handle cash shortens the life to barely two to three months. So printing and reprinting is done by RMA, which is quite high. Any transaction done through cash is no longer a virtue.

**The average Bhutanese has been enjoying life as it is- with nature as well as with development. How long can we expect to have this?**

Bhutanese merry-making should come to an end. When we say we are in a happiness country, we should also watch the balance sheet. As long as your balance sheet is red, we cannot continually be green and happy. This kind of situation also gives most of the Bhutanese to rationalize now- can we ever live a lifestyle of a consumer-based economy? No, we have to produce, generate and earn our income.

**There has been speculation that if we de-value our currency and un-peg it from the rupee, that Bhutan might experience an economic boom. Your comments.**

You de-value your currency if your economy is export-based. The logic is that if your currency is low, your export will rise. But when we have a huge debt, huge import and we de-value our currency, then we are gone (*chuckles*).

**So it's not a good move for Bhutan?**

No, not at all. In 2004, Argentina de-pegged [its currency] from the dollar. When they unhooked from the dollar, they first had to devalue their currency and by that much, the Argentineans were poorer. They had to re-designate the asset and liability into their currency and re-introduce their currency. Many people talk about devaluation and un-pegging without understanding it properly. For e.g. America was blaming China for manipulating currency value. China is a huge exporter. That is why they de-value their currency as much as they do. If you are an exporter, it makes sense. If you are a net importer, then you kill yourself.

**Do you think the vegetable import ban was the right move by the government. What would you have suggested otherwise?**

Bhutan is a wonderful land. Leaving the farms barren and just jumping across the border buying things we can grow ourselves in not a good idea.

Vegetable ban was necessary, because Bhutan could grow all kinds of vegetable, yet we were not growing, so the ban will trigger some interest in the farming community to grow and increase their income. This is the only way to ride on the sustainability path.

**Even with all these measures in place, we are on a slippery slope and the rupee crisis will not abate in the next few months? What should we expect?**

We are an import-led country, with over 75% of our merchandise from India. Only earning of rupee is from hydropower and some industrial export. But, unlike in the past, it is no more enough. Now with the growth in the population, growth in the business volume, rupee is going to be a challenge in the future, say until 5 to 10 years, until the full hydropower potentials are reaped. However, we may not get into the critical situation like we did in 2011.

**Does that mean that importers will face undue problems with importing from here on?**

The only restriction is on new housing loans and purchase of vehicles. The rest is all given through the banking channel. Apart from items like alcohol and luxury good everything is allowed for import. Any amount the importer wanted, they just need to submit the invoice and we give it through the banking channel.

**How does the RMA Governor manage the rupee issue in his**

**own life and what sort of crisis have you faced personally after the crisis began?**

My earning is in ngultrum, my children's earning is in ngultrum, and we have everything here in Bhutan. There are importers who bring the goods here, so we buy with the local currency. There are shops selling whatever we need. If my family has to go for a medical checkup or a treatment in India we can transfer any amount to the hospital account. Any Bhutanese student in India can open an account in India and money can be transferred to their account by family members from Bhutan. So I am telling my family there is no crisis.

**Any tips from the RMA Governor to improve this situation?**

Being a Bhutanese citizen, our economy is import and aid driven. Many countries come and give us help here and it is their tax money. The best thing I can ask the Bhutanese is that if you are a true Bhutanese and if you want to see this nation grow- pay tax, discipline yourself not to get into unnecessary consumption.

**Would you say that we should follow the GNH way of life?**

GNH means happiness, but as a banker you are happy with reason- with your book. Well, if you want to be happy but you are a highly indebted individual- happiness will just melt away. So consumption led, debt driven wealth- DO NOT jump into it. As a citizen, pay tax, follow rules, discipline

yourself.

Be prudent. Even the housewives are not prudent anymore. During my mother's time, the housewives controlled the money flow through them. Of course the job of the husband/father is to make money and bring, but her job is to manage the money. Now the housewives- their purse is open 24 hours- so when you lose that prudence, you really get into trouble. Even in villages, when we were young - forget fish and chicken - even pork and beef was very limited. So let us be prudent for the time being so that our future is safe.

Anyone who had not seen a 500 note before are now rolling in money because of profit made from land speculation and sale. True democracy comes by paying tax, if you want your voice to be heard. If you don't pay tax, just vote and select a guy and ask him to bring water, road, school, house- it is unreasonable. Pay your tax, look for the person who can manage that tax properly. Without paying tax, it is not sustainable at all. And we must cut on the consumption.

**What would you suggest to the government?**

The govt. should re-look at their development plans. There are 20 dzongkhags and



## Rupee is going to be a challenge in the future, say for 5 to 10 years

each dzongkhag has urban development plans. Do we want to develop all that in the 11th FYP? If yes, then the rupee slide is definite. We need to cut areas where rupee out-flow is involved.

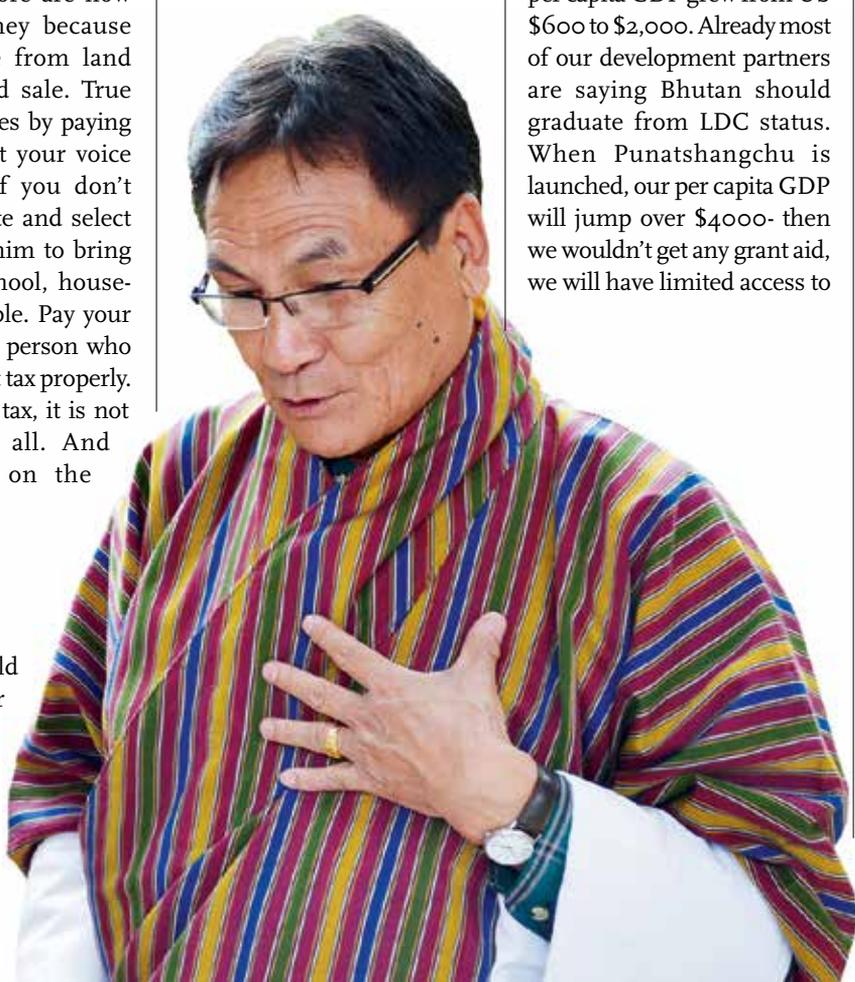
I also suggest the government relook and discuss in parliament on broadening the tax base. When Tala was launched, our per capita GDP grew from US \$600 to \$2,000. Already most of our development partners are saying Bhutan should graduate from LDC status. When Punatshangchu is launched, our per capita GDP will jump over \$4,000- then we wouldn't get any grant aid, we will have limited access to

concessional borrowing, we do not have our own potential to generate and earn. So this is the upside risk.

**Last couple months must have been very difficult for you. If you could give us some idea of what it was like.**

I was fortunate because Lyonchen and the Cabinet were quite open to my ideas. As a central bank, we follow data point, trends, and we analyze them, use good judgment and then run. The closing of the non-resident accounts, people thought I did not give them time- I CANNOT. We had to be rational and then to take a decision on the temporary suspension of housing and vehicle loan. Many people wouldn't have done it, but I chose to do it because it was necessary.

Now the public understands fully. I have comfort, because my main worry more than the rupee issue was how best to have a system in place; how do we coordinate between the Customs, bank and the RMA- because the game is played there. Now all the major systems are launched- things are falling into place, the dust is settling down. 



# The Gyelpozhing roundup

**T**he scenic town of Gyelpozhing is becoming a potential eastern hub following the 60MW Kurichu Hydropower, the Dungsam Cement Project, the Nganglam-Gyelpozhing highway, and the 1,800MW Kuri Gongri project planned downstream. That is why the illegal land transactions around 10 years back are under scrutiny. In 2001-02, when the current speaker Jigme Tshultrim, was the Mongar Dzongda and the ex officio chairman of the dzongkhag land allotment committee, land in Gyelpozhing town and nearby areas were illegally allotted to several influential people and their relatives including ministers, judges, dzongdas and senior Kurichu Project staff.

The land allotments, it was reported, were in violation of Royal Kashos on land allotment and the Land Act 1979.

Apart from not following the established procedures on allotting plots in Gyelpozhing town proper the dzongda, had also acquired additional government land across the Kurichu river which was not part of the town plan area and gave away large chunks of it to the influential beneficiaries.

Across the river, a 50 decimal plot was given to Lyonchen Jigmi Y. Thinley who was then

the home minister. A one acre plot was given to Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, the then finance minister. A 50 decimal plot was given to the then communication minister, Lyonpo Leki Dorji. The plots were allotted to them at a rate of Nu 5 per square feet or Nu 2,178 a decimal.

In the commercial and residential area in Gyelpozhing town, land was also allotted to a host of influential people directly or to their spouses and other family members.

In the second allotment of commercial plots at Gyelpozhing, none of the influential beneficiaries had a business license, a requisite at the time of allotments.

The land allotment in Gyelpozhing was part of a larger allotment done in two phases. In the first phase in 1999, 19 commercial plots were allotted to business people who had valid business licenses. The second allotment was in June, 2001.

About 25 plots were allotted from commercial area and about 46 plots from residential area during the second phase. The six or seven plots allotted to different individuals on the other side of the Kurichu River totaling 8.10 acres of land were categorized as "high command plots."

There were four committees that allotted commercial and





residential plots in Gyalpoizhing, Mongar between 1999 and 2006. Headed by the dzongda as the committee chairman and dzongrab as the member secretary, two committees were formed to allot commercial plots and the other two to allot residential plots.

Both committees comprised of 12 members each and included almost all the dzongkhag sector heads like the land record officer, district engineer, district agricultural officer, district livestock officer, Mongar gup, Saling gup, Mongar town chimi, Gyalpoizhing town thume, and Mongar municipal committee member.

Five plots in the commercial area and the other side of the river were allotted when the present home minister Minjur Dorji was the Mongar dzongda in 2005 and 2006. He also formed a 12-member committee in 2005 and another one in 2006, according to sources. Of the five plots, two plot sizes of 10.67 decimals each were allotted to Drametse dratshang in Mongar and Khar-chu dratshang in Bumthang in the commercial area.

A gist of the investigation findings on the Gyalpoizhing land case posted on the ACC website, said the plot allotment committee had undermined the rule of law and the principle of due diligence, fairness, equity, transparency and check and balance. Its findings, which is now with the Attorney General, stated that of the 99 plots allotted in both commercial and residential areas, 67 plots or 14.12 acres were illegal.

Anti Corruption Commission, which began investigations into the Gyalpoizhing case on September 20, 2011 after Prime Minister

## Most findings were substantiated by the ACC, which conducted a separate investigation.

Jigmi Y Thinley had requested ACC to do so on August 26 last year, froze transactions of 75 plots belonging to both individuals and institutions last month.

Land records today indicate that 81.89 acres of private land was acquired which means more private land may have been acquired after Dasha Lhakpa Dorji's tenure as dzongda.

Four committees were formed between 1999 and 2006 at the district level to specifically allot commercial and residential plots.

Most findings were substantiated by the ACC, which conducted a separate investigation. ACC pronounced that of the 99 plots allotted, 67 (14.12 acres) were illegal. After the case was forwarded to the OAG, interestingly they found no legal basis to pursue the case to court.

But this is not the end, the case will only become tenser as the ACC can now move the case to court. The Gyelpozhing land case will also be major campaign point in the 2013 elections. 

### MOST DISCUSSED NEWS IN SEPT

# 3.3

billion ngultrum worth of software was exported from Bhutan last year.



# 447

black necked cranes visited Bhutan in 2011-2012. The world has only around 11,000 cranes.



# 50

The country has 50 freshwater fish species.



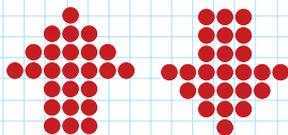
# 10

cases of child labor was recorded in the last four years.



### **'Ishness' by Karma Wangchuk**

Karma Wangchuk learnt the basics of painting while at school at Dr. Graham's Homes in Kalimpong, India. He is an obsessive 'sky-gazer; hopeless at using gadgets. Has an irrational fear that Bhutan in a 100 years will turn into a mere cultural museum. He is currently painting a portrait of His Majesty the King and making a documentary on HIV status in Bhutan. Contact Karma Wangchuk at [karmawangchuk@gmail.com](mailto:karmawangchuk@gmail.com)



**Sonam Tobgay**

Looks like Bhutan Kuen-Ngyam Party really wants to prove it's an out-of-the-box party. And it went too far this time when Party spokesperson Sonam Tobgay announced they will offer a minister post to the opposition leader if they come to power.



**Dasho Kunzang Wangdi**

Chief Election Commissioner Dasho Kunzang Wangdi has come to grips with social media being quite active on Facebook and Twitter. Perhaps other senior officials who run away from being on social media could take some lessons from him.



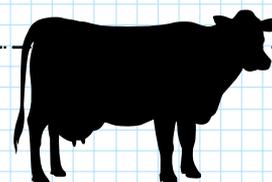
**Tshewang R Wangchuk**

Respected Conservationist and Bhutan Foundation Executive Director Tshewang R Wangchuk, was recently nominated as the National Geographic explorer of the week on September 5 to focusing on his work on snow leopards.



**Thinley Gyamtsho**

Druk Phunsum Tshogpa secretary Thinley Gyamtsho talking to BBS said the party has not approached anyone to join them. But what about this quote from the same story, "Thinley Gyamtsho also said the party is looking for more women candidates."



Meat prices have gone up. Beef with bones will be at Nu 140 a kilogram, and boneless beef will be Nu 200.



In the run up to the UN Security Council non-permanent seat bid, Bhutan forged diplomatic relations with four countries in September: UAE, Slovenia, Armenia, Turkey and Slovak Republic



The Bhutan lemon grass oil, popular among tourists as a gift to their loved ones, is becoming unpopular with farmers who produce it. While the Lemongrass Cooperative Group comprising of 170 farmers from four eastern dzongkhags produced 10 tons of lemongrass oil in 2007, this year, the number of members dwindled to 45 and only three tons can be produced.



Sangay Tshering from Laithang Goempa in Mongar is a lucky man. An unwelcome visitor, an adult leopard entered his house on September 21 and attacked him, but Sangay Tshering escaped with minor injuries.

**A**s October rolls in we are reminded of things that are bound to change along with the coming of cold drafts, the migratory birds and chirping crickets in the afternoon autumn sun. The seeds of the past year will finally bear fruits, and rewards will abound. The gift of grains, the chilies and Sichuan peppers out on rooftops creates a feast for woodpigeons, who knows the good days are ending. Perhaps, at this cusp, we should also be reminded that Bhutan is in the thick of things which are grounds for resonating change. Like the seasons, this process may seem mundane, but it is integral to what the Bhutanese society will eventually stand for. What will be a Bhutanese society if it does not encompass every small thing that identifies us, even though seemingly inconsequential?

Maybe as we snuggle the cold out, it will be necessary to fathom what could take our Bhutanese society forward as a civilization. What are the qualities we want to be known for? What philosophy besides Gross National Happiness do we want to be identified for?

As a people, Bhutanese are idealists but how much of our ideals are we willing to plant for our future generation? We have been at the crux of many contradictory ideals and practices. The pedestrian day comes to mind: though the rationale behind upholding pedestrian day was lauded, not many of us wanted to actually walk to put to practice the same ideals we held. So what does this mean?? Does it mean that we do not have what it takes to 'walk the talk'? That we are lazy? How many of us have strolled the streets and did not bother to pick up debris to throw in the bin nearby but complained of it all the same?? For an environmentally conscious society, it would seem the most natural thing to do.

A recent editorial in *The Bhutanese* about the shadowy world of civil service put forward many issues, but what struck out that was atypical to the service is the lack of priority given to mentoring in the system. Being a boss and being a mentor are two different things, and in a system where the 'boss' is the law, mentoring will invariably be absent. How does this generation of civil service begin to teach the next? We may have to remind ourselves that though the system might serve some of us now, there might come a time when it does not. The expose of scams the past few months left the population chagrined not so much because the system allowed it, but that it might keep allowing.

This October 13th is the first Royal Wedding Anniversary of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Gyaltshuen Jetsun Pema. So keeping aside the scams and the apprehension of upcoming elections, we may well be making a small conscientious move to better ourselves as the coming months will be not just cold but hard. When the nation celebrates the anniversary, as a token of felicitation we may take small footsteps of change; say no to calls while talking to somebody sitting across you and excuse yourself if you must, pick that paper strewn near your bin, avoid cutting lines and follow queues. As Van Gogh said, "great things are done by a series of small things brought together", and the hope here is that it pays forward, and we, the Bhutanese, will come out of it better.

**Karma Choden**  
(Managing Editor)



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# YANGPHEL REAL ESTATE

## Your Home at Chamjeykha, Kabesa

Thimphu has become one of the fastest growing cities in the region. Traffic congestion, lack of parking space, lack of recreational areas and lack of safety are growing concerns.

Just 11 kms from Tashichhodzong and here at Chamjeykha, Kabesa, we offer you a home surrounded by pristine wilderness, with the security of a gated compound, and the convenience and comfort of several amenities not available in any other residential area in Thimphu.

This is your chance to own the lifestyle you and your family truly deserve.

Come home  
to a better  
world



### Comfort

- ❖ American and Bhutanese architects combine to create aesthetic beauty with functionality.
- ❖ Double glazed windows, insulated walls and ceiling to provide warmth and reduce heating bills.
- ❖ 24 hours running water from independent and purpose built source.
- ❖ Plumbing designed and installed by American professionals.
- ❖ Spacious balconies in each apartment.
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### Convenience

- ❖ Indoor: fully equipped gym, table tennis and snooker.  
Outdoor: basketball, badminton, football, volleyball, archery and jogging trail.
- ❖ Two entertainment halls for social gatherings, movie screening and birthday parties.
- ❖ Grocer's store with coffee shop and beauty salon.
- ❖ Basement parking for each apartment with separate visitors parking.
- ❖ Option to customize kitchen and apartment.

### Safety

- ❖ Manned security gate and fenced in compound for total safety.
- ❖ Fire hydrants with emergency water tanks for fire fighting located on site.
- ❖ Fire, storm and earthquake insurance included in the cost for first year.
- ❖ State of art mechanical septic system (imported from Singapore).
- ❖ Uncompromised construction standards that meet or exceed national standards.

For sales enquiries contact:

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