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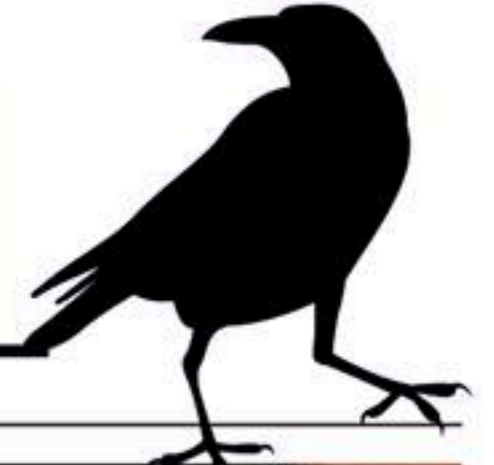
ELECTING A
CANDIDATE

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The Raven

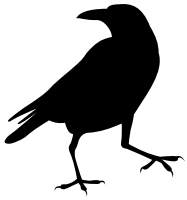
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NOTHING IS PURE,
NOTHING IS STAINED



- HEART SUTRA



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir/Madam,

As always, it was a pleasure to read the last issue of *The Raven*. The cover story, Meet the New Political Parties, was very informative to me as a voter. Firstly, it introduces the new parties to the readers and secondly, it covers a wide range of issues and the parties take on them thus enabling voters to make informed choices. Keep it up!

Tshering Choden, Thimphu

The Raven, of late, has been bringing out issues that have been overlooked for quite a while now. When other mediums only seem to focus on the elections *The Raven*, while providing information on the political parties, along with the Election Commission's views, continues bringing out other issues that are equally important too. I offer my congratulations to the team. It is good to know that we have some dedicated journalists in our midst.

Palden Tashi, Phuentsholing.



While I must admit that your team is doing a wonderful job, I must also admit that it was disappointing to not find PDP and DPT featured in the interview *The Raven* carried in its last edition featuring the three new political parties.

Also, I am sad that after subscribing to a yearly package, you have decided to publish only once in two months. I understand it may be financially viable to do so, but please do keep your dedicated readers in mind when you decide on things like these.

It is a wonderful magazine and I am sure the readers would want it twice a month instead of the other way round. Good Luck!

Dawa Dradul, Thimphu.

NOTIFICATION FROM *THE RAVEN*

Starting April, *The Raven* has gone bi-monthly (publishing one issue every two months).

To our clients who have paid for annual subscriptions, your subscription will not run out at the end of 2013, but after all 12 issues you have paid for have been delivered to you.

We have made the decision to go bi-monthly owing to the nature of the articles that we publish. *The Raven* focuses on providing in-depth stories on burning social issues of our times. We have thus determined that our mission is best served when we have the time that allows us to meet the quality standards we want to achieve. The challenges of publishing within Bhutan have been immense and we hope that you will continue to provide us your goodwill and support.

Thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely,

Team Raven

Letters to the Editor or to *The Raven* will be edited for clarity and space and can be published, unless specifically asked not to.

KUZUZANGPO!

April was a busy month (on the political front), but May proves to be even busier, what with all the political campaigning going on. June will be no less so when Bhutan heads to the polls for a second time. Congratulations to all the NC elects and good luck to all those contending in the upcoming elections. Our hope is that those who are elected to office will not lose perspective of the need for social reform in our society

There are many deep-seated social issues that need to be addressed. Instead of adding to these problems through ill-thought and un-researched policies it can only be hoped that officials will open up their minds and hearts to issues that affect certain sections of the population more than others. We also hope that they realize that education, awareness, and understanding are important to counter these problems in the correct ways. As a Developing country, there are many areas that demand the focus of the government, but when there is special emphasis made on the social sector, especially in Education and Health, we think it helps uplift the well-being of the people in ways that other sectors cannot.

This month *The Raven's* focus on another social issue in Bhutanese society is that of sexual abuse of minors in the monk body. Kuensel's revealing article on the plight of the monks last month gave us some insight into what is happening, but this needs to be addressed and investigated further by all organizations, including the media, that are responsible and beholden to these vulnerable groups.

It is not an easy task when the institution is powerful and has the support of many. We need not look anywhere else for examples – the Catholic Church, Penn State University, and now BBC. These are just few examples in the world of how officials/people have abused the power of their institutions to abuse minors. It tells us that these problems are universal, and not confined to Bhutan.

On another note we have great articles by staff writers as well as strong analytical pieces from our contributors on Information Technology and on problems with Foreign Direct Investment in Bhutan. These are much-needed studies of how the inconsistency of laws and implementing strategies takes away from the end result.

We hope you will write to us and let us know how we are doing and give us constructive feedback on how *The Raven* can continue to keep the discussion on various issues alive.

Have a great summer and election season. We sincerely hope that together we can bring a government in place that will put the basic needs of disadvantaged Bhutanese above their own.

Sonam Ongmo
Editor-at-Large



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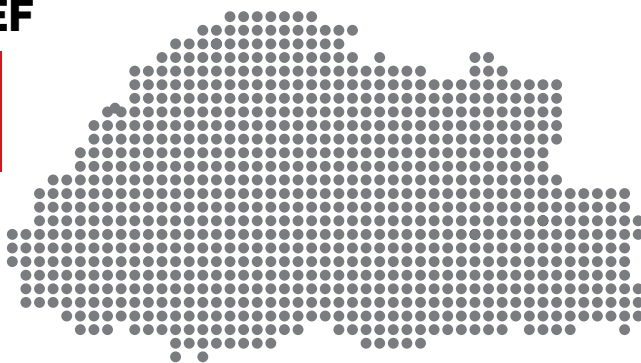
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THIMPHU

Dratshang opens childcare & protection office

His Holiness the Je Khenpo inaugurated and consecrated the childcare and protection office opened by the Zhung Dratshang on May 26. The office is set up to address issues related to the rights of the monks and nuns aged 18 years and below. The office will examine whether monastic institutions are providing quality education and hygienic accommodation facilities to the monks. The office will also give legal protection to the monks and nuns who have been deprived of their rights. The construction of the office was carried out with funds from the NCWC, while the equipment for the office was provided by UNICEF.

THIMPHU

NC gets new chair

Trashigang council member Dasho Dr. Sonam Kinga was elected as the new National Council chairperson. He secured a total of 15 votes of the 25 cast. Two former councilors, who competed for the post, Gasa's Sangay Khandu and Pemagatshel's Jigme Rinzin won eight and two votes each. Council member from Haa, Tshering Dorji, who was the lone candidate for the deputy chairperson, was elected unanimously with 25 yes votes.

THIMPHU

Army Worm invasion

Armyworm or Spodoptera frugiperda infestation has so far spread across 14 dzongkhags within a few weeks of the first incident being reported. Damaging paddy saplings and other crops, Punakha was the hardest hit by the worms with 100 percent damage in all 11 gewogs. Ministry of agriculture officials said there was no need to panic as the crops would grow back again. The ministry has been distributing pesticides, and advising farmers to carry out top dressing of urea after paddy transplantation.

SIPSOO

The gola bazaar quandary

Residents of Gola Bazaar in Sipsoo, Samtse, want to continue living in their old, small, compact town instead of moving to a new township area, chosen by the government, in Balbotay. The residents, mostly shopkeepers, after a consultative meeting, had submitted a plea to the dungkhag office in Sipsoo and to the Ministry of Works and Human Settlement requesting that their case be looked into.

LHUENTSE

154-ft tall Guru statue nearing completion

Construction of the enormous bronze statue of Guru Rinpoche, in the form of Guru Nangsey Zilneon in Takila, Lhuentse, is expected to be complete this year. The 154-ft tall statue is seated on a 38-ft high lotus-base, on a hilltop, overlooking the Tangmachu village in Menbi gewog. More than 35 skilled workers are working both inside and on the statue in order to meet the deadline.

PARO

Tractors & power tillers available on hire

Farmers in Paro have welcomed the government's machinery hiring service scheme. They say this move by the government that allows them to hire tractors and power tillers has sorted out their labor shortage woes. Some farmers even feel that it might be the answer to rural-urban migration, as it will employ the youth to operate this machinery. But, whether, it is the answer or not, the service was introduced by the Agriculture Machinery Centre in Paro to increase utilization of fallow lands, generate income through crop intensification, and to commercialize agriculture. According to the ministry officials, they hope such services will encourage people to farm.

The Raven



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quotes



I hand over this kasho to you with the hope that our elections will be carried out in accordance to the Constitution, with all the people taking equal responsibility and working in harmony to ensure that it is as successful as our first elections.

The time has come where the religious institutions in Bhutan [should be] involved in social service work for the benefit of the poor, beyond prayers.



I feel there's a small cancer cell growing in our five-year democratic child, and if I didn't join now, the damage would be done, and that cancer cell would have grown too much that it would be too late.



I translate my personal dreams into spaces in school. Now the blue pond is done! Took my family there.



Got home to find hordes of worms going up the walls of my house. Splashed water all around to deter them but I guess that is only a temporary measure.



HIS MAJESTY THE KING

while issuing the Royal decree, announcing the poll day, to the Election Commission.



LEKEY WANGDI

works at the GNHC.



DR. LOTAY TSHERING

after resigning from the civil service to contest the upcoming elections as a Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa candidate.



PASSANG

a school teacher from Bajothang who built a school pond.



CHIMMY PEM, TOURISM COUNCIL OF BHUTAN,

referring to the infestation of the army worms in Thimphu.



On elections

As common forum draws to [an] end, I am of the opinion that CF with all parties are [an] excellent idea. Thanks ECB.

Lamakheno on twitter.



On MPs

In the beginning MP's seem to be promising policies benefiting [the] poor, but finally [they] end up with pro-rich policies with changes in their [own] income bracket

Lekey Wangdi on twitter.



On Dratshangs

Does the Dratshang have age-based sections like schools? Primary, secondary etc. [It is a] travesty if all monks lodged together.

Sangay_penjor on twitter.



On benefits

Now that was pretty fast! From revision of armed forces pay scale it has now changed to retirement benefits.

LpTashi on twitter.

The Raven



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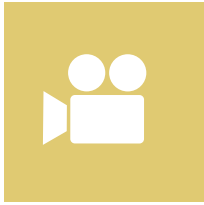
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MUSIC



PLAY



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ART

highlights

KEY • Date • Time • Place • Venue



INAUGURATION

OPENING OF THE ROYAL TEXTILE ACADEMY (RTA)

- JUNE 5-6
- THIMPHU

A complex of 5 acres in the heart of Thimphu, dedicated to the conservation and preservation of Bhutanese textiles will be inaugurated. The RTA will function as an education centre to teach and support the creation of Bhutanese textile arts. The center will also house a museum, introducing Bhutan's ancient heritage to its visitors, while expanding the country's resource for cultural tourism.

COURSE

SIXTH EXECUTIVE FOREST POLICY COURSE

- MAY 27- JUNE 6
- THIMPHU

The sixth executive forest policy course titled "Forest policies for the 21st century" will commence on May 27. The course will focus on policy analysis, formulation, development and implementation within the rapidly changing social, economical and environmental context affecting forests. Participants will also be introduced to international forest policy experiences and methodologies.

CONFERENCE

LEVERAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

- JUNE 4-5
- RTC CAMPUS, THIMPHU

Organized by Helvetas Swiss intercooperation and the Royal Thimphu College with the support of the European Union, the conference will explore, discuss, & celebrate distinctive cultures of marginalized communities in Bhutan.

ELECTIONS

2ND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

- MAY 31 & JULY 13
- NATIONWIDE

Bhutan will vote for the second National Assembly elections. The primary round will be held first on May 31, and the two parties with the majority of votes will proceed to the general elections that is scheduled to be held on July 13.

FESTIVAL

KURJEY TSHECHU

- JUNE 18
- KURJEY LHAKHANG, BUMTHANG

The prestigious Kurje tshechu is not only an attraction for tourists but for locals as well. Considered a sacred festival, the tshechu attracts people from all walks of life in their finest costumes and jewelry. Along with the mask dances, this year the festival has various folk dances lined up too.

HAA SUMMER FESTIVAL

- JULY 6-7
- HAA

Set among pristine lakes and high alpine valleys, the Haa summer festival is a lively and uplifting celebration of traditional living-culture, nomadic lifestyles, unique Bhutanese cuisine, traditional sports and religious performances. It provides unparalleled insight into the lives and traditions of Bhutan's nomadic herders.

NOTHING IS PURE, NOTHING IS STAINED -

HEART SUTRA

RELIGION HAS THE CAPACITY TO SILENCE CRITICAL THINKING AND CREATE BLINDNESS IN ENTIRE GROUPS OF PEOPLE. IT CAN INFECT THE MINDS OF FOLLOWERS SO COMPLETELY AS TO ALLOW THE MOST EGREGIOUS SEXUAL ACTS AGAINST CHILDREN AND OTHERS TO GO UNCHALLENGED FOR CENTURIES - **DARREL RAY**

A DREAM

He arrived one February morning in 2012 from his village, alone, and with a small battered and torn suitcase secured with a rope. The few contents, untidily packed, were visible because the case couldn't close. When I met him later that evening he was sitting alone in front of the Television enraptured by a cartoon. Thinley, eleven, stood up when I walked in. "So you want to become a monk?" I asked.

"Yes *la*," he replied.

"Why?" I asked, "I heard you were in school. Don't you like going to school?"

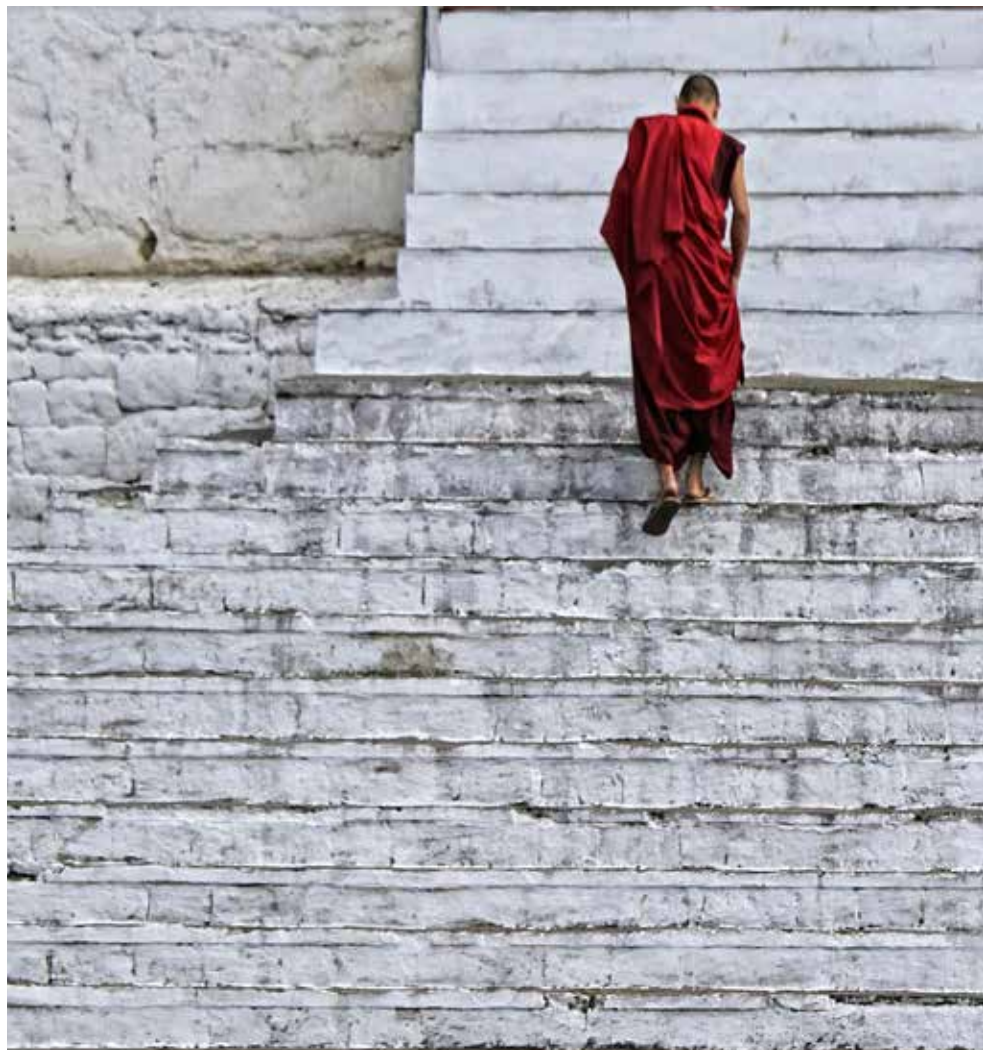
"I like school *la*, but I want to become a monk," he responded.

"Why?" I asked again.

"Because I want to learn the teachings of Sangay (the Buddha) and if I learn the teachings I will become learned and I will be able to help my parents and my village *la*." A child consciously aware of etiquette, bold, and probably street smart too, I surmised.

"But you can do that even if you go to school," I said. "How will you help them?" I was curious.

"I will be able to share the teachings, and I will be able to help with the rituals. Right now we don't have anyone who is learned in the scriptures



in our village,” he said. He spoke like an adult. I was touched by his desire to benefit others, if that was truly his intent. Short of saying anything else I told him, “Do you know they are very strict in the monasteries and punishment can be harsh?” I was trying to see his reaction and let him know it was not going to be so easy.

“Well, they need to be because children can be naughty. A little discipline is always good,” he said, undeterred. He was only eleven, yet he seemed determined to take difficulty on, even leave his family of his own volition, to become a



monk. It was moving. But was it because he really wanted to study the scriptures, or was it to escape the hard life in the village? Everything about this encounter was so Dickensian, it was hard to think there was a different Bhutan out there. Whatever his reason, I was impressed by his conviction and I wished the best for him.

AN ESCAPE FROM BROKEN DREAMS

It was a beautiful June morning at the monastery. The monks had just finished their breakfast and Thinley was at the stream washing up when Penjore, twelve, a year older, joined him. Together they washed their hands and bowls in silence. It had been about four months since Thinley had come to the monastery. The morning sun fell softly around them and although the days couldn't get more beautiful than this, the nights had been something else. Both Thinley and Penjore had experienced sleepless and terrifying nights at the monastery. Unable to take anymore of what seemed like a nightmare to them, Thinley decided it was time to do something about it. He asked Penjore if he would run away with him. Although both boys deny being the first one to come up with the plan, they both agree that it was decided at the stream that they would run away. Thinley may be a year younger than Penjore, who is shy and reserved, but he is taller and leaner, confident and bold.

It was there that the boys colluded to end their monastic life for good. They ran into the bathroom and hurriedly discarded their robes on the floor, changed into their home-clothes and made their big move. They snuck into the head Lama's chamber, stole Nu. 3,000, and made for the surrounding forests.

“I knew we would need money if we wanted to get home,” said Thinley. “I knew where the money was kept because another novice monk Tshering, who is eleven, and worked with the head Lama

showed me when I had gone to the chamber with him one day.”

Undetected the boys managed to sneak out of the monastery premises. The monastery is about half a day's walk uphill from the main motor road in Punakha. After running for what seemed like forever, the boys rested. They said they heard voices calling out their names. A few monks had given chase.

“They didn't find us, but we were scared to move after that, so we spent that night in the forest,” Thinley said. “We didn't have anything to eat, but we drank lots of water from a stream.” The next morning at sunrise they set out for the road. As they were walking along they saw a taxi and flagged it. “The driver asked us where we wanted to go and we told him to Thimphu. He said it was Nu. 1,000 and we paid him,” said Thinley. “He asked us where we were coming from and we told him that we had gone to help our uncle on his farm and were returning to Thimphu.”

When they got to Wolakha the taxi stopped. The taxi-driver told them he couldn't go any further. He gave no reason. “He didn't return our money because he said he didn't have change, but he found us a car that was going to Thimphu and told the driver to drop us there,” said Penjore.

The driver dropped them off at the bus-station. It was raining when they walked into town and stopped a man to ask him if he knew of a cheap hotel where they could stay. “The man instead took us to the police. We were very scared. The policeman asked us where we were from. We told him the same story, that we came from our uncle's farm, but the policeman somehow knew. Eventually we told him where we were from, although we didn't tell him that we had run away. He called the village Tshogpa

IT WAS THERE
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to inform my parents and Penjore's grandmother. He told them that we were safe at the station in Thimphu."

"The policeman took us to a small restaurant where he bought us tea and *momos*," the boys said. "A man who was sitting nearby and drinking bought us *puri* and *aloo* and even gave us Nu.100 each when we left."

THE HARSH REALITY

Thinley is back in his village. He is carrying his baby sister, strapped on his back with a kabney. He hasn't re-joined school as he has missed the academic year. He has an older brother who is in school and another younger sister apart from the one on his back. He spends his time helping his parents with the baby. His parents are farmers, although his father had once also been a monk but had left to become a farmer. I tell his parents that I want to talk to Thinley. His mother takes the baby, and Thinley and I walk behind the house where we sit on a large rock. I ask him why he ran away from the monastery.

"I didn't like it," he says.

I ask him again.

"What happened? Why did you run away? You confided in someone about why you ran away. Will you tell me?"

Thinley looks away and remains silent. "Did they beat you?"

"No," he turns to answer me, and then quickly looks away.

"Then why did you run away? You were very eager to go when I saw you the last time. Why? Did someone harm you?" I ask again.

He nods.

"What did they do?"

Thinley says that he and Penjore slept in one room with another monk who was probably in his 20's. Sometimes, the older monk demanded one of them into his bed. They had to sleep with him in turns.

"He didn't put it inside me, but

between my thighs. Every time I tried to scream or struggled, he pinned me with his body, put his hand over my mouth and covered it tightly. He said he was going to beat me if I screamed or said anything to anyone. During the day if I mentioned anything of it in front of the other boys, he would pinch and punch me. When I told him I was going to tell the head Lama, he said he was going to hit me so hard I would lose all my teeth, or make me unconscious." According to Thinley, he made these threats in front of the other little boys, none of whom dared report it to the head Lama.

Apart from Thinley and Penjore there were also two other young monks – Tshering, eleven, and Dorji, nine. Dorji, according to Thinley, slept with a



60-year-old monk, whom he referred to as Agay. "Sometimes Penjore and I took turns sleeping with the Agay too, because he asked for us," Thinley said. The 60-year old monk did the same thing, according to Thinley.

"Some nights he put it between my thighs and asked me to clench them. Then during the course he would yell out, 'dhum, dhum' (tight, tight). I felt very dirty and sick, it was disgusting."

Thinley says that apart from this, nothing else happened. But he wonders if the other boys might have experienced differently. According to him, when the boys talked amongst themselves in the mornings about these incidents at night, Dorji who

was only 9, cried, and Penjore didn't want to talk about it at all. "Penjore kept telling us to shut-up. He didn't want to talk about it, and he didn't want us to either."

Thinley's parents are sitting outside their house. Both of them suffer from alcoholism. His father looks unwell, his face swollen. I tell them what had happened to Thinley, hoping they will understand why he had run away and not blame him for doing so. "You were once a monk too, I heard. You probably know these things happened?" I tell his father. The father nods in acknowledgement, but doesn't say anything. He looks embarrassed or even ashamed – either of the subject or about what has happened – and looks away indicating he doesn't want to discuss it.

.....

I am standing at the edge of the field watching Penjore's grandmother dig for some potatoes from the only piece of land she owns. She has sent someone to fetch Penjore who is with the cows. This grandmother has outlived her husband, and her only daughter who died while Penjore was at the monastery. Penjore's father, her son-in-law, also died several years ago. The grandmother now looks after the children – Penjore and his sister. She tells me that Penjore was in school, but she couldn't afford to keep him there so she decided to send him to the monastery for a "good Buddhist" education. "It was difficult for me to look after and feed two parent-less children," she says. The head Lama of the monastery meant well when he took Penjore and Thinley, two boys from this village in Chukha, to give them a home and a good religious education at the monastery. After all, both children come from backgrounds where the families are struggling. And it is often that most, if not all, who are in the monastic community come from similar, or even more destitute, backgrounds. According to recent reports from Kuensel many monastic centers even have to bend admission rules by accepting children younger

DORJI WHO WAS ONLY 9, CRIED, AND PENJORE KEPT TELLING US TO SHUT-UP. HE DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, AND HE DIDN'T WANT US TO EITHER.

than ten years of age because they are either orphans, have no place to go to, or their parents or relatives are unable to care for them.

"In the absence of foster homes, monastic centers function as homes to the orphans and the poor," Tashi Geley, the Health and Religion coordinator told Kuensel.


Penjore may come from a poor family where a single grandmother could hardly feed him well, yet when I ask him why he ran away he tells me with some anger, "The food was bad. I didn't like it. I didn't want to go in the first place, but my grandmother thought it would be good for me. I missed my family," he says, tears in his eyes.

He is obviously thinking about his mother, I think. I ask what else he didn't like about life at the monastery and he says they were too strict. When I ask him if they beat him, and if there was anything else they did to him, he starts to cry. Did they sexually molest him? I ask – offering him an explanation of the term. He nods, says "yes," and breaks down sobbing bitterly.



MAKING A CASE; SEEKING JUSTICE

To avoid the boys from being criminally charged for stealing money from their Lama and to prevent further traumatizing them through police interrogations, I presented their case to RENEW (Respect Educate Nurture Empower Women) an organization that has been dealing with Women and Children's issues. It was also hoped that some sort of therapy or counseling would be provided for the wellbeing of the children. Maybe RENEW doesn't have the capabilities for that yet, because all the counselor did was ask that a written complaint be filed. It was the first case of its kind that they were dealing with. Mention of the two other boys who were still at the monastery, was also made. A few days later the Counselor said that she wanted to interview the children and summoned them to Thimphu. Penjore refused to come, but Thinley did and gave the interview. In his statements to the counselor, in the presence of a guardian, he gave her a full account of being sexually molested at the monastery, not once but several times. Then there was silence. Our counselor, we were told, was away on



THE IRONY ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE CASES IN BHUTAN IS THAT IF A MONK IS RAPED OR SEXUALLY MOLESTED, HE WILL NOT FIND JUSTICE THE WAY A LITTLE GIRL CAN.

leave and we waited. My hope was that after RENEW had established the truth and legitimacy of the case, they would forward it to the police for a criminal investigation, just as they would if it had been a little girl. Instead, a month later, a call from the Dratsang asked that the boys be brought to their office for questioning. They wanted to conduct their own investigation.

When I asked RENEW how the case had reached the Dratsang and why, I was told that the Executive Director had forwarded the case to another NGO, the NCWC (National Council for Women and Children) who in turn forwarded it to the Dratsang. On further enquiry, it was realized that social organizations, and the police, cooperate with the Dratsang and forward all such cases concerning monastic centers to them. I wondered how the boys, who had stolen money from the Lama, run away from their monastery, and now brought sexual abuse charges against some of the monks, would want to talk to the very institution they were accusing. Would they agree to speak? Would they retract their story?

Again Penjore refused to go, but Thinley did. And again, accompanied by the same guardian, Penjore recounted without any variation of what had happened at the monastery in front of the investigative unit. A month passed again. By October, the investigative unit at the Dratsang established that the boy was indeed telling the truth. But they only singled one monk out, the 20 year old. They asked how we wanted the case dealt with; in essence what kind of outcome would be desirable. According to their code of conduct, when a monk did something wrong he was ex-communicated. They would disrobe him, throw flour on him in front of the other monks, and chase him from the monastery.

To what end, I asked? What purpose does it serve this problem of sexual molestation in the institution if the monk is

only disrobed? What message does it send to the community at large? I was tormented and torn. I have a twelve-year old son. I have brothers, who were once also little boys. Had our lives been any different, it could have been them – either the abused, or the perpetrator. I also had an insight into the lives of Penjore and Thinley and seen how they were traumatized by this incident. Yes, Bhutanese children are sturdy and they move on, are forced to, and many do. But many also don't. They continue to suffer not just physically, but also internally - living in shame with these horrible dark secrets of rape and abuse, and suffer in anger and silence for the rest of their lives. Many suffer from depression and turn to alcohol unable to cope, and while some even take their lives, others resort to crime or even molest other children when they get older. When I think of these boys, I think of my son.

THE IRONY

The irony about sexual abuse cases in Bhutan is that if a boy (a monk) is raped or sexually molested, he will not find justice the way a little girl can. While it is good that our system is more favorable to girls, why should justice for little boys take a back seat, just because they are monks? Do they have to compromise their dignity and their rights so that the Institutions name can be protected? Should a girl be raped or molested she can go to the police, or any social organization that will readily pounce on the case and investigate it. If the perpetrator is found, he will be charged with statutory rape and imprisoned, the media will report it, and people will be incensed that such things happen to little girls. Even men who have had consensual sex with their girlfriends, 16 or 18 year olds, are charged with statutory rape and have to live with being labeled rapists for the rest of their lives. The age of consent for sex is 18 and above and the law is "supposedly" strictly enforced in order to ensure protection of women and children. Why then is it different for these boys? Cases of sodomy, sexual molesta-

tion, or rape that occur in the monastic community to monks, even if they are below 18 years of age, are not reported to the police. If cases are taken to the WCPU (The Women and Child Protection Unit) at the police station, the police will simply forward the case to the Dratsang (the Monastic Center), which has its own internal investigative unit that will look into the case. Although the police say they do not differentiate cases because the Dratsang forwards the case back to them, we don't know because it has never happened.

According to reports, the government doesn't intervene in the monastic order because they have their own courts, which operate outside the penal system. But this argument is not uniformly respected because if a monk loots a monastery or a chorten he is tried under civil law, the way he would for any other crime and the Dratsang would not be consulted? Then why is it that only sexual crimes in the monk body are not subject to civil law? While attempts are being made by the Dratsang to bring changes within the institution to improve the lives and living conditions of monks – establishing a child protection unit funded by UNICEF – a Kuensel article (25 March) reveals they still have a long way to go. Kuensel states that Sexually Transmitted Infections, piles, skin diseases, hypertension and other mental health issues are the most common ailments in the monk body. There are also five HIV positive monks, one of whom is only 19. A doctor at the Thimphu hospital told *The Raven*, on condition of anonymity, that it is almost every other day that he sees a monk that has ailments related to psychological issues or to private parts, some showing signs of abuse. Should a little girl go see a Doctor about her private parts being violated would he/she be required to report this to the police? Shouldn't it be an absolute requirement that if a health-official comes across a case of

a sexually violated child, be it a boy or girl, it be reported to the authorities, or have they also been asked to collaborate in the silence when it comes to monks?

With social problems like alcoholism, substance abuse, and violence increasing in Bhutanese society, it is time to take a serious look at the root problems, some of which may be, sadly, stemming in our monastic institutions. And this is nothing surprising or new. It also doesn't indicate that this happens in all our monastic institutions, that all our monks live miserable lives, or that it will destroy the image of the Dratsang. This happens in many institutionalized religions all over the world, with all faiths, and it has nothing to do with that particular religion. There is no better example than the tragedy of events in the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church, abuses might have been more extensive and rampant, and were deliberately hidden for many decades doing irreparable damage to the victims

and that institution. Bhutan or Buddhist institutions don't have to follow that path. The first step on the road to better this is to acknowledge that it is a serious social problem. Allowing transparency and making these transgressions to be recognized as crimes and prosecutable in the civil court of law, rather than outside of it, will save us. Should this not happen, the future of the Buddhist Institutions image could suffer the same fate as that of the Catholic Church. And this will happen not because people like me make such cases public, but because even without my doing so, people will learn that this is wrong and lose respect for the monastic order. I say this not out of anything against the Monastic Center, but because it is bound to happen and people are already talking about it in private conversations.

According to studies by experts in this field, it is very clear that people who inflict sexual crimes against children have very often themselves been victims. Why do these monks think it is acceptable or normal to do this? Because when it

(Continued on page 70)



IS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AN ENABLER?

Many events in the past two decades show that Information Technology (IT) on its own is not the business differentiator that people once believed it was, writes **Thinlay Nono Wangchuk**

Not so long ago, with the maturity and integration of technology in business processes, the popular slogan “IT is an enabler” was born.

True to the slogan, IT is only an enabler and it was realised painfully through the failure of numerous IT projects across the globe, primarily due to the gap between the business aspects and IT. Gartner, a global IT research body, in its 2012 IT project survey pointed to functionality issues, substantial delays, quality issues, high cost variance, cancelation after launch, rejection or non implementation for other reasons as the causes of IT project failure.

The Gartner survey (below) segregated IT projects based upon amount and uncovered that the failure rate for IT project exceeding USD 1 million was almost 50% higher than for IT projects below USD 350,000. The

survey was conducted across 154 organizations in North America, UK, Germany and France and it revealed no surprises since the rift between business and IT will always be a challenge in articulating business requirements into intangible software end-products.

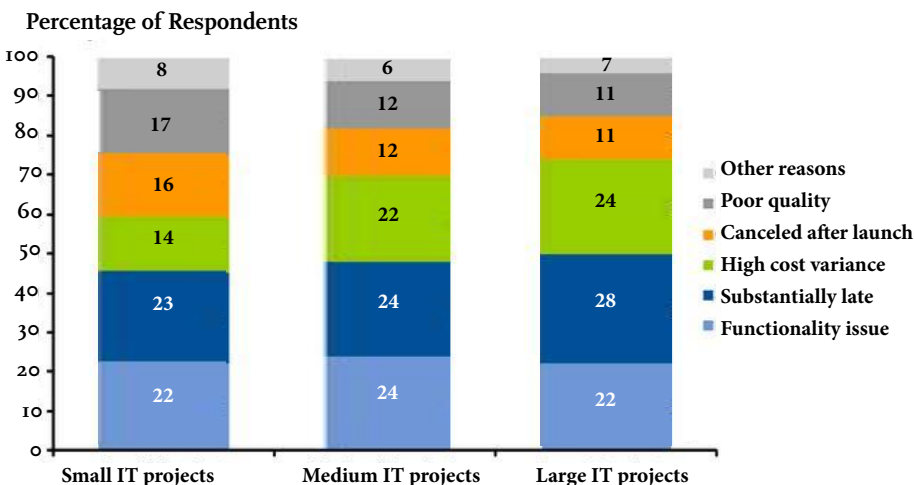
No such survey such as the distribution of success and failure across project size or analysis (next page) have been conducted in Bhutan. But given the small size of the public and private sector, and the fact that business processes are in general not visible, documented or practiced, functional issues related to time and costs can be predicted to affect IT projects. Business processes are ultimately the single most critical factor for any successful IT project implementation because it provides a workflow and sub-processes for IT systems to be designed and developed more easily. Without a standard business process in place, functional issues cannot be resolved and

therefore remain a risk to IT projects through its development and post-implementation.

Is IT in Bhutan Underutilised?

Recently, according to *Kuensel* and *The Bhutanese*, International Finance Corporation (IFC) published a report on “Ease of doing business” which ranked Bhutan 148 out of 185 countries, or second last in South Asia. This particular survey was conducted for business specifically, but how about regular public and private service processes that affect citizens in every walk of life? Visiting the hospital, transferring land records, opening a bank account, acquiring a loan, application and renewal of licenses et al. are examples of business processes where IT could enable better functionality and services.

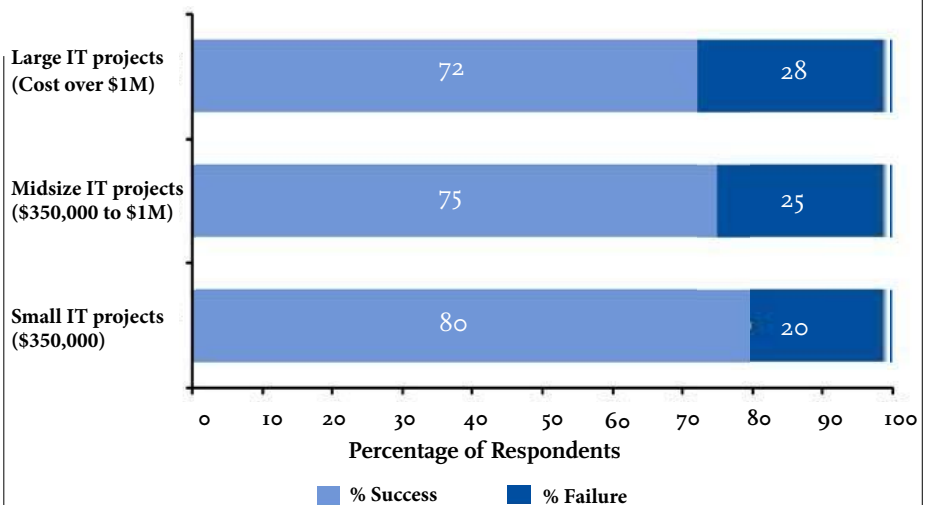
For instance, a high number of Bhutanese applying for scholarships abroad are required to obtain notarisation of their educational certificates, which is currently a cumbersome business process. A visit to the public notary office is redirected to the Dzongkhag court, where one has to queue up for a court hearing just to be told that the covering letter needs to be readdressed and a copy of the national ID card must be attached. And, due to allocated time restriction at the hearing bench, the resubmission is done the following day. The waiting time is long alongside marital, criminal and other hearings. Then the clearance has to be presented to the public notary office at another location, where again you need to have additional copies of



↑ WHY PROJECTS FAIL? (SOURCE: GARTNER 2012)

the certificate as well as a copy of the national ID card before the notary is issued. Besides this tedious bureaucratic process, there is no actual check for authenticity, it seems these processes are there merely for formalities sake. Another example is the process to obtain a tax exemption clearance for a hotel constructor that involves six major steps that takes about two weeks to complete. From obtaining the tax exemption form from the Department of Revenue and Customs and verifying the hotel list from the Tourism Council, to obtaining the tax code manual from Kuensel and filling the form and manually searching for each item code, the process can be tiresome. Add to that obtaining TCB approval and then finally submitting it to the Revenue and Customs for tax exemption. In most procedures the National ID card serves only as an attendance formality, whilst a photocopy must always be attached increasing paper trails and consumption.

There are many more examples of lengthy, unclear and some clearly redundant business procedures that should be reviewed to make the system more efficient. If this is seen to be tedious for a businessman living in Thimphu or in the vicinity of the capital, imagine what it is like for people who come from the districts and far flung areas. Distance, connectivity, communication and general literacy make processes more daunting. These bureaucratic processes may have been set up to curb fraud and provide audit trails from the governance perspective, but confined in silos with each authority imposing own requirements makes it a cumbersome process, that eats away at efficiency and productivity. And with such a system, what use then is IT, when it should be there to act as an enabler and computerise the workflow because of the complexities and siloed processes, but cannot because the sys-



tem dictates it be otherwise. The lessons learnt from the implementation of numerous Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems globally and most recently in Bhutan by Druk Holding and Investment (DHI), Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) and Bhutan Power Corporation (BPC) clearly demonstrates that all existing manual, administrative and legal system processes need to be captured and reengineered before even attempting an ERP implementation. A robust business process is at the heart of IT projects, and any organisation intending to computerise its business processes and services must first have a fully functional and clearly defined paper-based business process in place. Standards such as ISO 9001 Quality Management System can ensure necessary support, provided it is adopted in real and not just on paper.

A comprehensive IT plan should take into consideration the end-users

Looking abroad, many governments and corporates conduct analysis regularly to understand the ground reality and improve business processes. The processes are discussed, communicated, implemented and documented, often in cooperation with public and private sectors and end users, to put in place business processes and related IT systems that satisfy the requirements of

multiple authorities and the end users.

To cite an example, in Denmark, something similar to Bhutan's national ID number is called Centralised Civil Registry (CCR) number consisting of a ten-digit number with a DDMMYY-SSSS format, where the first six consist of the date of birth and the latter four a sequence number with the last digits representing even numbers for females and odd numbers for males. This number and ID card serve as personal identification in all public, and even some private matters, and no further authentication or photocopies are required. The central registration system contains basic personal details of every citizen and there is an Act guiding the system to avoid conflicts, privacy and misuse.

Any organisation intending to computerise its business processes must first have a functional and defined paper-based business process in place.

The central registration is at the root of Denmark's citizen Information System and with strict data security only certain relevant data required by health, financial institutions, tax, police, education et al is shared.


The benefit of such a system is that from one data source several organisations reap the benefit of a structured business process and closely associated IT system. For instance, if a citizen moves within the country, the person is required to inform the new local authority or update their address online, which automatically triggers the postal address to be changed so all mail to the old address is automatically redirected, all public service such as the police system, bank, tax authority, payroll and health care system are also updated at the back-end automatically. In another instance, if an accident occurs and the citizen is unconscious the moment the ambulance personnel gets hold of the CPR number, the emergency health service is able to know the person's medical history, medical allergies, relatives, etc. Further, the number is also used for subscription to a number of public and private services such as telephone and internet, insurance, library and sports clubs. The list of benefits of integrated systems is long, spanning all areas of public services because cross-sectional business processes foster IT systems to integrate seamlessly. This automation does not happen effortlessly, but is the result of strategic cooperation and planning across ministries and sectors so that processes are designed with the end goal and meet multiple requirements.

Such systems should be in place to improve overall efficiency of work processes benefiting both employees who are engaged in providing these services as well as private citizens. When people talk about efficiency

and advanced systems, it is because of how technology is used to enable a fair and efficient process that takes away from all the red tape and bureaucratic procedures.


In the long run, Bhutan could benefit from having similar systems in place to improve workflow and services. The National ID database must, in that case, be governed by an act to ensure security and so specific data from the national ID database can be shared with relevant authorities and registered organisations to avoid data duplication, increase accuracy, reduce data entry, and improve services. Adopting a BPM can then potentially increase Return on Investment through shared services by standardising financial, human resource and accounting across the government. Similarly, citizens can benefit from simpler and shorter processes and one-stop-shop services that is attempted by the G2C Government to Citizen (G2C) service more effectively.

When designing business processes, three types of process models for management, operational and support processes are generally used and adopted. According to a Business Process Management life-cycle process design, modelling, execution, monitoring and optimization are steps required to move away from the traditional hierarchical management, reducing bottlenecks and producing leaner processes. From an IT perspective, policies and procedures with fewer ambiguities allow easier cross-ministerial or cross-sectoral collaboration which ensures easier implementation of projects, with higher project success, lower cost and timeliness in the long run. For a small country with limited resources, optimizing the use of IT to enable efficiency and productivity could have huge advantages in terms of cost-reduction, improved efficiency and



The aspiration of Bhutan to be a BPO destination can only be realized if the government and corporates can successfully reengineer business processes.

productivity on all fronts.

The aspiration of Bhutan to be a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) destination can only be realized if the government and corporates can successfully reengineer business processes, and then computerise and outsource its own processes to specialized agencies within the country. It isn't late for Bhutan since the government has not implemented any tier-1 ERP system as of date, and it will be wise to establish a cross-functional strategic team to study the public and private sectors, produce a strategy for a short and long action plan to implement BPM. In the South Asian region Bhutan's civil service is well reputed for the highest percentage of post-graduates, therefore it is only obvious that a strong team can be formed nationally with external advisors. It is achievable but it requires cross ministry and cross sector agreements if we truly want "IT to be an enabler". 

The writer holds a MSc in IT from the University of Liverpool, UK. He is currently working with UNFPA in Bhutan.

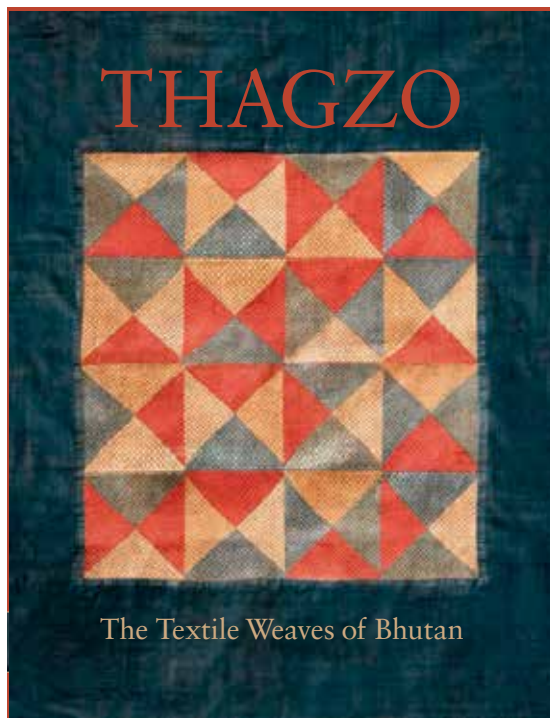


“Our handlooms have evolved over the centuries and reflect the country’s distinctive identity. Most of the designs and patterns of weave are unique to the country. Bhutanese weavers have been very innovative in their designs while maintaining the traditional character of the art.”

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FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER **LEON RUBTEN** CAPTURES VARIOUS IMAGES AT NIGHT AND IN BLACK & WHITE FROM VARIOUS SETTINGS IN THIS PHOTO ESSAY. HIS WORKS CAN BE VIEWED AT HIS STUDIO - PHOTOGRAPHY BHUTAN, THIMPHU.



PHOTO ESSAY





PHOTO ESSAY





HAPPENINGS

Private firm in Bhutan gets recognized internationally

A private company in Bhutan, Jigme Industries Private Limited (JIPL) has been internationally recognized and awarded for its efficient service delivery and environmental concerns. The company which was established in 2005 as a subsidiary company of Jigme Mining Corporation Limited (JMCL) and operates under the chairmanship of Dasho Ugen Dorji of the Lhaki Group, is based in Pagli. Last month, it was bestowed winner of the Business Initiative Directions International Arch of Europe award which saw participation from 72 countries around the world. The ceremony was held in Frankfurt, Germany.

According to the Business Initiative Directions, “recognition




RECEIVING THE AWARD, SONAM TOBGAY DORJI (VICE CHAIRMAN) AND UGYEN KESANG (CEO)

is based on the criteria of the QC100 model, implemented in over 100 countries. Business

leaders presented their companies for an international audience and participated in conferences regarding quality case studies in companies in search of quality and excellence.”

Jigme Industries Private Limited processes and markets Low Silica dolomite. A press release from the company stated, it was JIPL’s “ability to maintain quality as per international standards as well as customer satisfaction for overseas markets by continually improving effectiveness of the overall management system,” that allowed them to compete internationally.

Sonam Tobgay Dorji, Vice Chairman, and the company’s CEO Ugyen Kesang were in Frankfurt to receive the Award from the President of B.I.D., Jose E. Prieto. 



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Bhutan Standards Bureau

1. Cement (OPC-33 and opc-43)
2. Reinforcement Bars (Fe-500)

Bureau of Indian Standards

1. Cement-IS 269:1989, is 8112:1989 and is 455:1089
2. Reinforcement Bars -IS 1786:2008

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ELECTING A CANDIDATE

By ARIEL LEBOWITZ

Choosing who is going to lead your country is a difficult yet important choice. And how you make that decision depends on who you are and what is significant for you. In their attempts to sway voters' opinions, political candidates make promises about the role they will fulfill and the laws they will pass, and make speeches about what they believe in and who they are. They spend a lot of money touring the country and meeting people. In some countries, with all the rhetoric and promises flying about, the impassioned speeches and photo opportunities, the real messages can get lost and the electorate confused.

So with all this information flying around, I was curious as to how the Bhutanese people, in only the second national election, would choose for whom to vote for the National Council, the apolitical Upper House of the bicameral Parliament. The National Council of Bhutan consists of 25 members, one from each of the 20 Dzongkhags and five members nominated by the Druk Gyalpo, the King. The elected NC candidates are not, and should not be, affiliated with any party and are elected to represent their regions. It is written explicitly in the National Council act that the NC has an independent mandate: "The National Council shall not be bound by the voters or interest groups and shall function in a non-partisan manner in

their parliamentary work." Most legislations will emanate from the National Assembly, which will be elected over the next few months; however, the National Council is also able to introduce legislation, except money bills and financial bills. The NC as a whole is there to act as the house of sober second thought, as they say in Canada, with the mission "To fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people through review of public policies, legislations and scrutiny of state affairs; and render advice to the King, the Prime Minister and the National Assembly on matters of national importance."

In a country that is guided by the visionary principles of Their Majesties the Fourth and Fifth Kings, and in a House



Photo Courtesy: UPASNA DAHAL


that has no party affiliations, how are the voters to choose their candidates? I began writing this article about how people seek information because a well-educated friend of mine admitted that she had no idea who she was going to vote for days before the election and assumed that she would go in blind. "Have you looked on the internet?" I asked. "...um no, I forgot I could do that!" was her honest reply. I suggested we meet on the weekend to do the research together. I am a librarian; I am interested in how people do their research, how they evaluate information and then how they use it to make a decision. For National Council members, what were people looking for in a candidate? How could people tell the difference between candidates? Were people only voting for who they knew or who their family told them to?

I was pleasantly surprised by the incredible job done by both the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) and Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) in providing extensive coverage of the NC candidates. The live stream of the candidate debates were of good quality and made available to all those who had internet (and who could speak Dzongkha). ECB posted the manifestos from all the candidates, and though there was not a great deal of information in the manifestos themselves, there was enough for voters to get a sense of the differences between candidates. Some candidates were discussed in the newspapers and there was much speculation as whether incumbents would be re-elected and whether the voters would vote for candidates simply because they were women. In the first NC elections, four female candidates were elected. The Druk Gyalpo appointed another two for a total of six women out of 25 NC members, making up 24% of the membership.

By the time my friend and I sat down on Saturday afternoon, she had already looked on the internet and started doing her own research. She had hoped there would be more information on the manifestos. However, despite the lack of detailed histories, the decision for her came down to local representation. One candidate was from the same area as she is and so her mother told her to vote for him. When I asked if there were issues she was interested in, she named many - including infrastructure, education and governance- but at the end of the day she was voting for whom her family wanted and who was from her village.

I also spoke to Sonam Rinzin, a college graduate from Mongar, who was taking a week's leave to return home to cast his vote. He had watched the BBS common forum and had made his decision based on what he saw and heard from the candidates. One candidate in particular impressed him because of how he spoke and his focus on improving education. In the end, part of his decision was based on the fact that the other candidates were not as fluent in Dzongkha. He felt that all representatives should be fluent in the national language as it would help them to do their job in the National Council. But also, due to their lack of Dzongkha, the other candidates were less able to express themselves and explain their opinions. During the last election in 2008, he had not done his research and was influenced by his relatives. This time around, Sonam Rinzin's brothers asked for his help in deciding who to vote for. Sonam said that although he would go home and help them with the voting process, who one votes for is a personal decision; he would explain the manifestos to them and debate the issues but was not going to tell them who to vote for.

I began asking others how they



THOSE WHO ARE ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THEIR CONSTITUENTS' VOICES AND ISSUES HEARD.

were choosing their candidates and where they were getting their information. Some were voting based on personality. The candidate had come by their house and they had felt an affinity for them. And others were voting for the people they knew. If they did not know the candidate personally, they would ask someone who did and ask them if they were voting for that candidate. For them, the most important aspects of the candidate were their history and their integrity. I spoke to one man who had watched the common forum on BBS but felt that the debate wasn't enough to choose a candidate. According to him, anyone can talk, but it is their actions that are relevant. He also mentioned that he was unwilling to vote for someone who did not come across as confident during the forum.

Unfortunately, when I asked people about their research methods, the response I met with most commonly was that they were not voting. I asked people ranging all ages and backgrounds and the reasons given for not exercising their civic duties were many. Some were not from Thimphu and would have had to travel for days to vote, which would take up considerable time and incur personal expense.



↑ THIMPHU WORE A DESERTED LOOK ON THE DAY OF THE ELECTION

Others simply admitted that they were lazy and hadn't taken the time to fill out the postal ballots or the voter registration forms. Many said they didn't like politics and steered away from it, and for me, that was the most disheartening answer! The problem is that life is politics. The politicians elected by the people are responsible for drafting the laws that will affect nearly every aspect of our lives; they are responsible for the regulations that provide roads, schools and drinking water, and for those legislations that protect the pillars of GNH. Two recent class 12 graduates, who had just turned 18 and could have voted in their first election, chose not to because they find politics "dirty" and do not see how it relates to them. It was interesting to note that they were bright girls who are engaged in society and could be forces in the future of Bhutan - they are trying to start a magazine and want to start a youth advocacy group - and yet they chose

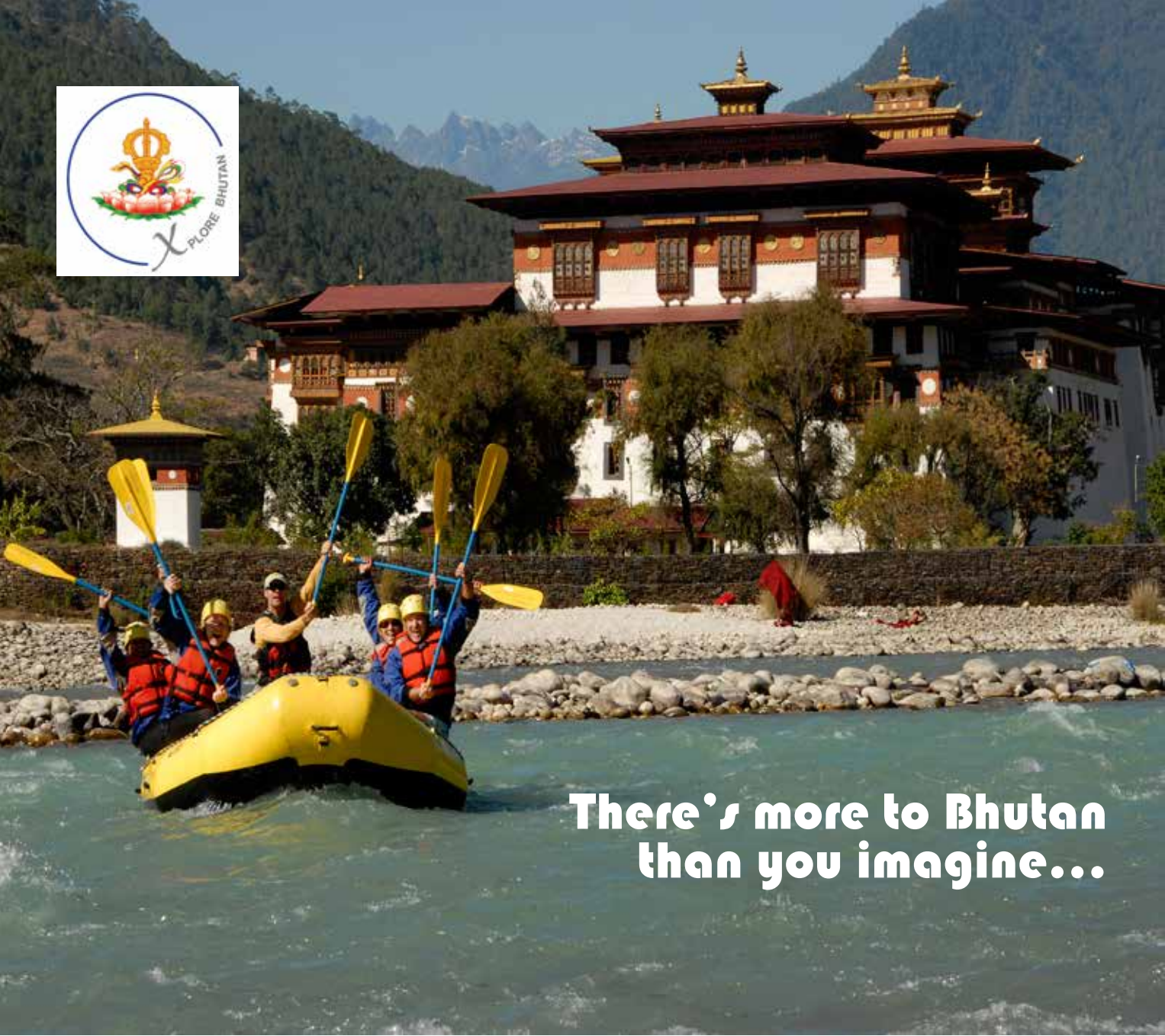
not to vote.

However, despite the disappointment at the lack of enthused voters, following the elections on April 23, 2013, ECB announced that 45% of the registered voters did cast a vote. And almost everyone I spoke to said that they would be voting in the upcoming National Assembly elections. Perhaps it's the political parties, the debate, or the fact that the Prime Minister is drawn from the National Assembly that has spurred the imagination of the electorate. Whatever the reason I look forward to an exciting campaign! For all the people who do not understand how politics affects their lives, the blame is not on them. In the US, there are still ongoing debates about the role of government. It prompted a recent article in Time magazine by Michael Grunwald that demonstrated just how interconnected the lives of everyday citizens and government really are (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/arti->

[cle/0,9171,2123809-2,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2123809-2,00.html)).

Democracy is new in Bhutan and while there has been much information on the procedures and the regulations – how to cast your vote, how to register, etc., there has been much less on what it means to be a democracy – the rights you get and the duties you have. Organizations such as BCMD (Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy) are helping to promote “a culture of democracy” and that begins by understanding how Bhutan's political institutions affect everyday lives. Those who are elected by the people have a responsibility to make their constituents' voices and issues heard. It is up to the National Council and the National Assembly to show the people of Bhutan that they are represented and that their participation in the political process is not only important but essential to the future of Bhutan. 🐦

The writer is a Canadian Librarian living in Thimphu.



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KOLKATA - THE ETERNAL CITY



Of all the Indian metropolises, few are as misconstrued as Kolkata. To many, it is synonymous with bleakness, associated with beggars and slums, congested traffic, diehard communists, and drained out rickshaw *walas*. But

it is also part of India's cultural bedrock having produced some of India's greatest writers, thinkers, artists and filmmakers.

On a recent trip, the city welcomed my curiosity. Its grim overcrowded look, incessant yellow Ambassador Taxi horns, and unpleasant odors tested me

↑
KOLKATA IS A CITY OF AMIABLE CONTRASTS, SIMULTANEOUSLY GRACIOUS AND NASTY

at first, but like the Bengalis say – the city grows on you. And it certainly did.

It is difficult to find a description that would do justice to a city built along the banks of the river Hooghly. But, it is a city of amiable contrasts. Simultaneously gracious and nasty, cultured



By MITRA RAJ DHITAL

and uncouth, Kolkata is a daily celebration of human existence. And it is all played out before your eyes on crowded streets where every inch of space is put to good use. No one, I feel, has captured the plight and beauty of Kolkata better than Dominique Lapierre in his famed novel *City*

of Joy (1985). The book takes you to the pulse of what life is like on the streets of Kolkata.

If you haven't read the book, the complexity of India's second biggest city might be hard to comprehend, and one simply conjures up images of human suffering. But to people who live there or know the City well, it is the raw poverty which can lead to not only a depraved living, but also a humane one, and this is what makes Kolkata very different from other cities in the world. Perhaps this is the reason why Kolkata has produced some of the greatest works of India art and is considered the cultural and intellectual capital of India. The stark, in-your-face poverty, and the plight of human condition in this city, obviously has something to do with it.

Most of India's 19th and 20th century philosophers, freedom fighters, poets and artists were Kolkatans. To name a few, Guru Ramakrishna (one of his famed disciples being Swami Vivekananda), Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore, and the much acclaimed film director and Oscar winner Satyajit Ray.

Kolkata's association with the British Empire began in 1690, when an agent of the East India Company - Job Charnok, chose Calcutta (as it was formerly known) for a British trade settlement. Soon, the East India Company moved in and started developing it as a Presidency city and over time turned it into a fortified mercantile base.

And thus, as a trading hub of British India in the east, Kolkata went on to become the most important city of the British Raj outside of England. Even today,

Even today, the city has an alluring old world charm and a frantic, yet tranquil, pace of life that no other Indian metro can boast of.

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Influences of the Raj can be found in every nook and cleft of the city. From slow rambling trams – introduced in 1902, to grand Victorian-era buildings, Kolkata has managed, over the years, to retain its British past. The city may have ceased to be the capital of British India way back in 1912, but it continues to be a center of cultural creativity. Venues all over the city showcase Bengali art, music, film, theatre, poetry and dance. Poverty certainly remains in-your-face but the elegant Bengali nobles continue to frequent the city's impressive old club houses, ride horses at the Kolkata Racetrack, and play golf at some of India's finest courses.

Like the Bengalis, it is a city of many moods. The name itself, I was told, is derived from the Bengali word Kalikshetra, meaning 'ground of the goddess Kali.' Legend goes that the swirling

TRAVEL

wheel of Lord Vishnu had sliced off the corpse of Sati - when Lord Shiva was performing his menacing dance (Pralay) with her on his shoulders - in a fit of tremendous rage. The body parts of the Hindu goddess fell at different places which later turned into pilgrimage centers for devout Hindus. Kalighat, built for Kolkata's patron deity Kali, is one such sacred spot where a toe of Sati's is believed to have dropped.

For those beguiled by history, Kolkata is a city that is worth every paisa.

For starters, visitors can immerse themselves in the ancient attractions of the Indian Museum. Built in 1874, it is the oldest museum in India and houses, among a host of artifacts, antiques, fossils, Mughal paintings, and a 4,000-year-old Egyptian Mummy, supposedly one of the oldest mummies in the world. But if armour, skeletons or mummies are not your thing, and you prefer being outdoors, then head to the Botanical gardens situated in Shibpur, Howrah. The best known landmark of the garden founded in 1786 is the great Banyan tree that is reckoned to be the largest tree in the world, at more than 330 meters in circumference.

For those who're not interested in History but prefer shopping and sampling the local cuisine, the city is choc-a-bloc with sprawling malls, all new, and all boasting the latest in global brands. But first, take a trip around the city to get a feel of its exclusivity.

Start by getting on to the metro and visiting Park Street, where a chain of restaurants and bars are located. Be it Olypub - the average man's watering hole,



Flury's - the classic confectionary, or Moulin Rouge, you can always find a range and variety of culinary delights. Remember, especially, not to miss the Kati Roll shop along the street.

The Hogg Market better known today as New Market is arguably one of Kolkata's best shopping centers. And it is less than a mile from Park Street. The confectionary Nahum's inside the market is a landmark by itself, but the best cakes come during the Christmas season and during New Year.

For connoisseurs of good food, the Nizams on Corporation Road, Sher-e-Punjab near Dum Dum Airport, Jimmy's Kitchen on AJC Bose Road, Azad Hind and Thai Tonight on Ballygunge



LIKE THE BENGALIS, KOLKATA IS A CITY OF MANY MOODS



In terms of elements, the city has it all and you can get from one place to another pretty quickly. But, the trick lies in knowing which direction you want to go in.



Circular Road and Mainland China on Gurusaday Road are an absolute must.

Traveling further north, you could visit Waterloo Street for some custom made shoes, followed by a glimpse of the Lal Bazaar Police Headquarters while moving onto BB Ganguly Street where you could find the cheapest furniture and handi-crafts in Kolkata. And since you are already there, don't miss the Kolkata Medical College and College Street.

College Street is a narrow lane between Bowbazar and Mahatma Gandhi Road, and has been for a long time a regular hangout and a renowned meeting place for intellectuals and students. It has played an important part in

Kolkata's cultural history and is known as the hub of intellectual debates. If the debates don't entice you, I am sure, the makeshift bookstalls, on either side of the street, definitely will.


As the sun goes down and you distinctly begin to crave a sense of quiet and peace, visit the Outram Ghat. Here, you can spend the evening watching the sunset over the Hooghly River with a traditional *chai* in an earthen pot, and admire the new Vidyasagar Setu stretching over the breadth of the water mass. Or, you could walk straight into the lawns of the Victoria Memorial and seat yourself besides lovers enjoying each other's company as darkness sets in.

But remember, getting around

in Kolkata, for some, could prove difficult to characterize and explain. In terms of elements, the city has it all and you can get from one place to another pretty quickly. But, the trick lies in knowing which direction you want to go in.

The name of lanes like Lenin and Shakespeare Sarani might intrigue you too and the sheer sight of the city is intimidating. But, bear in mind, the city is a little bit from and for everybody. If you get used to the bandhs, the heat and the poverty around, Kolkata is quite laid back and vivid. It is truly a city you 'feel' more than you see. But if you're there between May and September, be prepared for some serious drenching.

As my trip had come to an end, I was sad to leave Kolkata. Charmed by Bengali hospitality and the city's bond with the life of the mind, I was sure I'd miss the long conversations with talkative strangers in overcrowded bars; feasting on brain rolls on the streets of Park Circus; and the simple pleasures of lighting a cigarette the local way – with the slow burning butt of a coconut rope nailed to the wall of a corner pan shop. But, I know, I will return again to splurge on the simple pleasures of life. After all, it isn't called the City of Joy for nothing.

It is through art and art only that we can shield ourselves from the sordid perils of actual existence - Oscar Wilde. 

TRAVEL DETAILS



By Flight
From Paro it is a 45-minute flight to Kolkata.



By Train
Trains are available daily from Hashimara, an hour's drive from Phuentsholing.



Accommodation
Bhutanese travelers can book a room at the Tashi Guest House, situated next to Forum.



Climate
Best time to travel (October - April).

Improving the Investment Climate

By RANDALL KRANTZ

The reputation of Bhutan is justifiably immaculate in many international circles. Its stable democracy, low corruption, abundant supplies of clean energy and high levels of education make it a target for many foreign investors. In addition, Bhutan has unfettered access to one of the largest markets in the world, unhindered by the bureaucracy, corruption and political sloth that plague many of our neighbors. The charm of Gross National Happiness is just icing on the cake.

There is enormous potential in selling “Brand Bhutan” to India, the world’s second largest market, as well as to upscale markets in Europe and North America. The investments to make this happen have the potential to bring with them private sector jobs, social stability and a more diversified economy, but will require the right set of policies to make them happen.

On Jobs, Growth and FDI

As Bhutan continues its rapid pace of development, the private sector will play a critical role. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), 90% of jobs in emerging economies come from the private sector. With a rupee crunch that is not disappearing any time soon, and the next Five Year Plan calling for 122,000 new jobs, foreign direct investment into the

private sector will be a critical catalyst for economic diversification, jobs and growth. Already last year, 2/3 of the new jobs in Bhutan came from the private sector, and this ratio will only increase in the coming years. Currently, however, the number of these jobs generated through foreign investment is minimal, though the trend is increasing.

At a time when there is growing concern over youth unemployment, creating a match between the supply and demand should be at the top of the government’s agenda.

The 2010 FDI policy published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs highlights priority focus areas and sectors for foreign investment. With its usual foresight, the Government is encouraging investment in areas that contribute to the country’s long-term well-being. These include contributions to green growth, industries that are environmentally and socially responsible as well as culturally

and spiritually sensitive, promotion of ‘Brand Bhutan’ and creation of a knowledge society. However, having examined the FDI Policy closely, it seems to be more about protecting the interests of Bhutan than it is about encouraging cash flows into the country for the creation of jobs and economic growth. That foreign investors are not being tempted is evidenced by the small number of investments - fewer than 60 over nearly a decade. The figures are not very encouraging.

Bhutan can become an easy place to do business, with easy access to talented employees, the right tax incentives and simple repatriation of investments and dividends. Small countries like Singapore do not rely on their domestic market for investments, Switzerland has nearly as many mountains as Bhutan, and Ireland is an island that has used its local talent and business friendly taxation to encourage some of the world’s leading companies to invest.

Where to start

Three areas of focus can help Bhutan to attract more foreign investors: creating a better enabling environment for business, both domestic and foreign; matching the talent requirements of the private sector with the skills and attitudes of graduates; and making financial structures and regulations that are both simple and transparent for investors to understand.

An Enabling Environment

The rules and regulations that define the environment in which business operates are one of the most critical factors to the success or failure of the private sector as a whole. The procedures and processes to acquire land, set up a business, hire employees, and pay taxes will make or break any business, especially a foreign one new to the country. Unfortunately, Bhutan lags behind its neighbors on many of these indicators, according to the IFC's annual Ease of Doing Business report, in which Bhutan ranks 148 out of 185 countries.

While this ranking is not entirely comprehensive, as many of the numbers reported are not reflections of the actual time and effort required to perform many of these steps critical to setting up and operating a business, most investors agree that doing business in Bhutan is not easy. One shortcoming of the IFC's assessment is that it does not take into account the opinions and experiences of foreign investors. To complement studies such as this, I have been going through the list of foreign investments made in Bhutan, about half of them in the hospitality industry, and interviewing senior management to understand their experience. The examples that follow, gathered with interviews with foreign investors and their domestic counterparts, tell a story of complications and cultural barriers.

Another assessment of the business landscape is being undertaken this year for the first time, through collaboration between the World Economic Forum and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI). Looking at the experience of a wider range of business operations, this World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report

will incorporate the experience of foreign investors, family businesses as well as state owned enterprise. By looking at the policies, institutions, and infrastructure that enable a business, this report will provide apolitical insight into the enablers and barriers that are helping and hindering the private sector as a whole.

Combined with the ambitions of the 11th Five Year Plan, this analysis can help map out exactly how the enabling environment can be made more friendly to foreign (and domestic) investors, and where the 122,000 jobs will come from. The experience of long time delays, obscure permitting processes and redundant permissions from several ministries and local authorities can become a thing of the past.

Several trends in Bhutan point to changes in the right direction. Already, the Government-to-Citizen portal and the newer

Government-to-Business website are making it easier to find out the facts on setting up and operating a business. Enabling such portals to be transactional will accelerate and simplify the processes to start and run a business for domestic and foreign investors alike.

Tempting Talent:

At a time when there is growing concern over youth unemployment, especially in the towns, creating a match between the supply of talent and demand of jobs should be at the top of the government's agenda, for the benefit of both potential employees and employers.

After speaking with over 100 business leaders in seven dzongkhags, one of the most concerning



MOST INVESTORS AGREE THAT DOING BUSINESS IN BHUTAN IS NOT EASY



One of the most critical areas for foreign investors is the ability to make money off their investments.

issues facing business leaders - both foreign and domestic - is access to employable talent. This appears to be particularly tricky in service industries such as hotels, where graduating youth show a reluctance to apply themselves. It was also highlighted as a challenge in technical jobs, where employers I spoke with have had a hard time hiring Bhutanese with the computer and IT skills they require for more technical jobs. In addition, the highly desirable skills of master electricians, plumbers, and builders tend to be shunned by both the education system and youth alike.

The fix for talent can only take place at two levels. The first fix for talent requires taking a long-term view to ensure that the skills of the nation's youth match the demand from businesses. This will involve shifting the skills being developed in the nation's education and training systems as well as the culture that dictates what jobs are desirable to youth. In addition, while secondary and tertiary education levels in Bhutan are the highest in the region, the teaching of

vocational skills is actually the lowest. This difference means that almost all technical jobs must be outsourced to expatriate workers while graduates with expertise in liberal arts are simply not attractive to employers. Overcoming this mismatch will require long term coordination between Ministries of Education, Labour and Economic Affairs, alongside real-time input from the business community on the skills and talent they are looking for.

The second fix is regulatory, by making it easier to hire workers, especially foreign ones to fill the gaps that cannot (yet) be met domestically. I am conscious that I do not want to be an expatriate worker promoting more expatriates as a solution to employment gaps, however one of the most prominent complaints by foreign investors is the difficulty of bringing in and retaining foreign workers to fill senior and technical roles for which there is a short supply of domestic experience. While the FDI Policy allows a ratio of "one expatriate permit for every five Bhutanese employed in the business", managers I spoke with complain that this is not often honored, and that after multiple rejected applications, they often give up and leave critical senior positions vacant. On top of this, the difficulty for expatriate workers to move about the country and complexities of extending contracts beyond three years are another hurdle to foreign investors.


Fiscal Fixes

On top of burdensome regulations and a difficulty to find the right talent, financial hurdles add to this problem. Speaking to hoteliers at a selection of five star hotels, one hears of a very complicated and arduous taxation system that is not favorable to investors. In particular, the meager tax holidays

offered are not enough to make a meaningful difference to any of the business leaders with whom I spoke. Investors who spoke to me were mainly investing in Bhutan because they had been charmed by its beauty or serenity, but none were convinced that they would be generating profits any time soon.

While there are tax exemptions designed to promote the construction of luxury establishments, many hotel owners complain about the complexity of benefiting from these. For example, it was pointed out that furniture destined for hotel lobbies is exempt from taxes, but that which will furnish hotel rooms is not. For the import of fixtures in bathrooms, commodes are tax exempt, but the cisterns are not, and showerheads are tax-exempt, while the piping is not. Piecemeal regulation like this adds complexity and headaches for foreign investors and local partners alike.

One of the most critical areas for foreign investors is the ability to make money off their investments. In the event that a company is able to overcome the above obstacles and turn a profit, repatriation of this money is an additional step requiring



Two other fiscal challenges not addressed in the FDI Policy are access to finance and external commercial borrowing.

further paperwork and processes. While the FDI policy offers investors the right to repatriate dividends in the currency of earnings, there is no mention of how this actually works in practice, in particular for an industrial or manufacturing investment.

Additional hurdles imposed by the Royal Monetary Authority since the publication of the FDI Policy make this even more complicated. For example, in the 2012 Foreign Exchange Regulations, The FDI Policy does state that for 'service activities in the priority list', the investor is allowed to purchase up to USD 5 million in convertible currency per annum for repatriation of dividends. What does this mean for service activities outside of the priority list, or for industrial activities? Why is there a USD 5 million cap, and is the amount of allowable currency conversion not dependent on the amount of profits made? These questions are certainly not going to be encouraging more and larger investments to be flowing into the country any time soon. In one example, it is publicly known that the G4S security company had trouble repatriating profits, as its activities do not fall under the Government's priority list, despite being the largest foreign employer in Bhutan.

Two other fiscal challenges not addressed in the FDI Policy are access to finance and external commercial borrowing. Access to foreign investment is only allowed if a company is expanding or is declared to be 'sick' a subjective measure decided by the Government. It is not currently possible to sell a piece of a local company to a foreign investor to bring them in as a partner. Similarly, despite revisions in December of the external commercial borrowing guidelines, borrowed money is still heavily restricted and

cannot be used for investment in capital markets, on-lending or purchase of real estate. That the State should define how a private company uses a loan is surprising and certainly not a catalyst for a more dynamic private sector.

Enabling Improvement

In conclusion, each of these three areas: doing business, talent development, and fiscal policy, will require conscientious attention from across the Government. None can be overhauled by a single ministry, but can be addressed with careful coordination across several government ministries, as well as incorporation of structured and systematic input from the private sector. Additionally, despite research and many deep conversations, I was unable to locate conclusive numbers around the actual amounts for foreign investment or number of jobs created by these investments – it appears that the exact numbers have been lost somewhere along the way between the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Finance and Labor, and the Royal Monetary Authority.


One of the conclusions coming out of a conference on sustainable economic development hosted by Royal Thimphu College last year was that "Bhutan is a great place for foreign investors – unless you want to make money". The cynical statement starkly highlights room for improvement on the policies and practicalities of investing in Bhutan and points to the difference between the views of the Bhutanese government and the perspective of potential investors scrutinizing the country as a place to put their money.

Making Bhutan a better place for foreign investors will also make it a better place for local businesses and all of the country's future employees and employers. An FDI Policy that is



Making Bhutan a better place for foreign investors will also make it a better place for local businesses and all of the country's future employees and employers.

focused solely on protecting the domestic market will not provide temptation to lure in desperately needed foreign funds that will create the jobs, skills, and diversity of economic growth that is waiting for Bhutan to shift from an economy based on resource use, to one based on efficiency and innovation. The proven ability of the government to overcome its inherent silos (for example in the GNHC's Environment Climate Change and Poverty Reference Group) should now be applied to foreign investment and private sector development more broadly.

Ultimately, the policies and regulations that allow foreign investment in Bhutan need to clearly show the benefits for investors, and make it simple for them to invest, create jobs, build infrastructure and, of course, make profits. 

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WILL IT BOIL DOWN TO A CAR?

It is being speculated on by many that DPT might possibly score another sweeping victory this election in July. But, gauging public opinion largely in Thimphu, the cranes may not get to return and rule the roost again.

A historic win in 2008 presented the DPT with a historic opportunity. Some opportunities they seized, some they wasted, the Toyota Prado being one such opportunity they did seize. Not literally, of course. But, who would have imagined that a Japanese vehicle of all the things in the wide world would rev up a controversy in Bhutan?

When news broke that the former Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Speaker of the National Assembly, Chairman of the National Council and the Opposition Leader would be allowed to keep their government duty Toyota Prado Land Cruisers, public reaction ranged from sheer disbelief to outrage.

At a time when the country has been seeing officials like members of the parliament constantly put their benefits before those of the public, and when people are looking for leadership in setting standards in public service, this came as yet another disappointment.

This outrage was further compounded when it was learned that the ruling government had possibly asked to keep the vehicles as *kidu* from His Majesty the King, who graciously granted the request.

While most were quick to point out that this was a display of sheer greed by the DPT officials, others stood divided on whether the party shouldn't be judged by their last action. If one group pointed to the DPT's ability to turn things around for themselves, the other said the party had time and again been tested and often been found wanting.

There are moments when even the most trenchant of the DPT's critics have to believe that there is more to the party than its love of entitlements. And these are the moments when, like a professional athlete, the party has to outmaneuver its opponent and critics at the last minute and dash to victory at the finish line. Instead, it was the Opposition Leader (OL) who showed enough strategic flair.

In the early days of his political career, former OL Tshering Tobgay had a tendency to go on a bit, seemingly opposing for the sake of opposing. While there were times when his arguments against the government were weak, he did question many pertinent issues that got the public thinking and allowing them a different point of view. His advantage is that he is from a younger generation than most DPT ministers, is politically savvy and knows when to cash in. While his returning of the Prado is being seen as an extremely political move, he did what was right and that seems to sit well with the generation that is becoming extremely restless at the blatant misuse of office by some.

On the day the cabinet was dissolved, he returned his blue Prado to the government. Although he denied any political motivation despite having invited the press to cover the event, he seemed determined to have the last word as the country's first opposition. And he did.

His argument was simple. He said it was morally wrong. Simply because His Majesty was

requested by no other than the former Prime Minister himself, and that it was tantamount to disrespecting those who struggled to meet daily sustenance.

In response, the DPT sent out a press release expressing their 'deep sadness' that *Soelra* from His Majesty the King was being made an issue before the elections. And that 'some people', obviously referring to Tshering Tobgay and his supporters, were stooping to the lowest common denominator to sow discord and bring about discontentment.

Without statistical research that can define or question a custom, ideas become clichés and arguments become sound bites. And soon, the sound bite becomes an infectious form of communication among the masses, who are then led by this enforced wisdom. What if one was to ask about the DPT'S motive behind such a statement?

Somehow, their justification fell flat. It is like the saying, if the only tool in your kit is a hammer, every issue will appear to be a nail. In the context of the DPT, it seems, their only measure of defense lies in spinning the issue and nailing it down with a hammering approach. At times, even labeling shocking aberrations as customs while, at other times, coming across as inflexible, pompous and very pleased with themselves.

Sadly, what DPT failed to realize through their actions and short-sightedness was that there were many things that worked against them in asking for the vehicles.

The country, of late, has not been doing well economically. The national debt is more than Nu 83 billion (which translates to 82% of GDP) and projected to grow exponentially in the next few years. Short term Indian rupee borrowings has already crossed Rs 21 billion, creating an Indian rupee crisis of sorts, the brunt of which must be borne by the common man.

The Prado has now become a national discussion no one quite knows how to hang up on.



In such a scenario, if Tshering Tobgay doesn't accept the vehicle saying it would contribute to the problem further because the next government will have to import new vehicles for the new batch of elected leaders, wasn't it (returning the vehicle) the right thing to do?

It is estimated that over Nu 50 million will have to be spent to procure the 14 duty vehicles gifted, but that is only if the same make vehicles are purchased. Add to that sales and green tax and the figure will reach upward of Nu 80 million. Of course, here one could argue that vehicles imported for ministers are exempt of tax. Yet Nu 50 million is a big amount for a country that relies on aid.

DPT, during its tenure, imposed a ban on import of all types of vehicles, discontinued vehicle quotas for civil servants, and stopped banks from giving loans for vehicle purchases. The result was that ordinary folks and car businesses suffered. Against such a backdrop, isn't it morally wrong, like Tshering Tobgay pointed out, to take official vehicles and compel the next government to import new ones with taxpayer money? Or is pointing out a folly, sowing discord?

Yes, it is understandable if you reason that the Prados were well deserved as the elected members had served the country for the past five years. It is also understandable if you reason that Members of Parliament are given Nu 700,000 and a duty free quota to purchase a vehicle at the beginning of their terms, while the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Speaker, NC Chairman, and the Opposition Leader are not. But, whatever your reasoning, or mine, the Prado has now become a national discussion no one quite knows how to hang up on.

The issue seems to have spawned a joke factory that churns out innovative ways to provide answers. Like, yes, if I become a minister, and I serve the country for five years, I might probably ask to keep my bungalow in the ministers' enclave.

But it is, unfortunately, no joking matter.

This question was in fact asked to the new political party's on a social media forum, but much to the dismay of the questioner, there was no answer. Sadly, it seems that Bhutanese who are seeking office can't seem to take a stand on what is wrong or right on such a simply issue when most voters seem to know the answer.

The irony of it all struck me when a chilip friend of mine remarked: "Everybody in Bhutan wants to ride a big, sturdy SUV, but nobody wants to drive it on a rough, dirty road." 🐦

The Dawn of a New Orange King

By JURMI CHHOWING (reporting from Amsterdam)



Sometimes there is no such thing as a befitting introduction. Words fail to convey what the heart feels, the eyes see and the ears hear. So one must submit to one's inadequacy and write on. This in short was what April 30 in The Kingdom of The Netherlands felt like-ecstasy, festivity, hope, melancholy, togetherness, unity and above all, the Dutch people's love for

the Royal Family. It was visible and audible in the air, the streets and canals of Amsterdam and the city's beautifully decorated squares.

The bright colors of the House of Orange where the Dutch Royal Family hail from was what draped the city of Amsterdam and all its mazes, passages, alleys, houses and buildings.

The city's party-loving, opinioned and somewhat eccentric



HIS MAJESTY THE KING WITH THE DUTCH ROYAL COUPLE DURING THEIR VISIT TO BHUTAN

citizens were already partying the night before even as last minute arrangements and security were being looked into; orange was the color- including garbage cans, the trash in it, and every imaginable paraphernalia that the world has been privy to whenever the Dutch Football team makes it to the European or the World Cups were in ample display around the picturesque city of canals- recently honored as a UNESCO World

Heritage site.

It was one heck of an 'Orange' day. After thirty three years, Queen Beatrix abdicated in favor of the Crown Prince Willem-Alexander. The Netherlands has had three successive queens leading up to the abdication. The beloved queen, highly revered and respected for the way she has reigned over the three decades, bid an emotional farewell the night before the coronation. But then that further added to the emotions leading up to the next day's crowning change.

Unlike Bhutan, there was no handing over of a crown. The Queen signed the abdication and the investiture of her son Willem-Alexander in the presence of the Royal Family, Senate, and Members of Parliament on the morning of the biggest celebration in honor of their monarchs, that particular day being her

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last Queen's Day, celebrated to mark their monarchs' birthdays. From here on the Queen's Day becomes the King's Day with the familiar date of April 30th changing to April 27th, the new king's birthday. That was it. Willem-Alexander became the first king of The Netherlands since 1890 on Tuesday, ascending a throne largely stripped of political power but still invested with enormous symbolic significance for the Dutch people.

His Argentine wife, Princess Maxima is now the Queen.

The formalities were emotional as the queen described the "love and support of her people" and the best decision she had ever made, marrying her husband, Prince Claus. He died in 2002. She added that the decision was made to make way for a new generation under a new monarch. "Some moments ago I abdicated from the throne. I am happy and thankful to present to you your new King," said Beatrix, 75, who retired after 33 years in the role, following in the tradition of her mother and grandmother. She now takes the title of princess.

The signing, oaths of loyalty and the swearing in ceremonies were held in the historic Palace at the Dam in the center of Amsterdam. Hundreds of thousands of people flocked in from all over the country, together with a large number of visitors and the press at the Dam Square, watching an historic transition take place on giant screens installed at The Dam and other public avenues all

across the canal city and the rest of the country.

"I take office in a period when many in the kingdom feel vulnerable or uncertain. Vulnerable in their job or in their health, uncertain about their income or their immediate environment," Willem-Alexander said at his inauguration, attended by crown princes and princesses and other dignitaries. Opinions from young and old alike were of a joyous reflection. "Queen Beatrix has been an outstanding example. I hope our new king will live up to the standard she has set so consistently over the last thirty three years," said Tom De Kok, an Amsterdammer. "We have had only queens so I am looking forward to a king. He is a nice looking person with a lovely family," said Susanne Kuiken, who had just arrived in Amsterdam from the north-east of the country. "I want to establish ties, make connections and exemplify what unites us, the Dutch people," the freshly minted king said at a nationally televised investiture ceremony in Amsterdam's 600-year-old New Church, held before the combined houses of the Dutch Parliament.

"As king, I can strengthen the bond of mutual trust between the people and their government maintain our democracy and serve the public interest." Hopes for the new monarch are high.

But Dutch people are anything but lax. An Amsterdam resident, Jorge Bosman, said he doubted Willem-Alexander's investiture would give the country much of an

● **QUEEN BEATRIX
ABDICATED IN
FAVOR OF THE
CROWN PRINCE
WILLEM-ALEXAN-
DER.**

employment boost.

“Well, at least he is employed,” he said. “I think he is just like his mum, he is honest, casual and wants to do a lot for his people I and out of the country,” said Donny Julian, attired in orange dungarees and walking hurriedly towards the Dam.

The general feeling as I spoke to different people was one of hope, change and renewal in their new king and a feeling of reminiscence as the subject would invariably shift over to his mother, Queen Beatrix. The one constant and consistent opinion was the natural beauty of his wife, Queen Maxima and her easy going and attractive nature. When they met, she was Maxima Zorreguieta, an economist. “Although she comes from Argentina, she has integrated well into Dutch culture. She has mastered the language, is extremely social, carries herself beautifully and does a lot of philanthropy and it feels good to know we’ll have such a beautiful and likeable queen representing the Dutch,” said Sasha, a young apprentice helping foreign press personnel with logistics.

Queen Maxima has been on the front pages of the media back in her native land. An Argentine paper had this telling headline: “We now have the Pope, Messi and Queen Maxima.”

Having had some Dutch connection in the form of an eleven year-old boy whose mother is Dutch, it was a moment that got to me. That is what mass-joy is capable of. The fact that they show their love for their royal

family in that most typical of Dutch ways by donning outrageous costumes with Orange the dominant color exhibits what is also very seriously felt deep in their hearts. It’s a time of extreme economic recession where more Dutch people are out of work, jobless, unemployed and on welfare than ever in recent memory. But on April 30th, as popular slogans screamed from everywhere, it was the day “we celebrate the crowning of a new King; god bless the new King.” Not to be outdone, local entrepreneurs selling orange paraphernalia, such as the ubiquitous orange crowns had this tantalizing tag: “buy a crown and become a king for a day.”

The day was indeed a king’s

The bright colors of the House of Orange where the Dutch Royal Family hail from was what draped the city of Amsterdam



day as almost everyone seems to walk around either with orange crowns, hats, cowboy-hats and the like.

To conclude, it was a coronation without any untoward incident. And a celebration of a carnival nature that only the Dutch can demonstrate in that most unique of ways which sets apart this little kingdom in Europe’s southern flatlands.

If you go by the color, the future seems bright; the future seems orange.

As I end this, the setting Amsterdam sun has more than a hint and a hue of that color- it’s completely orange. 🐦



The Butch (Bhutanese-Dutch) Connection

Queen of Bhutan: The Tulip

The newest Dutch tulip to be named 'Queen of Bhutan': a tulip with deep red petals edged with golden yellow. The tulip symbolizes the friendship and longstanding relation between the Netherlands and Bhutan, and reflects besides the national colors of Bhutan, Her Majesty's personality: "warm and kind in heart and mind".

The tulip was revealed at the Florida World Stage Theatre in the presence of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Lyonpo Dago Tshering, the Ambassador of Bhutan to the EU in Brussels, His Excellency Sonam Tshong, the Florida 2012 General Director, Mr. Paul Beck and many other distinguished guests, and friends of Bhutan.

Mrs. Erica Terpstra explained that the tulip selected by Her Majesty the Queen of Bhutan, Ashi Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, also reflects her character as expressed by his Majesty the King of Bhutan: 'warm and kind in heart and mind'. The Queen of Bhutan tulip will soon be launched in Bhutan and will be available at the Gardeners' shop of Mrs. Tshering Yanki at the Centenary Market in Thimphu.

Bhutan + Partners

'Keeping in touch with Bhutan seemed natural' is the slogan behind this organization.

Bhutan+partners was founded in 2002 by Henk de Jong, after his term as SNV country director in Bhutan. Henk experienced his years working and living in Bhutan as inspiring and valuable. The respectful and open attitude of his colleagues and partners at work and the natural approach to daily life encouraged him to remain in touch with Bhutan and its people.

It has connected many people and organizations to partners in Bhutan and vice versa since 2002. Bhutan+partners facilitate and generate new and unusual programs driven by creative people searching for innovative and lasting connections. Founded in 2002, and based in the Netherlands, Bhutan+partners inspire people and organizations from Bhutan and Europe to connect in the fields of business, culture and sports. The programs are inspired by the principles of Gross National Happiness.

Some of the key areas in which Bhutan+Partners have been playing a major role are business, the film industry, culture, and sports where it coordinated the Sport Coalitions in Action Program in Bhutan for the Dutch ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports from 2009 to mid 2012.

86 Centimeters

Bhutan+Partners produced the documentary 86 Centimeters about the threats of a glacial lake outburst flooding in Bhutan. 86 Centimeters is a co-production with TGMI Media – Bhutan, and Enlightenment Films. The well known documentary chronicling the 2002 World Cup, The Other Final between Bhutan and Montserrat was the forbearer.

Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and Princess Maxima's visit to Bhutan

At the invitation of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the Royal Couple made an official visit to the Kingdom Bhutan on October 10, 2007. The visit further cemented the warm and friendly relationship between the two countries.

They visited the National Museum in Paro, an educational institute showcasing the history and culture of Bhutan and Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest Buddhist temples in Bhutan.

On the second day, the couple were officially welcomed at Tashichhodzong, where the Royal Couple were granted an audience and received by the His Majesty the King.

They also visited the National Institute of Traditional Medicine and the Bhutan Archery Foundation which received the 2004 Prince Claus Award for the role they played in preserving the traditional sport and making it accessible to women.

The couple also spoke about 'Gross National Happiness', developed by Bhutan as a 'yardstick' for sustainable socio-economic growth, good governance and the preservation and promotion of cultural values. The visit was concluded with a cultural evening.

By Jurmi Chhowing

WHAT'S NEW

Trends

KEY

Brand Where to buy Contact



MAC Studio Fix Compact

NU. 1,400

MAC LiquidLast Liner - Point Black



NU. 2,300



NU. 2,980

Clip-On Hair Piece



NU. 3000-4000

Buray (Raw Silk) Kiras
Norbu's Buray, Hong Kong Market, Thimphu



NU. 1,500

Synthetic Washable Hair Extensions



NU. 300

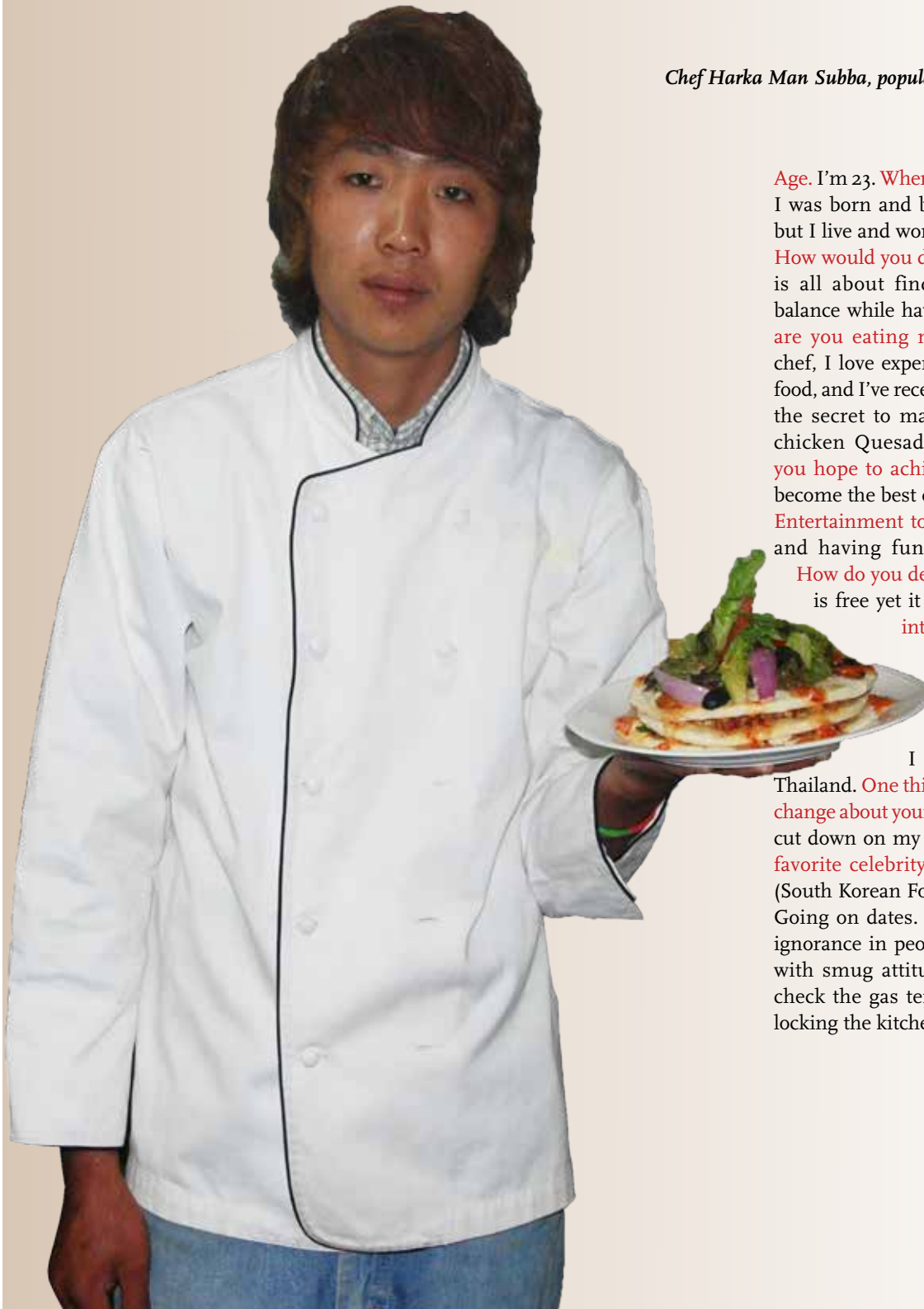
Spiked Bangles - Set of 3
The Classic, Multibrand Store, Jafa's Building, Chang Lam, Thimphu



NU. 1,000

Pussycat Faux Suede Flats
The Classic, Multibrand Store, Jafa's Building, Chang Lam, Thimphu

WHAT 'S YOUR QUIRK?



Chef Harka Man Subba, popularly known as Rigden

Age. I'm 23. **Where are you from?**

I was born and bred in Tsirang but I live and work in Thimphu.

How would you define life? Life is all about finding the right balance while having fun.

What are you eating now? As I'm a chef, I love experimenting with food, and I've recently discovered the secret to making excellent chicken Quesadillas.

What do you hope to achieve? I hope to become the best chef in Bhutan.

Entertainment to you? Dancing and having fun with freinds.

How do you define love? Love is free yet it binds us.

Your interests? Making new friends.

Where did you train to be a Chef?

I trained in Thailand.

One thing you'd like to change about yourself? I'd like to cut down on my smoking.

Your favorite celebrity? Park Ji-Sung (South Korean Footballer).

Like? Going on dates.

Dislike? I hate ignorance in people and people with smug attitudes.

Quirks? I check the gas ten times before locking the kitchen door.

KNOW YOUR FOOD

NAKEY (Fiddlehead Ferns)



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Nutritional value per	(100g)
Energy	34 kcal
Carbohydrates	5.54 g
Protein	4.55 g
Total Fat	0.40 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Vitamins	
Niacin	4.980 mg
Riboflavin	0.210 mg
Thiamin	0.020 mg
Vitamin A	3617 IU
Vitamin C	26.6 mg
Electrolytes	
Sodium	1 mg
Potassium	370 mg

Minerals

Calcium	32 mg
Copper	0.320 mg

MACRONUTRIENTS

Fiddlehead ferns are made up mostly of water, but they also provide protein and carbohydrates. A 100-gram serving of raw fiddlehead ferns has 4.55 grams of protein, 0.4 grams of fat and 5.54 grams of carbohydrates.

VITAMINS

Nakeys are very high in vitamin A, a fat-soluble vitamin essential for healthy vision, immune system function and regulation of gene expression. It is also an excellent source of niacin and vitamin C and a good source of riboflavin.

MINERALS

Good source of phosphorus, a mineral that is an important structural component of cell membranes and bone. Fiddlehead ferns also provide iron.



Amongst the many edibles that the wild has bountifully given to the Bhutanese, one is the fiddlehead fern, a foraged delicacy.

Locally known as *Nakey*, Fiddleheads are available almost everywhere in Bhutan where it is wet and warm, and so in spring it is found abundantly along riverbanks and streams. The fronds erupt along the length of rhizome spreads of big fern plants. Their harvesting season is very short and should be done before the fronds unfurl. The ferns are unique in their appearance, taste, and nutrition profile.

Their high-quality plant-nutrition profile consists of health benefits because of the antioxidants, vitamins, and omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids it contains.

Because of its nutritious and fleshy contents, fiddlehead ferns have now become a delicacy the world over. Wholefoods, a U.S. food chain, supplies farmed fiddlehead ferns charging about \$10 to \$15 a pound. In Ontario

Canada, NorCliffFarms forages, produces, packs and ships fiddleheads all over North America. They have been doing this since the 70's.

Fresh fronds are very high in antioxidant vitamin-A, and carotenes. Vitamin A is a powerful natural anti-oxidant and is required by the body for maintaining the integrity of skin and mucus membranes. It is also an essential vitamin for vision.

Research studies suggest that natural foods rich in vitamin A help the body protects against lung and oral cavity cancers. Agriculture Canada Research states that it has twice the anti-oxidants of blueberries. It is good for vegetarians because it is rich in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.

Their unique sweet taste comes from their richness in vitamin C. Together with flavonoid compound like carotenes, it helps scavenge harmful free radicals, and offer protection from cancers, inflammation, and viral cough and cold.

Fern shoots are a very good source of minerals and electro-



Because of its nutritious and fleshy contents, fiddlehead ferns have now become a delicacy the world over.

lytes, especially potassium, iron, manganese and copper. Potassium is a heart friendly electrolyte, which helps reduce blood pressure and heart rate by countering sodium effects.

Further, they contain small to moderate levels of some of the valuable B-complex group of vitamins such as niacin, riboflavin, and thiamin.

Bhutan is very lucky that this vitamin rich content vegetable is widely available and reasonably priced. But like fungi, it should be known that only some ferns are edible and some (like the bracken fern) can be carcinogenic. While choosing fiddleheads, look for deep or bright green, firm, tightly coiled ferns. The scales are bitter and need to be removed before being cooked.

Fiddlehead ferns should be cooked fresh, otherwise stored in wrapped plastic and place in a refrigerator set at high relative humidity where they stay fresh for 2-3 days. Another alternative is to prepare and blanch the fiddlehead for about 2 minutes in boiling water.

Before cooking remove any brown scales, trim the stem up to the base, and wash in cold water thoroughly. Then boil in salted water for 1-2 minutes. Drain and discard the water. Most common recipe in Bhutan is mixing with cheese and chilies usually called *Nakey Datshi*.

Aside from boiling and steaming, fiddlehead can be sautéed in butter or olive oil and is very good with a little garlic and parsley. 🐦

By TSHERING DORJI



REVIEW RESTAURANT



WHERE

Chang Lam - next to the UNDP roundabout

SPECIAL

Traditional Bhutanese Cuisine

TIMING

8:30 am - 10:00 pm

CONTACT

17673727

Kados

Kados for lunch, is something I've heard many nine to fivers say for years now. On enquiring, Kados was described to me as a little canteen tucked away in a little corner just off the Chang Lam - a jugular vein of a street running through the heart of Thimphu. It opened almost 15 years ago as a little canteen catering to Thimphu's office lunch crowd and it hasn't looked back since. I always wondered where exactly it was and if the food was even that great for it to be so popular. I knew it was cheap and quick, canteen food after all, something that young office-goers desire if they are to eat out regularly.

But when I eventually made that purposeful trip to Kados one day with my family, I realized why that name was uttered by every office goer. However, it wasn't easy finding "Kados" because it is no longer off the main street nor is it known as Kados, and it certainly wasn't a canteen. Kados has undergone a major facelift.

Much to my pleasant surprise I found that it is special for more than just quick service and low prices. It was famous for its traditional, heavy, rich, delicious, homemade food. And I say

The menu is simple and changes slightly seasonally. The food is typically Bhutanese and the menu of the day is written on a white board on display.

homemade because Kados, now known as 'Yangkhil Restaurant', is a family run business where the food is lovingly cooked by the mother (Kado's wife) and served by their children. Ap Kado himself is the manager, cashier and in charge of taking orders.

The menu is simple and changes slightly seasonally. The food is typically Bhutanese and the menu of the day is written on a white board on display. The most popular dishes such as the *Sikam* (Chill Dried Pork with Radish and Red Chilies), *Shakam* (Dried Beef with seasonal Vegetables), Pork Ribs and *Datshi Tshoem* (dried or fresh veggies

– meat optional - with cheese) are stable items because of the demand. If you, like me, prefer your *Sikam* spicy, well done and crispy - it's probably the best you'll ever have, and if you like your *Tshoem* to have just the right amount of soup, cheese and oil, you won't be disappointed with that either.

Ap Kado tells us some of his customers come mainly for their special *Ezzay* (a combination of mainly dried red chilies, tomatoes, onions, coriander, oil and salt to taste), a Bhutanese take on a salad/salsa if you will, which is an accompaniment to almost everything in Bhutanese cuisine. The staple Red and White rice are Nu 50 for each helping, but most people can barely get through the first because it comes in a heap! All other veggie dishes are Nu. 50 and meat items all Nu. 90 each. So for about Nu.300 to 400 (less than under USD \$5) you can have a grand traditional Bhutanese meal.

Kado's has been in business for over a decade, I am told and moved location three times, but it has not veered away from Chang Lam street. The restaurant has dedicated customers who have followed Kado wherever he goes over the years. That alone tells you that this once little canteen has done well for itself, building a steady clientele of Bhutanese, who love Bhutanese food. 🐦

By KESANG P. DORJI





REVIEW MOVIE

Centering around five different families, [Zhideyi Tsawa](#) explores a wide range of legal issues confronted by ordinary citizens in their daily lives. The series, broadcast in BBS, also highlights the importance of cultural beliefs and values in the Bhutanese legal system



The cast and crew

DIRECTOR

Palden Dorji

CAST

Lhaki Dolma, Lhakpa Dendup, Dechen Dorji, Khandu



Zhidheyi Tsawa, a new legal series, comprising of 25 episodes, was conceptualized by the president of the Bhutan Legal Institute, Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck, to foster better understanding and awareness of the Bhutanese legal system among the general public.

Apart from depicting real issues faced by Bhutanese society and by the people as they come in contact or in conflict with the laws of the Kingdom, the series also delves into the cultural values and beliefs of people whilst

providing information of the judicial system that exists in Bhutan.


Produced by the Bhutan National Legal Institute (BNLI) with financial assistance from UNDP and UNICEF, the series boasts an impressive cast of over 150 seasoned artists of the Bhutanese film fraternity.

The plot revolves around five families that are confronted with legal issues both civil and criminal in nature. And, as the law takes its course, the families land themselves in situations they had failed to anticipate earlier for lack of knowledge of the law.



Stills from the legal series

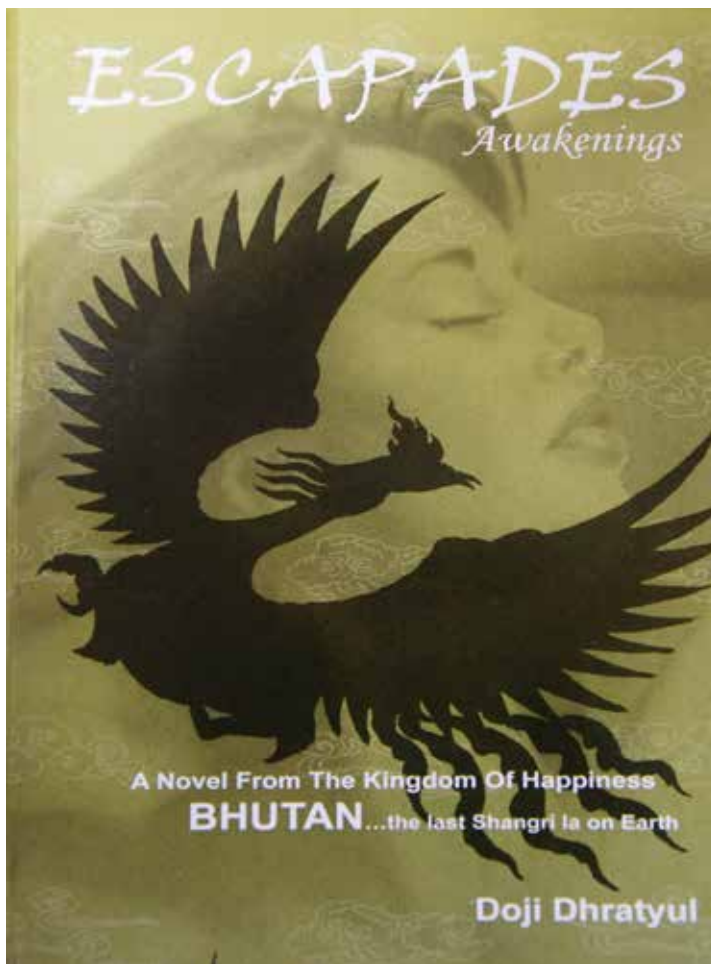
Shot with a budget of Nu 1.3 million, *Zhidheyi Tsawa* is a must watch not only to get a better understanding of the law but also because it conveys powerful social messages regarding violence, unemployment and substance abuse that plague the Bhutanese youth and in turn Bhutanese society.

Zhidheyi Tsawa entertains, informs and educates the public on the rule of law while also serving as an invaluable legal resource. 

By TSHERING DORJI



REVIEW BOOK



PRICE

Nu. 600

AVAILABLE AT

DSB Book Store, Thimphu

ESCAPADES *Awakenings*

The Bhutanese media has, over the years, been covering the many social issues that plague Bhutanese society. It has been instrumental in getting Bhutanese society to think about some of the things that we have considered normal and traditional, even when we know that they result in numerous problems lasting generations. But, newspapers and mainstream media can only do so much. It doesn't necessarily have the impact that a novel can.

Of late we have many Bhutanese novels, but none tackles head on the issue of Night Hunting and abuse of rural women by local officials the way this new book does. It is therefore refreshing to see that for the first time, we have a writer, that too a Bhutanese man who presents in great detail how these abuses occur and the generational impact it has on women and children in Bhutan. In some respects the book is a shocker because it really moves beyond the clichéd descriptions and traditional tales of the beautiful rural life in Bhutan, lifting the veil of misty romanticism and delves

instead into the heart of an ugly dark truth that many women and children in the villages have had to live with.


For a first time author, Doji Dhratyul, who has worked in the public sector, has done a pretty good job of developing strong characters spanning three generations. At the heart of the novel is Chechay who conceives a child out of wedlock after being abused by an official from Thimphu. It depicts in great detail the character's life and how she tries to cope with such a misfortune while officials who are guilty of such terrible crimes go on with their lives without being made accountable for what amounts to rape under today's laws.

The story comes alive though the simple but hard-hitting details of Chechey's life and the villagers of Maming, who are caught in the mesh of deceit, exploitation and back-breaking labour as porters to arrogant, self-righteous, over-indulged, and abusive officials from Thimphu who come to the villages "supposedly" to help them out. The novel is introspective, ably aided by the descriptions of Bhutanese life, culture, traditions and religion.

A strong theme in the story is the indomitable spirit of survival and inner strength, of rural Bhutanese women who tolerated these crimes because there was no way of seeking justice from people who are powerful and influential. As the main character struggles to overcome the bitter conditions that make them susceptible to exploitation, she also learns to use it to her advantage. The tale of how Thruabaab, a simple fatherless village girl, overcomes her humble beginnings to reach the highest rung of political power and corporate success is indeed mesmerizing, as is the ultimate sacrifice of her daughter Choedron who leaves behind all the trappings of material success to embrace spiritualism guided by her mentor Chencho.

For a first time author Doji Dhratyul has delivered one of the first Bhutanese novels that hits home. It is a story that should really get many officials, who have indulged in practices like night-hunting by seeking out innocent village girls, thinking about the grave sins they have committed. Many have gotten away and continue

Of late we have many Bhutanese novels, but none tackles head on the issue of Night Hunting and abuse of rural women by local officials the way this new book does.

to get away with rape and being accountable for their offspring simply because these women and girls are dependent on these officials for development needs in their villages. They also fail to report these cases because they do not know how or where to begin. 

By TSHERING DORJI



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Dasho Dr. **Sonam Kinga**, the Chairperson of the National Council, talks to *The Raven* on challenges pertaining to the house of review.



Q. Congratulations on your win! How do you feel being elected to the National Council for a second term?

A. Winning the trust of voters for the second time from the country's largest constituency is a big honour and even bigger a responsibility. I think we are looking forward to an exciting five-year in the course of deepening our young democracy. As a member and as Chairperson of the National Council, I feel that my commitments should be to make this institution very relevant to the everyday needs and aspirations of our people.

Q. Can you talk our readers through some of the issues that you'd like to table this time around in parliament?

A. My election commitments are to uphold and protect the Constitution so that those in power do not seek to amend it to remain in power or benefit a few people. I intend to call for an exhaustive review of agriculture policy so that we move beyond supporting subsistence farming and begin to think of agriculture not just as the realm of illiterate peasants but as a vibrant sector of a modern Bhutanese economy. I also intend to call for a review of

employment policies so that the issue of unemployment particularly youth unemployment can be better addressed by the government. As in the last five years, I commit myself to address the so-called small issues which may not have much to do with my legislative and review mandate but which may have direct and more meaningful impact on the everyday lives of our people.

Q. Most voters, even after five years of democracy, are still unclear about the role of the National Council. What, according to you, is the role of the NC?

A. I do not think there is a need to pretend that we do not know what the mandate of National Council is. The people generally understand its law-making, review and check and balance functions. We have used the last five years to continually and repeatedly inform people about the roles and responsibilities of NC. I think the lack of clarity stems from the fact that these functions have been made to perceive like the work of that of an opposition. It is important to reflect on how and who projected this image of NC as that of an opposition and created 'confusion'.

Q. The voter turnout was much

lower this year compared to the first Council election in 2008. Has the low turnout got to do with the general perception that people give less importance to the National Council as opposed to the National Assembly?

A. It is possible that the perception of National Council as less important an institution may be a cause for low voter turnout. But it is not the only reason. First, I chose to contest for National Council when the prevailing view is that competent people should contest for National Assembly seats. I do this



In Trashigang, some people with political affiliation attempted to influence elections. But the people are far more informed and experienced this time owing to voter education.

to emphasize the fact that the National Council is no less in importance and relevance. In fact, more mature and experienced people should contest for National Council elections. Second, low voter turnout is largely an urban phenomenon. People in villages do come and vote. In fact, rural turnout would be comparatively much higher. Third, costs associated with urban folks to go to villages and vote is quite high. It is not just about going home to vote but about visiting family members and relatives. That has lots of social and familial obligations. Fourth, many Tashigangpas thought that I would anyway win since there were no other contestants. I think this is true of single candidate constituency like Dagana as well. Fifth, NC candidates do not have networks like party machineries to mobilize and rally voters to vote.

Q. Even with more women voters, not a single woman candidate was elected. What could have led to such a trend and how will this impact the National Council?

A. Certainly the presence of women members in Parliament brings along its own dynamics of gender perspective on issues and other considerations. This is good and desirable. However, we cannot question the electorate's choice but respect it. His Majesty's gracious and well-considered reappointment of five eminent members consisting of two women is a great contribution and support to the composition of National Council. I am confident that they and the men members will be sensitive to the presence of fewer women and represent women's concerns well.

Q. Only six former Council members

were re-elected this time. Why, in your opinion, did the others fare badly at the polls, despite the legislative experience they could have brought to the Council?

A. The reasons for electoral outcomes concerning former members would differ across constituencies. They range from anti-incumbency factor to assessment of candidates' performances, candidates' touch with their constituencies, availability of more choices, demographic strength of constituencies from which candidates were nominated and many others.

Q. There are rumors that political parties influenced the National Council elections in some of the constituencies, including your own. How true are these rumors true?

A. Although I think rumours are rumours, they do not happen just like that. There would be basis for rumours to take a life of their own. However, I am not in a position to comment about this issue in other constituencies. In Trashigang, some people with political affiliation attempted to influence elections. But the people are far more informed and experienced this time owing to voter education conducted by election officials as well as my own efforts during campaign period. The people largely did not give in to attempts of influence of such people and ensured that the elections were successful by choosing to vote independently.

Q. A lot of young candidates have been elected to the National Council this year. Are you worried that most members, in the house of review, are inexperienced? And, how will it bode for the Nation?



Certainly the presence of women members in Parliament brings along its own dynamics of gender perspective on issues and other considerations. However, we cannot question the electorate's choice but respect it.

A. The re-election of six old members and His Majesty's gracious and well-considered re-appointment of the five eminent members strike a fine balance with the educational background and work experience of fourteen new members. I think the continuity of the National Council in terms of institutional experience and memory of eleven former members and injection of fresh perspectives, knowledge and energy by the new members make this National Council an exciting and strong team. I feel very confident about the members.

Q. Trashigang is the biggest Dzongkhag in the country, with a huge proportion of highly qualified individuals. Yet, no one stood to contest the NC election with you. Did your receiving the red scarf last year dissuade potential candidates?

A. Tashigang indeed has a pool



DASHO SONAM KINGA INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS OF KANGPAR

of highly qualified people serving in different agencies. There were indications earlier that people were going to contest along with me, and I welcomed them. Some even came and talked to me about their interest. Besides, Radhi Gewog formally nominated a candidate in a gewog zomdue although he withdrew later. More people however, were interested in joining political parties than contesting for National Council. The honour of red scarf should not have deterred anyone from contesting. In fact, it should be a motivation for people to stand as candidates and serve our country.

Q. As postal ballots are only meant for civil servants and corporate

employees, private employees are left with no choice but to go to their designated polling stations to cast their votes. And this translates into a lot of expenses. If the Election Commission had allowed people to vote from their station of residence, would it have resulted in a bigger voter turnout? How can elections be made more accessible to the people?

A. I think we need to re-think how to expand voting opportunities. Even though postal ballots are made available to some group of voters, my own experience finds that many postal ballots are not counted due to mistakes made by applicants. Postal ballots are costly. So we need to explore alternatives. I feel that

while postal ballot opportunities need to be continued, alternatives such as opening 20 polling stations during National Council elections and 47 during National Assembly elections in larger towns like Thimphu, Phuntsholing, Gelephu and Samdrup Jongkhar and settlements with large population of armed forces and students should be considered. Let alone private and corporate employees and their family members, even civil servants may choose to come and vote rather than send postal ballots. Voting can also be spread over a few days rather than confining them to one day. For eligible voters in other countries, e-votes could be considered. It is not impossible. 🐦

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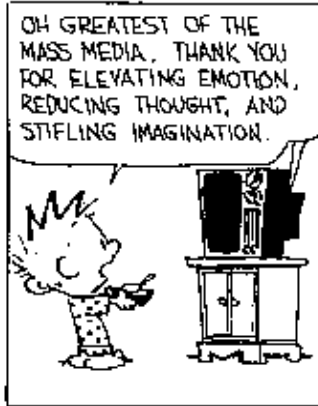
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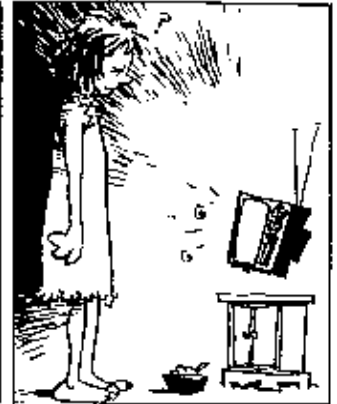
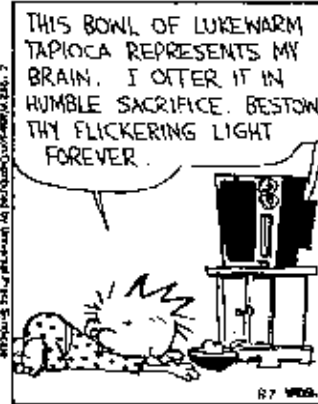


LEISURE

Calvin & Hobbes



THANK YOU FOR THE ARTIFICIALITY OF QUICK SOLUTIONS AND FOR THE INSIDIOUS MANIPULATION OF HUMAN DESIRES FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.



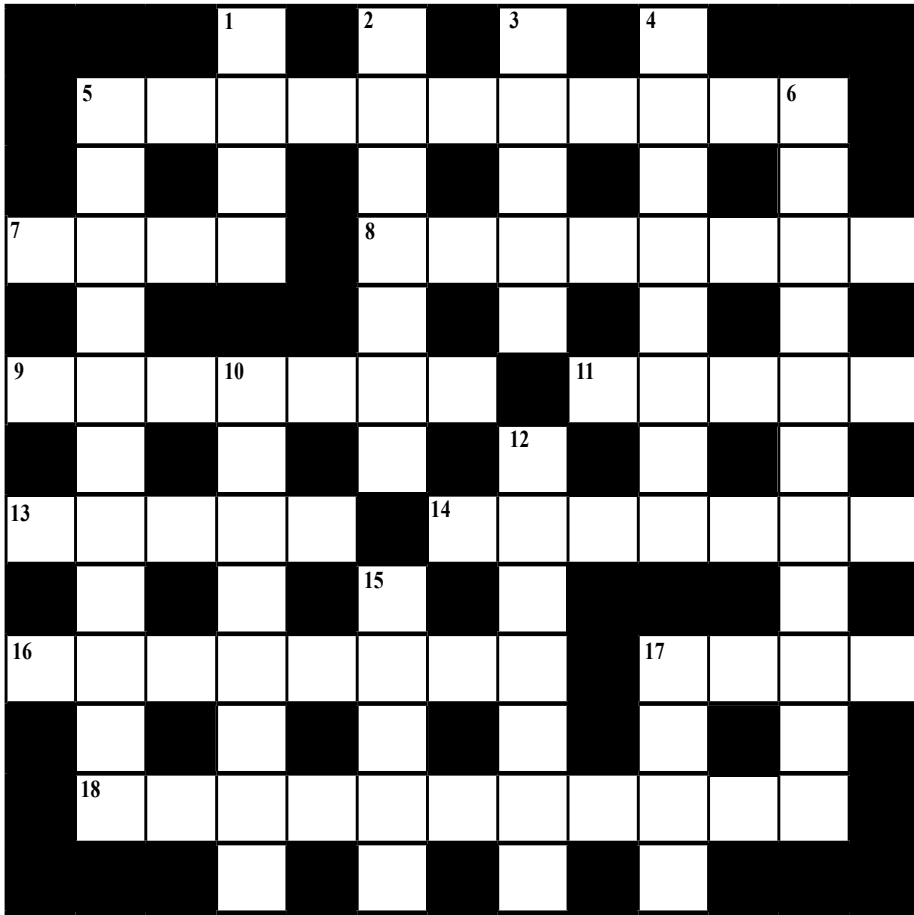
Beau Peep



Beetle Bailey



QUICK CROSSWORD



Last Month's Solution

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	E		O						C		E				D			
			12	W	O	13	R	T	H	L	E	S	14	S				
15	U								I		E			E	16	H		
17	N	E	18	W	T	S			19	E	N	20	G	R	A	V	E	
	I		A		I				S		A		W		Y			
21	Q	U	I	B	B	L	E			22	F	I	E	N	D			
	U		S		L						F		E		A			
23	E	S	T	E	E	M			24	D	E	A	D	L	Y			

Solution Next Month

Across

- 5 Promotion (11)
- 7 Rend (4)
- 8 Miserable (8)
- 9 Once and for all (7)
- 11 Fox's lair (5)
- 13 Stinging insects (5)
- 14 Break into many bits (7)
- 16 Cadge (8)
- 17 Commanded (4)
- 18 Unusual characteristic (11)

Down

- 1 Half a dozen deliveries (4)
- 2 Smarty-pants (4-3)
- 3 Number of Deadly Sins (5)
- 4 Trader (8)
- 5 Yachting prize (8,3)
- 6 Not long ago (3,5,3)
- 10 Draw near (8)
- 12 Fastest land animal (7)
- 15 Male relative (5)
- 17 French cheese (4)

LIVING WITH GARBAGE

The household scrap collector has been part of Bhutan's recycling machinery for decades now. They pay people for their waste and then sell it to the recyclers for a profit. Changa, however, collects things that have been thrown directly into the trash can.

By MITRA RAJ DHITAL

One chilly May day the sky is dark and overcast, about to give way any moment to a downpour. Changa, his chin nuzzled into his chest, in an effort to escape the strong wind, takes shelter beneath the low roof that is protruding out of his small shack. He isn't quick enough though. A swirl of gritty dust envelopes him as he sticks to the tin wall of his home.

Just next to him, under the open sky, the passageway smells of waste and decay. At one end of it, close to the entrance of his home, is a huge worn out sack - half full, yet too large for indoor display - flapping furiously in the wind.

The 62-year-old father of six, just before the dust storm and now the rain, had been sorting through the trash he had collected that morning from around the suburbs of Thimphu.

Cardboard box, yes. In the border town of Jaigaon, it will sell for Nu. 2 a kilogram. Tin, yes, Nu. 2.5 per kilo. Scraps of paper, Nu. 1.75. Empty bags of potato chips, no. Not everything he has collected will fetch him money.

Changa's 29-year-old wife, Tshering Yuden, just prior to the wind and rain, had pulled out a black computer keyboard and handed it to her husband. Holding it still, he emerges from his shelter and looks at it with a hint of fascination. Then, he shoves it into the half-full sack of recyclables. It will sell - he has no other use for it.

About 15 others like Changa

➔
CHANGA



work throughout Thimphu and its surrounding areas collecting waste and scrap. They constitute not even one percent of the capital's population, yet they recycle almost 20 percent of the material the city discards, saving the Municipality of Thimphu a lot of money and work.

Poverty forces people into this line of work – scrap collection. And although these waste-pickers don't face any discrimination in Bhutan, they still undergo a great deal of hardship trying to eke out a living from it.

This year, making a living has been tougher than usual, according to Changa.

"A few years ago, for a truckload of scrap that I'd take to Jaigaon every second month, I'd make a profit of almost Nu. 7,000," says the soft spoken man from Kurtoe, getting into his thick, dirty, jacket to shield himself from the wind. "Today, it is difficult to make even Nu. 3,500 every three months. Everything, from waste to money, has become scarce."

Surprisingly, the ongoing rupee issue in the country affects what scrap is available and what money they can get for it. Further, the waste collecting trucks, donated by the Japanese government, doing its rounds around the capital every day in order to create a cleaner city – means scrap and waste collection is out of sight and out of mind. The City Corporations efforts that is succeeding in cutting the supply of scrap only translates into waste-pickers losing their source of income and, in most cases, their homes. For them, scrap is survival.

"When I started collecting waste in 2008, business was much bet-

ter," he says. "Back then, a beer bottle would fetch me Nu. 3.25, Today, I'd be happy if I got Nu. 2 for it."

These days, Changa collects waste and scrap from people's homes and from the many restaurants around town. When he has money he even buys what he thinks will sell. And on days his collection doesn't amount to much, he heads for the Memelakha landfill, a few kilometers away from Thimphu, where he will spend the day rummaging through the unwanted filth.

Changa is second from the bottom in Thimphu's recycling chain. Below him are the landfill waste-pickers; above him are the specialized door-to-door scrap collectors who get the 'cream of the crop' – corrugated cardboard, paper, and beverage containers from homes and offices.

The household scrap collector has been part of Bhutan's recycling machinery for decades now. They pay people for their collection and then sell it to the recyclers for a good profit. Changa collects things that have been thrown directly into the trash can. But now, he has no choice but to keep aside some money he makes from his trips to Jaigon in order to purchase bottles – both glass and plastic – and metals.

"Competition is stiff," he smiles. "Even after going around every day for three months at a stretch, it is difficult to collect one truckload of waste."

About two years back, when there were not many people in his line of work, Changa could manage to collect one



Changa is second from the bottom in Thimphu's recycling chain. Below him are the landfill waste-pickers; above him are the specialized door-to-door scrap collectors.

truckload every other month to sell in Jaigaon. Now, all that has changed!

Hiring a DCM truck to carry the waste to the bordering town of India is also beginning to prove cumbersome for Changa. What would cost him Nu. 7,000 for a one way trip a year or two back, now costs him Nu. 10,000, and with dealers/recyclers not paying as much as they did in the past, his profit margins have decreased drastically. Add to that the house rent of Nu.

2,500 he has to dish out every month, along with the household expenses.

"It is tough to make a living," he says with a grim look on his face.

His children don't visit him anymore after he separated from their mother, his first wife, four years ago.

"As long as they can look after themselves it doesn't matter whether they visit me or not. At least I've educated all of them and they now have decent jobs," he says. "But to be honest, I think they are ashamed of what I do, and are embarrassed to visit me."

Changa, before he got the title of 'Scrap Dealer', was a constable with the Royal Bhutan Police. In 1990, he resigned, and with whatever money he had made as a policeman, he opened up a

● **THIMPHU, EACH YEAR, PRODUCES MORE THAN 20,000 TONNES OF WASTE AMOUNTING TO 50,000 KG OF WASTE EVERYDAY**

● **THE THIMPHU CITY CORPORATION SPENDS ALMOST NU 10 MILLION A YEAR ON WASTE COLLECTION**



bar. But there are one too many bars in Thimphu competing with each other and soon his business went bust. Changa was then compelled to take up the job of a security guard at the Wood Craft Centre in Thimphu. And though his meager salary wasn't enough to look after his wife and children, he guarded the Centre's premises for 12 years. In 2009, after his retirement, without any savings, he was left with no choice but to get into dealing with scrap.

According to a doctor at the Jigme Dorji National Referral Hospital in Thimphu, a lot of men, women and children who work as waste-pickers are severely anemic. Most of them are prone to respiratory illnesses caused by exposure to dust and gastrointestinal diseases caused by eating in unclean and unhy-

gienic surroundings. They are also prone to fever and nausea which probably results from the various environments they are exposed to.

Changa was no exception. Throughout 2012, he was bedridden with chest pain and fever. The result – he had no income whatsoever for the entire year.

“My credit had accumulated. But, once I was well, I worked hard and I've managed to clear it all,” he says.

Nothing else seems to bother him, not even the upcoming elections. All he is interested in is collecting enough waste that will pull his family – his wife and her young child from her previous marriage – through.

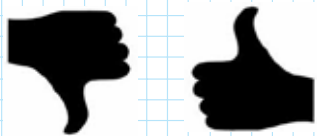
Inside his one-room home, on the lap of his wife, lies her young child. She will not get

into this trade, Changa says.

“I have to send her to school. This year, I haven't fallen ill at all, and if my good health continues, I can carry on for another 10 to 12 years collecting waste. I know I still have it in me,” he says, as he pets a stray dog who seems to have found a home with Changa.

Finally, the dust settles, the rain stops, and there is silence again as the pounding on the tin roof ceases. As the moments pass, the discarded fragments of people's lives are shoved back into Changa's burlap sack. A brown purse, a broken toilet seat, stacks of newspapers and books, things that once meant something to someone. One man's waste is truly another's treasure. 🐕

↑
**CHANGA SORTS
 OUT THE WASTE
 OUTSIDE HIS
 SMALL SHACK IN
 HEJO, THIMPHU**



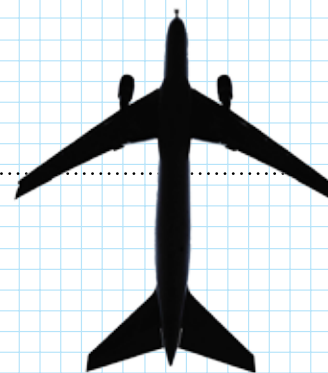
Police Officer

An Officer In-charge of traffic in Phuentsholing for his alleged involvement in a bribery case.



Tshering Gyeltshen

For sweeping 11 awards for his film *Thank You Sir* at the National Film Award.



15 schools in the country have maintained their rankings in the list of top 40 performing schools in 2012, according to the school performance rankings released by the education ministry recently.



Bhutan Kuen-Nyam party

Despite being disqualified from contesting the National Assembly elections, BKNP will continue working hard and stay on as a political party.



A 21-year-old former monk

For impregnating a 15-year-old girl. He was sentenced to nine years in prison by the court.



The short-term Indian rupee borrowings will continue to balloon until 2017. The borrowings stand at 50 billion currently.



The annual inflation rate from January to March this year was 8.3 percent. It was 9.5 percent for the same period last year.



Government Schools

For having limited or no access to the internet. Only 36 percent of government schools have access to the internet.



Students of Wheaton College

Eleven students of Wheaton College in the United States, who are on exchange program at the Royal Thimphu college, spent three days in the country to help in the reconstruction of Konchosum lhakhang in Bumthang.



Drukair's profit after tax dropped by 37 percent in 2012 compared with 2011.



Hydropower grants and earnings in the last few months have brought down rupee borrowings to Rs 17B from the Rs 20.5B at the beginning of the year.

Interim government takes over



The dissolving of the parliament and cabinet saw the interim government headed by the chief justice taking over the task to govern the country. Some of the interim government's responsibilities will be to complete the 10th Five Year Plan, develop the 11th, and mobilise aid and other financial assistance from foreign entities. The date for the general election has been fixed at July 13, and the interim government will continue heading the government until a new one has been sworn in.

The RCSC smack

Two teachers involved with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Druk Chirwang Tshogpa (DCT) have been asked to compulsory retire by the Royal Civil Service Commission for breaching the civil service code of conduct.

They had declared in the media to contest the upcoming elections as candidates for PDP and DCT prior to putting up their resignations. Although, the parties have submitted the details of the candidates, the election commission will begin scrutinizing all the candidates only before the general elections.

DHI Stands firm against rupee crisis



While the economic sectors like the construction and transport sectors have been hit the hardest by the shortage of Indian rupees, DHI-owned companies have managed to avoid the impact.

Officials of DHI-owned companies, during their annual press conference, said the liquidity crunch had no direct impact on them. This, they said, is because most of the DHI-owned companies earn their share of rupee to spend.

Sarpang Kidnap case gets closure

After a spate of kidnappings that rocked Sarpang last year, people are finally relieved that the perpetrators have been brought to justice.

Five men, three from the bordering Indian state of Assam and two Bhutanese nationals from Sarpang, were arrested by the police. According to police officials, two non-nationals were directly involved in the kidnapping while the third is alleged to have aided and abetted in the abduction.

A 35-year-old Bhutanese, involved in kidnapping two people, was also arrested along with a 69-year-old man.

Three people, a taxi driver, an astrologer, and the son of a shopkeeper had been kidnapped and held for ransom. All three were released after the kidnappers demands had been met by their family members.



DPT president to give back his land



Druk Phuensum Tshogpa president, Jigmi Y.Thinley, said he would like to give back his land in Gyalpoizhing, while meeting with the people there during his campaign.

The land that racked up quite a controversy over its allotment, the president said did not benefit him at all.

“Irrespective of what the court says, I don’t want to keep the land but give it to the people,” he said.

The National Council election sees less voters

The National Council election in April saw an overall turnout of less than half the registered voters in the country. In the Dzongkhags, voter participation varied from 33 to 73 percent, the highest turnout being in Gasa.

52.5 percent of those who cast their votes were women while 47.5 percent were men. And of the 16 former council members who had resigned, forgoing their benefits, to re-contest, only 6 were re-elected.



MOST DISCUSSED

20

percent of the richest Bhutanese population consumed, on an average, 6.7 times more than the poorest 20 percent of the population.

12

percent is the current rate of poverty in Bhutan.

11,049

of Bhutanese households are poor and 2,322 extremely poor. There are 127,942 households in Bhutan.

45

percent of the Bhutanese electorate voted during the National Council election.

76

Thimphu has the highest adult literacy rate at 76 percent.



Title: *Maidens*
Artist: *Tashio*
Medium: *Mix Media*

This form by Artist Tashio excels in its tribute to Bhutanese textiles and contemporary designs. The mixed media technique used by the artist is appealing and understatedly sensual.

This and other artworks are available at Terton Art Gallery in Thimphu.



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COVER STORY

(Continued from page 15)

happened to them nobody, including society, pointed out that it was wrong; that it is a heinous crime, one that should be punishable by law. Why is it that society, including the media, knows and does nothing? Where does this apathy come from? Is it out of fear, out of “supposed” respect for Buddhism/the monks/the religious institution, or is it because they just don’t see it as being wrong? One reason offered is that it is pointless. Pursuing such a case is not only exhaustive, it takes a toll on your psyche, and it is extremely stressful. Because many of the monks come from similar backgrounds like Penjore and Thinley, there is really no one who has the will, energy, resource or connections to stay the course. And, when your case winds up at the very institution that you want to hold accountable, how do you expect not to feel intimidated?

Also, even after knowing what had happened, both families seemed to have no interest in righting the wrongs. When Penjore’s Uncle, also an ex-monk, heard that he had been molested, he told him not to make incredulous remarks. Yet when I told the Uncle that this might have happened and there was another boy who could corroborate his statement, he



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A CLOSE EXAMPLE. FOR THE LONGEST TIME BHUTANESE SOCIETY DID NOT SEE IT AS SOMETHING WRONG OR EVEN AS A CRIME.

acknowledged he knew it did happen. But to them, it was just an unfortunate incident. The monastery had been kind enough to take the boys in and they knew the head Lama, whom the boys had wronged by stealing from, so how could they now hold both Lama and Dratsang to task? They would be seen as ungrateful after all that had been done for them. When I raised the case with educated colleagues their reaction baffled me equally. They were sympathetic, but didn’t seem to want me to make an “issue” out of it. One even said that I should seek compensation for the boys, like a school scholarship, so that they would at least benefit from it. After all, it was presumed that justice – the way I sought it – would be hard to come by, if at all it did. While this was all said in good faith, it surprised me that very few seemed to see why it was important to hold the Institution accountable for something that happens to these children, destitute or not. This was not just about Penjore and Thinley, but that of many other monks like them out there.

Although these reactions were difficult to comprehend at first, it became clearer that it was the general mindset that made this acceptable. Domestic violence is a close enough example. For the longest time Bhutanese society did not see it as something wrong or even as a crime. Even today many don’t see it as such, but only by passing legislations and prosecuting it can we make it a crime and teach society that it is wrong. It is the same for sexual abuse, especially that of monks. But unlike domestic violence where legislations were passed only recently, sexual abuse penalties are very clearly spelled out in the penal code. However, it doesn’t seem to apply to the monks because they are beyond the reach of the civil courts. Sadly, despite knowing these dark truths nobody has questioned it. Meanwhile, the Dratsang trying to bring in change by distribut-

ing condoms in the monasteries (as Kuensel reported) or setting up an investigative unit, which sees no cases because no one dares report them (ours was the first case brought to the Dratsang from outside the monastery), becomes a futile attempt at change. Nothing will change.

Child molesters and rapists are often people known to the victim and someone they are familiar with. That is why it makes it even more difficult for these children and for families to report these cases or for some people to see their perpetrators as evil.

SHIRKING RESPONSIBILITY

The Dratsang itself seemed to be unsure of how to move forward. Instead of suggesting a course of action it asked for a written response to what was expected by filing this case, I responded:

“The issue is simple – either the incidents alleged and supported by testimony and inquiry are a crime or they are not. If it is a crime, then the law should apply regardless of who these people are, (monks), or where they come from (the Dratsang)....The Dratsang is being given an opportunity to show leadership and set an example. It is at times of trouble and stress that true leadership shows moral fortitude. People feel that by hiding these social ills we will prevent an institution from disgrace. It is submitted, however, to the contrary. If the Dratsang puts the interests of the victims and treats this as a crime, it will earn respect from the community and society for setting moral standards and leading the way. By downplaying such an incident and claiming the privilege of excusing itself and its members from civil law that applies to those it asks to follow it, risks losing credibility and respect.

Buddhism is a religion that may be tolerant, but it is also a religion of compassion and empathy for the weak, the underprivileged, and those that are suffering. If anyone should know more about this, it should be the Dratsang. I am simply asking for your understanding of this problem; that it is wrong, and that it is a crime. If the Dratsang cannot treat it as one then, as I said before, disrobing a scapegoat doesn’t do much.


The appropriate handling of this case gives the Dratsang every opportunity to show leadership and prove to our society and the world that it is different from those institutions that have condoned and hidden such cases.

You are asking me to make a submission on the handling of this case. It is, however, not my role to determine the outcome. It happened in one of your monasteries, under your supervision, and by some of your members. The Dratsang has the moral and civic responsibility to society to act appropriately for the sake of little children that were entrusted to your care.”

By the end of October the Dratsang did take action. The 20-year old monk was disrobed and had left the monastery. But was that because of my

persistence in wanting them to make a criminal case out of it? According to a message conveyed from the Monastic Center, I was now free to pursue a criminal case against this monk in the civil court. They would not report the crime or pursue a criminal case on behalf of the boys while he was in the monk body. This way, the Dratsang prevented itself from being implicated, washed its hands of the case, and avoided moral responsibility and legal accountability for what happened. They were essentially leaving it up to these two boys, to pursue their case or it was taken for granted that somebody would help them.

Meanwhile, no broader inquiry was made into the events, and nothing happened to the 60-year old. He continues

to be a monk at the monastery. The situation of the two other boys was also not followed up on by the Dratsang, RENEW, or NCWC. Everything is back to functioning the way it does, except maybe for the boys. Although both Penjore and Thinley are back in school, one with the help of relatives, the other through a sponsor, things will never be the same. They have lost their innocence and live in shame of what happened to them. Penjore still has anger that he lost his mother while he was going through this horrible ordeal, and Thinley lost his father who succumbed to alcohol, six months after they ran away. 

By SONAM ONGMO

(The names of all the boys have been changed to protect their identities and the name of the monastery has been deliberately left out).

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LAST WORD

Objectivity in politics is a rare thing. Any time someone sets out to report political events, analyze a political situation or, yes, evaluate a politician, elements of subjectivity will creep in.

To begin with, we use words to communicate and words (whether or not one's good with it) have denotative as well as connotative meanings. While communicating their primary meaning, they also signal other messages. Say, for example, I want to tell you that a certain candidate, although a good speaker, is incapable of putting forward his points. The impression you'll get of the politician will vary considerably depending on whether I call him 'verbose' or 'eloquent.' And thus, such subjectivity can so spin the objective meaning.

Obviously, there's more to it than just the choice of words. You see, political reporters aren't just disinterested observers. In fact, they – at least the ones I know and I've worked with – feel pretty passionately about their beat. They're all political enthusiasts, if one can call them that. They have points of view and they like good and interesting politicians. The standards, however, of 'good' and 'interesting' are to a certain degree quite personal; more so now, as most politicians are trying hard to come across as presentable and appealing – both subjective qualities.

Good political writers want good, interesting, and promising candidates and political activity that they will enjoy writing and telling you about. So, in a sense, you could say, they're agents for politicians and political parties. When a politician or a political party deserves credit, writers will often tell you, just as they tell you about the disappointments they feel. Having said that, however, success in political writing requires painstaking fairness and impartiality. That doesn't mean that it is the same thing as objectivity. Simply, because it shouldn't be about personal likes and dislikes of the writer. If a politician is criticized, it should be explained why and the justifications for the criticism should be supported by facts. Yet political writers/journalists are unapologetic about being subjective in their evaluation of politics. Perhaps that's what the job requires.

Some of you, in the Presidential Debates of political parties, saw some of former Opposition Leader Tshering Tobgay's remarks as unwarranted but what would you have the political writers/journalists do? The fact is, they appreciate eloquence mingled with valid arguments and, as long as those qualities are visible, they'll write about it.

And on the subject of bias, that most politicians accuse the media of, politicians have to understand that in a free press, journalists and even citizens are free to express themselves whether they are biased or not. We can complain about biases, no doubt. But to take action against free speech or the practice of free press is another story, one that then undermines a democratic institution – something that a good politician should instead be leading the struggle for. Credibility is the one thing any good politician, media house, or for that matter anybody who wants respect, has to offer. Compromise it, and everything comes tumbling down. We don't need organizations or politicians to curb speech or criticism, just because we worry that lies are being spread. Credibility, at the end of the day, will take care of that, as it always has.

Politicians in particular always seem to disagree about what's written about them or their party, and that is perfectly fine. But if they want to prove their maturity, proficiency and aptitude as a politician or a leader of a democratic nation, they should have the ability to weather such criticism without whining.

At the end of the day, journalists have a greater duty towards their readers/viewers/listeners, and above all to themselves. And hopefully they understand that. As a journalist, I know that many are in this line of profession to bring their version of truth to the people. So, that leaves us with the final question: Do journalists operate with true objectivity? Now, isn't that a subjective question?



Mitra Raj Dhital