

Window on BHUTAN

ISSUE XIX, 2022





Inauguration of Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project 720MW



MHPA DAM



MHPA POWER HOUSE

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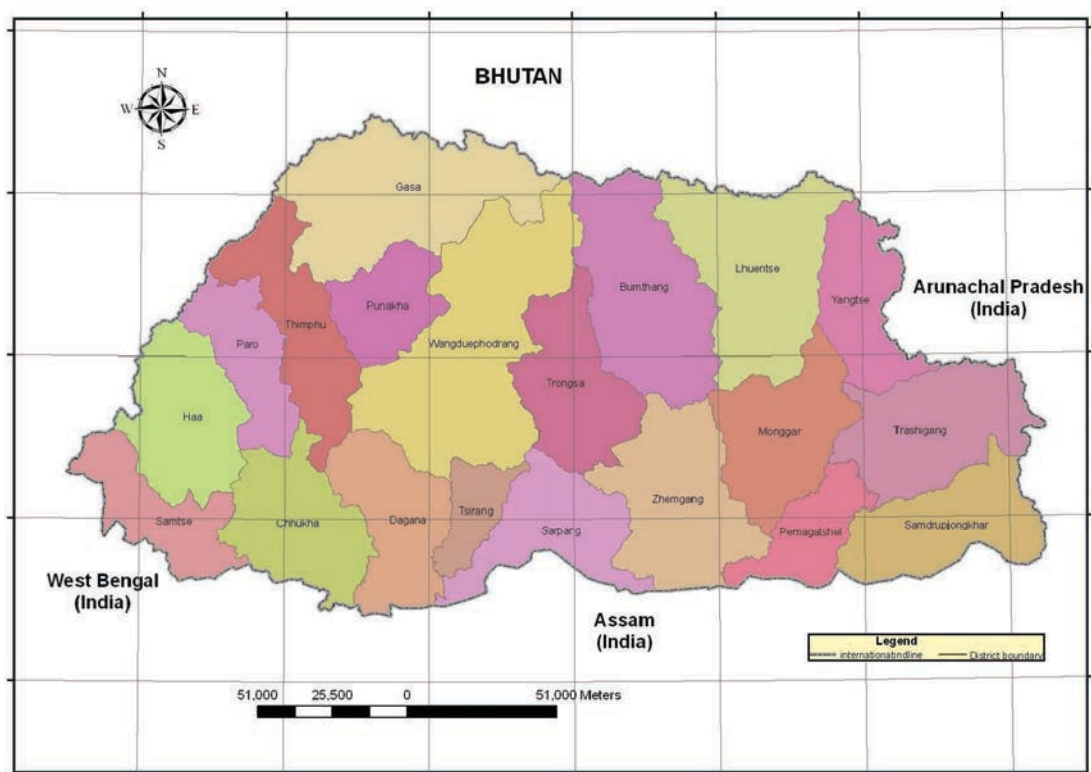
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Foreword

My colleagues and I at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi are very happy to bring out the annual issue of Window on Bhutan.

After the difficulties inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic all over the world, 2022 has been a more encouraging year. Most countries have opened up fully and people are reverting to a more normal life with renewed focus on economic recovery.

In Bhutan, under the wise and caring personal guidance of His Majesty The King, the Covid Task Force led by the Prime Minister was able to deal effectively with the pandemic. Successful implementation of the Covid protocols and timely treatment of infected cases protected the health of the people with very minimal loss of lives. Even though the economy was hit very hard, welfare measures provided relief for all those who were in need. With the success of the vaccination programme for all age groups, the country was able to open up fully from 23rd September this year.

The re-opening of the country took place in conjunction with the implementation of a revised tourism policy that will promote Bhutan as a truly special tourist destination with a living cultural heritage and pristine natural environment. The implementation of our High Value, Low Volume tourism policy has been strengthened with a substantial increase in the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) from \$65 to \$200 for international tourists along with the introduction of a preferential SDF of Rs. 1,200 for Indian tourists. The quality of service from the tourism industry and delivery of a memorable experience for the tourist is being strengthened with the introduction of more interesting activities and trekking routes like the newly opened Trans Bhutan Trail. Visitors to Bhutan may arrive as tourists and guests but, with our new tourism policy, we believe that their presence in our country will make them our partners in appreciating and preserving a priceless heritage.

The effects of the pandemic did not prevent important, path-breaking activities from being carried out in our country. One such activity was the establishment of the first-ever Super Fab Lab in Bhutan. On the cultural front, the Bhutanese film industry received a big boost to its image when the endearing film Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom was nominated for an Oscar in the Best International Feature Film Category.

As the strict quarantine requirement gradually relaxed this year, important bilateral visits were able to take place, starting with the official visit by the External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar on 29-30 April with a high level delegation. Later in September, His Majesty The King visited New Delhi for two days before going to the United Kingdom for the state funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi received His Majesty at his official residence for a warm and cordial meeting. Foreign Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and senior officials of the Indian government also called on His Majesty.

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

The travel restrictions to Bhutan during the pandemic did not hinder the close cooperation and interaction between India and Bhutan. A landmark activity that took place was the joint development of a small satellite. Over the past year, space engineers from Bhutan went to ISRO'S satellite center in Bangalore to train and work with their Indian counterparts to build the satellite. This culminated in the successful launch of the India-Bhutan SAT as one of the nine satellites in the payload atop the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from the Satish Dawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh on 26th November 2022. The India-Bhutan Satellite is indeed a historic milestone in the close cooperation between our two countries and a testament to our special friendship.

My colleagues and I in the Royal Bhutanese Embassy are very happy and grateful for the goodwill, friendship and support that we continue to receive from our counterparts and friends in Delhi. We look forward to further strengthen the excellent relations between India and Bhutan.

As 2022 comes to a close, my colleagues and I wish our Indian friends and our esteemed colleagues in the diplomatic community a Very Happy New Year and a successful 2023.

Tashi Delek!

V. Namgyel
Ambassador of Bhutan



His Majesty The King's Royal Visit to India



His Majesty The King with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi



Dr. S. Jaishankar calling on His Majesty The King

His Majesty The King arrived in Delhi on 14th September 2022 and met with the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi.

Prime Minister Modi received His Majesty at his official residence at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg. His Majesty and Prime Minister Modi discussed issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed the commitment and friendship that has defined the special and exemplary relations that exist between Bhutan and India.

While in Delhi, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary and senior officials of the Indian government called on His Majesty The King. His Majesty visited the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in Delhi and granted an Audience to the Ambassador and staff working at the Embassy.

Thereafter, His Majesty travelled onward to the United Kingdom with Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen to attend the state funeral of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Dr. S. Jaishankar calling on Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering

Visit to Bhutan by H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India

His Excellency Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India visited Bhutan from 29-30 April 2022, at the invitation of Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Dr. Jaishankar was accompanied by senior officials of the Government of India. The visit was the first high-level official visit since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Jaishankar received Audiences with His Majesty The King and His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. He also called on Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister, and met with Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and discussed matters of mutual interest.

During the visit, Dr. Jaishankar and Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji virtually inaugurated the Four-lane road from Jungshina to Chubachu, Bajo-Khuruthang Secondary National Highway and new Bus Terminal in Bumthang. To support Bhutan's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Jaishankar handed over 2000 boxes of essential medical supplies to Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji.

The visit was in keeping with the long-established tradition of regular exchange of high-level visits between Bhutan and India. The External Affairs Minister's visit further strengthened the already existing close ties of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

India-Bhutan Satellite - A Milestone

- Contributed by Mr. Kinzang Dorjic, Counsellor, RBE Delhi



Lyonpo Karma Donnen Wangdi, Minister of Information and Communications of Bhutan (center), Major General V. Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan to India (left), Shri. S. Somnath, Chairman of ISRO (left of Ambassador), and officials from Bhutan and India in front of the ISRO's workhorse rocket – the PSLV – that took India-Bhutan SAT to orbit.

On 26th November 2022, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched yet another successful mission from its spaceport, the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Andhra Pradesh. Riding atop the ISRO's highly dependable and versatile "workhorse" launch vehicle - the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle or PSLV - was a precious payload of nine satellites. One of them was the India-Bhutan SAT.

Developed jointly by space engineers from Bhutan and India over the course of two years, the India-Bhutan SAT's primary payload is a nano multispectral camera capable of taking images of Bhutan in 4 spectral bands with 29 meter ground resolution. The primary payload was designed by ISRO team and will have practical applications in Bhutan. The images taken by the satellite can be used to map Bhutan's forest cover, landslides, urban settlement and even rooftop solar power generation potential.

The secondary payload, developed by young space engineers from Bhutan, is the Automatic Packet

Reporting System (APRS) Digipeater. It will serve as a repeater station in space for text messaging for amateur radio users. Students of five colleges in Bhutan that already have amateur radio ground stations established will be able to communicate with the satellite every time it is over Bhutan as it zooms from pole to pole fourteen times a day. For these students, the Digipeater will be a tool to explore concepts of satellite tracking and communication, opening a window to the vast expanse of the space for them and future space explorers.

For Bhutan, the significance of the launch was not lost. Firstly, as one of the newest entrants into the space program, launching two satellites in a span of four years is a remarkable feat. It was only in 2018 that the country under the vision of His Majesty The King put together a team of young brains, trained them, built a cube satellite and launched it. With that, Bhutan broke through that prohibitive barrier of space which still remains largely within reach of only a select few.

Secondly, the satellite creates a launchpad for Bhutan's future space program. Apart from its utility aspects, the second satellite stands as a proof that the fledgling space program of Bhutan with its small team of engineers can in fact build functional satellites, with complexity and capability growing with each iteration. It follows that the next step should be a home-grown satellite morphing into a constellation of small, low Earth orbit satellites with a wide range of practical applications.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the successful launch and separation of the satellite on 26th November will be an inspiration for young minds in Bhutan as the country makes renewed efforts to prioritize STEM education. To every Bhutanese, the satellite will stand as a testament to STEM education and the possibilities it represents.

Of course, launching satellites to space and putting them in orbit is still a technologically prohibitive and resource intensive venture. After all, it is rocket science. Therefore, only a handful of countries have the manpower, capital and technology to run a full-fledged space program. Bhutan's venture into space is possible only because some of these countries are willing to give us a piggyback. For Bhutan's second satellite, it was the Government of India and its space arm who were Bhutan's partner from the start all the way.

The joint satellite program between India and Bhutan was announced during the State Visit to Bhutan by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2019. Even though the Covid-19 pandemic came in the way, an implementation agreement between Bhutan and India on the joint development of a small satellite was inked in September 2021. Over the following year, space engineers from Bhutan traveled to ISRO's satellite center in Bangalore to train and work with their Indian counterparts to build the satellite.

On the launch date, Bhutan's Minister for Information and Communications Lyonpo Karma Donnen Wangdi led a high-level delegation from Bhutan to witness the launch from ISRO's launch center in Andhra Pradesh. Back home in Bhutan, the nation watched in anticipation as the launch countdown began live on national television while Bhutan's Prime Minister accompanied by Bhutanese and Indian officials watched the launch with equal anticipation from a location in Thimphu.

In keeping with ISRO's tradition, the launch was nothing short of picture perfect. The palpable sense

of anticipation from the countdown drill turned into one applause after another as each of the four stages of the rocket performed as intended, and as each of the eight satellites separated successfully, one after another.

For India, the joint satellite program with Bhutan, stands as yet another testament to its generosity and willingness to share its technologies and resources with other countries. India's own space program had humble beginnings. Its first rocket in 1963 was taken to the launch site on a cart pulled by a bullock and its payload of 30 KG taken on a bicycle pushed by a man. Since then, India's top brains crafted a truly home-grown space program almost from scratch which today can launch missions to the Moon, Mars and even deep space. That too with a price tag that looks impossibly low. For a country that had to pave its own path, India has no reservations about helping other countries harness the opportunities of space. The joint satellite program is a model for cooperation in space technology between India and other smaller countries.

The joint program comes at the heels of India's gift of South Asia satellite to South Asian countries in 2017. Bhutan has made full use of the South Asia satellite from day one to broadcast its national television. It connects a few remote villages in Bhutan to the Internet and is a platform for emergency communication in times of disaster.

The future of space exploration is exciting, certainly when one looks from India. Its Chandrayaan-3 mission to the Moon is scheduled for launch in 2023 followed by Gaganyaan manned mission possibly in 2024. A host of private players and start-ups in India are also coming up with bold ideas, a trend seen globally, and newer, breakthrough technologies are bound to come up. As India makes greater strides in space, greater benefits will spill over to other countries especially in the neighbourhood.

For the bilateral relations between Bhutan and India, the joint satellite project marks another important milestone. After the launch, His Majesty The King of Bhutan said: "The launch of India-Bhutan satellite today is a historic milestone in the exemplary and enduring friendship between Bhutan and India. The development and launch of the joint satellite marks a new era in the relations between our two nations, extending to the frontiers of space. It is an endeavour befitting our time, showcasing modern India's technological and scientific capabilities, and reflecting Bhutan's aspirations."

On the occasion, India's Prime Narendra Modi tweeted that the India-Bhutan satellite is a testament to the special relationship between India and Bhutan.

It certainly is a testament to the special relationship between Bhutan and India. The first motorable road, which represented the first form of modern development in Bhutan, was built only in the early

1960s with full support from the Government of India. Bhutan went from its first motorable road to the second consecutive satellite in six decades. Yet, in that relatively short period Bhutan made a journey that spans an immense distance in every conceivable way. All along this journey, India has been a generous and steadfast friend for Bhutan. This friendship now extends to the far reaches of outer space.



Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of Bhutan, and officials of Bhutan and India witness the launch of the satellite from a location in Thimphu. The launch was broadcast live on Bhutan's national television



Snowman Race

Bhutan's Tourism back to the Roots – High Value, Low Volume

- Contributed by Mr. Dorji Dhradhul, Director General, Department of Tourism

Tourism Reopening Day on 23rd September 2022

The kingdom marked the formal reopening of its door to the guests on 23rd September 2022 after two and half years of enforced closure by the COVID-19 pandemic. All visitors and guests were welcomed with refreshments, gifts and entertainment at the Paro International Airport and the four land entry points of Samtse, Phuentsholing, Gelephu, and Samdrup Jongkhar. On the same day, the Department also launched the Visitor Information Counters at all these entry points for visitors' facilitation.

Brand Bhutan – Bhutan Believe

Coinciding with the tourism reopening, the country also embraced a brand-new identity created for the country to inspire a new vision of the future in its citizens. The new Nation Brand “Bhutan” with the tagline “Believe” reflects Bhutan's character and landscapes, history, and ambitions: bold, vivid, richly storied, and utterly distinctive – rebranding it for a new future, both for its people and its guests who are seeking a different travel experience, that is experiential and conscious.

The new tagline “Believe” is targeted towards the youth of Bhutan and it reflects the determined focus of the country on the future. The new Brand Bhutan will ensure that the communities and streets are clean and safe, the environment protected and cherished, and that Bhutan has everything it needs in place.

A group of Bhutanese experts worked closely with the UK-based branding agency, MMBP & Associates, for Brand Bhutan. To respond with sensitivity and substance to the brief, the team involved spoke to hundreds of people from Thimphu, Trongsa, Trashigang, Lunana, Punakha, and Bumthang. Conveying the rich tapestry of Bhutan's living culture, which seamlessly weaves together the ancient, the contemporary, and the visionary, quickly became a priority for the new brand. In particular, the younger Bhutanese generation was centered on the brand's development, ensuring that the new identity reflects their role as key stakeholders in Bhutan's future.

A vital element of the strategy was to create a new graphic identity for Bhutan—a contemporary interpretation of the country's heritage that would offer a pathway toward the future. It draws on Bhutan's national flag's vibrant saffron yellow and orange, with further color palette inspiration from nature — the cypress green of the forests that cover 70% of the country, the blue of Bhutan's national flower, the Himalayan blue poppy, and a soft black referencing the natural soot from the fires burning in the country's hearths.

Using these colors, a completely new graphic identity system was created, which draws on traditional Bhutanese iconographies such as hand-painted architectural decoration, mythical animals, folklore, and symbolism – all reimagined with boldness, sharpness, and dynamism. The vibrant brand identity has already been rolled out across the tourism sector to great acclaim. Soon it will also be seen across government organizations, official websites, National Day celebrations, and even a new postage stamp.

The new national brand is therefore beyond creating a new identity, it aims to leverage the power of branding to connect Bhutan, and the stories it wants to tell, with a global audience. Bhutan Believe is not only about Nation Branding, but more importantly, it's about “Nation Building.”

Transformation in Tourism

Changes in Bhutan's tourism is part of a nationwide transformation, from the civil service to education and financial reforms. The changes are geared toward reinforcing the time tested policy and practices; forging fresh pathways and creating long-term opportunities for forthcoming generations.

High Value, Low Volume

Bhutan has long practiced a policy of ‘High value(s), Low volume’ tourism to protect and preserve its peace, values, sacred places, its nature and wildernesses. The extended period of closure due to COVID-19 gave us the time and space to reconsider our relationship with tourism, and relooked at its policies, strategies, and plans for the country's advancement – in particular, for how it can invest in creating sustainable opportunities for its young people and how best we can offer an exclusive experiential experience to our visitors and guests.

This brings us back to our roots, of ‘High value(s), Low volume tourism, where we meet the needs of visitors/guests, while protecting our people, culture, values, and environment.

Department of Tourism

Tourism Council of Bhutan has become the Department of Tourism under the new Ministry of Industries, Commerce and Employment(MOICE) since November 1st, 2022. The department's website <https://bhutan.travel/> was also revamped.

Permit/Visa system

The new online visa/permit system handled by the Department of Immigration was also introduced. With the new system, visitors can now apply online for a visa by themselves by completing the application form or

they can also apply through the tour operator or hotelier. The added bonus of the new visa system is that the visa will allow visitors to remain in the country for up to 90 days from the date of entry and the visitors can also change their dates of stay, entry, and exit within the 90 days provision.

The online visa system was operational from 23rd September 2022. Since the launch of the new online visa system till the 1st week of November, Bhutan received a total of 11,093 guests, of which 2349 were paying the new SDF rate of USD 200, 3642 were paying the old SDF rate and 5102 were from India paying Nu.1200 SDF.

However, the use of Bhutanese service providers by visitor/guest for permit/visa and other services are optional. But the visitor and guest have to be accompanied by a Bhutanese tour guide and stay in government-certified accommodation.

Minimum Daily Package Rate (MDPR)

The Minimum Daily Package Rate (MDPR) is the all-inclusive package tour costs that had to be paid in advance has been removed. The MDPR has in the past often limited the visitor's experience, as travelers could only choose packaged tours provided by tour operators. Now the visitor/guest will have the flexibility to engage service providers directly and pay for their services accordingly.

Revised Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

One of the notable changes is the increase in the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), a daily contribution made by visitors towards Bhutan's effort in sustainable development.



Thimphu Tshechu Mask Dance

Beyond protecting Bhutan's natural environment, the SDF will also be directed towards activities that preserve Bhutan's built and living cultural heritage, including architecture and traditional values, as well as meaningful environmental projects. Our future requires us to protect our heritage and forge fresh pathways for forthcoming generations.

It's these plans and programs that Bhutan's brand – and new campaign – is built upon. It offers a rallying cry to believe - in the nation's capabilities, its values, its global contribution, its responsibilities, and its future.

Before the revision, guests had to pay SDF of US\$65 per person, per night. This fee was introduced when the kingdom first officially opened to tourism in 1974 and the rate did not change since the early 90s.

The SDF has been revised to USD200 per person, per night for all visitors, except for those from India is Ngultrum 1200 or the equivalent amount in Indian rupees, per person, per night.

Training and deployment of Tourism Information Officers

Department of Tourism collaborated with stakeholder partners to conduct frontline managers training for the officials of Airlines, Immigration, Customs, airports, and others in Paro for a duration of three days in September 2022. A total of 82 officials were trained in two batches of the training. To provide seamless travel facilitation for visitors, the Department deployed Tourism Information Officers at the Paro International Airport and the four land entry points at Phuentsholing, Gelephu, Samdrupjongkhar, and Samtse.

Host services

A team of six Desuups have started to offer online host services from the Department. The role of these Hosts is to answer questions from travel agents and guests who wish to visit Bhutan as a way of facilitating guest bookings and sharing helpful information with travellers.

Tourism Rules and Regulations (TRR) 2022

The Tourism Rules and Regulation 2022 (TRR 2022) was endorsed by the Royal Government on 14th September 2022 and came into effect on 23rd September as Bhutan reopened its door to visitors. Meanwhile, the action plan for the implementation of TRR 2022 has been developed and the modalities for the collection of SDF and fee for the foreign visitor's vehicle at the port of entry have been discussed with the relevant stakeholders and are being implemented accordingly.

Assessment and Upskilling of Tour Guides

As one of the vital tourism transformation initiatives, the tour guides in Bhutan are being assessed by the Department of Tourism and also being helped with upskilling training by various agencies including De-Suung Skilling Programme (DSP). There are over 3,000 licensed tour guides in the country. From over 1,300 guides who registered for the Tour Guide, Readiness Assessment carried out by the Department about 600 were shortlisted. Of these, 481 got through the assessment and are certified for the service.

In the meantime, capacity-building programs (e.g. Advanced tour guides course; High-end fly-fishing; Biodiversity and Biopiracy; Wilderness Medicines and First aid, etc) for tour guides are being rolled out with support from various agencies.

Validation of Tour Operators and Accommodations

In line with the requirement for all guests to stay in Government certified accommodations, (3-star and above hotels and homestays), validation of the service providers are being carried out in phases to assess their readiness to cater to guests. Under Phase I and II, 139 star-rated hotels and 83 homestays were validated across the country. The third phase of validation is currently underway. Presently, the tour operators in Bhutan are also being assessed.

The plan is to revamp the standards and certification of all service providers, viz. accommodation, tour operation, tour guiding, etc.



(Picture: Contemporary Constellations of Brand Bhutan)



Tourism Infrastructure Enhancement

The most popular visitor attraction in Paro, the hiking trail to Taktsang monastery, underwent restoration involving Desuups. Similarly, several other popular hiking routes like the Jomolhari and the Drukpath are being enhanced.

Monument/Sacred sites entry fees and Others

Entry fees to some new monuments and sites were also introduced. The following is the list that charges entry fees:

Tashichho Dzong, Changangkha Lhakhang, National Memorial Chorten, Buddha Dordenma, Simtokha Dzong in Thimphu; Rinpung Dzong, Taktsang, Kyichu Lhakhang, Dobji Dzong in Paro; Punakha Dzong and Chimi Lhakhang in Punakha; Jambay Lhakhang, Kurjey Lhakhang and Jakar Dzong in Bumthang; Rinchening Goenpa in Phuntsholing, Chukha and; Trongsa Dzong in Trongsa.

An online e-entry ticket can be also availed while processing for visa/permit in addition to the onsite ticket booking is also available.

<https://services.tourism.gov.bt/#/site/homepage>

Conclusion

We are talking of Tourism that is beyond revenue and receipts and that the Tourism is like any natural resource a strategic valuable asset of the country for all citizens of today and the future; tourism that is knowledge-based and professional and; tourism with a reinforced high value(s) and low volume policy to develop Bhutan into an exclusive place and a space for conscious travelers.

We are confident that the new Nation Brand – Bhutan Believe will give us the necessary inspiration to materialize the ambitious goals and also offer the space, place, and services to our visitors and guests (conscious travelers) for an exclusive experience.

We are committed to evolving Bhutan as a destination for everyone, a destination where one doesn't only travel once as a 'bucket list destination', but as a must-visit destination and experience and protect Bhutan as one of the global assets for our future generations for all times to come.

We have mindfully redefined the word "tourist" and consciously replacing it with "guest or visitor." A foreigner who is on his or her way to visit Bhutan is a visitor. The visitor becomes our guest once in our country and the guest departs as our new family member or a friend or as our goodwill ambassador, thus developing intergenerational relationship with our guests.

Tashi Delek!

BHUTAN
Believe



HRH Prince Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck at the inauguration of the Super Fab Lab

The Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super Fab Lab: A Platform for Innovators and Creators

- Contributed by InnoTech Department, Druk Holding & Investments Limited.

In keeping with His Majesty's vision and command to strategize and create impactful socio-economic pathways through innovation and technology, Druk Holding and Investments Limited (DHI), in collaboration with the Bhutan Foundation, USA and the Center of Bits and Atoms of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA established the first-ever Super Fab Lab in Bhutan.

The Super Fab Lab is the second of its kind outside of the United States, and third in the world, with advanced capabilities in research and prototyping. The critical infrastructure has been envisioned as a powerful tool to foster innovative problem solving, provide an impetus to invigorate industries through digital fabrication and computation. The vision of the lab is to build a global collaborative community in Bhutan to create solutions to the problems that matter to societies at present and the future.

The Fab Movement in Bhutan

In 2017, Bhutan welcomed the first fab lab, embracing the Fab Movement which was initiated by Dr. Neil Gershenfeld. The lab garnered a vast number of volunteers eager to get their hands on new technologies and join the network of fabbers. The Fab Network, now spread over 120 countries, is a

global community of learners, educators, innovators, researchers, technologists, and makers. All the labs in the Fab Network share common tools and processes. Therefore, a project developed in Barcelona, for instance, can be replicated at a Fab Lab in Bhutan and vice versa. The idea behind this standardization and democratization is to build a distributed laboratory for research and invention.

Poised to become one of the leaders of the Fab Movement, the Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super Fab Lab (JNWSFL) has been established as an open platform for innovation; a place to learn, create, and collaborate. Going beyond theoretical concepts, the lab provides hands-on experience with machines and equipment that leverages modern technology. JNWSFL's community of fabbers can design and create custom products through quick iterations at significantly reduced cost and time. Some of the machines that enable this include the Polyjet J55, a powerful 3D printer that produces smooth, accurate parts, prototypes, and tooling. With microscopic layer resolution, it can produce thin walls and complex geometries using the widest range of materials available with any technology. The lab also has a space dedicated to industrial machinery, including water jet cutter, CNC lathe, metal cutter, etc.

The lab has been made easily accessible to students, researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and individuals to use their imaginations and creativity to manufacture and prototype products, foster innovative problem solving, and provide an impetus for digital fabrication and manufacturing. Given this unique position, the lab aspires to exist in the global space, by encouraging local citizens to engage with the international community to create impactful products and projects and address overarching global challenges through innovation, technology, and the spirit of collaboration. The JNWSFL, thus, sits at the center to facilitate collaboration between the Bhutanese youth and the global Fab Network.

Invention Through Innovation

The establishment of the JNW Super Fab Lab is part of a larger project, "Invention through Innovation and Fabrication in Bhutan" which aims to build an innovation ecosystem in the country. Aligned to this vision, the initiation of the Department of Innovation and Technology (InnoTech) at DHI was also aimed at "building technology with values". The objectives of InnoTech include the creation of knowledge and capacity through "scientific research and development"; building "Innovation" on that knowledge to create useful products and services; and establishment of "ventures" that serve to solve the problems of society.

InnoTech designs solutions to address socio-economic challenges nationally by fostering ideas to impact. These ideas are brought to life through applied and fundamental collaborative research initiatives which eventually lead to technology ventures and start-ups, build national intellectual property, and establish a platform for innovation. In order to align the department's diverse portfolio of projects to its objectives, the department follows a stage gate development lifecycle to ensure that each project is given a roadmap, strategic direction, and support to scale up successfully. InnoTech is, thus, positioned to play a pivotal role in building a unique Bhutanese Innovation Ecosystem in the country. Now, the introduction of JNW Super Fab Lab presents a segue into the efforts carried out by InnoTech by providing the resources, skillset, and space to underwrite the envisioned ecosystem.

Bridging Academia, Government, Industry, and Society

InnoTech provides resources, connections, and guidance to bring together and scale up other components of the Bhutan Innovation Ecosystem. Having identified the three pillars of People (Human Capital); Infrastructure; and Finance as being essential to the development of this ecosystem, the department aims to bring together academia, government, industry, and society—the quadruple helix for initiating the wheel of change towards building a technology-driven economy. The establishment of the JNW Super Fab Lab has been placed at the center to meet this goal of the department.

To bridge the requirements of academia, government, industry, and society, the lab commits to building technical capacity and engaging stakeholders to equip the next generation with the necessary skills and knowledge. The team has also partnered with organizations like United Nations and Omdena to conduct national and international challenges, programs, and hackathons with the aim of inspiring innovative solutions through global collaborations. These challenges, trainings, workshops, and initiatives are all focused on professional development aligned to the requirements of the government, industry, and society.



HRH Prince Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck touring the facilities at the Super FabLab

Further, JNWSFL provides a platform to integrate digital fabrication into grassroots-level STEM education through various integrated programs. Educators are encouraged to leverage the Super Fab Lab to co-create lessons on using digital fabrication in the classroom to catalyze STEM courses in schools and provide students with diverse learning environments. For this, the JNWSFL has also leveraged its 40+ machines to build distinctive capability in schools and Labs, potentially expanding the number of Fab Labs across the country.

Super Fab Lab Community

To fully maximize its impact, the lab has prioritized capacity building and the creation of a vibrant, innovative community centered around its space. To ensure optimum impact on the members, JNWSFL has established and segregated its community into four groups.

- **JNWSFL YOUTH.** Students and Youth under the age of 18, as part of this community, have access to all the basic machines and proper training to utilize these machines.
- **JNWSFL OPEN.** Makers and hobbyists have access to the machines and are equipped with proper training to facilitate their learning and growth.
- **JNWSFL BUSINESS.** Companies and agencies can leverage JNWSFL's space and resources for research and prototyping. Members of this community have access to all the resources available in the lab, as well as additional support from the InnoTech team.
- **JNWSFL CREATOR.** This community has been established for start-ups and entrepreneurs who have been looking for the space and resources to prototype their ideas. To support these start-ups and ventures, the InnoTech team provides guidance and tools to help turn ideas into prototypes and prototypes into marketable products.

Additionally, JNW Super Fab Lab also offers internship programs for national and international candidates interested in enhancing skills in innovation and digital fabrication.

Looking Ahead

The introduction of the Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super Fab Lab in Bhutan presents an opportunity, and with it, the potential to lay the groundwork for innovation culture in the country. The JNW Super Fab Lab aspires to exist in the global space; collaborating and developing solutions with the international community, but also targeting solutions it designs for local use. JNWSFL, thus, comes with the potential to segue into collaborative research among community members, start-ups, organizations, national and international educational and research institutes, and the global Fab Network.

The JNWSFL, along with its network of Fab Labs across the country, has thus been envisioned as a place for technology development and innovation that enables cross-collaborative learning, expands social and professional networks, and contributes to economic diversification. This establishment symbolizes the start of an agile nation and presents a chance to evolve existing systems and processes for the next generation. With this symbolic significance in mind, the space has been dedicated to His Royal Highness Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck with the conviction that through this, our Druk Gyalsey will champion innovation and lead Bhutan into its next transformation.

JNW Super Fab Lab invites innovators, researchers, creators, hobbyists, volunteers to join the community of fabbers and contribute to innovative solutions designed for the future. Initiate collaborations: jnwsfl@dhi.bt | jnwbhutansuperfablab.bt | innotech.dhi.bt



Bhutan's Sole Literary and Arts Festival: Drukyul's Literature Festival

-Contributed by Bhutan Echoes – Drukyul's Literature Festival Team



From left to right: Namita Bhandare, Rahul Bose, Aparna Sen and Lily Wangchuk

What makes Bhutan alluring to the world? Bright red chilies drying on tin roofs, Gross National Happiness, and temples perched on impossible slopes are a few of many impressions. Wedged between China and India in mountainous terrain, Bhutan boasts pristine environment, an abundance of gorgeous naturescapes and wildlife, and a rich Buddhist heritage.

However, what most people have yet to discover is that Bhutan is also a melting pot for literature, the arts, and culture, where curious minds gather to share, learn and engage in meaningful dialogue.

The Drukyul's Literature Festival (DLF) is both a festival and a lively dialogue between the Bhutanese and people from all over the world. It is free and open to all. The celebration of literature, art, and culture takes place in the capital city, Thimphu, the metropolis of the kingdom. The DLF

is the annual flagship event of Bhutan Echoes, a literary and arts initiative under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Gyalum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. Bhutan Echoes strives to nurture a literary culture throughout the country year-round to cultivate the creation of an enlightened society in pursuit of collective progress and happiness.

Just recently, Bhutan Echoes virtually hosted the 2022 Drukyul's Literature Festival, from April 22nd to 25th. Brilliant and celebrated authors, artists, thought leaders, and performers from all over the world and from within Bhutan spoke at the festival which was themed "Stories and Ideas for a Changing World". The festival altogether has had a decade of rich cultural and literature exchange and engagement and has welcomed international literary luminaries such as Pico Iyer, Ruskin Bond, and Markus Zusak.

Speakers reflected on periods of transformation but also spoke on new ideas that might aid us as we walk into an ever-changing future. Sessions ranged in topics from environmental issues, the publishing process, motherhood, spirituality, music production, writing for children, Bhutanese culture and history, and more.

Lopen Tandin Tshering introduced a Bhutanese category of poetry called Lozay with such comical examples. Lozay is when sharp sarcasm with wit, sophisticated poetry and a nice melody come together. His deliverance of Lozay examples offers a taste of the potential in power and impact of words.

Dr. Karma Phuntsho's session on Guru Rinpoche's enigmatic life brought to mind the latest discoveries in quantum physics. To think that Bhutanese folklore on Guru Rinpoche may be closer to being explained by science is mind-boggling.

Avni Doshi's session on her debut book, *Burnt Sugar*, brought to light topics of ambivalence around motherhood and women's anger. The experiences of women that Doshi touched upon add to the understanding of women's experiences.

During some of the Q&A sessions, audience members had the opportunity to directly converse with speakers.

Given the covid situation and with travel restrictions at an all-time high, Bhutan Echoes took the opportunity to shine a spotlight on local writers and artists. 70% of speakers were Bhutanese and 40% of those Bhutanese were youth. The youngest Bhutanese speaker featured was 13-year-old Pema Yangsel, author of "Worlds of Wonder". Above all, DLF successfully fulfilled Her Majesty's vision for the festival to empower and engage with new generations of Bhutanese writers and young people.

"We must inculcate in us a culture of life-long learning. We need to be prepared for the future so that every one of us is equipped with the skills, competencies, and experience to succeed and compete in the world." - His Majesty The King.

Aligning with His Majesty's statement, Bhutan Echoes is working to engage the youth in literature and the arts to help develop these vital skills. Literature and the arts are about thinking in an innovative manner, understanding the importance of context, and evaluating information and arguments. Further, literature and arts is discovering and gaining familiarity with all kinds of beliefs and values, the abundance of possibilities, and how everything in life is interconnected and allows for self-expression.

Literature and art have spaces for all kinds of people



Her Majesty the Queen Mother with Festival Guest

and the DLF has various worthwhile events for people with special interests. The DLF works annually to gather curious minds to revel in the chosen themes of the festival.

We invite you to DLF 2023

Next year the festival will be held in person with the theme of “Reconnecting and Reviving” from August 3rd to 5th. As the extraordinary changes in our world continue, DLF 2023 will not only provide scenes to absorb great stories but also invite forums to examine the changing definition of travel, culture, the environment, and holistic well-being. The festival will also be about the ongoing need for human connection and post-pandemic community.

From visionary keynote speakers to intimate author

conversations, to international culture displays, the festival will offer both eye-opening insights on global and domestic scales as well as immersive experiences of Bhutan's culture and stories.

Fill your eyes, ears, and minds with colors and sounds from our traditional folk dances, songs, and instruments. Enjoy the bustling energy from discussions with others who also find avant-garde ways of thinking magnetizing.

In the meanwhile, keep up with Bhutan Echoes on our social media platforms to see how the local Bhutanese communities are being engaged in all things literature, art, and culture through monthly programs and events. Additionally, keep an eye out for DLF updates. We can't wait for you all to join us next year!




For details, please visit:

<https://www.drukyul.org/>

Social media:

 [Bhutan Echoes](#)

 [Bhutan Echoes](#)

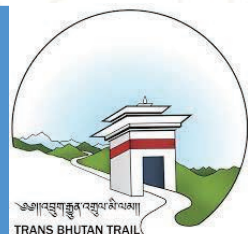
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Dzomi, Punakha

Trans Bhutan Trail: Connecting Bhutan – Past, Present and Future



- Contributed by Trans Bhutan Trail Secretariat

The Trans Bhutan Trail (TBT) is an initiative to fulfill His Majesty The King's vision to revive the centuries-old ancestral trail of Bhutan. The Trans Bhutan Trail project, led by the Bhutan Canada Foundation with support from the Tourism Council of Bhutan and the Royal Government, received the Royal Command in 2019. The trail spans 403kms across the country, connecting 27 Gewogs, 2 national park – Phrumsengla National Park and Jigme Singye Wangchuk National Park- and 9 Dzongkhags. It starts in Haa, runs through Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Wangduephodrang, Trongsa, Bumthang, Mongar and ends in Trashigang.

Our ancestors carved this thin line across the mountains to connect the nation and it has impacted and touched the lives of every Bhutanese across

many generations. It was the economic, political and social bloodline of the country before the construction of motor roads began in the 1960's. It is an integral to Bhutan's identity and history. Before the motor roads, all activities depended upon this Zhunglam (national highway). It was used by merchants for trade, messengers ran the trail with secret messages, soldiers marched on it, and it was a pilgrimage route as our religious leaders used it to spread Buddhism. But most importantly, it was used by our Monarchs to meet, protect and unite the Bhutanese as one nation one people. Thus, the trail is a symbol of national unity and an important cultural heritage. The Trans Bhutan Trail's mission is to connect Bhutan's past, present and the future and together we commit to preserve the trail out of respect for our ancestors that built it and as gift to the future generation.

Trans Bhutan Trail strives to become the most sustainable trail in the world. International best practices are maintained in all aspects of the trail development and renovation in partnership with the local communities and the Desuung – Guardians of Peace. Since 2019, TBT has provided gainful employment to more than 900 individuals displaced by the pandemic and numerous local communities to refurbish and re-build the trail in preparation for the future generations. TBT aims to usher in a new era of eco tourism and showcase Bhutan's cultural and natural heritage post covid, promote socio economic wellbeing of local communities along the trail and contribute to the recovery of tourism industry in Bhutan. The Trail serves as an alternative tourism experience, allowing people to stay longer in Bhutan while exploring diverse landscapes, regional cultures and Buddhist traditions.

The TBT is an opportunity to indulge in the rich and diverse natural beauty of the Kingdom. You will experience different landscapes of Bhutan, from the lush rice paddies fields to thick forest, remote villages and bustling towns. The Trail will give you an insight into the local communities. Join our expert guides for a guided walk or biking experience along the trail organized by TBT on a not-for-profit basis, whereby all the profits go back into the sustenance of the trail and to the local communities.

Our TBT Trailblazer membership program has been developed to encourage all Bhutanese and Friend of Bhutan to become stewards of the trail. By becoming Trailblazer, you are not only a part of the TBT trail community but also a guardian of the Trans Bhutan Trail and a custodian of a very important cultural heritage. A tree will be planted along the trail in honor of every member and all members will also receive the TBT Trail Passport to document and log their trail exploration and adventures. It will help members track their journey in the footsteps of their ancestors across the Kingdom. With over 70 TBT ambassadors appointed across the trail, Trailblazers can collect

stamps after completing every section. In addition to stamping the Trail Passports, the ambassadors are also key to delivering an authentic local experience to all trail users as they belong to the local community. They are the local shopkeepers, farmers, hoteliers and homestay owners, ready to help all travellers and share their stories of local legends.

The Trans Bhutan Trail is a living, experiential and open-air classroom for the youth of Bhutan, providing opportunities for experiential education, leadership and team development, physical fitness, cultural history and low-impact trekking. By partnering with Bhutan Scout Association, De-suung, Gyalsung National Service and local communities we strive to create lifelong memories that inspire future generations to protect our heritage, lush ecosystems, and incredible biodiversity.

TBT has also partnered with the Gyalsung National Service to develop a multi-day, land based experiential education curriculum. The historic scout walk was a pilot program for the National Service. 24 young scouts had the honor of being the first to walk the Trans Bhutan Trail after 60 years of disuse, each of them proudly representing the 20 dzongkhags and 4 thromdes of Bhutan. The experiences of the scouts and the finding will be instrumental in developing the Gyalsung experiential learning curriculum. Through the National Service, 13,000 Gyalsungs will walk the trail annually and within a couple of generations every single Bhutanese would have walked the Trans Bhutan Trail.

A revitalized trail will encourage active learning and fitness while reconnecting the communities along its route. If you are looking for an adventure, look no further! The Trans Bhutan Trail combines the best of the old with the new. Taking a step back in time will help individuals reconnect with nature, their local communities and culture. The Trans Bhutan Trail will be an unforgettable experience for all who venture on it. If you would like to walk on the Trans Bhutan Trail or become a trailblazer, kindly visit our website at www.transbhutantrail.bt.





*Dungkar Nagtshang
Photo Courtesy - BBS*

Jigme Namgyal Museum

- Contributed by Lhuentse Dzongkhag Administration

Lhuentse lies in the North-Eastern corner of Bhutan and covers an area of approximately 2853.55 sq. km which accounts for 7.43 % of the total land area of the country. Since it is located at an altitude ranging from 600 m- 5800 m above sea level, it has warm summer and cold winter. Apart from a serene landscape and spiritual embodiments, the dzongkhag is highly revered, for it hosts the ancestral home of our great monarchs, which is popularly known as the Jigme Namgyal Nagtshang (palace). The towering structure was built in the 18th century by Pila Goenpo Wangyel and later rebuilt by his second son, Jigme Namgyal, who was the father of the first king of Bhutan. Since the Majestic palace upholds greater historical significance, it can still be seen today in its original form.

Despite the country being known for its rich cultural heritage, the majority of the traditions and customs are found to be lost. Hence, in order to retrieve the fading culture and traditions and to educate the young generations on the livelihood of our ancestors and with an objective to preserve Bhutanese traditional architecture and craftsmanship, the Dzongkhag Administration in collaboration with the Royal Textile Academy (RTA) converted Nagtshang into a museum under the name "Jigme Namgyal Museum".

The Jigme Namgyal Museum can enchant tourists with its exquisite collection of antiques that are rarely seen today. These historical artifacts are spread within the three-storied house. On the ground floor, there is a display of ancient agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, and weaving materials. On the other hand, visitors can see military equipment along with the household goods used by our predecessors for domestic purposes on the first floor. This includes pots, ornaments, and vintage clothes. In addition, the second and third floor exhibits religious sculptures, wooden carved manuscripts, and other sacred relics safeguarded in a display box. The value of the museum is further enriched by the display of the attire of our first king Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck and the bedroom setting of Jigme Namgyal, the father of our first king.

On the second floor, there lies Peling Lhakhang which mainly comprises the statue of Pema Lingpa, whose influence on the religious and cultural heritage of Bhutan is immaculate. His contribution solely involved treasure discovery and the composition of prayers and texts. In order to pay homage, a small shrine is designated with his statues. Similarly, on the third floor, there is a Lhakhang with a statue of Guru Rinpoche, the great saint who flourished Buddhism in the country, and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, a historical figure who unanimously unified the country as a nation-state. All in all, the museum not only showcases the authentic Bhutanese lifestyle from about three centuries ago but also provides a platform for visitors to offer their prayers and accumulate merits by visiting sacred lhakhangs located within the vicinity of the museum.

The Jigme Namgyal Museum is an ideal place to visit for free-spirited adventurers who have a keen interest to know more about the diverse historical and cultural heritage of Bhutan.



Dungkar Nagtshang
Photo Courtesy - BBS



Participants of the Young Leaders Neighbourhood First Fellowship

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST-EVER YOUNG LEADERS NEIGHBOURHOOD-FIRST FELLOWSHIP

- Contributed by Mr. Ngawang Rigzar Wangchuk

Mr. Rigzar Wangchuk attended the Young Leaders Neighbourhood-First Fellowship Programme in India. The programme was hosted by St. Stephens' College for emerging leaders from the South Asia region to study Public Policy and its implementation.

So there we all were, on the terrace, under the cover of Delhi's night sky talking about what we could do for Sri Lanka. By then, we were already two months into the fellowship and what would normally be a news article headline drowned amongst the other crises headlines suddenly had names and faces: Bharat, Thamindri, Rishad, Amjad, Gajan, Niroshini, Kritika. More worryingly, they were people I considered friends - statistics on fuel shortages suddenly came alive as they transformed into stories of Rishad's wife waiting in queue for 3 hours just to fill the tank of her car;

street protests took on the shape of Thamindri's relatives and friends who couldn't bear to sit and watch their home fall apart; videos of empty market shelves became phone calls I overheard of Gajan calling home to ensure his father had enough food to eat. The Young Leaders Neighbourhood-First (YLNf) fellowship brought 23 young professionals from five countries to the red brick terrace of St. Stephens college that warm summer evening.

We discussed various ideas from a food donation drive to emergency medicines - always making sure

to allow our Sri Lankan colleagues to temper our views with their on-ground realities and needs. Eventually, we settled on the simplest and oft-overlooked resource: paper. Through our conversation, we were shocked to find out about the cancellations of school exams due to a shortage of paper and ink to print the examination papers, which affected roughly three million students on the island. We were also inspired by the symbolic association therein: the goal of education had brought us all together and it seemed appropriate that we strive to do the same for others whose worldview may likewise be enlarged through education.

This memory fragment in many ways encapsulates the spirit of the 3-month long fellowship itself. YLNF strives to bring together passionate young professionals from the neighbourhood and allows engagement with the best of what India has to offer, to ultimately reflect and address issues in our respective societies. The courage to dream a little bigger and work collaboratively to learn, share and empathise also lies at the heart of YLNF.

In its actual format, the fellowship took on largely the shape of stimulating guest lectures covering a dizzyingly incredible range of topics from education and media to geopolitics, public policy, economics and even mountaineering. My notes indicate that we received close to 80 unique lectures delivered by inspiring practitioners, academics, diplomats, journalists, policymakers, bureaucrats and leaders! The impact of such an incredible diversity of topics has meant that I was able to realise just how interconnected our world is becoming; and therefore, the need to shift our thinking from traditional silo-mentality to one where we can work with complexity and collaborate. Moreover, while the guest lecturers largely drew from their Indian experience, we were always pushed to bring in our comparative lenses and critically imagine its applications to our home context. My final paper, 'Democratising Bhutan's Capital City' draws on the lessons of India's democratic statecraft journey to argue for the need to expand democratic rights to Thimphu's inhabitants and the subsequent impacts that this would have on our Gross National Happiness (GNH).

Of the many lectures, one on 'Neighbourhood relations & Foreign policy' delivered by the former High Commissioner, TCA Raghavan, left an unforgettable imprint on me: "Neighbourhood is very important because you can't 'graduate' out of your region and for better or worse, you can't choose your neighbours".

Nowhere has this fact been more evident than the recent COVID pandemic - when it comes down to a moment of crisis, the relationships we have with those closest to us become that which could make or break each other. On a larger scale, the reverberations of the war in Ukraine are felt every day in the prices of essentials across many parts of the world and point urgently to a need to do better in terms of our geopolitics. Since we cannot 'move' out of our region, we must pay better attention to our neighbours and ensure that we move collectively towards a shared vision of mutual prosperity, underpinned by respect, channels for communication and dignity for each other. In the hurried pace towards 'globalisation', this simple fact must not be lost out of our sights.

The 'rational' intellectual pursuit is hardly ever divorced from that which is considered 'subjective' i.e. the messy stuff of life. YLNF ensured that we were not deprived of immersing ourselves in the vast Indian ocean of culture and heritage. From our unforgettable experience of reciting poetry in the gleaming dawn of the Taj Mahal understanding the time-defying value of love to Dr Ambedkar's memorial witnessing the magnitudinal impact of one person's resolve to reshape an unjust society, we shared in the universal human experiences that unite. These experiences opened up avenues for exchanging stories of our own respective intellectual/cultural giants and the renewed appreciation one comes to have of one's own background through the act of sharing with others. On the flip side, our overnight study trip to the exemplary Barefoot College in the small village of Tilonia, Rajasthan took development concepts such as 'self-sufficiency' and 'resilience' to new heights. I could scarcely imagine that Tilonia could exist as a real place on earth, outside of the conceptual domain of academia. It expanded our confidence in what is possible and inspired us to resist giving in to 'practical realities' before we have stretched the limits of our will, energy and commitment for a better society. Listening to a lecture that evening from Mr Bunker Roy, the founder of Barefoot college, I saw myself in his shoes somewhere down the line in a community, somewhere in Bhutan.

Needless to say, the intellectual rigour, cultural exchanges and shared moments of growth have kept the fellows of YLNF still connected, cheering each other on to greater heights... and much like seeds that are sown in spring, it lies dormant to bloom in full, one summer into the future. It is only a small group of young professionals from the South Asian neighbourhood but then, it has only ever been

small groups of committed people that have brought about a change in our world. We believe in this fact of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: I remain thankful to the Ministry of External Affairs, India and St. Stephens College (in particular Professor John Verghese and

Dr Geetanjali Sethi), for birthing YLNF into existence. Also to H.E. Major General V. Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan to India and the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi for the hospitality during our time there. Finally, to my fellow YLNFers without which the programme would lack the indispensable learning 'beyond the four walls'.



Author presenting his research paper

Untying Knots: The Story of Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom

Contributed by Pawo Chonying Dorji, a Bhutanese Filmmaker and Director of “Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom”



A still Capture from the movie “Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom”

Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom is the first Bhutanese film to be nominated for an Oscar, in the Best International Feature Film category.

Interestingly with many local Bhutanese dialects, particularly the dialects of central and eastern Bhutan, there is no word for ‘story telling’. When we ask someone to tell us a story, we usually say it as ‘please untie a knot for me’. Such is the beauty of the Bhutanese linguistic traditions, that the simple act of telling a story is not just meant to pass time or to entertain but it is believed to have a greater purpose. The act of telling a story is meant to free, it is meant to liberate, it is meant to inspire others, it is meant to ‘untie knots’.

With Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom, I was inspired to share with the world a story that would not only bring to life the uniqueness of Bhutan’s culture but create a story that could also help the

audience discover something about themselves within the story, a story that would help untie knots for themselves.

I have always mentioned in the numerous press interviews that with Lunana, the audience will probably experience one of the most culturally, linguistically, and environmentally diverse cinematic experiences. However, within all that diversity, they will also discover something that is so very familiar, as the central storyline of the film is ‘seeking home and happiness’, and that is something that is universal, irrespective of culture, creed, or religion.

Lunana’s global box office and awards success, culminating with Bhutan’s first Oscar nomination, all



Inauguration of Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project 720MW



The MHPA 720 MW was conferred the 2020 Brunel Medal in recognition of its credentials of social and environmental aspects by the UK-based Institute of Civil Engineers Institute in London. The award was presented to the Chairman of MHPA, Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, Minister for Economic Affairs by the then Ambassador of India to Bhutan, H.E. Ruchira Kamboj.



MHPA DAM



MHPA POWER HOUSE



during the COVID pandemic, is a clear reflection of the universal acceptance of these themes. The film may have premiered as the world built up walls and barriers, during a time when we were told to emphasize our differences, all to keep a deadly virus at bay. However, this little film from the glaciers of Bhutan became a celebration of humanity, as it reminded the world that within whatever makes us so different, we are the same as we are united in the hopes and dreams that we all cherish. With that, I like to believe that Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom did indeed help untie knots.

In praise of shadows:

One of the major themes I wished to explore with 'Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom' were the universal themes of 'home' and the sense of 'belongingness'. The Buddha had described sentient beings as 'drowa semchen', which translates to as 'sentient beings who are continuously moving'. He had described sentient beings as 'movers' because according to him, all beings from the moment of birth to the moment of death, are in a perpetual state of 'movement'; frantically moving every minute of our existence as we desperately seek out our own security, our own happiness, and a sense of belongingness.

The protagonist of the movie, Ugyen, is that 'drowa semchen', and he wishes to move out of Bhutan specifically because he seeks out his own happiness and sense of belongingness; which he, like countless other Bhutanese, believe will be discovered in Australia. For Ugyen, Australia represents a world that is different from Bhutan, a world that is materially wealthy, urban, developed, and illuminated. In other words, he seeks what he seeks in the glittering lights of the modern world.

So, with the film, I wanted to create an alternate journey for Ugyen. If he so desperately seeks what he seeks in the light, what if we instead send him into the opposite end of the spectrum? Into the furthest, most remote, darkest region of Bhutan? I journeyed into the corners of Bhutan to find this darkness, and I discovered it to be 'Lunana', which so fittingly translates to as the 'dark valley', as locals believe that the village is so far and distant that even the light doesn't even reach it.

With Ugyen's journey, I wanted to immerse the audience into a journey in the darkness and explore

with Ugyen if we could indeed find what we seek in the light... in the darkness. As with the ending of the movie, we realize that we might not find what we seek in the darkness, but it is only through the experience of the darkness and shadows, that we truly learn about ourselves so we can appreciate the beauty of what the light may offer us.

Shooting at the world's most remote school:

Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom was shot on location at the world's most remote school, in the actual glacial village of Lunana, deep in the Himalayas along the Bhutan- Sino border. The location is a gruelling 8-day trek away from the nearest road, and is still totally cut off from any modern facilities. Due to the remoteness and absence of electricity, the production of the film was fully dependent on solar energy.

During the pre-production period of the film, many tried to deter me from taking up the daunting task of trying to make a film, something so dependent on modern amenities, in such a remote location with such overwhelming production challenges. However, I was motivated by His Majesty the King of Bhutan who in one of his speeches to the youth of Bhutan said "it is not a matter if being able to do it or not being able to do it, it is a matter of doing it or not doing it".

Though extremely challenging, I specifically wanted to shoot the movie in Lunana, inspired by the opportunity of being able to capture on film the untouched purity of the lands and the people otherwise never seen. We casted locals, many of whom had never even watched a film in their lives, to play themselves to make the story as authentic as possible. I also wished for everyone involved in the production of the film, all our cast and crew, to outwardly experience this once in a lifetime journey. I wished for them to go on this journey of self-discover just as the protagonist of the film does, so that the inner transformation of the crew and cast could translate on to the finished film.

Our 35 crew and cast members braved the conditions by living in Lunana for two months, living and working without any modern conveniences. Every one of them sacrificed so much for this story to be told. I am proud to say that their hard work and personal sacrifices have indeed translated into an authentic film that speaks from the heart.



Interconnectivity of Bhutan QR Code and BHIM QR Code payment

- Contributed by the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan



Smt. Ruchira Kamboj addressing the joint launch of BHIM-UPI in presence of Finance Minister Namgay Tshering

As the RuPay cards are already accepted in Bhutan after the bilateral network interconnectivity between the Bhutan Financial Switch (BFS) and the National Financial Switch of India to promote cross-border digital financial services, there was a strong need for a common and standardized QR Code based payment in Bhutan, given the popularity of QR code payment outstripping card-based payment in the retail space, which can be interoperable with international QR code payment networks, including with BHIM UPI QR of India.

The prerequisite for interconnectivity with the BHIM QR Code required RMA to implement a common QR Code to standardize and facilitate interoperability of QR Code payments within the domestic banks in Bhutan. To this, the RMA developed a National QR Code Framework, as per the EMVCo standard, to pave way for interoperability with BHIM QR.

Launch of BHIM QR Code in Bhutan

Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, along with her counterpart, the Hon'ble Finance Minister of Bhutan, Lyonpo Namgay Tshering, jointly launched BHIM-UPI in Bhutan in a virtual ceremony on July 13th, 2021.

As a part of the launch, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman also made a Live transaction using BHIM-UPI to purchase an organic product from a Bhutanese One Geog One Product(OGOP) outlet, which sells fresh farm produce made organically by local communities in Bhutan.

Bhutan is the first country to adopt UPI standards for its QR deployment, and the first country in our immediate neighborhood to accept mobile-based payments through the BHIM App.



Author with international students at Sharda University

My Life in India

- Contributed by Ms. Karma Dema, Trainee, Royal Institute of Management

Ms. Karma Dema studied Economics at Sharda University on a Government Scholarship. She topped the Bhutan Civil Services Examination in 2021 and is currently studying Public Administration at the Royal Institute of Management.

It may not be easy, the journey that we are making but often this journey will lead us to places we have never dreamt of reaching. It was not blind luck but my fate that took me to the amazing “Land of Enlightenment-Jagar Phagpai Yul.” The sun of happiness and joy shone yet again as I got the golden opportunity, a government scholarship to pursue my undergraduate degree in India. Receiving the precious words of wisdom from His Majesty, my guiding light, I commenced a new journey of life in an entirely different place with new faces. It was my first time traveling to another country, and I was anxious about the experiences I was about to have. But the three years of my stay in India completely changed the way I looked at the world. The people were kinder than I thought and the places more beautiful than what I had seen in movies. Three years, I thought, was too long, but when the time finally came to pack my backpack and book the one-way ticket home, it seemed like it was just yesterday that I came to India, and truly, time passed by too soon. Apart from the knowledge that I learned, the exposure, and the skills that I gained, I have made so many wonderful friends who have taught me more than what I could find in books. The most crucial phase of my life took place in India, as it was there that I fully transformed into a responsible adult, a wiser woman, and a better human being.

Do you define a country by its people or its places? I would say, "Both." India is without a doubt the biggest nation in South Asia, but what is more astounding is how vast the hearts of its citizens are. I had obligations as a student, including working hard to fulfill due dates for assignments and preparing for assessments. I, nonetheless, desired to travel outside of my institution to see India's stunning culture and architecture. I planned several vacations to locations around me, some of which are still just plans. We traveled to Agra, also known as the "city of love," to view the Taj Mahal and to pray for my soulmate to find me soon. I traveled to Jaipur, often known as the "pink city," to see the Amer Fort, the palace of "Jodha," my favorite Hindi television series, Sarjafar's Tomb, the India Gate, the Grand Venice mall, and Majnu-ka-Tila, where all my Bhutanese friends go when they miss red rice.

Whenever we first received our stipend, Sarojini Nagar market was one place we usually went to shop. We initially found using the metro to be somewhat confusing, but we eventually worked out how to follow the pink line. We were four friends, and after a while, the market became so crowded that we were separated from one another. We could only reach each other by calling, but regrettably, we hadn't recharged our phones. I stood still near the main entrance, expecting them to somehow come my way, but to no avail. It gradually became dark, and I sheepishly asked a passerby for her phone, and she kindly let me dial my friend's number.

My second home for the past three years in India has been Sharda University, with a tagline "The world is here. Where are you? " I met my friends from the opposite parts of the world - South Africa and far east Bhutan converged into one University. There were friends from Nigeria, Tanzania, Korea, Delhi, Noida, Kashmir, Punjab, Nagaland, and Nepal, and in all of them, I found a friend who was willing to help each other. Through the X-Culture program initiated by our university, we interacted with friends from Mexico and the USA, which helped me increase my connections. We remain in touch with each other these days through social media and keep track of each other. I managed to make friends easily as I valued my friends' opinions and mostly because I was the one providing notes to my classmates. Life is indeed a long journey, and we meet so many people on our way. Samita Khulal is a pretty little girl from Nepal, whose presence has made a huge difference in my life. She had always made me feel like I wasn't alone and would wait for me to get to class every day.

As a class, we visited Indira Parya-Varan-Bhavan and got to see the first on-site net zero building, led by our lecturer Aditya. From celebrating birthdays of our classmates to organizing a fresher's welcome party, bunking classes sometimes and being kicked out of accounts classes after forgetting to bring calculators, the days passed by. It's a nostalgic feeling to reminisce about those moments. I miss the "halwa" Ruchi brought us that we ate during break time and the potato curry that Anjali's mom prepared for us on her birthday. I miss the long journey in the door-less auto that we took and the beautiful tunes of Bollywood songs that we danced to.

College life is said to be the most interesting period of one's life, and it was wonderful. It was a period where we got to be by ourselves and reflect on ourselves. As the morning sun rose amidst the blue sky each morning and the days wore on, I realized as I reflected upon myself-my hobbies which I had never known about. The elective class was a concept that I heard for the first time at Sharda University. In my first term, I enrolled myself in Basic Sketching and it also provided me with the opportunity to work on my long-lost hobby of sketching; I was able to re-discover myself. Furthermore, I also got a great opportunity to learn basic Spanish as a part of my electives, and my leisure time was spent mostly playing basketball with my friends.

The connection that we share as a culturally rich country really fascinates me, especially the richness of India's festivals. Being in India provided me the opportunity to appreciate it even more. The streets were filled with color, more color than I had ever seen. People — children and adults alike — were playing everywhere, and as I laid covered in different colors myself, I saw joy all around me. It was Holi, the festival of colors and the welcoming of a hopeful spring. Towards the end of the year, as my friends in India got excited about the biggest celebration of the year, I too found myself looking forward to that day – Diwali, "the festival of Light." There were beautifully lit buildings all around us, and adding to their beauty were the colorful rangolis made with love by the beautiful girls. As we lit the Dhiyas (the small lamps), we prayed to the goddess Laxmi to bless us with all the riches of the world and, more importantly, that it would lighten up our lives and that the days would glow bright just as they should be. The most interesting part of it was the round "laddoos" that we got at the end of the celebrations.

The cultural exchange was really happening as the International Division at Sharda University didn't leave any stone unturned in celebrating all our festivals too. The University participated in all of our celebrations, including our National Day. Visiting the Bhutan Embassy in Delhi was always a great experience. On September 23rd, 2018, we went to the Indira Gandhi Center for National Arts in Delhi, side by side, commemorating the Golden Jubilee of diplomatic relations between Bhutan and India, while at the same time celebrating our Blessed Rainy Day. Her Majesty The Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck came to formally grace the inauguration of Bhutan Week, a week-long program organized to mark the auspicious event and to enhance the age-old relationship between Bhutan and India. On 9th April, 2019, during COVID-19, our University graciously permitted our journey back home despite the state of emergency, with the assistance of our government. We were all dropped off at the bus by Warden Madam and a few other focals from the International Division, who also gave us masks and 'parathas' for breakfast that were wrapped in foil paper. We also had a little photo shoot.

The most memorable day for me remains the day of our "Cultural Exhibition" on the 18th of October 2020. There were almost ten different groups participating, each displaying their own unique traditional dresses, dishes, and country's descriptions. The exhibition was held on the ground floor of School of Business Studies (SBS). As the judges went around, marking each group, they reached our group and made us dance. This took us by surprise, as we were not told to prepare any dances or songs. So, without any preparation, we decided to make a round and danced our traditional Boedra song. It was a lot of experience, it was fun and memorable, thanks to my dear friends, my juniors, and seniors. The matter of pride was not that we won but that we were appreciated by all the other competitors, and everyone joined in our celebration.

"I have played a very small part in your lives, but I have no doubt that you will play a very big role in mine." Bearing in mind what His Majesty has told us, that we are the ambassadors of our country, I believe we have played our part in living up to the expectations of His Majesty and of our own. The experiences were hard at times and great at others. The people I encountered along the way were worth meeting. Memories were created along this journey, knowingly or unknowingly. Those golden moments I cherished are engraved in my heart, always and forever.



Ms. Karma Dema

Zorig Chusum

- Contributed by Dr. Karma Phuntsho

Zorig Chusum (བོད་རིག་བརྒྱུ་གསུམ་) is a classification of arts, crafts and technological skills into thirteen different domains, which is well known in Bhutan. The thirteen categories include (1) calligraphy or *yigzo*, (2) painting or *lhazo*, (3) carving or *parzo* (ཐར་བཟོ་), (4) clay sculpture or *jinzo* (འཛིམ་བཟོ་), (5) metal casting or *lugzo* (ལུག་བཟོ་), (6) silver and gold smithery or *troezo* (སྒྲིལ་བཟོ་), (7) needle work or *tshemzo* (ཚམ་བཟོ་), (8) wood work/ carpentry or *shingzo* (ཤིང་བཟོ་), (9) textile production or *thagzo* (ཐགས་བཟོ་), (10) paper making or *delzo* (འདལ་བཟོ་), (11) bamboo craft or *tsharzo* (ཚར་བཟོ་), (12) black smithery or *garzo* (མགར་བཟོ་), and (13) masonry or *dozo* (རྩ་བཟོ་). In this classification, carpentry and woodturning are put together *under* wood work whereas in another enumeration, black smithery and gold and silver smithery are treated as one art of smithery and woodturning (ཤིང་བཟོ་) and carpentry enumerated as different arts or crafts.

Yigzo (ཡིག་བཟོ་) or calligraphy includes the art of writing in different scripts. It is carried out mostly by monastic scribes and priests who create books for regular use or make ornamental books with artistic calligraphy. Associated with calligraphy are also other crafts such as ink making and pen making.

Lhazo (ལྷ་བཟོ་) or fine art is practised as high culture by artists who are trained in the field. Buddhist figures and themes dominate the content of fine art, thus giving it the name *lhazo* or art of divine beings. The painters learn iconographic mensuration and line drawings and gradually go on to create very complex images of deities and Buddhas. They also learn how to prepare and use the pigments, paint brushes and canvass.

Parzo (ཐར་བཟོ་) or carving comes in many forms. Bhutanese artists and craftsman carve on metals such as copper, bronze, silver and gold, and also on wood *and* stone. The carvings on the stone are mostly mantra spells in either the *Lantsha* (ལན་ཇ་) or *Uchen* (དབུ་ཅན་) script while the carving on wood generally depict Buddhist icons and traditional motifs and symbols. It is common to find deity images carved on metal and sometimes on stone and placed on receptacles and monuments.

Jinzo (འཛིམ་བཟོ་) or clay sculpture is one of the finest arts associated with Bhutan. Bhutanese clay sculptors excel in making clay figures, most of which is religious icons or symbols. A very special clay, collected from some specific areas of Bhutan, is used for the clay sculpting. Bhutanese temples are full of wonderful samples of clay sculpture. Like fine art, clay sculpture is taught in the schools for traditional arts and crafts.

Metal casting or *lugzo* (ལུག་བཟོ་) is also known in Bhutan. Using the ancient lost wax technology, many bronze sculpture are created through metal casting.

Silver and gold smithery or *troezo* (སྒྲིལ་བཟོ་) is a very refined tradition. Silver and gold smiths create a wide range of intricate objects including religious figures, ritual artefacts, jewellerys and household items. Many religious and cultural motifs are used in the gold and silver works.



Calligraphy (Yigzo)



Painting (Lhazo)



Metal Casting (Lugzo)



Silver and Gold Smithery (Troezo)



Sculpting (Jinzo)



Paper Making (Delzo)



Carving (Parzo)



Wood Work (Shingzo)



Bamboo Craft (Tsharzo)



Masonry (Dozo)



Needle Work (Tshemzo)



Black Smithery (Garzo)



Textile Production (Thagzo)

Needle work or *tshemzo* (ཚེམ་བཟོ་) is practised by many Bhutanese but the more specialised art of embroidery and applique are undertaken only by people with skills. Needle includes the basic craft of tailoring to produce a diverse set of garments Bhutanese wear and the ornamental pieces which Bhutanese use heavily in both religious activities and ceremonies. Special pieces such as wall hangings such as thongdrol and thangka are created using the technique of embroidery and applique.

Wood work/carpentry known as *shingzo* (ཤིང་བཟོ་) is a very common craft. Most Bhutanese houses are built with intensive use of timber. The wooden part of Bhutanese built structure is filled with various designs and decorations, which a master carpenter or architect is familiar with. Wood work is also carried out to produce household utensils. Traditionally, the Bhutanese mostly produced their crockery from wood through woodturning.

Textile production or *thagzo* (ཐག་བཟོ་) is a very popular art and craft practised almost exclusively by women. From creating yarn, to dyeing to weaving the numerous patterns, Bhutan has a very rich and diverse tradition of textile production. Bhutan exported textiles created from wool, yakhair, silk, cotton and plant fibres to Tibet and textiles remains one of the main attractions for the tourist who visit Bhutan today.

Paper making or *delzo* (འདེལ་བཟོ་), (11) is an ancient craft which was perhaps passed from China via Tibet. As Bhutan abundantly grows Daphne and Edgeworthia, Bhutan had a vibrant tradition of paper production although this was a craft practised by selected people. Paper was sent as gift or merchandise to Tibet and the state also collected paper as tax from the people.

Bamboo craft or *tsharzo* (ཚར་བཟོ་) is widely practised by the common Bhutanese. Most cowherders practise craft to create ropes, baskets, strainers, mats and other household items. Thanks to Bhutan's environment with heavy vegetation, different species of bamboo and cane are grown across the country. Bamboo is also used to build houses in the southern parts of Bhutan.

Black smithery or *garzo* (གར་བཟོ་) was practised by certain communities and families in the past. Black smiths produced a wide range of household items, farming tools and also religious artefacts. Bhutan had many areas where iron ore was prevalent and even Tibetan builders such as Thangtong Gyalpo used iron extracted and processed in Bhutan. The tradition is now in decline as a lot of the steel artefacts and implements are imported from India.

Masonry or *dozo* (རྩ་བཟོ་) is a widespread in Bhutan. The houses in Central and Eastern Bhutan are generally built of stone and wood. Bhutanese masons used stone in skilful ways to built towering structures which lasted for many centuries. Most valleys also have quarries from where excellent stone is extracted for building houses. The stone is chiselled or broken to get the desired shape and then stacked using mud plaster to hold them together. Whole stone slabs are sometimes put over a river to make a bridge. Stones are also used for millstone, mortar and pestle, knife sharpener, and also as pans for pancake.

Although the thirteen arts and crafts are generally given as comprehensive list of artistic tradition and craftsmanship in Bhutan, this set of thirteen does not include all arts and crafts. Tannery, ink making and bone works are some examples which do not fall within the thirteen. Nonetheless, the thirteen arts and crafts today represent the artistic and craft based cultural heritage of Bhutan and is being actively promoted by the state.



India-Bhutan Foundation (IBF)

The Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India on 29 August 2003 signed the Memorandum of Understanding to establish the India-Bhutan Foundation to enrich and expand the close friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The Foundation strives to enhance people to people contact by supporting activities in mutually agreed areas in particular, educational, cultural, scientific and technical fields.

The Foundation has been endowed with a Trust Fund of Rs. 160 million contributed by the two governments and the income generated by the Trust Fund is used to finance projects in the aforementioned areas in both Bhutan and India.

The IBF is administered by a 10-member Board of Directors with the Ambassador of Bhutan to India and the Ambassador of India to Bhutan as Co-Chairpersons of the Board. RGOB and GOI each nominates four other members of the Board, supported by two officials from the respective embassies, designated by the concerned Ambassadors, as Secretary of the Foundation. The Board of Directors meets twice annually to dispatch the Foundation's business such as reviewing and approve various project proposals and grants.

The IBF over the years have financed a number of projects in Bhutan and India, some of which are:

- Mountain Echoes - Literary Festival. The festival enjoys the royal patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. It provides a platform for authors to engage in cultural dialogue and celebrate tales of a shared landscape in the Himalayan region.
- Film Fraternity Field Visit - An initiative of Bhutan Film Association, Thimphu
- SAARC Festival of Literature
- Workshop on Techniques in Physiological Sciences for SAARC Nations
- Printing the Book "The Bodhisattva King" by Tshering Tashi of Bhutan Publishing House
- India-Bhutan Cultural Exchange & Art Camp by Centre for Escalation of Peace
- India-Bhutan Friendship Tennis Championship-
- Empowerment: Shades of Togetherness-India Bhutan Artist Camp-
- Skill and Know How Initiative for Lifelong Leadership Development (SKILLD)
- Folklore Collection and Study Program in Bhutan

- Cottage Enterprise & Textile Recycling- A Climate Smart Livelihood for Women Empowerment in Bhutan by SAFE

- V series of India-Bhutan Friendship Tennis Championship 2019

- 1st & 2nd India- Bhutan Youth Summit

- Promotion of Sports and Indigenous Games in Bhutan

- Khadi-Tagzo: A textile presentation at RTA Thimphu

IBF welcomes suitable project proposals from private individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, academicians and other organizations from Bhutan and India. Information on (a) application form for financial assistance and (b) terms of reference for projects funded by IBF can be obtained from:

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New Delhi 110021**

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Countries that have Diplomatic Relations with Bhutan

Country Name			Year of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations		
1	Afghanistan	2010	29	Maldives	1984
2	Andorra	2012	30	Mauritius	2012
3	Argentina	2012	31	Mongolia	2012
4	Armenia	2012	32	Morocco	2011
5	Australia	2002	33	Myanmar	2012
6	Austria	1989	34	Nepal	1983
7	Azerbaijan	2013	35	Netherlands	1985
8	Bahrain	1992	36	Norway	1985
9	Bangladesh	1973	37	Oman	2013
10	Belgium	2009	38	Pakistan	1988
11	Brazil	2009	39	Poland	2012
12	Canada	2003	40	Serbia	2011
13	Colombia	2012	41	Singapore	2002
14	Costa Rica	2012	42	Slovakia	2012
15	Cuba	2011	43	Slovenia	2012
16	Czech Republic	2011	44	Spain	2011
17	Denmark	1985	45	Sri Lanka	1987
18	Egypt	2012	46	Eswatini	2012
19	European Union	1985	47	Sweden	1985
20	Fiji	2011	48	Switzerland	1985
21	Finland	1986	49	Tajikistan	2013
22	India	1968	50	Thailand	1989
23	Indonesia	2011	51	Turkey	2012
24	Japan	1986	52	United Arab Emirates	2012
25	Kazakhstan	2012	53	Vietnam	2012
26	Korea, South	1987	54	Germany	2020
27	Kuwait	1983	55	Israel	2020
28	Luxembourg	2011			

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Lunana Valley

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Ministry of Agriculture & Forests: www.moaf.gov.bt
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Ministry of Economic Affairs: www.moea.gov.bt
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Ministry of Labour and Human Resources: www.molhr.gov.bt
Ministry of Works and Human Settlement: www.mowhs.gov.bt
Cabinet Secretariat: www.cabinet.gov.bt
National Environment Commission: www.nec.gov.bt
Department of Tourism: www.tourism.gov.bt
Royal Audit Authority: www.bhutanaudit.gov.bt
Royal Civil Service Commission: www.rcsc.gov.bt
Royal Court of Justice: www.judiciary.gov.bt
Royal Institute of Management: www.rim.edu.bt
Royal University of Bhutan: www.rub.edu.bt
Bhutan Chamber of Commerce & Industry: www.bcci.org.bt
Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies: www.bhutanstudies.org.bt
Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies: www.rigss.bt
Bhutan Post Corporation Ltd: www.bhutanpost.bt
Druk Air: www.drukair.com.bt
Bhutan Portal: www.bhutan.gov.bt
Bhutan Broadcasting Services (BBS): www.bbs.bt
Kuensel Newspaper: www.kuenselonline.com
The Bhutanese: www.thebhutanese.bt

National Symbols



NATIONAL DAY

On 17 December 1907, Bhutan established its hereditary monarchy by appointing Gongsar Ugen Wangchuck as the First King.

The representatives of the clergy, Penlops (governors) and people's representatives decided to end the internal strife in the country by unanimously signing a genja (Oath of Allegiance) that handed over the reins of the country to Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck and his hereditary heirs. This landmark decision set the Kingdom on the path of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Today, this occasion is commemorated as Bhutan's National Day.



NATIONAL EMBLEM

The symbol of the sacred jewel at the top of the royal crest signifies that the Buddhist Sovereign is raised supreme above all heads, in the compassionate form of the triple gem. The crossed Vajras (diamond sceptres) in the center represents the harmony between the noble and ancient customs of spiritual and secular law, and modern power and authority. The qualities essential for harmony flows naturally and imperceptibly from the spiritual essence of the Vajra. The male and female turquoise thunder dragons embracing in unity symbolize the name of the Kingdom: Druk Yul. Druk means thunder dragon, Yul means land. The thunder of summer storms like a dragon's roar reverberates across mountains and valley speaking of the country's glory.



NATIONAL FLAG

The upper yellow half of Bhutan's flag signifies the secular authority of the King. It is the colour of fruitful action, both in religious and state matters. The orange half of the flag denotes the religious practice and spiritual power of Buddhism as manifested in the Kargyupa and Nyingmapa sects, the historic springs of the Bhutanese faith. The dragon honours the people's name for their country: Druk Yul – Land of the Thunder Dragon. Its colour, the white of purity, expresses the loyalty of the country's many racial and linguistic groups. The dragon's snarling mouth expresses the stern strength of the male and female deities protecting Bhutan. The jewels it clasps in its claws are symbol of the land's wealth and perfection.



NATIONAL FLOWER

The 'Blue Poppy,' Bhutan's national flower, is now synonymous with a country that is known for its rare and special hybrids.

NATIONAL ANIMAL

The Takin (*Burdorcas taxicolor*) is a rare mammal with a thick neck and short muscular legs. It lives in groups and is found above 4000 meters on the north-western and far north eastern parts of the country. They feed on bamboo and the adult Takin can weigh over 200 kgs.



NATIONAL BIRD

The national bird is the raven. It adorns the royal crown. The raven represents the deity Gonpo Jarodongchen (raven headed Mahakala), one of the chief guardian deities of Bhutan.

NATIONAL SPORT

Archery was declared the national sport in 1971 when Bhutan became a member of the United Nations. Bhutan also maintains an Olympic archery team. Archery tournaments and competitions are held throughout the country. Archery is played during religious and secular public holidays in Bhutan, local festivals (tsechu), between public ministries and departments, and between the dzongkhag and the regional teams.



NATIONAL TREE

The national tree is the cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*). Cypressess are found in abundance and one may notice large cypressess near temples and monasteries. This tree is found in the temperate climate zone, between 1800 and 3500 meters. Its capacity to survive on rugged harsh terrain is compared to bravery and simplicity.



DISCLAIMER:

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Photo Courtesy:

1. Prime Minister's Office
2. The Royal Office for Media
3. Department of Tourism, Bhutan
4. Bhutan Echoes
5. Bhutan Broadcasting Service Ltd (BBS)
6. A Book: Arts and Culture of Bhutan (2019)



The MHPA 720 MW was conferred the 2020 Brunel Medal in recognition of its credentials of social and environmental aspects by the UK-based Institute of Civil Engineers Institute in London. The award was presented to the Chairman of MHPA, Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, Minister for Economic Affairs by the then Ambassador of India to Bhutan, H.E. Ruchira Kamboj.



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