



## Snippets from "Bhutan Media" and other

### [Druk Air plans new flight to Guwahati](#)

*Business Bhutan 12 March 2010*

Druk Air is mulling a flight to the capital of the neighboring Indian state of Assam, Guwahati, a prominent business destination for many Bhutanese.

"The situation has improved drastically over a few months," the Consul General of the Bhutan Consulate at Kolkota, Dasho Tshering Wangda, told Business Bhutan over phone referring to the security scenario along the Indo-Bhutan border. He had met with the Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi and proposed the Paro-Guwahati flight.

The General Manager of the Commercial division of Druk Air, Tshering Penjore, has confirmed that the national airline will commence flight operations with Assam on the Paro-Guwahati-Bangkok route by October this year and later extended till Patna, india. "We are still working on the plan," he said adding that the plan is to have two flights a week in the sector.

If the projects work out, then Bhutan will be connected with all major business destinations in the region. Last year, Druk Air began its Bagdora flight, which has increased the traffic between the business hub of India's north eastern region, Siliguri. The Bagdora flight also brought to Bhutan, many foreign tourists who visited Darjeeling, internationally known as the Queen of the Hills.

Bhutan, especially the eastern region, has shared historical trade relations with Guwahati - recently rated as one of the world's fastest growing 100 cities - which is only around 100 kilometers from Samdrup Jongkhar.

But since 2003, the year Bhutan flushed out Indian militants, this city was tagged under a travel advisory for the fear of attacks from extremists including ULFA, KLO and NDFB. Even along the Indian national highway connecting Phuentsholing and Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutanese have to travel with an army convoy fearing attacks.

But with the lifting of the travel advisory, which Dasho Tshering Wangda said Bhutan was considering, businessmen and students can move freely in Assam.

The Chirag district in Assam which is a popular destination for businessmen from Bhutan who bore the consequences of the ban is happy with the news of the lift.

"I am glad that the movement would be safe now, and we need not worry about convoys anymore," said Malati, who owns an import house in the capital.

The Indian media, quoting the Consul General, said the number of tourists visiting Bhutan will increase with the introduction of the flight to Guwahati, a city considered as the gateway to north-east India.

"The tour operators here (in Assam) have given me a positive feedback of the feasibility of starting flights from Bhutan to Guwahati," said Dasho Tshering Wangda.

During his visit to the bordering state, the *Consul General* also discussed with the chief minister issues relating to scope in tourism, health and education sectors where the two countries can partner

## **timeline of hydropower deals with India**

*Buisiness Bhutan 12 Mar 2010*

### **Since 1961, the story goes on**

The history of hydropower ties between Bhutan and India dates back to 1961 when Bhutan started the advent of modern development by starting the first five year plan.

The first bilateral agreement was inked on September 13, 1961, to construct a barrage in the Bhutanese territory for a 27mwgawatt (MW) power plant in the Indian state of West Bengal. India agreed to give an annual royalty payment of Nu 8 per kilowatt and 250kW of free power was imported to Bhutanese border settlements of Sipsu and Chamurchi in Samtse and Phuentsholing in Chukha.

The first power plant of 360 kW was commissioned in 1967 at Joshina to supply power to the capital under grant assistance from India. The plant was later synchronized to the western grid in 1992-93. In 1968, a mini hydel of 400kW was built in Paro which was later decommissioned in 1986. In 1972, the 750kW Chenari plant was built and another 300kW hydel at Hesothanka in Wangduephodrang.

To provide electricity to the southern border towns, seven power import connections of 11 kV and 33 kV systems were established along the border. In South West Bhutan, it was established in Sipsu and Phuentsholing and Chamurchi in India. In the South East district of Samdrup Jongkhar it was established in Daifam and Bhangtar with another one at Darranga, the Indian town bordering Samdrup Jongkhar proper. The last one was in the central town of Gelephu at Hatisar.

On March 23, 1974, the two governments reached an agreement to develop the 336MW hydropower plant at Chukha. When the Chukha project was under construction, a 66kV line was also drawn from Birpara in West Bengal to be used for the construction. The import

power tariff for this line between 1972 and 1982 ranged between Rs 0.30 to 0.80 a unit.

Major construction for the Chukha Project started from 1978. Upon completion in 1988, the project cost was Nu 24.6b. India provided the funds in the ratio of 60:40 of grant and loan at 5% interest payable in 15 years.

On February 18, 1994, Bhutan and India again signed an agreement for the construction of the Kurichhu 60MW plant in Mongar. The project was completed in 2002 at a total cost of Nu 5.637b. India again funded the project on a 60:40 ratio of grant to loan at 10.75% interest rate repayable in 12 years.

On March 5, 1996, the agreement for the then biggest power project in Bhutan, 1020MW Tala project, was signed between the two countries. India again funded the project at 60:40 ratio of grant to loan at 9% interest rate repayable in 12 years. Its export tariff now stands at Nu 1.80 per unit, which increases by 10% every five years till the loan is repaid. Thereafter, it will increase by 5% after every five years. The Tala project was completed at a cost of Nu 41.855b and the first unit was commissioned on July 31, 2006.

Last year, the 1,095MW Punatshangchu hydropower project-I and the 114MW Dagachu project started its pre-construction activities as joint venture projects between Indian government companies and the Druk Green Power Corporation. The 992 MW Punatshangchu-II and the 700 MW Mangdechu project constructions are expected to begin in the coming fiscal.

Other projects in the pipeline include the Nikachu, Chamkharchu, AmoChu and Sunkosh projects. Bhutan has signed an agreement to export 10,000MW of power to India by 2020.

## Walking to a new school of GNH

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When GNH was first conceptualized by His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, there was simplicity in its essence which could be understood and felt by all. It appeared as if the path to happiness was so clear it would be easy to walk it. The people understood that 'happiness' came before 'material wealth', which was just a means to achieve the end. GNH was in many ways similar to the 'four noble truths' taught by Buddha.

Then there was a rush to interpret and find mechanisms to deduce 'happiness'. Deliberations at symposiums, conferences and other gatherings, local and international, became so complex an uneven platform was created between the experts and the audience. And what the audience did not understand they left it for the small circles of experts to discuss. So at one point of time, the GNH concept was falling into oblivion.

But in the small rooms of the Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS), work was progressing to find the four pillars, nine domains and 72 indicators of GNH, which were the tools and mechanisms to calculate to the extent possible. The cabinet last year approved each and every government policy and project to be tested with a GNH exercise, to ensure all activities are pro-GNH, including all ongoing projects and policies, using the GNH indicators. On his return from a conference in Brazil last year, the prime minister came back with a focused plan to inculcate GNH in the daily lives of the Bhutanese. This came after his experience of seeing how GNH is practiced in a land thousands of miles away from its land of origin.

A GNH workshop conducted in Paro last winter saw the participation of heads and other officials from schools, who in turn held training courses in their respective schools to train the teachers. Initially, there was a silent protest as teachers were required to spend more than the usual hours at school; with early reporting time and late

dismissal. Some were against the duty of having to clean the toilets of the students. But within weeks this all changed and teachers saw their added role in a new perspective; one of service and humility. And seeing students, who were using vehicles to drop them to school, are now walking to reduce carbon emission, and at the same time picking up papers and plastic on the way is a step ahead toward achieving GNH. Many, including Bhutanese, have had a better understanding of GNH when His Majesty King Khesar during His Majesty's last visit to India said "GNH is development with values". This brings GNH closer to the people, and makes GNH easier to absorb in our daily lives. GNH will be the ultimate stand that will unite the Bhutanese no matter what profession, belief and political inclination.

### **Controversial IPCC chairman talks climate change in Bhutan** Written by Sonam Dema

*Bhutan Today* March 14, 2010: A Nobel Laureate and the chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Dr. R.K. Pachauri was in Thimphu on a personal visit.

During the visit, Dr. Pachauri and the Prime Minister, Lyonchen J.Y.Thinley, discussed on issues concerning climate and environmental problems stirring in Bhutan and the South Asian nations.

"I greatly admire Bhutan's efforts to build a society that is sustainable in every sense and that emphasizes Gross National Happiness. I think the rest of the world must learn from Bhutan in this regard," said Dr. Pachauri.

The prime minister said that Bhutan would be looking at creating complementary and supplementary energy generating sources in the light of the fact that, due to climate change, Bhutan's electricity generation had now dropped from a high of around of 1,500 MW in summer to just about 275 MW in winter.

On being asked, if Bhutan could harness solar power, Dr. Pachauri said that it was feasible and worth exploring; adding that he will talk to his colleagues at the Clinton Climate Initiative on this matter.

On the PM's request, Dr. Pachauri also said that he will also help explore the possibilities of promoting Thimphu as a 'bicycle city'. He also expressed his interest in setting up a center for TERI (Tata Energy Resources Institute where he is its director general) and Yale University (where he heads its newly established Yale Climate and Energy Institute) at Bhutan's education city which is also being planned as a green city in near future.

"As far as the SAARC summit is concerned, I think this an opportunity where politics hopefully will not come in the way of cooperation because we are dealing with common problems that will affect all countries, which includes scarcity of water, melting glaciers, changing rainfall pattern, sea level rising threatening the survival of countries like Maldives and Bangladesh and even India and Sri Lanka," said Dr. Pachauri.

He added that the SAARC countries will have to adapt to some of these impacts; and if we can come up with a common approach and share knowledge and information, then, all the counties in the region will benefit from it.

"I am very happy that Bhutan is hosting this summit because Bhutan is trusted by all the SAARC countries. Everyone would see that this agenda is a neutral agenda- there is no hidden meaning. Therefore, Bhutan is placed in a good position to see that we bring about some cooperation in climate change in the SAARC region," he said.

He further added that it is a special opportunity because all the SAARC countries are going to be very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; therefore, if we can come up with a common

strategy as to how to deal with the impacts of climate change, that will be a major step forward.

"The fact is the glaciers are melting and that is going to affect local ecology, water availability, posing major dangers," he said, " thus, we are working on the fifth assessment report with the IPCC and I hope there will little more information. The Chinese are doing research on their side of the Himalaya since they are concerned that they will be affected severely within a short period of time."

He also said that we have to get global society to reduce green house gases while some countries don't want to do anything about it even though they are responsible for causing the problem.

"The second thing as far as we are concern is that we have to adapt to these affects. If water is going to scare, how we are going to manage; or if agriculture is going to be affected, how do we make sure that our agriculture practices are changed so that we can still produce enough food without causing food security problem," he said. Therefore, the SAARC countries could adapt a common position and be able to do something on climate change since Bhutan is a right place, he added.

While in Bhutan Dr. Pachauri also had an audience with the His Majesty, and met the foreign minister and Bhutanese environmentalists.

Dr. Pachauri sits in the Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister of India and also teaches in several universities worldwide. He has authored 21 books. Acknowledging his immense contribution to the field of environment, apart from the Nobel Prize he has also been awarded the Padma Bhushan (one of India's highest civilian awards) in 2001. Internationally recognized as a leading global thinker and leader of research, he has become synonymous with climate change and environment.

## **Behind the masks and dances** . By Tashi Dema

*Kuensel* 14 March, 2010 - In Damphu's windy and dusty afternoon, 30 men and 15 women are practising dances for the upcoming tshechu beginning March 22.

Some men move their hands and body in accordance with the beats of the drum and cymbal. The women practise steps while some friends play the dramnyen and sing.

The dancers said that they are happy to be a part of the annual dzongkhag event, but the responsibilities at their villages bore heavy in their minds. "I've a lot of problems at home," said Birkha Bahadur, 29, from Sergithang. "My four children go to school, my wife herds the five cattle and there's no one to light the oven." Most of them, who have been dancing for the past 11 years, said that, though they desperately want to resign, they could not. "We're told the police will be sent if we don't show up," said a dancer, who chose anonymity.

The dancers said the dzongkhag assured them, when they were first selected, that they would not have to contribute woola (labour contribution) if they participate in the tshechu. "When we approached the gup, they say we need a letter from the dzongkhag and when we come here, officials say the gup will look into the matter," said a dancer from Dungalagang. Most dancers say that when they tell officials about it, it falls on deaf ears. "Some tell us that we're paid to be dancers and there won't be consideration," said a father of five. The dancers are paid Nu 375 each month, even when they are not participating in the dzongkhag activities. During the tshechu, they are paid Nu 100 a day, which they say is too less. One dancer said that, in the village, they are paid Nu 250. "We should be paid at least Nu 200 here." With most people coming from far-flung villages, they rent rooms and some stay with friends and relatives, which they say is really inconvenient. "I have to borrow money from relatives," said Thinley Dem, 25, who brought her four-year old child with her. "I wish someone looks after my problem," she said.

Of the 45 people, about 30 of them come from far-flung villages. Denka, 31, from Gosaling, an ulcer patient, said no one was home to look after her aged in-laws and two children. Individuals are also not consulted when selected as dancers. "Gewog officials simply point and tell us that we have to go and become dancers," said one dancer. According to Damber Bahadur, the champoen (leader), they have raised the low payment issue to the dzongkhag. Tsirang dzongda Pemba Wangchuk said that every dzongkhag performs tsechu and it's the people who participate in it. "It's their tsechu, not dzongkhags, and they should be proud," he said. "Instead, each person should be happy to participate in it. He, however, said that, given the importance of promoting culture and tradition, the wage rate for dzongkhag dancers had been discussed in the 18th annual dzongda's conference. "The issue has been put up to the prime minister," he said.

When it comes to woola considering, dzongda Pemba Wangchuk said that people should understand that the dzongkhag is investing in them by paying to them to learn dances. "In the long run, they'll benefit," he said, adding, "We're promoting culture so that they'll keep it alive," he said. "We'll look into their problem," he assured. Without any maintenance budget, the mask dancers use drums that are torn

### **Meet Miss Mason**

**By Tashi Dema**

*Kuensel 15 March, 2010* - It is a workplace where non-nationals dominate, a workplace, where young Bhutanese either loathe or lack the skill for. But for Sonam Yangzom, it's her bread and butter.

Amidst the deafening roar of machinery at the Tsirang dratshang construction site, the 19-year-old mason girl is comfortable and doesn't hesitate to do manual work, when girls like her age are rushing to urban centres looking for better opportunities.

Her hands are rough, hardened by the bricks, cement and wood she handles every day. Her face is red, burnt by the sun she is exposed to from morning till sunset. The eldest of four siblings, Sonam Yangzom from Lumang in Trashigang, is the lone female mason with 19 men involved at the site. It was a job she found after experiencing a hard life. "I worked as a maid for a thrimpon before to help my mother, brothers and sisters when my father left with his new wife," Sonam said. She was 14 then. The following year, she lost her babysitting job. "We constructed a hut on the thrimpon's land and stayed here," she said. Since then she had been working with expatriate workers, earning Nu 100 daily. "I transported stones and bricks and made concrete mix," she said. "I suffered a lot, carrying heavy stones to the top floors of building and many times my hands got crushed." But now she claims that she can work like any male counterpart and that she enjoys her work. "If I didn't suffer, I'd never have been able to work and earn today."

Sonam lives in a hut, made of CGI sheets, carton boxes and cloth pieces, below the dratshang with her brother, a class five student. Sonam said that she could not afford to live in a better house, as she has to educate her brother and send money to her parents. "My father divorced his wife and came back to take my mother with him three years after he left us," she said, adding that, since then, she has lived alone with her brother.

Her dream for now is to educate her brother. "I don't want to marry and raise children as I don't want my children to suffer like me," she said. "I'll work and support my brother until he can stand on his own feet," she said. Sonam said that she never felt any different working with men. "I'm a woman but I work my share and they do theirs," she said. The supervisor, Ratan, says Sonam is a hard working and simple woman and the men around her appreciate her.

Tsirang residents, who know Sonam, say that she is exemplary girl. "There's no dignity higher than the dignity of being able to work and earn your own food," said a contractor in Tsirang. "Anyone can do

white collar job but not a work like this," said another. "Her attitude towards the job is worth praising." But the dratshang construction work will finish in the next two months and Sonam is worried. "I'll have to look for work and save before monsoon," she said. "I hate rain as I don't get any work."

### **Bodo militant apprehended**

*Kuensel 17 March, 2010* - Seven soldiers of the royal Bhutan army survived a gunfire attack from a group of Bodo militants on March 14 near Sukan Taklai river in Sarpang. The soldiers apprehended a militant after the action.

The soldiers from the Taraythang outpost were returning, on foot, from Kanamakura outpost after dropping fresh vegetables when the militants armed with AK rifles opened fire.

According to a press release from the royal Bhutan army, the soldiers took cover and returned fire. The militant was brought to Gelephu for questioning, but denied having any links with the armed group, stated the press release. The militant was handed over to the Indian authorities across the border.

<b>ENGLISH SUMMARY, of page 3 - 26</b>	<b>By IAN BROOK</b>
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The publication of this spring number of DRUK YUL coincides with astronomical spring, March 20<sup>th</sup> the March equinox, but as I write this summary, here in central Sweden we still have a snow cover of the order of 60cm and daytime temperatures are rarely above 5°C. So we will still have a long wait for greenery and spring flowers even after you have read this number of DRUK YUL on our homepage at [www.swedish-bhutan-society.org](http://www.swedish-bhutan-society.org)

The focus of this number is on the upcoming annual general meeting, which will be held in Stockholm on May 12<sup>th</sup>, and includes the agenda and annual report of the society. At present we have 124 members with varying levels of participation in the society's activities. With participation and the need for new blood and ideas in mind, we

carried out a survey in January, by e-mail and telephone, to collect information about how our members view the society's activities (or lack of activity) and their comments and suggestions concerning future focus and activities. Experience tells us that it is a long step from words to action. But we remain optimistic. The detailed analysis of the replies has not yet been fully completed, but at this stage it can be categorically stated that all members greatly appreciate DRUK YUL and the editor's selection of topics and articles! Unfortunately, it seems that very few members are aware of, or visit, our homepage. But Internet is perhaps still a generation issue! Between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of September our sister friendship society in Italy, Amici del Bhutan, will arrange the bi-annual pan-European meeting in Mantua. The programme for the meeting, in English, is included in this number of DRUK YUL.

We have long sought to recruit new members to the editorial team but now can look forward to working together with Ms. Anita Lundmark who has recently joined us. Anita's first contribution is a portrait of Kunzang Choden in which mention is made of her six books. It is interesting to note that the editor wrote a short article in DRUK YUL 1999-1 in which he warmly recommended Kunzang Choden's Folktales of Bhutan. Hopefully, our Swedish readers will be able to enjoy Swedish translations of Kunzang Choden's six books in the not too distant future.

The editor has collected IMF statistics for tourism in Bhutan for the period 2003-2009, which make interesting reading. There is also a link to other IMF information.

Åsa Sundström has selected and translated to Swedish a number of articles from Kuensel. These include: a new postal code system and standardised addresses for Bhutan, the increasing problem of pirate copying of films and music, which was discussed at a meeting of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Thimphu, women's football and, the introduction of health-insurance by the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan.

Finally, as usual, there are a number of snippets, in English, from the Bhutan media.

