

## **Opening Address of the Hon'ble Chairperson (23<sup>rd</sup> Session)**

(20th Day of the 3rd Month of Earth Female Pig Year corresponding to 23rd May 2019)

The 23rd Session of the National Council commenced on an auspicious day with the opening ceremony of the Joint Sitting of Parliament in the morning was graced by His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo. The opening ceremony of the National Council commenced in the afternoon. The Hon'ble Chairperson welcomed and expressed his appreciation to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Hon'ble Speaker of National Assembly and other senior government officials for their presence in the opening ceremony. He also extended greetings to all the Hon'ble Members and Secretariat staff.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the people and the National Council offered deepest gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for the extraordinary services in strengthening the peace, happiness and well-being of the people and the country. He said that under the visionary leadership of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, the National Day Celebrations are held in different dzongkhags every year which has greatly benefitted in promoting balanced regional development in the country.

Moreover, this has also greatly benefitted the respective dzongkhags in promoting cleanliness and beautiful surrounding. He submitted gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for such noble initiative. Similarly, His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo has always graced the convocation ceremony conducted by the Royal University of Bhutan every year to bestow the graduates with the rare Royal advices and noble guidance. Moreover, His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo always grants audience to Class XII scholarship recipients who are going to pursue professional degree courses outside the country with the invaluable advice to continue to work hard, and become capable and productive individuals. Such noble initiatives from His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo has immensely benefitted the youths in guiding them during the course of their studies to be very productive citizens. The establishment of the De-Suung programme has also immensely benefitted in providing voluntary and timely emergency and other social services. The Chairperson also congratulated the Hon'ble Members of National Council for successfully completing the Leadership Programme for Parliamentarian at Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies from 24th February to 15th March 2019 and the De-Suung programme in April

2019. The Chairperson expressed his appreciation to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for further improving and strengthening the foreign relationship with the foreign countries. He also submitted his gratitude to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for the noble deed in granting Land and Citizenship Kidu. As a Dharma King, His Majesty has graced the religious ceremonies, Losar celebrations and important events, which provide opportunities for the youth and people to interact with His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo. Further, on behalf of the people of Bhutan he offered heartfelt condolence to our beloved Royal Family Members on the sad demise of Yab Dasho Ugyen Dorji, a great promoter of the sacred dharma who left for heavenly abode and expressed deep regret for this great loss. The Chairperson also expressed his gratitude to His Holiness the Je Khenpo, Zhung Dratshang, and other religious bodies for conducting various rituals. On behalf of National Council, the Chairperson also thanked Punakha and Wangdue Dzongkhag Administration staff, armed force, other relevant agencies and the people of 20 Dzongkhags for their help and support in such an hour of need. He said that as announced during the 22nd Session of the National Council, the Committees worked hard to achieve various tasks assigned in preparation for the 23rd Session by conducting extensive research and review works which included 3 Plenary Sessions, 64 Committee Meetings, 55 rounds of stakeholder consultation meeting and 5 field visits. Resolution of the 23rd Session of National Council 4 Further, during this Session the House will deliberate on 6 Legislative issues, 3 issues related to Review of Policies, 1 Annual report and 6 Question Hour Sessions. He reported that under the Legislative issues; Ratification of Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on substance that deplete the Ozone Layer (Kigali Amendment), Ratification of Bilateral Air Service Agreement (ASA) between Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of United Arab Emirates (UAE), Budget Appropriation Bill of 2019-2020, Impeachment Procedure Bill of Bhutan 2019, Minister and Minister Equivalent Position Holders Entitlement Bill of Bhutan 2019 and Pay Revision Bill of Bhutan 2019 will be deliberated. Similarly, under the issues related to Review of Policies; issues related to Technical and Vocational Education and Training; issues related to Harmful use of Alcohol; issues related to Fronting and with regard to Annual report; Annual Anti-Corruption Commission report will be deliberated. He reported that as decided in the previous Session, the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee has drafted Lhengye Zhungtshog Bill for deliberation in the current Session.

However, while consulting the Cabinet Secretariat and the Office of the Attorney General on the Bill, it was agreed that it would be appropriate if the Cabinet Secretariat could initiate to table in the Parliament in the later Session as the Bill is directly related to Lhengye Zhungtshog. Resolution of the 23rd Session of National Council 5 Similarly, he said that during the 1st Session of the National Assembly of the Third Parliament, the House expressed its concern on the removal of Class X cut-off point for admission in Class XI for the students who had scored pass marks in their board examination. The Government's response on the National Council's concerns and 4 recommendations will be deliberated on 31st May 2019 during the Question Hour Session. In conclusion, the Chairperson sought the guidance and prayers for the successful completion of the 23rd session of the National Council with the continued advice and guidance of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo, blessings of His Holiness the Je Khenpo and Zhung Dratshang.