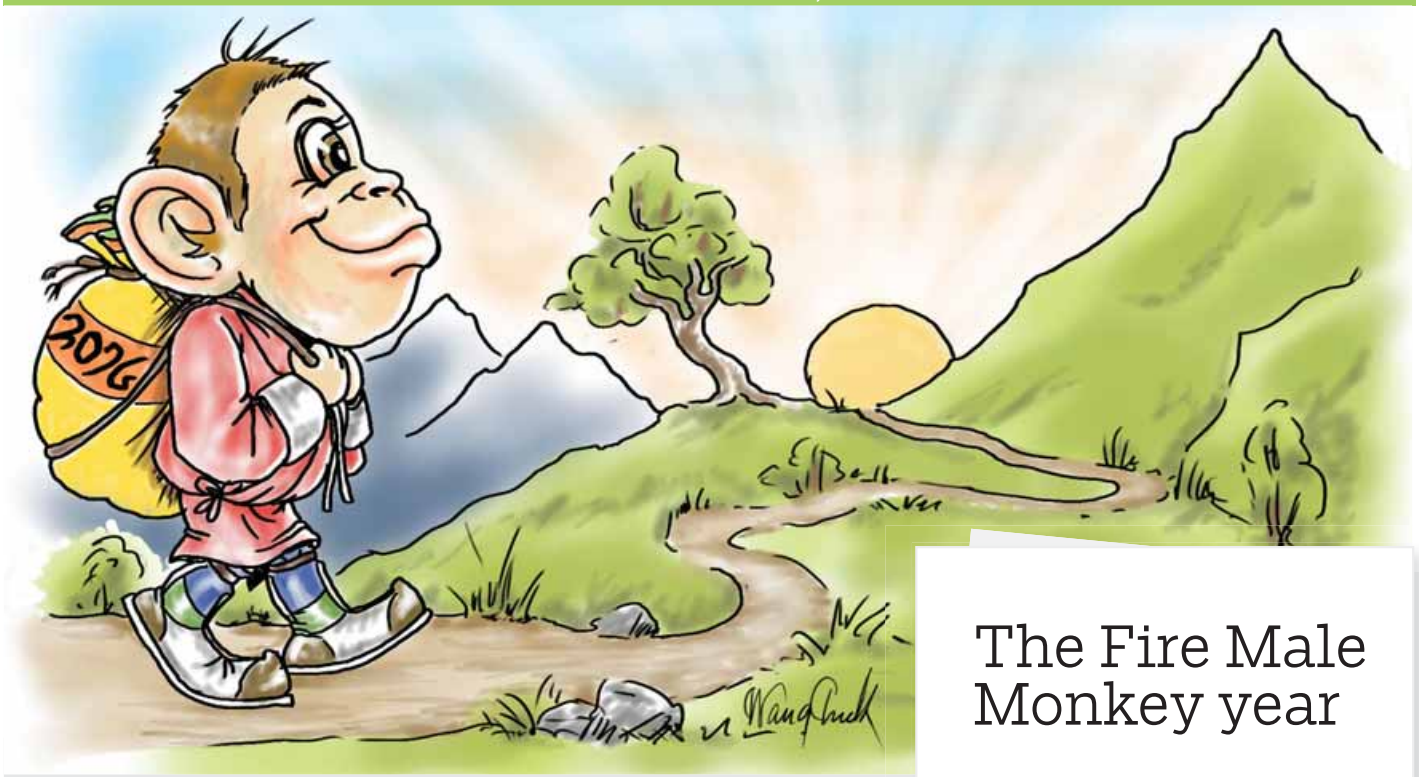
Kuensel wishes all its readers a Happy Losar!

KUENSEL

THAT THE PEOPLE SHALL BE INFORMED

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 09, 2016 · Nu 10



Looking back the year gone by

Jigme Wangchuk

It was a year filled with events so memorable, the year that we just bade farewell to, 2015. It was a year painted in myriad colours of joy, successes and celebrations; it was a year that saw this small Himalayan nation that is fast shedding its image of a hermit kingdom in peace with itself take daring steps, etching its greatness in the enduring realm of Drukyul's more than ordinary story.

As the nation moves on, it has the natural urge to look back on the milestones that it has covered, for often it is one's past that shapes one's future. What did this forward-looking nation achieve in the Year of the Sheep that will catapult it further beyond as a society with its own clarity of visions, aims and objectives?

The Wood Female Sheep was a year of celebration. The nation celebrated the 60th birth anniversary of a king that gave the nation its face and heart and defined the very contours of its being. The celebration of the reign of a monarch most unparalleled brought the people and communities together like never before. What deep fractures and dark crevasses democracy and politics might have brought to this otherwise quiet and content nation was healed by one unifying act of worship to the sire who is still the indelible source of inspiration.

Pg.2

The Fire Male Monkey year

The country should brace for major fire incidents and untimely rainfall going by the prediction from the institute of astrology in Pangrizampa, Thimphu.

The datho (astrological calendar) has it that untimely rainfall will lead to poor yield and livestock production. Although the year of the Monkey is considered inauspicious (lona), astrologers said that because it is also the year of the birth of Guru Rinpoche, it is still considered an auspicious year. "The Fire element coinciding with Mewa nyinag, which is this year, comes once in between 180 and 190 years," astrologer, Sonam Rinchen of the institute said.

Insert 3

There will be no **Kuensel** issue on February 10 and 11

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Indian government sanctions widening of Chuzom-Haa highway

Minimum disruption to the environment is ensured

Tenzin Namgyel

The government of India has approved the widening of the Chuzom-Haa highway, at a cost of Nu 2.6 billion.

ROAD

Work is scheduled to begin soon and the widening of the highway is expected to be completed by June 2018.

The widening work will be carried out at a cost of Nu 2.6 billion, according to a press release issued by DANTAK.

After months of sustained efforts and the perseverance of Brigadier PKG Mishra, the Chief Engineer for DANTAK, the Indian government has sanctioned the up-gradation of the Chuzom-Haa road, according to a press release issued by DANTAK. The Indian government has committed around Nu 2.6 billion for the double laning of the road.

Chief Engineer, Brigadier PKG Mishra said the project will ensure comprehensive development of the Haa region. He added the improvement of the Chuzom–Haa road is a key part of DANTAK's road up-gradation plan and will bring major economic development and positive changes to the country.

The project is expected to have a significant socio-economic impact especially be allowing enhancing the link between agriculture produce and markets.

The double laning of the Chuzom-Haa highway, along with the construction of the Damchu-Haa link road will reduce the distance between Phuentsholing and Haa by approximately 45km and travel time by more than two hours.

DANTAK plans to execute 50.9km of the Chuzom-Haa road in three stretches with minimum disruption to the environment.

The link road from Damchu will connect with the Chuzom-Haa highway at a point called KM 28 from where the up-gradation work will commence.



DANTAK officials survey the highway

The work on the first stretch (from the Haa side) from KM 79 to KM 58 will commence in next financial year and the remaining two stretches: KM 58 to KM 24 and KM 24 to KM 28 will start subsequently.

The construction of road would eventually will allow an unimpeded drive from Phuentsholing through the Damchu-Chukha realignment, potentially all the way to Haa valley.

Looking back the year gone by

From Pg.1

It might be on the nation at times to tread a path most treacherous and sad, but it is in the leader to give the people hopes and dreams to rise. Through the ages since we bestowed out trust and faith and elected Sir Ugyen Wangchuck as the first hereditary monarch by signing the most sacred covenant in Pungthang Dewachenpoi Phodrang, Bhutan and the Bhutanese have been singularly fortunate to receive the extraordinary stewardship and benedictions of the Wangchuck Kings.

And what better joy for the nation than the reassurance of the great dynasty's perpetual continuity? The news of the birth of His Royal Highness The Gyalsey was a blessing most precious and divine that gave the Bhutanese people happiness that they could only express in tears. What milestone in the life of a nation could be greater than the birth of our most favoured child of destiny? As is spelled in the nation's most hallowed hymn, so it is now come for the nation to enjoy continued sun of peace and happiness.

The Wood Female Sheep was a year when Bhutan made headlines beyond its doorsteps. As part of celebration of the 60th birth anniversary of Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Bhutan set a world record by planting 49,672 trees in one hour at Kuenselphodrang in Thimphu. Nothing could have been more fitting a tribute from the people to the monarch who championed environment conservation. Also at Kuenselphodrang, 2015 saw the consecration of giant 201ft Buddha Dordenma. The biggest Buddha statue in the world was consecrated by Je Khenpo to celebrate the life and reign of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

Bhutan in the year of Wood Female Sheep showed itself as a country that aspired to build clean and upright society by eliminating corruption root and branch. Besides launching numerous investigations related to corruption, the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) put an end to one of the biggest fronting cases in Phuentsholing involving Jatan Prasad Lal Chand Prasad.

ACC also launched an investigation involving former Foreign Minister Rinzin Dorje, who the court later convicted for violating the Civil Service Act and Anti-Corruption Act when he was the dzongdag of Haa. Reversing the dzongkhag court's ruling, the High Court convicted Rinzin Dorje to a year in prison for misusing the dzongkhag's pool vehicle to transport private timber from Thimphu to Haa. The court, however, granted Rinzin Dorje an option to pay thrimthue in lieu of imprisonment amounting to Nu 45,000 and ordered him to pay a penalty of Nu 111,640.

In what could be described as an important milestone in the aviation sector, the Wood Female Sheep year was the year when Bhutan established Royal Bhutan Helicopter Services Ltd (RBHS), allowing Bhutan to overcome the many geographical challenges in the event of emergency.

Bhutan also received some hard jabs in the year of the Wood Female Sheep. It wasn't an all-good year. Health ministry detected 29 new cases of people living with HIV, including an 18-month-old child. Of the total detected, 13 are male and 16 are female, taking the total number of people living with HIV in the country to 432. The viral disease is fast becoming a major public health concern in the country.

In Trongsa, a teenager and a woman were brutally murdered on august 5. The16-year-old class seven student of Samcholing middle secondary school and his 60-year-old grandmother were murdered at Kingarabten, Trongsa on Wednesday night. This came as a rude reminder that Bhutanese society is changing and fast becoming unsafe.

All that, in a nutshell, is what the year of the Wood Female Sheep brought to Bhutan and the Bhutanese. As we welcome the year of the Fire Male Monkey, we hope that the year will bring unprecedented peace, progress and happiness. Over all, goodness-ushering Fire Monkey has in store some good things to offer.

Economy

A tale of a Shepard turned rich

Tshering Dorji

The Sheep has delighted its Shepard as it hands over the coffer to the Monkey.

On the economic front, the sheep year transpired the economy to recover from all time low GDP growth of 2.05 percent, fatigued by rupee shortage to 5.5 percent escorted by swelling reserves.

Things are looking better today, reserves have improved, inflation is stable, GDP has improved to Nu 119.5B, there is no longer the shortage of Indian rupee and the central bank has opened more counters to exchange rupees.

The country is witnessing some structural changes and transformation with GDP contribution of secondary and tertiary sector surpassing the primary sector.

With the lift of credit restriction, construction sector is back in the field, private consumption has increased so has small businesses.

Small, cottage and medium industries has recorded a major growth of 15 percent compared with the past year. This is fuelled by Business Opportunity and Information Centre (BOiC) coming into business.

However, after much scrutiny on the legal aspects in the Parliament, the government has decided to close its shop to be reopened as a state owned enterprise.

Not only did the economy improve but also the country was able to repay Nu 21.9 billion (B) short-term borrowing availed in the 10th plan to ease rupee shortage

Domestic revenue has grown by an estimate of 12.5 percent on the back of higher export revenue of sale of electricity, commissioning of Dagachhu and increased taxes.

The news of Dungsam Cement plant attaining its set production target and capturing the hydropower market also came as a relief to the Shepard.

But amidst the glowing health of economy, the Shepard is already made aware of the uncertainties as the country prepares to graduate from the Least Developed Countries (LDC) category. The repercussion will result in reduced grant and aid, posing pressure on the debt burden.

The country also relished the global fuel price fall that resulted in more than 17 price cuts, the direct impact of which is felt on the inflation figures stabilizing at 4 percent.

With generous credit, Bhutan imported 22 new cars every day on an average spending more than Rs 3B. Fuel bill almost negated the electricity earning, threatening the energy balance of payment.

Import of essential items shot to Nu 8.05B in 2013 and Nu 8.9B in 2014. Economists are speculating further increase in import bill with number of foreign expat workers increasing as the country pursues its hydropower dreams.

At this rate, the country's entire INR earning from electricity falls short to import essential items including fuel.

In the banking sector, bankers are reading more newspapers than banking. Bankers joke among themselves that from a period of crazy banking in 2012, that tolled excessive lending, things have more or less settled down to lazy banking today.

Interest rates among the five banks in the country have remained more or less the same. In some areas, lending has been made rather more restrictive by revising the debt equity ratio on loans.

Bhutan has also performed relatively well in global indicators like doing business ranking and economic freedom index. However, the ranking came under question, when it did not capture actual reality in the market and improvement was attributed to change in methodology.

The government has also formed two new state owned enterprise besides the BOiC. The Bhutan Duty-free limited, Royal Bhutan Lottery Limited and a couple of planned state enterprises is now for the monkey to make it work.

Outlook

What's on the tree?

Tshering Dorji

Pondering over the Sheep's yield, the Monkey is likely to cart a wagonload of national fortune, at least on the economic front.

The Wood female Sheep year has witnessed many transformations and activities in the economy and it is the Monkey's turn to harvest the fruits, bitter or sweet.

With the caveat that predicting economy is a futile job, Bhutan's economic growth is forecasted between six and seven percent. However, this would mainly be driven by the government investment and investment in hydropower, as usual.

The Monkey year is also the third year of 11th Plan where largest share of budget of close to Nu 50B will be poured into the economy, propelling government expenditure.

Possibly in the next two years, the size of the economy is bound to reach the highest level because initial estimates of investment in hydropower itself is twice the size of economy.

A couple of hydropower projects are expected to go full swing this year, resulting in more consumption. Hydropower-related imports will slow toward the end of the government's Eleventh Five Year Plan in 2018.

Notwithstanding the upside pressures from increased government spending and wages, inflation is expected to ease further this year driven by projected fall in fuel price.

The Asian Development Bank projects the country's current account deficit to a quarter of GDP, which is still considered high.

Trade other than electricity will benefit from low oil prices, but the deficit will continue to reflect large private imports because of improved access to finance. The rate of vehicle import, which today stands staggeringly high since the lifting of the ban, is likely to stabilise.

However, if current monetary policies are not monitored the risk of liquidity remains very high.

Sufficient capital and financial flows from funds tied to projects will help keep the overall balance in surplus and international reserves adequate.

The hydropower activities will create demand for both fuel and domestic electricity consumption. Should the projects delay, the country will have to import more power.

If the services of Business Opportunity and Information Centre (BOiC) are continued under the new state enterprise with improved service delivery, cottage, small and medium industry is bound to grow.

But foreign investment into the economy, according to economists, is not likely to sprout even with the revision of FDI policy unless the ground reality changes. Innovation, technology, human capital and market size will subdue the comparative advantage of political stability. It is for all to see how and by how much the recently launched brand Bhutan will help local product proliferate in the international market.

In the words of the economic affairs minister, the country need to capitalize on the low hanging fruits- the identified five jewels. "But is the government providing adequate incentives into harvest those low-hanging fruits?" many in the business sector echoed this question.

The improved performance of Dungsam and other corporations and individual income would increase the tax revenue. In addition, Kurichhu would bring Nu 115M additional revenue to the national coffer, after liquidating its loan. Likewise Dagachhu would also add to the electricity revenue.

Despite a projection of a busy Monkey year, public spending still constitutes over 90 percent of the economy. This will subdue the private sector growth. Credit market is largely dominated by building and construction and personal loans.

Bhutan's stock market may need more strengthening. The stock exchange is today working on establishing a commodity exchange to boost agriculture production.

With stagnant unemployment figures last year, local economists claim that the government might have to consider revisiting the policies.

Bhutan's total external debt stock has reached 98 percent of the GDP, majority of which is accumulated for hydropower projects. The government is already working on a draft debt management policy.

Minus the uncertainties, the economy is bound to improve. But like the Monkey, it is hard to predict because a boom always precedes bust in any economy

Looking ahead as we reflect on our past

As we see the stubborn Sheep off and welcome the clever Monkey, we look back on the journey that we have made so far as a nation. At the same time, we look ahead with great hopes and aspirations.

We are leaving behind a year that gave us so much to remember. For a nation that has chosen to tread paths on its own pace, what it was able to achieve in just a year is indeed astonishing. The great successes that we accomplished together weave into the general narrative of this country that we will remember them fondly as we sail through the events of the new year.

The ear of the Wood Female Sheep was a year of celebration for Bhutan and the Bhutanese. It was a year when we paused and reflected on the milestones we have covered since the day we elected Sir Ugyen Wangchuck as the first hereditary monarch in 1907 at the Great Palace of Bliss. From a nation that was idly basking in the cloistered security of the medieval peace, Bhutan has come a long way. The year gone by was a year when we celebrated our march to progress.

In particular, the year of the Wood Female Sheep was the year when we celebrated the life and reign of the monarch extraordinaire, our guiding light and source of inspiration – Drukgyal Zhipa. In the age when whoever does anything worthy of notice is hailed as a hero, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck is truly deserving of all the accolades and tributes there is for His people to offer. Bhutan is what it is today, proud and secure, confident and forward-looking, all thanks to the Great Fourth.

The year of the resolute Sheep was a very special year that Bhutanese of this generation will remember forever. The birth of His Royal Highness The Gyalsey gave the Bhutanese joy and happiness they had never known. The significance of Gyalsey's birth is one of continuity. The unparalleled wisdom and sagacity of the Wangchuck Dynasty will continue to guide the future of this bold and progressive nation.

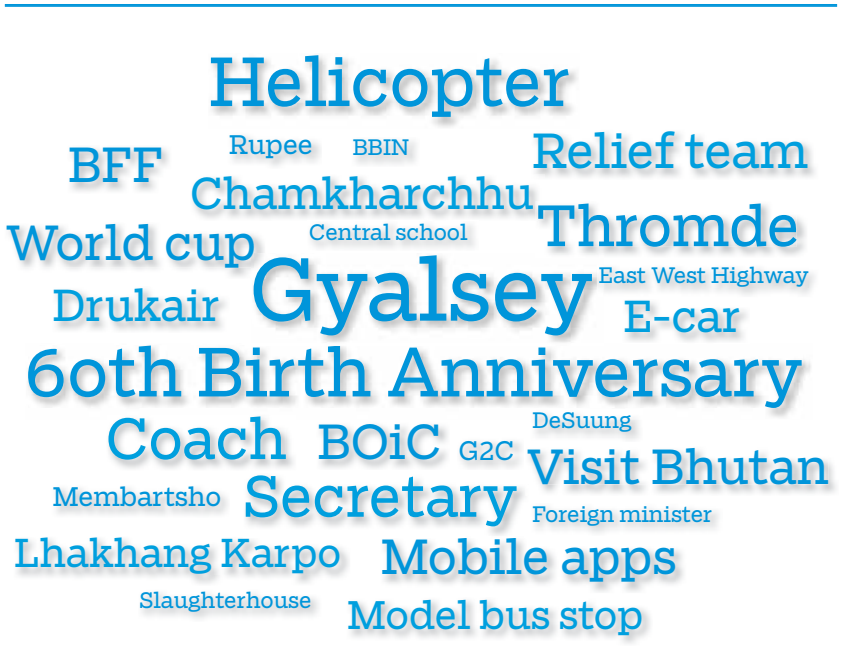
As we step into the new frontier, the shrewd and nimble Monkey offers us so much promise and opportunities. However, we must not forget that there are also not-so-rosy predictions that we might have to countenance along the way. But then, what adversities have Bhutanese resilience, valour and compassion not overcome?

We welcome The Fire Male Monkey Year with prayers and good wishes to all.

MY COUNTRY, MY TOWN



From work to play: **If it's got wheels, so goes kid's logic, it's got to be a ride!**
Photo by Karma Tenzin



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Online public services get much deserved attention during the Sheep

Gyalsten K Dorji

A revitalized G2C (government to citizen) Office made our headlines throughout the year of the Sheep, and for the right reasons. The office, which now operates directly under the supervision of a tech saavy Prime Minister, has been busy churning out electronic public services at a more acceptable rate than previous years.

Perhaps, the most groundbreaking one was the G2C Wallet, an online payment system for public services. There are more than 70 public services that require fees and even if a public service can be obtained online, fees would still have to be paid physically at an office. While starting off with only a small number of Thimphu thromde services the past year, a start has been made, and only more services can be expected to be incorporated under the G2C Wallet.

The government is also working on an e-payment gateway that will allow for inter-bank transfers for G2C services by June, this year.

The PM's eDesk, an online monitoring tool that allows the Prime Minister to personally track how long government agencies take to process some online public service applications was also introduced. A few months later, the eDesk had caused the turnaround times for some services to drop.

During the one-year anniversary of the reformed G2C Office, the eKaasel, an online public grievance system was also launched, allowing citizens to provide feedback, positive and negative, on public service delivery. To make sure the IT illiterate are also involved, a G2C contact call centre was also introduced.

As part of its own effort to be efficient, the government chose to renew its Google Apps subscription for another three years rather than go for an open tender under ADB financing.

Use of the online suite has reduced time, costs, and paper. However, at the beginning of the year, full usage of Google Apps had not yet been achieved and low IT literacy and rigid mindsets were blamed.

In another development, the country's first IT park now employs more than 600, and this number is expected to reach a thousand by the end of the Monkey year. A new problem has emerged. There's not enough


IT

Chiphen Rigpel impacted more than 200,000 Bhutanese

E-Waste to be properly managed from next year

space at the IT park, which was for some time known as a fat "white elephant".

The five-year ambitious Nu 2.05 billion Chiphen Rigpel project ended last year. The Indian government funded project directly trained an estimated 125,000 Bhutanese and indirectly impacted an estimated 200,000. The project established IT laboratories in schools, created a six-year IT curriculum, and trained teachers, civil servants, executive leaders, and monks.

The government got close to establishing a community centre in every gewog, with 195 this year. Operation of the centres was also handed over from Bhutan Post to the Bhutan Development Bank.

While many communities are benefitting from having closer access to public and financial services, some centres are reportedly still underutilized given their remote locations. The government is also yet to decide how to establish centres in the remaining gewogs, which are some of the remotest in the country.

Bhutan Telecom completed upgrading its system last year and some improvements are being experienced in terms of voice and 3G connectivity in Thimphu city. To further improve connectivity in the city, the company is reintroducing WiFi hotspots soon to decongest its 3G network.

As Bhutan moves into the Year of the Monkey, some issues remain to be worked on. Cyber security is one. The departing Indian Ambassador, Gautam Bambawale has offered India's support in this field and Bhutan is also working on forming a division solely dedicated to this purpose.

For the growth of the sector, we are yet to determine our niche and how to capitalize on markets abroad. Questions remain if we can depend on our English and artistic skills alone to compete globally. Software development is occurring in the country already but for this to pick up, a stronger link between academic and industry will have to be established this year.

Currently, entrepreneurship remains the long term sustainable answer for the growth of the IT sector.

Concerns still persist in the private IT sector that their largest client, the government is outsourcing many IT contracts to international vendors.

Media literacy has to be tackled. While the social media policy has been approved and is expected to guide us in using social media, many of our youth and even adults tend to not question information online.

As access to technology and information grows this year, it is most important that our understanding of the internet grows alongside.

Central school era begins in 2015

Nirmala Pokhrel

The wood female sheep year saw the beginning of a new era in education: the central school.

Communities and government agencies often locked horns either about the location of the central school or facilities provided.

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and former Indian ambassador Gautam Bambawale formally launched 24 pilot central schools at Wangbama central school, Genekha.

Bhutan has come a long way. With just 11 schools and about 400 students in 1961, Bhutan has 655 schools with 175,393 students today.

A total of 49 central schools have been planned in the country. Free uniforms, meals, boarding facilities and stationary were some of the main reasons why parents chose to enroll their children in central schools.

But these very facilities turned controversial when children residing at walk-able distances were denied admission to hostels of central schools. Parents were also not happy that day-scholars received almost nothing of the facilities.

As rightly expressed by a parent in Gomdar, Samdrupjongkhar, a central school is a blessing for some villagers who will no longer have to look for the money to shop for their school-going children.

As the government moves ahead adding more central schools, such issues could be closely reviewed to ensure that poor villagers are benefitted the most.

Most of the central schools have managed without caregivers and washers, needed to take care of boarders in classes PP-III.

Another new development in the education was that schools began functioning independently. As part of reforms, the education ministry granted autonomy to all 24 central schools, taking the number of autonomous schools to 43 across the country. Another 19 schools were granted autonomy in 2014. By all measures, central schools are large and they ought to have certain freedom on how they function. It is hoped that autonomy will improve the quality of education.

Towards the end of the year parliamentarians raised concerns on the need for the government to rationalize its investment of central school funds to achieve quality considering the interest and need of other schools. Inadequate consultation with communities also caused a debate on central schools.

The Indian government supported the establishment of 37 central schools with Nu 3.4 billion through its project tied assistance (PTA) programme. The Indian government also supported the establishment of 12 more central schools through a small development grant of Nu 536.4 million. The government provides all recurrent costs, including salaries, provision of uniforms, stationary and meals, among others.

In a move to retain and attract the best and brightest into the teaching profession and to make the profession a career of choice, a teacher Human Resource (HR) Policy was put in place last year.

To improve access to the interest-free education loan facility started in 2014, the G2C service introduced an online system to avail the loan.

Meanwhile, 42 former employees of the Royal Education Council (REC)are awaiting their next appointment as promised by the Prime Minister. Their employment was discontinued in October after REC was merged with the education ministry's department of curriculum research and development.

The Prime Minister promised to find them jobs within six months, in October last year.

Bhutan reaches out to Nepal in time of need

Gyalsten K Dorji





Lyonchoen Tshering Tobgay and Ambassador Jaideep Sarkar discussed new areas of cooperation in their first meeting

New Indian Ambassador presents credentials

Gyalsten K Dorji

India's new ambassador to Bhutan, Jaideep Sarkar, presented his credentials to His Majesty The King

"Both my wife and I were honoured to have an audience with His Majesty," ambassador

"The ceremony in which I presented credentials"

Majesty was a

Nepal was struck by a devastating earthquake in April and in an unprecedented show of support towards its neighbor, Bhutan contributed Nu 63 million (USD 1 million) for rehabilitation efforts there.

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay travelled to Kathmandu a day after the earthquake, to hand over the money personally on behalf of the people of Bhutan.

Upon the command of His Majesty The King a 78-member relief team was also deployed to Nepal. The team based near the epicenter of the quake treated more than 2,000 victims during its two-three week stay there.

This was the first time Bhutan contributed such a significant amount to another country, and deployed a large relief team outside its borders.

A new foreign minister, Damcho Dorji, assumed control of the foreign ministry last year. The former home minister replaced Rinzin Dorje following the Lhakhang Karpo issue going to court.

The government maintained its policy of not expanding foreign relations under its new minister but on consolidating existing ones on grounds that the economy, while improved, was still not out of troubled waters.

For UN peacekeeping operations, the government continued to contribute more personnel, last year.

While Bhutan's relations with India remain strong as always, efforts were made to further strengthen links, especially on the economic front, with the neighboring state of West Bengal.

The state's chief minister, Mamata Banerjee visited Bhutan in October, and assured that the railway line from Hashimara to Bhutan would be reviewed, among others.

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay returned the gesture in January 2016, visiting Kolkata to attend a business summit.

India also assigned a new ambassador to Bhutan, Jaideep Sarkar, who replaced former ambassador, Gautam Bambawale, now the high commissioner to Pakistan.

We will be celebrating 30 years of diplomatic relations with Japan, this year. Japanese tourists visiting Bhutan this year during the fall will not have to pay the required tariff and will be eligible for large airline and hotel discounts to mark the occasion.

A new Japanese ambassador to Bhutan and a new Japan International Cooperation Agency president have both assured that Bhutan will not only remain a top priority country for assistance but that support will be enhanced and expanded to other areas.

While Bhutan maybe only one of three countries not to have diplomatic relations with the USA, Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay visited the USA twice last year. Once, for 10 days in March to promote and solicit funds for the Bhutan for Life initiative. Commitments of USD 40 million were obtained for the initiative to ensure sustainable financing for the conservation of Bhutan's protected areas and biological corridors.

The second trip was to attend the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit and the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly in September. The Prime Minister also attended a dinner reception hosted by the US President, Barack Obama.

The Prime Minister called for the UN to be reformed and supported India's bid for a permanent seat on the organization's security council.

Prior to the US visit, the Prime Minister was in Luxembourg at the invitation of the European Commission to explore areas of potential cooperation, including satellite technology and the financial sector.

Earlier in the year, the Prime Minister was in Brussels, Belgium at the invitation of the President of the European Commission.

The EU also appointed a new accredited ambassador to Bhutan who recently told this paper that the EU is looking to further support Bhutan's development.

Bhutan and China held the 23rd round of border talks in Thimphu. The Chinese foreign affairs vice minister said China will continue to respect Bhutan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, during his time here.

CLASSIFIEDS

Housing

Sale: Karaoke & discotheque, main town, Thimphu. Contact 17605051/ 17993595.

Sale: Shop at Thimphu. Contact 17615791.

Rent: Large office space w.e.f 10th March, '16 at building (next to Hotel Kisa), Changlam, Thimphu. Contact 17111239/17878490.

Rent: Furnished cottage in the woods above Golf Course. Two bedrooms, one toilet, kitchen & one dining, one living @ thirty thousand per month. Contact 17603971.

Vacancy

Vacancy: Yum Thuji Zam Charity School, Bjemina, requires one trained and experienced English Teacher. Interested candidates may apply by February 12, 2016 with all relevant documents. For further enquiry, contact 17713074/ 17701372.

Vacancy: Tourist restaurant in Thimphu requires staff for immediate start, good English skills required. 1.Dishwasher- salary 7,000/ month; 2.Waitress/ Waiter with restaurant experience; 3.Cook/ Chef- with previous experience. Contact 17117801.

Vacancy: B.Ed trained Teacher and a school bus Driver at Phuensum School. Contact 17692512.

Others

Announcement: Aluminium windows. Call us today for all your aluminium needs at 17522837/77102959 or visit www.sparkbhutan.com.

Announcement: High quality flush doors shuttering plywood and block board available with Bhutan Ply only. Contact 252213/ 17625657/17114230.

NU. PER UNITS OF FOREIGN CURRENCY
as of yesterday

	NOTES	
	Buy	Sell
US $	66.65	68.85
POUND	96.90	99.60
EURO	74.60	76.70
YEN (100)	57.00	58.60
HK $	8.55	8.80
AUS $	47.90	49.20
SING $	47.65	48.95

Courtesy BNB

Wisdom wise

Everybody likes a compliment.



Abraham Lincoln

A WORD a day

Plutocrat.

n. A person whose power derives from their wealth.

Champagne-swilling plutocrats.

REBUS



ANSWER: Big foot

Sudoku

2				8	6		4	
	7					3		
			7			2		9
					5	8		7
			9		2			
1		5	8					
9		2			8			
		7					6	
	3		5	9				1

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

How to play

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3 X 3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

Answer

2	9	1	3	8	6	7	4	5
5	7	4	1	2	9	3	8	6
3	6	8	7	5	4	2	1	9
6	2	9	4	1	5	8	3	7
7	8	3	9	6	2	1	5	4
1	4	5	8	7	3	6	9	2
9	1	2	6	4	8	5	7	3
4	5	7	2	3	1	9	6	8
8	3	6	5	9	7	4	2	1

BC



History

LIFE and WORKS

Jamgon Ngawang Gyeltshen

Through the centuries, a number of influential local gentry families and hereditary religious lineages (*choje, zhengo*) holding both religious and secular power became established in the region, in particular the diverse family lines that boasted descent from Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo, another early Drukpa pioneer – who held sway over large stretches of the remote and isolated western valleys, such as Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Wangdi. They kept up close ecclesiastical bonds as a spiritual lifeline, but also maintained marital ties with the ruling heads of the Drukpa mother-seat of Ralung in Tibet.

Fungi of Bhutan

Sese Shamong



Scientific name:
Cantharellus cf. cibarius

- It is the most popular edible species of the *Cantharellus genus*
- It is a very common mushroom found in the market particularly in western Bhutan during the summer season and one of the most popular mushrooms in the country
- It can be recognized by its characteristic unique odour

Tech Tricks

MS EXCEL

FUNCTIONS AND FORMULA

- AVERAGE =AVERAGE(B1:B10)
  Finds the average of the cells B1 through B10.
- MAX =MAX(C1:C100)
  Returns the highest number from cells C1 through C100.

Daily Living

Difficulties



Defeat lies not in failing or making mistakes; rather, it lies in giving up on ourselves when we do so.

- Daisaku Ikeda

MEDICAL Terminologies

- ཚ་ཕྱུར་ཤྱུར། Burning
- ཙ་བྱག། Buttock
- རྒྱར་ཁག། Cabin
  ཁང་གླ་སྟོང་དེ་ ནད་པ་སྟོང་ས་ལེ་ཁང་མེག།
- ཚོད་བཏུལ་ཉམས་ཤོར། Cachexia
- རོ། ཤུངམ། Cadaver

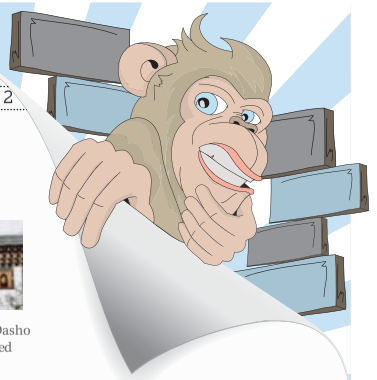
To be continued...

ecotip:

ENERGY SAVER

Today's dishwashers are about 95% more energy-efficient than those bought in 1972—your old dishwasher may be costing you more in energy bills than it would take to buy a new one.

Tuesday, February 09, 2



MARCH

27 Friday
The Royal Textile Museum hosts "In the Service of our Kings" exhibition.



15 Sunday



Drukair's newest aircraft, an Airbus A319 costing at least USD 40 million, arrived at Paro International airport.

APRIL

01 Wednesday



Her Majesty the Royal Grandmother inaugurates the Royal Bhutan Flower Exhibition in Paro.

16 Thursday



30 years of Japanese assistance winds up.

20 Monday



ACC closed down three shops in Phuentsholing town.

27 Monday



Bhutan contributes USD 1M to Nepal

MAY

12 Tuesday



Second quake hits Nepal as first batch of Bhutan's medical team returns.

21 Thursday



Ludrong Memorial Garden opens at Langjophakha.

29 Friday



His Majesty met the people of Sakteng at the ceremonial ground, and spent the entire day among them.

JUNE

15 Monday



Transport ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal flag off the BBIN Friendship motor rally following the signing of the sub-regional motor vehicle agreement.

04 Thursday



Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen graced the celebration of the World Environment Day

JULY

07 Friday
Committee of Secretaries dissolved

04 Saturday



Injectable inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) introduced

AUGUST

01 Saturday



His Majesty The King granted *dhar* to officially appoint Home Minister, Dawa Gyaltshen and the holders of the constitutional offices.

10 Monday



The Royal Bhutan Helicopter Services Ltd inaugurated.

SEPTEMBER

03 Thursday
High Court convicts former foreign minister Rinzin Dorje

24 Thursday



Buddha Dordenma statue at the Kuenselphodrang consecrated.

18 Friday
Kholongchu Project kicks off

OCTOBER

30 Friday
High Court convicts Chang Ugyen

11 Wednesday



His Majesty announced that The Gyalsey will be born around Losar in 2016.

NOVEMBER

13 Friday
Cabinet decides to close down BOiC

26 Thursday



Parliament endorsed Betekha as Paro's yenlag thromde and Denchi and Nganglam as Pemagtshel's dzongkhag and yenlag thromdes.

DECEMBER

07 Monday



RMA governor Dasho Penjore appointed

16 Wednesday
Cabinet endorses six months paid maternity leave

17 Thursday



His Majesty The King and His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo join the people to celebrate the 108th National Day in Paro.

17 Thursday



His Majesty The King confers red scarf to Dasho Karma Tshiteem.

17 Thursday



17 Thursday



Former Yangpi lopen Bosokarp, Lopen Nyapchi, Drungtsho Sherab Jorden and Dr Arthit Ourairat and received the Druk Thuksey medal from His Majesty The King.

Still labouring to create jobs

Thinley Zangmo

The Wood Female Sheep year saw a flock of jobseekers, a total of about 23,180, registered at the online job portal system with the labour ministry.

The online job portal system claimed to have placed about 11,269 jobseekers from June 1, 2014 to October last year. They were placed in various government, private, corporation and non-governmental organizations including the overseas employment programme. About 11,911 still remains to find a job.

The main challenge, as usual, was the lack of 'job experience', which was required for any allotted vacancy in an organization. Graduates and jobseekers alike were frustrated by the requirements these job vacancies imposed. For a graduate level entry, a minimum of two to three years of job experience was required, which drove many graduates up the wall.

The overall unemployment rate in the country dropped from 2.9 percent in 2013 to 2.6 percent in 2014, taking the overall employment to 97.4 percent. This, the Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, during the meet the press sessions held last year, said that by definition of the International Labour Organization, Bhutan has achieved the overall full employment of 97.5 percent.

The ministry aims to reduce the overall unemployment rate to less than 2.5 percent by the end of the 11th Plan.

Despite the overall unemployment rate seeing a slight drop, the overall youth unemployment still remained high at 9.4 percent, out of which female youth unemployment rate was at the highest at 10 percent in the Sheep year. By the end of the 11th Plan, the labour ministry aims to reduce the youth unemployment rate to 2.5 percent and female youth unemployment rate to five percent.


Labour

9,173 youth unemployed: Labour Force Survey

Of which 5,546 are female

Younten Tshedup

"When we don't have a job, where are we supposed to get the experience from?"

LABOUR

Focus now is full youth employment: Lyonchoen

Younten Tshedup

MoLHR survey plumbs the depths of youth unemployment

An analysis of a social malaise that is only set to become bigger

EMPLOYMENT

In a hope to fully understand the perception of unemployed youth in the country, the labour ministry conduced unemployed youth perspective survey. Conducted for the first time, the survey found out that the level of education alone is not sufficient to secure a gainful employment today.

The type of education and skills a jobseeker possesses is equally vital and that the existing mismatch between jobseekers and available jobs is not because of the level of education.

Work experience, duration of formal training, interpersonal and communication skills, and the ability to work in a team also attributed for the mismatch.

The survey also found that a lack of experience, nepotism and lack of employability skills was the top three reasons youth jobseekers perceived for not getting through an interview. An overwhelming majority of youth (77.3 percent) preferred desk jobs and associated poor working conditions, low salary, and low social status with non-desk jobs.

Crime rate drops in 2015

But the Sheep witnessed the most heinous crimes in the year

Kinga Dema

Olakha residents woke up to the news of the murder of a 29-year-old man at Central Plaza in Lungtenphu, Thimphu, making it the first case of cold-blooded murder in the Sheep year.

The man was found dead in a pool of blood on January 13 around 7.30am at the entrance of the five-storied Central Plaza building.

On April 21, passersby spotted a taxi driver who was murdered near a stream on the way to Royal Thimphu College with multiple stab wounds on the body.

It did not end there. Yet another act of gruesome murder was reported at Kingarabten, Trongsa on August 6 where a 16-year-old class seven student of Samcholing MSS and his 60-year-old grandmother were found murdered. Police are still investigating the case.

The grandmother was found dead with a slit throat in the bar attached to her shop whiles her grandson was murdered in the bedroom with multiple gashes on the head and back.

The country recorded at least one homicide (murder) in a month last year from seven such cases in 2014.

However, overall crime rate in the country dropped by 13 percent as compared to the previous year.

A total of 2,055 penal code offenses were reported last year from 2,367 in 2014. Except for Paro, Trashiyangtse and Gasa, the rest of the dzongkhags including Thimphu recorded a drop in crime rates.

Dzongkhag wise, the highest crime, as is the trend, was reported in Thimphu followed by Chukha and Paro with 746, 291 and 178 cases respectively.

The seven highest crimes reported last year were battery, larceny, burglary, possession and illicit transaction of controlled substances, offense against Ku-Sung-Thukten, malicious mischief and auto stripping. Rape cases dropped to 33 last year from 43.

Although listed among the seven top crimes last year, offense against Ku-Sung-Thukten dropped by about 50 percent with 129 cases.

Similarly, motor vehicle accidents also dropped by 10 percent or by 76 cases. The drop is mainly attributed to the Zero Tolerance Day that the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) initiated across the country in April.


Crime

Nu 10.6M collected in traffic violation fines in seven months

At least 50 drivers on average penalized every day

Dechen Tshomo

"There has been a drop in accidents especially during weekends."

TRAFFIC

Overall drop in crime

But certain crimes have increased

Dechen Tshomo

Sexual depiction of children a crime: RBP

Warns of stringent action if found distributing offensive videos and photog

Kinga Dema

One down more to come

ECB is headed for a busy year ahead

MB Subba

It was a busy year for those engaged in elections in the year of the Sheep.

Besides the bye-elections, the year saw four Thrompon elected in the thromdes of Thimphu, Phuentsholing and Gelephu.

While Thimphu re-elected Kinlay Dorjee, the other two thromdes chose new thrompons. Gelephu elected Tikaram Kaflay, a former engineer as their new thrompon, while Phuentsholing elected a businessman, Uttar Kumar Rai.

The elections went smoothly even after disqualifying a candidate at the eleventh hour, but a concern among the observers was the poor voter turn out, especially in the capital city's election. Voter turnout dropped by 13.5 percent from the last election in 2011.

The overall voter turnout for the three thromdes in the recent elections was 37.25 percent.

The Election Commission of Bhutan also witnessed continuity ensured as they gear for the local government (LG) elections in all the 20 dzongkhags with for commissioner Chogyal Dago Rigdzin becoming the Chief Election Commissioner and commissioners Deki Pema continuing as one of the two commissioners. Commissioner Ugyen Chewang was the only outsider the in the new set up.

With the declaration of thromdes in all dzongkhags, the ECB has cleared them for elections. However, after repeated petitions from the people against the thromde boundary, the Paro thromde will be reviewed again by the Parliament in its upcoming session though its delimitation has been completed and the thromde's boundary could change.

Earlier last year, the Constitution of the Bhutan Children's Parliament (BCP) was signed at the Punakha Dzong on June 2, a milestone for the ECB in the year of the Sheep. The signing subsequently led to the election of student members to the first ever children's parliament on September 12.

The first session of the children's parliament held in the Great Fourth Auditorium of Democracy House in Kawangjangsa, Thimphu, commenced on January 4 and concluded on January 8. The parliament, henceforth, will meet twice yearly to discuss issues of common concern.

Through the parliament, children and youth will be able to submit their proceedings to the Prime Minister, Speaker of the National Assembly and the Opposition Leader.



The children's parliament comprises a National Assembly (NA) and National Council (NC) with the constituencies mirroring the electoral boundaries of the real houses of Parliament. Children, according to the Constitution of the BCP, include all school going children, trainees and degree college students who are not older than twenty-four years.

More elections

With the first phase of the second thromde elections completed in January, the ECB is headed for a busy year ahead. Aspiring candidates to contest the upcoming thromde elections should also get ready for a busy new year at the polls.

The 2016 LG elections will be held in four phases, and the second phase will be held in June. The second phase, scheduled in June, will see elections in all dzongkhags, except in 10 gewogs.

Elections in five gewogs of Chumey (Bumthang), Phuentsholing (Chukha), Goenshari (Punakha), Sang-Nga-Chholing (Samtse) and Mendrelgang in Tsirang will be conducted in the third phase in July.

The final and fourth phase will see elections in the five gewogs of Bjabchhog and Doongna in Chhukha and Samkhar, Bartsham and Udzorong gewogs in Trashigang in November.

To identify and motivate potential candidates, a fresh round of functional literacy test (FLT) will be held across the country in April.

RE-TENDER

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Department of Renewable Energy

The Department of Renewable Energy (DRE), Ministry of Economic Affairs, Thimphu would like to invite sealed bids from the eligible bidder(s) having valid trade/service licence for the **Retrieval of used solar home lighting systems and delivery till Thimphu**.

The tender document can be downloaded from the website **www.moea.gov.bt** at free of cost. Bids must be submitted to DRE, MoEA on or before **1200 hrs** on **March 11, 2016**. The bids will be opened at **1400 hrs** on the same day in the DRE Conference Hall.

Chief Engineer, AED, DRE

TENDER

STATE MINING CORPORATION LIMITED

Tender No. SMCL/HRA/PROC-01/2016/02

State Mining Corporation Limited, Samtse invites sealed bids for the following:

1	Description	**Bid for supply of Safety Gears**
2	Earnest Money	**Nu. 7,500/-**
3	Cost of Bid document	**Nu. 500.00**
4	Sale of Bid Document	**February 9 to February 24, 2016**
4	Last date of submission of bid& opening	**February 24, 2016 at 1400hrs & shall be opened on same day at 1430 hrs in Conference Hall**
5	Contact person	**Dy. Manager–Procurement/05-365885/17743273**

Detailed bid document can be downloaded from **www.smcl.bt** or obtained from the office of SMCL, Samtse.

General Manger HR & A

Year of the Chopper

Gyalsten K Dorji

The highlight of the aviation sector in the year of the Sheep was undoubtedly the arrival of Bhutan's first helicopter adorned in the colours of the national flag in November.

Since its arrival, the chopper, which many find "cute", perhaps because of its oval shaped cabin, has already carried out a number of medical airlifts, and saved a few lives.

So far, the only Bhutanese to have been able to afford riding in the chopper are the Lunaps, who harvest the expensive fungi, cordyceps. Very recently, the Lunaps hired the chopper for a second time to fly home from Punakha cutting their weeklong journey by foot to half an hour.

The second chopper is expected soon.

The national airline, Drukair was often in the news last year. The year began for Drukair by welcoming its newest aircraft, a USD 43 million Airbus A319, equipped with sharklets or wing extensions that improve the aerodynamics of the aircraft and therefore, saves fuel.

The airline registered the aircraft, A5-JSW, in honor of His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

However, following that, the airline's CEO resigned for personal reasons despite two years remaining on his contract.

Despite acknowledging that the domestic market is too small for two airlines, the government decided that both airlines must operate to all domestic airports. Drukair began operations to Gelephu in November and Tashi Air is required to resume domestic flights by April this year.

The national airline was the subject of much public scorn towards the end of the year when a passenger, who emitted a smell as a result of a medical condition, was deboarded from the aircraft.

The incident was widely discussed by the public and the media covered the incident extensively.

While the captain acted according to aviation norms, and was cleared by the aviation regulator, Drukair still found it necessary to change the procedures for carrying



medical patients as some lapses had occurred.

Offloaded baggage continued to overwhelm Drukair during the winter, as it has in previous ones, as a result of more Bhutanese traveling to Bangkok taking advantage of promotional airfares and packages.

Another major development in the aviation sector involved the relocation of the Indian military's Air Force camp at Paro airport, freeing up space to extend the apron to allow three-four more aircraft to be parked there. The two governments had been discussing the relocation for over a decade and a mutually acceptable arrangement was finally reached last year.

The aviation regulator's aviation oversight capabilities also received some much-needed attention.

The erstwhile Department of Civil Aviation was spilt into two, removing a conflict of interest situation, by dividing its regulator and service provider functions.

The government also approved a higher pay for a critical flight safety position that had remained vacant for decades due to attrition to the private sector, which paid such professionals much better.

In what could further improve oversight capabilities in Bhutan, the office of the Cooperative Development of Operational Safety and Continuing Airworthiness Programme – South Asia is moving to Bhutan this year. The regional aviation safety programme could provide Bhutan much needed expertise to consult with when it comes to safety concerns and improvements.

A second larger terminal building in Paro was also inaugurated to keep up with increasing traffic flow in November.

Both airlines, Drukair and Tashi Air also gave away 60 free tickets each to mark the 60th birth anniversary of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. Tashi Air's was exclusively for medical patients.

Pilots of both airlines also pledged Nu 12 million over the next ten years to NGO RENEW to honour his Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo, and because it helped women and children and was in need of financial support.

The meaty slaughterhouse debate

Kinga Dema

It is not clear whether or not the government had planned a slaughterhouse. What was crystal clear was it did lead to an intense debate almost throughout the year.

While details were vague, the clarification from the government that came late further aggravated the issue.

It all started after this paper carried an article in April on the government's plans to start a meat-processing unit at Serbithang. While most misunderstood the meat-processing unit for slaughterhouse, others linked it to slaughtering of animals within the country, as meat would have to be supplied to the unit to be processed.

The article quoted a livestock official stating that "animals will be slaughtered in a professional way, like stunning down, making the animal unconscious."

The unit was expected to process meat products like ham, bacon, meat balls, minced meat, sausages, frozen and smoked chicken and chicken cuts, among others, for high-end hotels as well as for household consumption.

There was also a Facebook page against slaughterhouses, with over 5,000 members. This followed with a petition to the Prime Minister by the dratshang.

It did not end there. Even at the question hour session in both the Assembly and the National Council, the government was thoroughly questioned about the slaughterhouse plan.



While the government denied having any plans to start one, Lyonpo Damcho Dorji said that the dratshang to urge people not to consume meat. "The reality is that people are against slaughterhouses, but they love meat and this is where the problem lies," lyonpo had said.

Reiterating the government's stand on the slaughterhouse, the agriculture minister Yeshey Dorji, also informed the National Council that imported meat would be processed at the planned meat-processing unit.

Despite lyonchoen and the ministers' clarifications on the slaughterhouse, people are still convinced that there is a plan for slaughterhouse. It is still not clear how the meat-processing unit would reduce import when the unit at Serbithang would process and package imported meat.

Meanwhile, Lyopo Yeshey Dorji urged all ministries, constitutional bodies, autonomous agencies, corporate bodies, armed forces, international organizations, private and non-governmental organizations to not serve any meat or meat items during the ceremonial or official gathering during the holy Choetrul dawa month (From today until March 9).

CHHUKHA DZONGKHAG

THE RABDEY, CIVIL SERVANTS, STUDENTS, BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND THE PEOPLE OF CHHUKHA DZONGKHAG JOIN THE MOMENTOUS OCCASION TO COMMEMORATE THE BIRTH OF THE GYALSEY. WE OFFER OUR TASHI DELEK TO THEIR MAJESTIES.



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A *(baa)ad* Sheep for the tourism sector

The debate on the tariff liberalization was the highlight of the year

Kinga Dema

Spring in Bhutan, characteristic of peak tourist arrivals, did not favour the tourism industry since the beginning of the Wood Female Sheep year.

The Paro tshechu, one of the highlights of the peak season in spring, failed to draw the international flock as it did in the past. Similarly, autumn was no better for the industry that continued to witness a further drop in international arrivals.

While the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) has taken unusually long to reveal last year's arrivals figure, the industry believes that arrivals recorded about a 12 percent drop in international arrivals.

This is not a good sign for a country where tourism is the second revenue earner after hydropower.

Tourists are finding newer grazing grounds in countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka and that contributed to drop in arrivals besides the increasing number of Bhutanese tour operators and more competition.

Regional tourist arrivals continued to increase last year. In just about eight months last year, with 66,832 regional tourists, it was an increase of 77.25 percent against the same period last year.

Visitors from India, Maldives and Bangladesh are known as regional tourists. Unlike international tourists, they are exempt from paying the mandatory daily tariff of USD 250 and USD 200 for the peak and lean seasons.

The drastic increase in the arrivals pushed tourism stakeholders bleating for a policy to govern regional tourists. They also raised the issue with the government expressing the need for a proper strategy on management and maximizing benefits from regional tourists.

This, however, did not go well with the budget hoteliers where a majority of the regional tourists put up. For budget hoteliers that mainly cater to


Tourism

Peak season records fall in tourist arrivals

Plug undercutting or daily tourism tariff: C

Bleak start for Visit Bhutan year

regional tourists, the increase in arrivals was much desired.

To further add to the agony of the tour operators, a debate among stakeholders ensued following the National Council's recommendations on tariff liberalization. It left the industry divided.

The Council during its 16th session in November resolved to recommend the government to reform the "archaic tourism pricing mechanism by moving from the fixed minimum daily tariff system to a more transparent pricing system that provides tourists greater value for money and discourages the malpractice of undercutting and improves higher value tourism."

This recommendation entails retaining or even increasing the royalty component (sustainable tourism fee) and requiring tourists to be routed through local tour operators and using local tour guides.

Just around that time, the draft Economic Development Policy (EDP) came as another blow to the industry, particularly the tour operators.

Terming Bhutan as an exclusive tourist destination, the draft EDP states that tourists will no longer be required to come through a travel agency. Instead tourists are required to pay a sustainable development fee (royalty) and show the confirmations of guide, vehicle and hotel reservation, airline booking, and travel itinerary before they are issued visas.

As the debate continued, the industry also mourned the death of a 26-year-old guide in November, who jumped in the Mebartsho (lake), Bumthang to rescue a French tourist who slipped and fell in the lake. Prior to that, on October 22, a female Indian tourist died and two suffered injuries in a vehicle accident at Chelela.

There are more than 2,300 guides, 1,600 tour operators and 123 tourist standard hotels in the country as of last year.

More reforms was RCSC's main task in the Sheep year

Nirmala Pokhrel

It was yet again another year of reforms in the civil service in the year that just went by.

RCSC

The organizational development exercise that was conducted last year continued this year as well. Improving the performance management system is one of the five reforms the commission has initiated. With the new Performance Management System (PMS) pilot tested in all government agencies the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) has begun the process of differentiating performing and non-performing civil servants.

The PMS will be pilot-tested until June and RCSC will implement the system from July. For the pilot testing, the commission has asked all civil servants below P1 level to develop an Individual Work Plan (IWP) and Core Competencies (CC) for July 2015-June 2016.

Following the OD exercise, at least three posts of administrative, revenue and budget officers from all dzongkhag administrations were removed. OD exercise found the positions to have no clear roles and responsibilities and workloads for these positions had greatly reduced. These positions are either found to have become defunct or assumed by other officers.

One of the tools used for conducting OD exercise was the Daily Log of Activities to analyze their nature of work and alignment to dzongkhag's core objectives and workload.

Much to the appreciation of those associated with political parties, the RCSC also reduced the cooling-off period to one year from three.

In what could help attract, retain and motivate medical doctors in the profession, RCSC also reformed their career path with an amendment of four sections of the Bhutan Civil Service Rules 2012.

RCSC has also found solutions for extraordinarily creative civil servants. A temporary post for Innovative and Creativity Officer is created in the Performance and Management category.

Toward the end of the year, the Civil Servants' Welfare Scheme (CSWS), which ensures financial support to civil servants and their direct dependents in times of need was also launched. A self-help programme 'of, by and for' the civil servants, the CSWS is an insurance scheme expected to take care of civil servants while in service and after they superannuate.

RCSC is committed to overhauling the civil service system with changes that will reduce corruption and reward performing civil servants with promotions. One such reform will be the hiring of retired civil servants as mentors to young civil servants. This will be implemented with the launch of a mentoring framework, which is yet to be done.

Meanwhile, the much-awaited news for civil servant mothers is yet to come. Although the government has endorsed the six months maternity leave and six month flexi time RCSC is yet to decide on a date to implement it.

The RCSC also couldn't find appropriate post to employ the three government secretaries on "Authorized absence'. One retired while on the leave.

Plenty of heat in Parliament


Parliament

NA drops Paro thromde issue

Opposition party out voted at plenary meeting

Council drops Enterpr

Proposed Assembly to do the same, and redo it

Tshering Palden

Deadlock on thromdes again

Parliament fails to decide Paro's yenlag and Pemagatshel's thromdes

Kinga Dema

The National Coun
liberate the Enter
tion Bill of Bhutan
Economic affairs
Wangchuk introdu

MB Subba

If beauty of democracy is disagreement, the Parliament of Bhutan had a plenty of issues to disagree.

Bills, international conventions and agreements faced deadlocks in the Parliament when the National Council (NC) rejected some of them. However, the most controversial of all the issues was the Paro dzongkhag thromde boundary, which the people said threatened their livelihood.

Backed by the opposition members, the local government requested the Speaker and the Prime Minister to redraw the boundary that was endorsed during the 5th fifth session. It was claimed that about 500 acres of paddy would be lost to the thromde if the parliament did not backtrack from its earlier decision.

The heat was felt when Gasa MP Pema Dukpa accused NC members of siding with political parties. The MP however, had to apologize after the NC members protested against the MP's comment.

The argument of the people of Paro finally prevailed. The joint sitting resolved that the government in consultation with the Paro dzongkhag tshogdu would submit the issues pertaining to thromde for re-deliberation in the upcoming summer session.

The 6th session also broke the deadlock on the dzongkhag for Pemagatshel with the endorsement of Nganglam as the dzongkhag thromde. Most of the thromdes were endorsed in the 5th session, but the parliament's inability to choose from among Nganglam and Denchi had stunned the people.

Calculation of a simple majority in the Parliament was redefined when the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal transport agreement was revoked by the National Assembly after opposition members contested that the bill had not secured a majority. The agreement was passed with 22 "Yes" votes among the 39 members present, but it was latter agreed that 24 members were required to endorse a bill.

This means that a simple majority will now be counted based on the total number of members of the house, and not on the total number of members present during the voting.

Another significant legislative moves from the last session was the NC's resolution to amend the election Act during the upcoming session.

This came despite the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB)'s repeated argument that it was too early to amend the Act. The ECB felt that amending the election rules could solve any anomalies in the implementation of the Act.

However, the need to amend the election Act was felt when inconsistencies in the Constitution and the election Act marred the recently concluded thromde elections.

For instance, while, Section 196 the election Act states that elections to a local government should be held before the expiry of the term of the incumbent members, the Constitution mandates that elections to a local government should be held only after the completion of term unless dissolved prematurely.

The NC's decision to withdraw the Enterprise Registration Bill and the European Investment Bank Framework Agreement raised eyebrows in the National Assembly. The Council reasoned that the framework agreement was not in consonance with the country's external commercial borrowing guidelines and that it could undermine Bhutan's sovereignty.

The Assembly also re-deliberated on the Jabmi (Amendment) Bill, Companies Bill and the Framework Agreement with the European Investment Bank. However, since consensus could not be reached on some of the sections in these three agenda, they have been submitted to submission has His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for the royal consent for deliberation in a joint sitting.

FLIGHTS

DrukAir

Date	Route	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival
February 10	Paro to Bangkok via Guwahati	KB 140	11:45 am	05:00 pm
February 10	Paro to Delhi	KB 204	11:25 am	01:15 pm
February 10	Delhi to Paro	KB 205	06:35 am	09:25 am
February 10	Bangkok to Paro via Kolkata	KB 153	06:50 am	10:10 am
February 10	Paro to Singapore via Kolkata	KB 500	07:20 am	03:40 pm
February 10	Paro to Kathmandu	KB 400	08:30 am	09:35 am
February 10	Kathmandu to Paro	KB 401	10:15 am	11:50 am
February 11	Bangkok to Paro via Guwahati	KB 141	06:45 am	10:05 am
February 11	Paro to Bangkok via Gaya	KB 122	11:00 am	05:00 pm
February 11	Paro to Delhi	KB 204	11:30 am	02:25 pm
February 11	Delhi to Paro	KB 205	06:35 am	10:30 am
February 11	Paro to Bangkok	KB 150	11:50 am	04:10 pm
February 11	Singapore to Paro via Kolkatta	KB 501	06:30 am	10:50 am
February 12	Bangkok to Paro	KB 151	06:00 am	08:00 am
February 12	Paro to Bangkok via Kolkata	KB 152	11:30 am	05:00 pm
February 12	Bangkok to Paro via Gaya	KB 123	06:50 am	10:40 am
February 12	Delhi to Paro via Kathmandu	KB 205	06:35 am	09:25 am
February 12	Paro to Dhaka	KB 300	07:30 am	08:50 am
February 12	Dhaka to Paro	KB 301	09:30 am	10:50 am
February 12	Paro to Kathmandu	KB 400	09:00 am	09:45 am
February 12	Kathmandu to Paro	KB 401	10:35 am	11:50 am

Domestic

February 11	Paro to Bumthang	KB 1001	08:00 am	08:35 am
February 11	Bumthang to Paro	KB 1002	08:55 am	09:30 am

Note : All timings in local. Timings are subject to change. Call Drukair toll free No. 1300 for latest flight information.

Bhutan Airlines (Tashi Air)

February 10	Bangkok to Paro via Kolkata	B3701	09:20 am	12:45 am
February 10	Paro to Bangkok via Kolkata	B3700	10:35 am	04:05 pm
February 11	Bangkok to Paro via Kolkata	B3701	09:20 am	12:45 am
February 11	Paro to Bangkok via Kolkata	B3700	10:35 am	04:05 pm
February 12	Bangkok to Paro via Kolkata	B3701	06:30 am	03:30 pm
February 12	Paro to Bangkok via Kolkata	B3700	10:55 am	05:00 pm

Note : All timings in local. Timings are subject to change. Call Bhutan Airlines toll free No. 1234 for latest flight information.

Football still dominates sporting realm

Younten Tshedup

The kick generated by the horse lingered into the year of the sheep and football, once again, was in the limelight.

Bhutan's qualification into the second round of the World Cup qualifiers could have been the sport highlight last year.

However, after conceding 60 goals in 13 games played last year, Bhutan's national football team and the federation both came under public scrutiny. The 60 goals conceded by the team coincided with the nation's festive observance of the 60th birth anniversary of The Fourth Druk Gyalpo and it generated huge hype on social media.

However, football also got embroiled in controversy. The Japanese head coach, Norio Tsukitate, spurred several inquisitions against the federation's management after his untimely departure. Norio Tsukitate who took over the national team for the second round of the World Cup qualifiers was sacked midway during the match against Maldives after falling out with team manager Hishey Tshering.

The head coach was known for his rigid conduct of the team. The friction between the coach and the management was visible to many football enthusiasts. After nine months of the coach's bittersweet relation with the team and the federation, he was "relieved" from his duties on October 9.

The team donned the moniker, The Dragon Boys, after carrying the nation from the very rock bottom of the FIFA Coca-Cola world rankings to 163 in April. However, after failing to register a single win in 13 international games, the country today stands at 192 with just 49 points.

From the bigger grounds to the mini pitch, the year of the sheep saw new champions crowned in the national futsal league. Paro Yuljung FC defeated Yeedzin FC to claim their first league title.

FC Terton emerged victorious after the two-month-long national league tournament. Six teams from Thimphu, Paro, Phuentsholing and Punakha participated in in the league. The league also saw some eight foreign players involved signalling a new development in football in the country.

The second most popular game in the country, basketball, also enjoyed a good share of the spotlight in the year of the sheep. Several basketball tournaments were organized to promote the game in the country including the revival of the veteran's tournament.

Despite concerns about the Swimming Pool Complex basketball court's structural integrity, aficionados continued to flock the complex.

Overcoming a 0-1 deficit in a best of three series, team Jachungs defeated Jaguars to claim the A league championship title



in March. Jachungs also clinched the prestigious coronation cup title and Pamos were declared the winners for the women's category.

In bodybuilding, Lobzang Tshering defeated all three former Mr Bhutans in the heavyweight category to claim the title for the first time. Kinley Wangmo became the first Miss Fitness Bhutan defeating a more popular figure in women fitness, Yeatoeh Lhamo Panjore.

The Bhutanese bodybuilders bagged a gold and a silver medal each at the 49th Asian bodybuilding championship in Uzbekistan. Sangay Tsheltrim won a gold and a silver medal and was also crowned the Asian Champion in athletic physique. He bagged silver in fitness physiques open category. Sangay Tsheltrim is the only male athlete in the championship to win two medals.

Similarly, Bhutan Judo Association, one of the newly formed sports associations in the country got their first international medals at the 2015 Jagsport Judo Invitational tournament for cadets, in Singapore.

The four Bhutanese judokas who took part in the tournament returned with two gold and a silver and bronze each.

The national sport of archery, saw a few changes in the age long tradition of the game. Bhutan indigenous games and sports association (BIGSA) banned the use of Monal pheasant feathers as fletches on traditional arrows in national tournaments.

Of 22 teams registered for the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck memorial national tournament, 14 boycotted the tournament for the ban.

In order to facilitate Bhutanese archers to be at par with the international standards and to compete at an international level, Bhutan Olympic Committee (BOC) approved the use of accessories on compound bows during the 19th Yangphel Open archery tournament last year.

The use of accessories, such as triggers and scopes on compound bows, was disallowed in the country in order to preserve the tradition with the usage of the indigenous bow. Today most of the compound bow archers are seen using the accessories.

Team DGPC defeated Norlah to win the illustrious Druk Wangyal National Archery Tournament. A total of 31 teams took part in the tournament, the highest in the history of the competition.

In martial arts, Chukha dzongkhag's taekwondo association dominated the taekwondo discipline by winning both the major taekwondo events conducted in the sheep year.

With eight gold, 11 silver and four bronze medals, the association won the second national black belt senior and junior taekwondo championship held in Thimphu. The team also won the Indo-Bhutan Taekwondo Championship organized by the Phuentsholing Taekwondo Club on December 18.

Meanwhile, Mikyo Dorje, a tenth grade student of St. Jospeh's School, North Point in Darjeeling became the first Bhutanese to win the coveted Depelchin gold medal and the rare White Coat.

Mikyo Dorje was conferred the White Coat for excellence in sports early in May last year while he received the medal in October. Mikyo Dorjee is the only student to have been bestowed with two prestigious awards in a year in the 127 yearlong history of the school.



Picture story: Team Bhutan won their first medal at the 12th South Asian Games in Shillong yesterday. The Bhutanese compound bow team lost to host India: 219 to 231. However, the team managed to secure a silver medal. Two Bhutanese archers competed against each other for a bronze medal in the compound bow individual category. Tshewang Dorji beat Tashi Peljor by a lone point: 138 against 137 to secure the medal.

On the joyous occasion of the birth of The Gyalsey, the Board of Trustee, staff, parents and children of Ability Bhutan Society join the Nation in extending our heartfelt Tashi Delek to His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen with immense sense of happiness in the happy occasion of the birth of The Gyalsey.

We pray for the good health and long life of The Gyalsey.

ABILITY BHUTAN SOCIETY

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More than a sheepish frisk in hydropower

Shift from IG to other modalities of HEP financing observed

Tshering Dorji


Hydropower

lateral cooperation likely for Kuri -I

Tshering Dorji

But as a number of projects

As of now th

Mangdechu project ahead of schedule

The annual energy generation from th

MB Subba

The Mangdechu hydropower project is now 60 percent complete and is on track to be commissioned by September 2017.

MHPA

Chamkharchu debate a decade too late: PM

The Prime Minister did not agree with any of the arguments raised by those against the dam

MB Subba

Albeit the 10,000MW by 2020 is dead and down the rivers, the Sheep year unfurled a new era in Bhutan's hydropower ambition as the country brace for a different modality of implementation, swaying from conventional inter-governmental model

Exactly a year ago, the 126MW Dagachhu came on line, taking the country's installed capacity to 1,606MW.

Despite the series of delays, it is a remarkable achievement in the power sector since the construction and project management was fully manned by Bhutanese.

Following this, the year marked some Joint Ventures (JV) projects materialize, where the local utility company, Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) is fully involved.

The construction of 600MW Kholongchhu is in full swing. Paper works on other JV projects like 570 MW Wangchhu, 180 MW Bunakha and 770 MW Chamkharchhu projects has also advanced well. However, government has decided to prioritize Chamkharchhu, which is in advance stage of implementation.

It is estimated that total investment on these projects would equal almost twice the size of country's economy.

Transformation in the hydropower sector took a major turn when financial deal for 120MW Nikachhu was struck.

Besides raising a loan of Rs 3.53B from consortium of Indian banks, the project also announced that it would divest 20 percent of its share to the public, making it the first project to raise capital from public. The total project cost is expected to be Nu 11.89B, the debt to equity ratio is 65:35, which means that about Nu 7.73B would be raised from loans and the remaining Nu 4.16B as DGPC's equity.

The 1125MW Kuri-I or the Rothpashong project is also anticipating another twist in the hydropower tale. Towards the last quarter of the year, initial deals on the project indicate that a trilateral cooperation between Bhutan, India and Bangladesh is likely for the implementation.

With the diversion of Tsibjalamchhu into the Tala dam, Tala's generation was enhanced by 83 million units. Similar feature is also envisaged in Mangdechu.

As for the on going IG projects, the Punatsangchu II project started construction of the dam on April last year. In May, the Mangdechu project began concreting the foundation of the dam, which will block the Mangdechu and divert it through the tunnels.

All's not well

While the strengthening measures along the Punatsangchu I was progressing well, the project is already running behind schedule by two years now.

The Punatsangchhu-II reportedly came short of a similar disaster when the left bank of the project site almost slid because of poor geology in Feb. 2015. Remedial measures had to be taken using cable anchors to support lose mass and prevent it from sliding.

As a result, the completion of this project is delayed. While the initial cost of the project was Nu 37.78 B, it was revised to Nu 75 B

That Bhutan's hydropower construction spree in the recent years has increased debt burden on the country is still raising concerns.

Concerns are emerging over Bhutan's profligate spending on a single sector and severe risk of climate change effects and has a huge social and ecological cost.

However the government, both the former and the current, has stressed that hydropower debts are self-liquidating. Legislators are sheep and wool in going ahead with harnessing more hydropower. They bleat that the debt is sustainable because projects will eventually generate significant revenue, boost exports and fuel economic growth.

The year also witnessed debate among the environmentalists and government sprouting in the social media on the Chamkharchu project.

Environmentalist lobbied against damming all the rivers in the country, especially demanding free flow of chamkharchu. The cabinet's answer was simple; "The petition is a decade too late."

Renewable energy also got a boost with the first two wind turbines spinning and producing energy enough to light 300 homes. The Prime Minister inaugurated the 300kw wind turbines in Rubesa, Wangdue in January.

As we stride into fire Male Monkey Year, the nation can expect many interesting developments in the hydropower sector and its consequences, both good and bad.



Picture story: To celebrate the birth of The Gyalsey, the management, faculty, staff and participants of the Leadership Program for Parliamentarians at the Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies, offered prayers and butter lamps at the Pelden Tashi Choling Lhakang in Phuentsholing on February 6. A Tshethar ceremony releasing live fish into the Amo Chhu was also held.

Tukuli and the Kuensel Editorial

Thinley Zangmo

Meet Tukuli (Pema Yuden). She's just over three years old and she's the youngest member of the Kuensel family. Don't underestimate her tender age since she's the feistiest one of all.

PROFILE

Despite her temper and tantrums, which she throws almost everyday, the red-cheeked girl with shabby hair wins everyone's heart with her smile and the colourful clothes she wears lighting up the dull winter as she makes her way around the Kuensel compound.

Tukuli lives in the office canteen with her parents. Her mother is popularly know as Tukuli Ama, who makes her ends meet serving orders at the canteen.

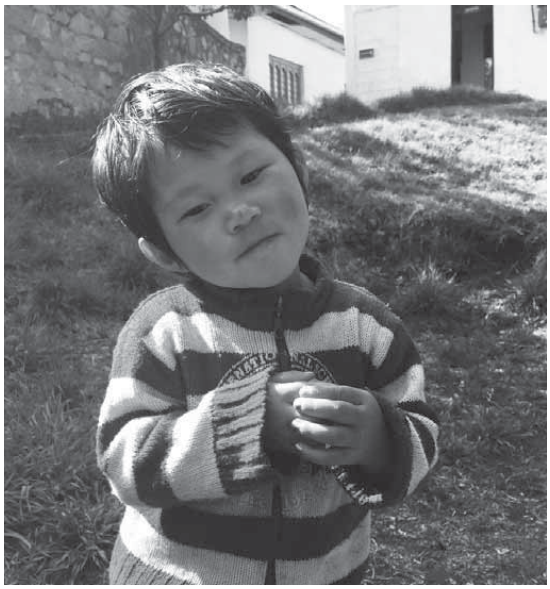
Tukuli always seem to look forward to accompany her mother on her daily chores but her mother never takes her along. Tukuli loves spending time with the dogs, her best friends, and she loves taking afternoon naps too. When she's not sleeping, she loves strolling around the office.

Despite having a rule in place where outsiders are not allowed inside the offices especially inside the editorial department, one can find Tukuli talking with a reporter in her gibberish language. She is popular among the staff but she's closer to the editorial family.

Sometimes, during a cold day, she sneaks inside the warm newsroom hopping from one cubicle to another, greeting anyone she meets on the way.

A newsroom is a place filled with stress where reporters and editors are always busy. In the midst of it all, Tukuli walks in and lightens up the entire mood. One can always hear a reporter or an editor stopping their work and chatting with her.

On that particular day, I was bogged down with work as usual. Tukuli wearing an Elsa's costume (a character from a popular animated movie, Frozen), which was torn in few areas and a slipper that matched her dress, walked up to me. Without a second thought, I stopped everything and talked to her. It was a much-needed break.



Pema Yuden

She started inquiring about every thing on my table. When she was bored, she went on to the next cubicle and began inquiring the same. Then, she started running about the newsroom. People shushed her from some corners but she seemed to enjoy running inside the warm office.

Then the editor walked in, a tall figure towering above the little girl. I could see that he wanted to tell her to go home but after seeing her smile and realizing that it's too cold outside, he decided to let her stay inside a bit longer. Tukuli, after knowing she could stay a bit longer inside, squeaked with excitement and began running from corner to corner.

After a few minutes, to her dismay, Tukuli Ama stormed inside the newsroom with a fiery look in her eyes. She took Tukuli by her hands and dragged her home. Tukuli left the newsroom with a smile because she knew someone or the other would definitely let her in the next time, in a place that resembled a maze where everyone was busy typing something on a computer screen. She knew there was no one who will bother her there because sometimes it was so silent that one could hear a pin drop.

What the Sheep reminded about health care

Sonam Pelden

Administrative and clinical issues may have kept the health sector on its toes but the sheep year was fairly calm for a sector that often gets dragged into unhealthy cases.

HEALTH

For the health sector, the sheep year was about putting in place policies. Suicide was recognized as a public health concern more than a crime after a study revealed that the country's suicide death rate 14 per 100,000 population was higher than the global average of nine to ten deaths.

An action plan was instituted and suicide prevention is now an indicator in the heath ministry's and the local government's Annual Performance Agreements.

While suicides were claiming young lives, the country was also buckling under the burden of rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Prevalence of diabetes and physical inactivity in Bhutan, the sheep bleated was the highest in the South-East Asia region.

Accounting for 53 percent of all deaths in the country, NCDs had surpassed the burden of infectious illnesses to become Bhutan's biggest health challenge.

To address the growing threats of NCDs, Bhutan released a five-year multi sectorial action plan.

One of the 10 targets set in the action plan is to reduce harmful use of alcohol since Bhutan's per capita consumption of alcohol is eight liters against the global consumption of 6.2 percent of alcohol per person 15 years and older.

An important milestone in the sheep year is the Cabinet's endorsement of the National Policy and Strategic Framework To Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol. The policy would among others, control access and consumption by levying tax based on the alcohol content of products.

It would ensure that minors (below 18 years) are restricted from entering entertainment venues that exclusively promote alcohol consumption and has also acknowledged the authority of the local government.

Alcohol is, however, not the lone cause. The sheep reminded that the country's health problem is compounded with ageing, a still high prevalence of communicable diseases, and a steady decline in spending on health care services.

From 5.7 percent of gross domestic product spent on health in 2000, Bhutan's spending on health over the years had declined to 3.5 percent when the sheep year began.

With sustainability issues looming large against the growing health challenges, health walks were organized nationwide to raise funds in financing the supply of essential drugs and vaccines.

The Bhutan Health Trust Fund was injected with Nu 11.6 million (M) which was collected in a health walk drive from Bhutanese and foreign donors.

The Trust's role in supporting essential health care services was acknowledged when the World Health Organization conferred the Excellence in Public Health award to former health and education minister Sangay Ngedup in Dili, Timor-Leste.

To generate reliable scientific information on health and diseases for well-informed policies, the government of India supported Royal Centre for Disease Control, which was instituted in Thimphu.

The sheep ensured that mother and child health continue to receive priority and work to construct a 150-bed Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital has begun. A decision to introduce epidural labour analgesia for free to ensure painless childbirth was also recently taken.

Although the year saw important policies being instituted, it also revealed loopholes in some existing polices. A post on social media alleging a drunk HIV positive woman posing a risk raised issues of not just patient confidentiality but also questioned about who had the authority to reveal a person's HIV status in the interest of public health.

For the health sector, the sheep year was about reminders. It reminded the importance of taking preventive measures and that the threat can come from even a mosquito.

Windstorms wreck havoc in past year

Fires also killed six children in Phuentsholing

Dawa Gyelmo, Wangdue

Astrologers predicted terrible windstorms and fire in the year of the Sheep. Looking back, the predictions had come true with several windstorms and fires recorded in the year.

Windstorms started by April when 792 households were affected in nine districts and injured three people. More than 92 structures belonging to culture, health and education ministers were damaged, and one cow in Dagana and four calves in Sarpang were killed.

Of the nine dzongkhags, Dagana was hit hardest, followed by Chukha, Samtse, Pemagatshel, Tsirang and Samdrupjongkhar. The destruction on April 4 has cost Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan (RICBL) Nu 15M in compensations.

More than a week later, on April 17, Samtse was hit again hit by a windstorm where Norbugang lower secondary school (NLSS) suffered severe damages. In Trashiyangtse, several acres of maize crop of 20 farmers were destroyed by windstorm on July 6.

Few weeks later, on July 25, a powerful windstorm hit Tsirang. More than 150 acres of maize was damaged by a windstorm in the two gewogs of Dunglagang and Patshaling.

On October 13 and 23, heavy rain and hail that lasted for an hour damaged paddy and blew away roofs in several parts of the country. The hailstorm on October affected about 4,000 people across the country. Agriculture Minister Yeshey Dorji reported to the National Council that the hailstorm damaged 735 acres of rice crop, 20 acres of maize fields and six acres of chilli fields nationwide. Around 791 households in 22 gewogs in six dzongkhags of Punakha, Wangdue, Lhuentse, Mongar, Trashigang, and Trashiyangtse were affected.

His Majesty The King granted kidu to all 791 affected households following the disaster.

Besides the damage to several acres of forest by fire last year, six young lives were also claimed. Two boys were burnt alive when the hut, locked from outside, was gutted by a fire in September in Phuentsholing. His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen travelled to Phuentsholing following the tragic accident.

One moth later, four children- three girls and a boy, died from burns in a similar accident. One died on the way to Thimphu referral hospital, two died in the hospital while undergoing treatment.

Those along the Punakha-Wangdue were reminded of the 1994 glacial lake outburst flood when on June 28, an outburst of the Lemthang tsho caused panic downstream. The flood washed away five wooden bridges in Laya and Gasa.

The outburst did not cause major damage but it called for greater preparedness and mitigation measures other than early warning sirens.


Disaster

hutan escapes with minor damages

Preliminary report shows 248 structures damaged m

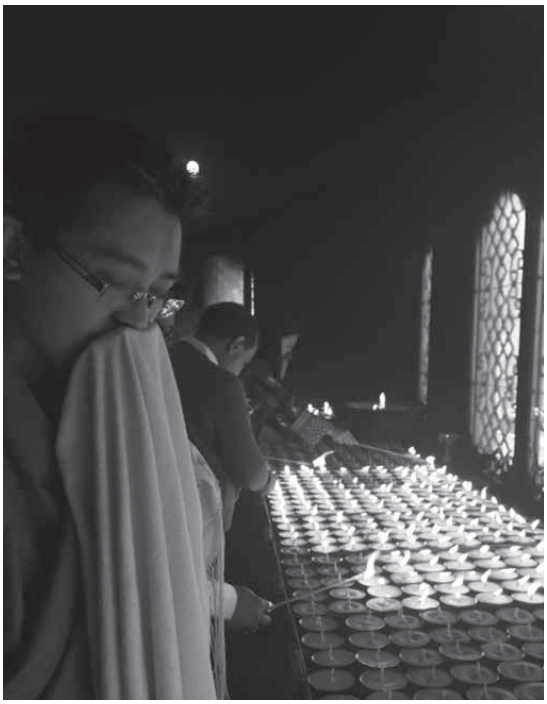
Tshering Palden

The 6.7 magnitude earthquake on January 4 had affected 248 structures in the country with most damages reported in the eastern dzongkhags, as they are closer to the epicentre in Manipur, India.

and a gewog and Renewal Natura Resources office each. About 8 percent of the damages were re ported in Trashiyangtse, Trashi gang, Mongar and Pemagatshel.

Of the 248 structures that suf fered minor damages, 124 were in the eight gewogs of T ngtse includi

ASSESSME



Picture story: To welcome The Gyalsey and pray for his good health and well-being, the business community in Phuentsholing, including Indians and civil servants offered butter lamps at the Zangtogpelri Lhakhang yesterday.

The Fire Male Monkey year

From Pg.1

The astrologer said that there will be perfect harmony among the King, the government and the people this year.

"To avert disasters from fire and drought, offerings to Guru Rinpoche and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel should be made as a *dothab* (prevention)," he said.

Those born in the year of the Monkey (13, 25, 49, 61, 73, 85) are *lodog* (inauspicious) and should avoid long distance travels, visits to construction sites, cremation grounds and marriages.

Those born in the year of the Tiger and Ox are not compatible (*Duenzur*) with the Monkey and should avoid starting important ventures.

Those born in the year of the Dragon are compatible with the Monkey (*Thuensum*) and thus the year is not good for them. They should avoid visiting hot springs (*tsachu and menchu*).

Sonam Rinchen said that to avert bad luck, people who are *lodog* and *thuensum* should conduct rituals like *Loka gi Lue, Thuensum gi Torchoe, Duenzur gi Torchoe, Bjabzhi* and *Tsedrup*.

It is a good year for those born in the year of the Earth Sheep, 38 years (male) and Water Sheep, 14 (male). The *datho* recommends the two ages for important works like conducting of ground-breaking ceremonies.

Males born this year will become powerful and females will bring wealth in the family. However, as the Year is a Male, it is considered better for males to be born this year.

The second month of the Bhutanese calendar (from March 10 to April 8) and the eighth month (from October 3 to October 31) are considered *Dhana* or inauspicious months.

2015 and the Lunar Year that was: from good to bad

As large parts of Asia celebrate the arrival of the Lunar New Year (February 8), it's in with the Year of the Monkey.

REGION

But before the lunar year past and the Year of the Sheep recedes into memory, we take our annual look back at the people and events that made headlines across Asia, for good and for bad, in places near and far to Bhutan.

Our choice last time around for worst year in Asia went to Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority – persecuted at home and increasingly ignored by business and political leaders hungry to engage with the new Burma. Time will tell whether their plight will be any better under a Parliament new led by the party of one-time democracy activist and icon Aung San Suu Kyi.

When 2015 wrapped, we took to CNN to share an initial take on the best and worst of the year behind us. A deadly earthquake in Nepal and landmark elections – in Myanmar, of course, but also in Singapore and most recently in Taiwan – as well as South China Sea territorial disputes and trans-Pacific trade deals captured regional news headlines providing fertile ground for our choices. In some nations, like Australia, government leaders changed quickly. In others, including Thailand, they did not.

So, as the lunar Year of the Monkey arrives, here is our updated list of this past year's "winners," from bad to good. Congratulations of a sort to all.

Worst year: Asia's lungs – for facing down "airpocalypse" now

Bhutan is known for its forests, its rivers and its blue skies. But all too often and across too many parts of Asia including in nearby India, starting the day has meant donning a facemask or perhaps a hacking cough.

The culprit is the region's declining air quality as development brought more factories and cars to an increasingly urbanized region. This is particularly true in some of the region's largest nations, including in China, India and Indonesia – but also in their neighbors. Pollution knows no boundaries.

India's "National Health Profile" reported nearly 3.5 million cases of acute respiratory infection in 2014. That's a 30% increase since 2010. The World Health Organization says 13 of the top 20 most polluted cities worldwide are in India.

In China, Beijing issued its first ever "red alert" smog days as the nation's notorious pollution returned with a vengeance this winter. Now banned in China, CCTV reporter Chai Jing's online documentary "Under the Dome" told of how her country's poor air quality contributed to the premature death of 500,000 people from cardiovascular and cardiorespiratory disease.

And in Southeast Asia, a "haze" from fires used to clear forest land in Indonesia for agricultural use led to school and business closures. Thousands sought care for respiratory ailments and at least 19 deaths were reported as smoke darkened skies in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and even parts of Thailand and the Philippines.

Bad year: Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak – for taking Asian forbearance for granted

The latest development in an alleged corruption scandal from a nation that touts itself as "Truly Asia," has Malaysian Attorney General Apandi Ali declaring that Prime Minister Najib Razak has committed no criminal offence.

The declaration followed an investigation into how some US$ 700 million showed up in Najib's personal bank accounts. Apandi has said the money was a donation from Saudi Arabia, and has since been returned. All this followed the Wall Street Journal's reporting that the money was possibly linked to the financially troubled 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). The state-owned investment company 1MDB had been founded in part by Najib to invest in property, infrastructure and energy projects.

What's next? Stay tuned for the next "1MDB Scandal" episode from Malaysia. The nation's antigraft agency has sought a review of the attorney general's decision to clear Najib, and investigations reportedly continue outside the country. Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad also continues to call for his successor's departure.

Not-so-good-year: Modi & Jokowi – for believing their own hype a little too much

Last year, we gave Asia's "new management" – India's Narendra Modi and Indonesia's Joko "Jokowi" Widodo along with China's Xi Jinping and Japan's Shinzo Abe – the award for best year in Asia. Modi and Jokowi were seen as pro-business and reform-minded with agendas that had the potential to kick into high gear their countries' economies.

What a difference a year makes. Entrenched economic interests and a "little bric" of bureaucracy, regulation, interventionism and corruption continue to impede the structural changes needed to attract more foreign direct investment and drive long-term job creation.

Struggling Chinese and Japanese economies, Jokowi's declining approval ratings and the defeat of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in two regional elections signal that the honeymoon is over. In earthquake-stricken Nepal, the hashtag #BackOffIndia trended as needed goods were stopped at the border due to ethnic and political disputes. Japan wrapped up the year by introducing negative interest rates. Meanwhile, China's currency and stock market interventions risk being seen as more about trust in market manipulation than market forces.

Good year: Trans-Pacific Partnership – for putting some oomph into the US pivot to Asia

Disagreements over "rule of origin" and pharmaceutical and diary products threatened to delay once again the conclusion of negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a major international trade pact. But, on October 5 came news that negotiators had overcome all obstacles and reached agreement.

Begun in 2007 as an exploratory services and investment negotiation between Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore and the United States during the Administration of President George W. Bush, the TPP now encompasses 12 Pacific-rim nations and covers 40 percent of world trade.

TPP signatories Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the U.S., and Vietnam must each now ratify the deal. That is where the hard work truly begins. This is especially true in the United States where trade agreements don't fare well during an election year.

Even the leading Democratic candidates have come out to join Donald Trump against what should be one of the Obama Administration's signature accomplishments. In Japan, Akira Amari, the nation's economics minister and a leading proponent of the TPP, recently resigned over a bribery scandal.

That doesn't stop us from awarding the TPP the honor of "good year in Asia."

Best year: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – for shaking up the status quo

When China first floated the idea of establishing a new development bank to help finance Asia's infrastructure, critics countered by asking whether it was necessary. Others feared a new China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) would become an extension of Chinese power and a further challenge to the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, led respectively by American and Japanese presidents.

The United States and Japan in particular also raised questions about governance and project-lending "standards" at the AIIB.

But money talks. The United Kingdom was the first U.S. ally to break ranks with the Obama Administration over joining the new AIIB. Nearly 60 nations, including Myanmar and the rest of Southeast Asia, ultimately signed on as founding members of the new $100 billion institution. And the first projects are expected to be announced by April if not sooner.

By Curtis S. Chin & Jose B. Collazo

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