

**NA Elections  
2023-24**



# DRUK PHUENSUM TSHOGPA



# MANIFESTO

**Economic Prosperity and Social Well-being  
*Development with Equity and Justice***

**2023-2028**





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# Foreword by the President

May it be auspicious!

It is with immense joy and a deep sense of honor that I present the Manifesto of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa to the people of Bhutan as we approach the fourth National Assembly elections.

A Manifesto, for us, signifies a profound social, political, economic, and moral contract between our political party and our people. It encapsulates our party's genuine proposals and unwavering commitment to serve our Tsawa-Sum and earn your mandate.

We firmly believe that the guiding principles of 'Gross National Happiness' and the ideals of 'equity and justice' hold timeless significance for humanity. This is why our Manifesto is carefully crafted around the core values and vision of GNH. At its core, our Manifesto reflects our tireless national efforts to promote inclusive socio-economic development and enduring sustainable prosperity for all.

We acknowledge that changing times and challenges demand new strategies and solutions. In light of Bhutan's current challenges and fresh vision, dreams, and aspirations, our Manifesto revolves around the central theme of 'Economic Prosperity and Social Well-Being.' We believe this is the wisest and most secure path for Bhutan as we move forward into the future.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the people of Bhutan, for standing by us throughout this political journey. Your support has granted us the unique privilege and honor of serving in Parliament for three consecutive terms, making us the most experienced political party in Bhutan.

We hope that the people will find our Manifesto inspiring and meaningful, and our party deserving of your continued trust and support. We earnestly seek the support of every fellow citizen and promise to uphold the faith and confidence you have placed in us.

(Dorji Wangdi)

*President*

**Druk Phuensum Tshogpa**

*In Pursuit of Gross National Happiness*





## The Significance of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa's Election Symbol

### Election Symbol

Three Thrung-Thrung soaring high in the sky through the pristine environment represents our pledge to honor, serve and to protect our Kings, Country and People while promoting the highest of democratic principles and practices.

### Significance of Election Symbol

This is the rarest bird exceptionally beautiful and elegant admired globally. As a celestial bird of purity with amazing strength and endurance yet humble and pacific, the Thrung-Thrung represents Druk Phuensum Tshogpa's commitment to balance material development with enrichment of inner peace and happiness – a basic premise for the promotion of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Marvelled for their virtue of fidelity, the cranes represent our unwavering loyalty and devotion to the Tsa-wa Sum and they mirror our determination to live in harmony with nature and all sentient beings. As a true exemplar of the harmonious living, the crane is symbolic of the party's commitment to the promotion of social inclusion and equity; natural integration and integrity; and furtherance of the vitality of our communities and society.

### Our Allegiance and Commitment

We offer our unwavering allegiance to the sacred institution of monarchy, the life-force of our nation.

We shall be guided by His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, in our pursuit of just, equitable and harmonious society for fulfilling the overarching vision of Gross National Happiness.

We commit ourselves to be the true servants and to strive to fulfill the aspirations and wishes of the people of Bhutan through utmost loyalty, honesty, integrity and perseverance.





## Our Vision

A sovereign and prosperous nation of enlightened citizens committed to the pursuit of Gross National Happiness through development with equity and justice, encompassing economic self-reliance, social harmony, environmental integrity and political justice.

## Our Mission

1. To realize the vision of His Majesty the King for a just, equitable and harmonious society and strive to our best to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bhutan.
2. To always strive to ensure that national unity, security, justice, fundamental rights and freedom are never compromised.
3. To abide by the Constitution and uphold the Rule of Law.
4. To persevere to build and strengthen conditions for the happiness of the Bhutanese people.
5. To ensure stability and serve as a standard of constancy and trustworthiness amid the vagaries of party politics and the ever-changing political landscape.
6. To establish standards and norms for party politics and behavior by way of example so that parties and individuals choose to follow them or be so inspired, as to give all voters true and comparative choice.
7. To be guided, demonstrably, by the highest management and social ethics and principles so that the party shall be worthy of the loyalty of its own members and the trust and confidence of the people.
8. To recognize and give opportunity to potential leaders to rise to positions of political office irrespective of their social standing or economic status.
9. To serve with the highest transparency, accountability and compassion in keeping with the ideals and purposes enshrined in the Constitution of our country.





# INTRODUCTION

**D**ruk Phuensum Tshogpa holds a strong belief in the significance of a political party's manifesto as a multifaceted commitment encompassing social, political, economic, and moral dimensions, binding the party to the people. Such a manifesto should embody sincerity, honesty, and authenticity, transcending mere electoral ambitions. The narratives, assurances, and aspirations expressed in an election manifesto persist well beyond the electoral cycle, leaving an enduring imprint on the public's collective memory and knowledge. These elements not only shape the electorate's understanding of politics but also contribute to a nation's social and political awareness. The vitality and integrity of political party's manifesto will play a pivotal role in determining the future of democratic culture and structures. The trust and faith that people place in politics may be jeopardized when political parties make lofty promises they cannot fulfill, resulting in "over-promising and under-delivering." Such a scenario can erode public confidence in both political parties and their leaders.

One of the primary reasons for the declining trust in political parties and politicians in the region and beyond is the prioritization of electoral gains over the broader goal of establishing a sustainable political culture rooted in public welfare and honesty. Druk Phuensum Tshogpa is unwavering in its commitment to preventing such a scenario in our country. We firmly believe that the unique foundations of our parliamentary democracy should not be subject to the capricious ambitions of political entities and politicians. Our election manifesto for the fourth National Assembly elections, guided by the Vision of His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo and the principles of our Constitution, is built on four guiding tenets: reasonableness, relevance, achievability, and forward-thinking.

Within this framework, we wish to convey to our fellow citizens that, as a political party, we adhere to the principle of "under-promising and over-delivering." Our previous election manifestos serve as a testament to our unwavering commitment to serving the people. Our current manifesto is centered around the theme of "Economic Prosperity and Social Well-being." We firmly believe that these three pillars should form the foundation of Tsawa-Sum. Our pledges are not intended to manipulate voters or appeal to individual desires; rather, they are based on a genuine assessment of current realities and future needs, grounded in our fifteen years of experience as both a governing and opposition party in Parliament.





Our manifesto seeks to attain a “comprehensive socio-economic development with equity and justice” to ensure the well-being of future generations of Bhutanese, fostering prosperity, integrity, and harmony. We recognize the imperative of directing our national resources, energy, and spirit toward economic development at a pace that befits our nation – this commitment is unwavering.

To reiterate, social and economic development is at the core of our manifesto. We have confidence in our ability to fulfill all our promises because they are rooted in the bedrock of sincerity, honesty, and unwavering conviction. At no point have we allowed self-serving electoral motives to compromise our sincerity and reasonability. We are committed to delivering on our promises!



# 1 In pursuit of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development

## Economy: strengthening the foundation of prosperity

We live in the world where the only predictable thing is uncertainty. The health and strength of a country's economy has become the fundamental determinant of her security, sovereignty, and independence. It is our unquestionable belief that we must continue to accord the highest priority to achieving economic self-reliance, prosperity and well-being. While challenges abound, we are confident to bring our economy back on track and march forward to a secure future through strategic and sound economic policies and interventions. Our focus shall be on achieving sustainable, inclusive, equitable, and diversified economy for the people of Bhutan. A careful analysis of our economic fundamentals and constraints informs us that the best alternative for Bhutan is to become a productive service economy, driven and supported by information & technology and educated human resource. Our approach to economic development will be guided by the principles of 'Economics of Knowledge' to transform our country into a knowledge-based economy and society.

Leveraging our experience as the governing party from 2008 to 2013, a period marked by a strong emphasis on economic progress, we are poised to restore Bhutan's economic course and guide it toward self-sufficiency, ensuring prosperity for all. Our commitment to economic development is resolute, with the overarching aim of molding Bhutan into a sustainable society where wealth creation is a continuous endeavor, national wealth is equitably distributed, and gainful employment is accessible to all of working age.

### 1.1. Achieving economic self-reliance to secure our future

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Achieve economic self-reliance and high-income status by 2035.
- ii. Maintain an average of 8% economic growth rate in five years.
- iii. Maintain foreign currency reserve to cover 12 months of essential imports.
- iv. Frame a new Economic Development Policy within six months.





- v. Review and revise the existing Foreign Direct Investment Policy.
- vi. Develop a new National Export Strategy within the first six months.
- vii. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated National Investing Strategy.
- viii. Institute Bhutan's Economic Development Council (with representations from all sectors, including the private sector).
- ix. Institute a high-level Private Sector Development Committee within 100 days.

## 1.2. Harnessing the hydropower generation potential: maximizing the national wealth

We recognize that Bhutan still holds a huge potential in generating hydropower for export and domestic industrial development. The regional market for clean hydropower energy is lucrative, while the domestic industries will need energy at affordable prices to be competitive in the regional and global markets.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Start three new mega hydropower projects in collaboration with the Government of India on the financing model mutually agreeable and beneficial.
- ii. Fast-track the trilateral discussions between the Governments of India, Bangladesh and Bhutan for exporting its hydropower energy to third country market.
- iii. Ensure maintaining electricity tariff at affordable price to domestic industries to make them competitive in the regional and domestic markets.
- iv. Explore new opportunities for hydro power development, including small-scale hydro projects in rural areas.
- v. Complete the on-going hydropower projects, particularly PHP-I and PHP-II at the earliest possible.

## 1.3. Clean and affordable energy: a fundamental catalyst of economic development

As our nation works harder each day toward achieving economic self-reliance, how soon we attain our national goal will depend on the degree of energy security we have.



We are committed to develop a sustainable and diverse energy sector, encompassing hydro, solar, biogas, and wind power to ensure access to clean and affordable energy for individuals, institutions and businesses at all times.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Amend Electricity Act of Bhutan 2001 to respond to changing demands and requirements of electricity in the country.
- ii. Review the existing export and import tariffs of electricity.
- iii. Leverage the potential of harnessing solar power through provision of incentives for individuals and businesses to install solar panels and invest in large-scale solar projects.
- iv. Improve energy transmission and distribution by modernizing the energy grid to ensure clean and affordable energy is available to all.
- v. Provide incentives for individuals and businesses to adopt energy-efficient practices and invest in energy-efficient technologies.
- vi. Support renewable energy research and development.

#### 1.4. Tourism: capitalizing on nature's gift of beauty and uniqueness

As a country with limited natural resources but an abundant natural beauty, tourism presents us a rare opportunity to simultaneously create wealth for the nation and connect to the world. With travel becoming a necessity for an individual's well-being, Bhutan enjoys a huge potential to become a sustainable high-end profitable tourist market. We will promote Bhutan as a world-class destination for sustainable and responsible tourism that will bring about economic benefits and at the same time preserve our unique cultural heritage and pristine natural environment.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Revisit Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) to revive and boost tourism industry and make it more affordable for the visitors and lucrative for our country.
- ii. Amend the Tourism Act of 2022 to make it more encompassing and comprehensive.
- iii. Put in place fiscal incentives scheme for tour operators and hotels.





- iv. Provide support in training qualified and competent tour guides.
- v. Effectively liaise with Tour Operators', Tour Guides' and Hoteliers' Associations to make tourism an industry of country's repute and revenue.
- vi. Ensure a policy environment that promotes and supports all the allied sectors: handicrafts, farmhouses, farmers, eco lodges, among others.
- vii. Invest in improving infrastructure to develop modern, safe, and sustainable tourism infrastructures.
- viii. Initiate a special program to diversify tourism products to attract broader range of visitors.
- ix. Incentivize and support local communities to develop the tourism industry.
- x. Develop rural tourism by promoting local cultural heritage and attractions and providing training and support for local tour operators.
- xi. Improve payment gateways for tourists.

### 1.5. Private Sector: making it the pioneer of economic growth and development

Bhutan is a public sector-driven economy. Any reduction and disruption in the government expenditure forces the economy into disequilibrium at best and standstill at worst. A weak private sector is a sign of an unstable and stagnant economy exposed to both internal and external economic shocks. An economy dependent on government's expenditures and capital injection often lacks innovation and progress plagued with a narrow tax base for revenue and inability to generate employment opportunities. Without strengthening the private sector in earnest, Bhutan's economy holds a grim future. The contribution of the private sector to a country's GDP is one of the core determinants of its economy. We will accord the highest priority to the private sector development and promotion of cottage and small industries (CSI) to make it the agent of change and a reliable development partner of the government.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Promote and boost private sector as the key driver of the economy and increase its contribution to GDP to at least 50 percent.
- ii. Institute a Private Sector Development Council to foster collaboration between government agencies and businesses, streamline regulatory processes, and promote economic growth through effective public-private partnerships.
- iii. Undertake comprehensive taxation reforms to spur the growth of private sector.





- iv. Review and Revise the existing Foreign Direct Investment Policy to address the needs of the private sector.
- v. Establish a macro-economic and private sector development advisory panel to advise the cabinet.
- vi. Streamline business regulations, remove bureaucratic hurdles, and promote Bhutan as an attractive investment destination.
- vii. Provide access to financing, training, and professional backstopping to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- viii. Work closely with financial institutions, government agencies, and other stakeholders to provide enhanced access to finance.
- ix. Support Bhutan Chamber for Commerce and Industry (BCCI) to spearhead the private sector growth by giving clearer policy and legal mandate

### 1.6. Enhancing the ease of doing Business: a means to wealth creation and economic prosperity

Challenged by resource constraints and being a developing country, it is critical to create an enabling environment for doing business that supports entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth. We will put all the legislative and policy instruments in place to create a vibrant forward-looking business environment to put our struggling economy back on track.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Streamline business regulations and remove bureaucratic hurdles to support and promote CSI/SMEs.
- ii. Promote entrepreneurship and provide access to finance, training, and other required resources to develop new big businesses and SMEs.
- iii. Improve physical infrastructures to attract investments in the business sector.
- iv. Improve legislative and policy instruments to protect intellectual property rights to ensure businesses innovate and grow.
- v. Put in place policies and regulations to ensure fair competition and level playing field for all businesses.





- vi. Streamline and reopen trade routes with India.
- vii. Improve and ease customs and trade procedures.

### 1.7. Building an entrepreneurial society to create national wealth

As an economy that is challenged by natural resource constraints and being dependent, we need to promote and support the development of entrepreneurial culture to diversify potential growth areas. It has become ever important to strategize to tap into the potential of our youth who are leaving the country in thousands for want of economic opportunities at home.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Promote entrepreneurship as the critical foundation of our nation's economic growth.
- ii. Provide training and technical assistance, access to capital, bridging loans and mentorship to young entrepreneurs and start-ups. It will be through corporate sponsorship, venture capital, angel investors, crowd funding, foundation grants and etc.
- iii. Eliminate bureaucratic procedures and requirements that affect the entrepreneurial ambitions.
- iv. Invest in building quality infrastructure to ensure sustained economic growth with multiplier effect on employment creation.
- v. Redesign the skill-oriented education and training programs to respond to labor market demands.
- vi. Establish business incubation centers in different regions, colleges and institutes.
- vii. Facilitate government land-lease for youth entrepreneurs.
- viii. Promote rural entrepreneurship by providing business training, access to capital, and technical assistance to rural residents.

### 1.8. Agriculture: enhancing rural prosperity and national food security

Bhutan is largely an agrarian economy where approximately 48 percent of its population and its productive work force is engaged in the sector for livelihood and now increasingly for commerce. However, the sector's potential remains hugely unexplored. Today, much





of our required food items are imported. The question of food security has implications for national security and sovereignty in the long run. It is important that we are able to grow our own, at least major essential food items. Further, the agriculture sector holds a great potential to generate both on farm and off-farm employment opportunities for our youth. We will prioritize to develop the agriculture sector to secure the nation's future and to improve the lives of the rural communities.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Undertake a comprehensive and holistic review of the country's agricultural policy.
- ii. Undertake a nationwide land management exercise to ease farming and enhance productivity.
- iii. Mechanize farming with appropriate subsidies on farm implements and machineries for farmers.
- iv. Identify Special Agricultural Zones (SAZs) to ensure economy of scale and productivity.
- v. Strengthen Bhutan Development Bank (BDBL) to make credit more accessible and affordable for farmers.
- vi. Strengthen Food Corporation of Bhutan (FCBL) to serve as a national food bank stocked with local produce in addition to its existing mandates, including identifying and broadening markets for Bhutan's produce.
- vii. Promote Bhutan as a source of organic products for which the demand is on the rise in the region and beyond.
- viii. Ensure all cultivated arable land (wetland and dryland) have sufficient water for irrigation.
- ix. Put in place adequate and efficient mechanisms and facilities to transport farm produce to markets.
- x. Ensure adequate and timely provision of improved and high-yielding crop seeds.
- xi. Undertake agricultural diversification by promoting the cultivation of a wider range of crops, including fruits, vegetables, and cash crops to improve food security and income for farmers.
- xii. Establish processing, marketing and cold storage facilities based on priorities.





- xiii. Provide adequate and affordable fertilizers and invest in domestic production of fertilizers.
- xiv. Strengthen mechanism for integrated pest and disease management.

### 1.9. 24/7 clean drinking and adequate irrigation water

Clean drinking water is a lifeforce of human beings, while irrigation water sustains their livelihood through the enhancement of food production. We understand the critical importance of providing both drinking and irrigation water to our citizens to improve their quality of life and to drive our economic growth.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Ensure 24/7 clean drinking water supply in all cities, urban centers and rural communities.
- ii. Expand rural water supply networks, connecting more communities to safe and reliable water sources for both drinking and irrigation.
- iii. Invest in water supply infrastructure, such as dams, reservoirs, and water treatment plants.
- iv. Invest in protecting and reviving water sources and catchment areas.

### 1.10. Enhancing livestock farming: complementing sustenance and income generation for farmers

Livestock farming is an integral part of rural Bhutanese communities that provides a vital source of livelihood and sustenance for them. The sector contributes significantly to the country's economy. Amid dwindling rural labor force and increasing import of livestock products, it has become urgent to adopt value-added and modern technology-based livestock farming. We will promote and support high income-generating and environmentally-friendly livestock farming.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Provide access to capital to help people invest in livestock farming.
- ii. Prioritize the construction of animal health centers with adequate manpower, feed and fodder storage facilities in rural areas.
- iii. Increase access to veterinary care in remote rural areas through mobile clinics and training programs for community veterinarians.



- iv. Promote the use of natural fertilizers and pesticides to reduce the sector's environmental impact.
- v. Support the establishment of small-scale processing facilities for dairy products to encourage value addition and diversification to achieve self-sufficiency.
- vi. Supply high-yielding breeds to ensure production of scale to substitute imports.
- vii. Initiate a flagship program in dairy farming for the highlanders.

### 1.11. Addressing the human-wildlife conflict: attending to farmer's woes

The wildlife depredation on crops has been a serious menace to our formers. It has weakened our agricultural productivity, rural life vitality and forced people to leave their lands fallow, ultimately causing rural-urban migration. It has posed a formidable challenge to the sustenance of our rural people's livelihoods. We understand the urgency of addressing the conflict which also has significant impacts on both wildlife and human populations.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Develop appropriate insurance and compensation schemes to compensate loss of crops and livestock of our farmers.
- ii. Provide chain-link fencing to protect crops from wildlife depredation.
- iii. Promote the use of non-lethal methods and scare devices to deter wildlife from crop fields and livestock enclosures.
- iv. Support effective wildlife management, including the development of more conservation areas and advocacy campaigns on living in harmony with them.

### 1.12. Natural resource-based Industries: leveraging opportunities

Our industrial sector holds great potential despite limited natural resources. It is high time that we reap the maximum benefit by making most of the available resources without adverse impacts on our natural environment –the protection and conservation of which has gained us a pride of place in the world. The existing practice is largely limited to exporting raw materials without much value addition.





Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Amend the Mines and Minerals Management Act of Bhutan 1995, to ensure increase of government revenue, private sector growth, benefits for local communities, and intergenerational benefits of national resources.
- ii. Review policies inclusive of appropriate tax measures to ensure maximum value addition to the products and to encourage industries to export value added and finished products and earn more than exporting raw materials.
- iii. Focus on import substitution, export promotion and employment generation.
- iv. Ensure value-addition to wood-based industries.
- v. Make optimum use of forest resources, especially timber.
- vi. Involve private sector to explore and mine non-strategic minerals.

### 1.13. Improving road networks: the way to growth, development and prosperity

The connectivity of national settlements and places with quality road is extremely important. We strongly believe the road is the mother of growth and development. The rural prosperity has a direct correlation to our national social and economic health. We are committed to building all-weather year-round pliable road infrastructure for the people of Bhutan.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Construct roads to ensure complete internal road connectivity in the country.
- ii. Improve the roads connecting all Dzongkhag headquarters.
- iii. Construct the remaining southern East-West Highway and complete the widening of northern East-West Highway.
- iv. Construct alternate routes, bypasses and undertake widening of roads to shorten the travel time on major national highways.
- v. Construct the alternate routes including but not limited to: Gezamchhu -Autsho; Khengkhar-Shumar; Wama-Khamshar; Shingkhar-Khandupang; Trashiyangtse-Dongla-Menji; Tashiling-Refel; Getana-Dorona; Merak to Lauri, Nahi-Chamgang; Soe-Gunitsawa; Sherichu-Kurigongri; Jaziphu-Rakashong and Gensa-Tshongsa).
- vi. Explore alternative means of transport such as rope ways and cable cars.



- vii. Promote alternative modes of transportation, such as cycling and public transportation for environmental conservation and healthy living.

### 1.14 Improving farm Roads: the lifeline of rural areas

We understand the importance of improving farm roads in rural Bhutan for economic growth and improved quality of life. Given our scattered human settlements and villages where much of the population lives, farm road connectivity has a strong bearing on our national goal of achieving rural prosperity for our people.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Expand the farm road network to ensure remote rural areas are connected to markets and service centers.
- ii. Improve and resurface the gewog roads.
- iii. Upgrade the existing farm roads by providing GSB.
- iv. Blacktop major Chiwog roads.
- v. Hand over the maintenance of GC roads to the Department of Surface Transport.
- vi. Invest in farm road infrastructure, such as bridges, culverts, drains and walls.
- vii. Institute the mechanism to monitor the rural road connectivity to ensure all rural areas are connected to markets and basic service centers throughout the year.

### 1.15 Air connectivity: overcoming Bhutan's topographical challenges

The developmental cost of road connectivity in Bhutan is extremely high because of difficult topographical compulsions. For quicker, safer and easier transport, air connectivity is an option. We are committed to keep Bhutan connected through reliable and affordable air transport services.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Upgrade the Paro International Airport into a state-of-the-art modern international airport.
- ii. Upgrade the existing domestic airstrips, viz. Yongphula and Gelephu.
- iii. Increase the frequency of both domestic and international flights depending on the needs of the travelers.
- iv. Increase flying destinations for Bhutan's airlines.





### 1.16. Efficient Transport System: saving time, energy and resources

Transport system is one of the important factors that determines the efficiency and productivity of an economy. At the micro level, it is a critical industry that supports thousands of families. We recognize the importance and benefits in investing in and improving public and urban transportation.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Work with the Taxi Association of Bhutan to improve the taxi services in the country.
- ii. Work with the Truckers Association of Bhutan to improve goods transport services in the country.
- iii. Put in place appropriate financing mechanisms to buy taxis and trucks.
- iv. Invest in public transportation systems to ensure transportation options are accessible, affordable and efficient.
- v. Expand parking options in core urban areas to ensure smooth traffic and efficient transportation.
- vi. Finalize the feasibility of connecting Thimphu, Paro, Punakha and Wangduephodrang by tunnels.

### 1.17 Augmenting telecommunication networks: connecting people and places

Without reliable and affordable telecommunication facilities in this fast-paced world, information and digital divide leads to economic and social inequalities. We will prioritize to ensure all citizens have access to affordable, reliable and efficient telecommunication facilities as their basic right.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Invest in telecommunication infrastructure, including mobile networks, to ensure that Bhutanese citizens have access to the latest technology.
- ii. Expand and ensure 100% reliable mobile coverage in all parts of the county, particularly in rural areas.
- iii. Enhance mobile network services like 5G technology for faster delivery of both data and on-call services.





- iv. Explore the market carrying capacity of one more telecom operator to ensure our citizens have access to affordable and quality telecom services.
- v. Improve the Communication Centers in gewogs to enhance service delivery to our rural fellow citizens.

### 1.18 Reducing our debt burden: taking the national economy forward

We recognize the current debt to GDP ratio of 129.1% poses significant risks to our economy. Reducing our debt burden will require difficult choices and sacrifices, but it is necessary for the long-term prosperity of our nation. We are committed to working together with all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, to achieve this goal. We are committed to reducing Bhutan's debt burden to ensure sustainable economic growth and financial stability.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Develop a comprehensive National Investing Plan by bringing Druk Holdings and Investments (DHI) onboard.
- ii. Carryout a comprehensive debt restructuring exercise in consultation with the creditors to reduce the debt burden on the country.
- iii. Undertake progressive and equitable tax reforms.
- iv. Improve tax collection mechanisms and diversify the tax base.
- v. Rationalize government expenditures to avoid wasteful spending.
- vi. Attract foreign investments to create employment opportunities and to ensure economic growth.

### 1.19 Narrowing the trade deficit and addressing the balance of payment

We recognize the urgent need to address the trade imbalance, which is currently skewed in favor of imports. Our economy cannot sustain this trend any longer. It has become critical to protect our domestic industries and promote exports. Our focus will be to make our economy progressive and resilient.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Create legislative and policy environment for people to invest in domestic industries to provide a level playing field for local businesses to expand their production and compete with imported goods.





- ii. Provide incentives such as subsidies, tax breaks, and other incentives to domestic producers to substitute imports with local goods.
- iii. Support and promote export-oriented industries such as agriculture, handicrafts, tourism, minerals and services to enhance their competitiveness and increase their regional and global market share.
- iv. Further deepen trade relations with neighboring countries.
- v. Attract foreign investment by providing a stable business environment, favorable tax policies, and other incentives.
- vi. Streamline customs procedures, reduce trade barriers, and improve logistics infrastructure to make it easier and cheaper for businesses to import and export goods.
- vii. Improve trade infrastructure, such as roads, airports, waterways and dry ports, to facilitate the efficient movement of goods into and out of the country to make it more competitive in international trade.
- viii. Make our trade policies more effective by reviewing existing trade agreements, negotiating new agreements, and addressing non-tariff barriers to trade.
- ix. Incentivize the consumption of local goods and services.
- x. Open few more integrated check points like that of Phuentsholing, for e.g. additional integrated checkpoints in Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar, Nganglam and Samtse.

## 1.20 A sound monetary policy for a self-reliant economy

We recognize that a sound monetary policy is crucial to maintain economic stability and promote growth. A well-designed policy can help stabilize prices, encourage investment and spending, and reduce the risk of financial crises. However, an inadequate or poorly implemented monetary policy can lead to inflation, recession, and other associated economic problems. We shall formulate and maintain a sound monetary policy to ensure our economy is stable and prosperous.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Ensure that Bhutan has clear monetary policy objectives that are transparent and understood by the public.
- ii. Protect the independence of the Royal Monetary Authority (RMA) in its operation to ensure that monetary policy decisions are based on sound economic analysis and not subject to short-term political considerations.





- iii. Work with and support RMA to ensure that all its decisions are scientific and data-driven that allow economic and financial principles and logic to prevail for macro-economic stability.
- iv. Work closely with the RMA to ensure that monetary policies are consistent with broader economic policies, such as fiscal policy and structural reforms, to promote overall economic stability and growth.
- v. Promote transparency and credibility to ensure a steady flow of communication between the RMA, Financial Institutions and the general public.
- vi. Lower the existing interest rates on loans in consultation with RMA.

### 1.21 Education: making it our nation's lifeforce and unique selling point

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa fully recognize that the quality of education will determine the future of our nation; and that no policy crosscuts issues of national importance as education policy does. The fast changing and ever uncertain world have put the educational advancement at the center of a nation's progress and competitiveness. To move forward, we must ensure the education we impart to our children is of world-class – saleable and competitive.

Because of the technological progress, the global nature in the use of knowledge has become transnational, transboundary and pervading. Education is a powerful tool for promoting personal, social, and economic development to build a better nation. Our Bhutanese future citizens must be equipped to be competent global citizens, yet a Bhutanese at heart. We pledge to reform the education system to ensure that our students are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the rapidly changing world. While our focus will be on promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, we will also give enough and appropriate space and opportunities for Arts and Humanities subjects to thrive.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Review options in consultation with MoESD and RCSC to provide Human Resource for administrative and secretarial duties for teachers in order to allow them to concentrate on quality teaching.
- ii. Review the Individual Work Plan's (IWP) relevance and effectiveness.
- iii. Keep Saturday off for schools for teachers and students to rejuvenate and prepare for the next week.





- iv. In strengthening STEM Education, ensure that our schools have the necessary resources and infrastructure to effectively teach STEM subjects.
- v. Invest in modern laboratories to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and develop innovative curricula.
- vi. Initiate science fairs, robotics clubs, and coding competitions to spark students' interest in STEM fields.
- vii. Integrate Arts and Humanities subjects in school curricula to complement STEM education for holistic educational and social development.
- viii. Expand vocational education programs in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, engineering, construction, IT and hospitality as per the need and changing demands in these sectors.
- ix. Foster collaboration between educational institutes and industries to ensure our students are learning the skills that are in demand in the labor market.
- x. Provide education loans to students in need to pursue higher studies.
- xi. Provide 100 percent Early Childcare and Development (ECCD) coverage.
- xii. Revive the private school industry to improve quality of education through competition and de-crowding.

## 1.22 Digital transformation: leveraging information and communication technology

Digital footprints are everywhere in human ecosystem – from personal to political to governance to national and public spaces. We will encourage the adoption of digital technologies in various sectors, including finance, healthcare, and education, to increase efficiency and competitiveness. We strongly believe that digital transformation will help to reboot our economy and create a path to sustained economic growth and prosperity. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to make this vision a reality.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Undertake legislative, policy and program initiatives to make Bhutan into a vibrant Information and Communication Technology (ICT) hub.
- ii. Develop e-resilient IT infrastructures to ensure efficient e-governance.
- iii. Secure Third Internet Gateway as soon as possible.
- iv. Provide access to high-speed internet services at affordable rates.



- v. Except for government services that have bearings on national security, rest will be provided online to reduce interface between the service provider and recipient.
- vi. Support start-ups, provide access to funding and mentorship, and create an ecosystem that fosters innovation and creativity.
- vii. Establish IT parks to create jobs and to build Bhutan into an ICT-driven knowledge-based economy and society.
- viii. Put in place data privacy and security measures to protect citizens' personal information and prevent cyber threats.
- ix. Engage with India in the field of technology, particularly IT and AI, to harness available strengths of our neighbor in these fields to achieve robust technological progress and commercialization of available technology for betterment of Bhutanese society and business.

### 1.23 Improving health services: building a healthier nation

As guaranteed by the Constitution, Druk Phuensum Tshogpa recognizes all Bhutanese people, irrespective of their economic and social status, have the right to quality, affordable and equitable health services. We draw our health service provision mandate from our party's core belief that 'health of our nation is anchored to the health of our population'.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Expand the coverage of quality healthcare services through improved modern facilities and well-trained healthcare professionals both in rural and urban hospitals and health centers.
- ii. Strive to achieve the World Health Organization (WHO) prescribed doctor and nurse ratio to people by training doctors and nurses.
- iii. Provide five doctors for Dzongkhag Hospitals, including a gynecologist.
- iv. Increase incentives for critically scarce doctors and specialists to retain them depending on the economic situation of the country and government's fiscal position.
- v. Provide ambulance for Gewog BHUs on need basis.





- vi. Rationalize Grade I Basic Health Unit (BHUs) in gewogs with population exceeding 8,000 people.
- vii. Establish BHUs/Health Outposts in bigger and far-flung chiwogs with more than 500 resident population.
- viii. Ensure the provision of traditional medicine and healthcare services through hospitals and BHUs.
- ix. Initiate a minimum of twice a year mobile health screening in rural areas to improve access to healthcare for the most vulnerable and under-served communities.
- x. Explore to make Bhutan a wellness center, where we can combine provision of health care and tourism services.

### 1.24 Encouraging population growth: securing our future

With a total population of less than a million, Bhutan is a small country with a very small population. The dwindling fertility rate of 1.7%, which is below the replacement rate, poses a serious challenge to our country's future outlook, especially to our aspirations to leapfrog our economy and become a self-reliant developed country. It is imperative to create enabling social and economic conditions and incentivize to increase the population.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Introduce family-friendly policies that support families, such as providing affordable childcare, parental leave, and flexible working hours.
- ii. Increase access to affordable housing options at any interest rate below the existing ones that are suitable for families in consultation with financial institutions and relevant agencies.
- iii. Expand parental leave policies that provide paid parental leave to new parents, allowing them to take time off work to care for their newborns without sacrificing income. Specifically increase paternity leave to 1 month.
- iv. Offer financial incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, and other benefits to encourage couples to have more children.
- v. Invest in healthcare and maternal care to ensure that women have safe and healthy pregnancies and childbirths.



- vi. Implement a policy to provide state support for the education of the third and subsequent children of a couple.
- vii. Put in place quality creches at offices to support mothers to work effectively.

### **1.25 Empowering Youth with Decent and Gainful Employment: Forging Bhutan's Prosperous Future**

We are a country whose population is not only young, but with almost fifty percent being youth. The inability to harness demographic dividends has struck us hard and deep leading to thousands of youth leaving for overseas in search of job and livelihoods. We are gravely worried that if this trend continues, the reality that will confront us will be so unkind that we might lose most of our productive and educated citizens. Such situation could pose existential threat to us as a nation. We are committed to creating employment opportunities in the country and build a strong and prosperous economy. Our pledges to our youth are to create new jobs and support the growth of existing and new businesses.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Reduce general unemployment to 2.5% and youth unemployment to 5 percent.
- ii. Roll out entrepreneurship programs to empower our youth by enabling them to create their own businesses and become self-employed.
- iii. Provide access to adequate funding, training, and mentorship for our youths in consultation with RMA.
- iv. Improve the quality of education and trainings to ensure the youths are equipped with skills and knowledge that national and international job markets demand.
- v. Prioritize vocational education to equip youths with necessary skills for employment in industries such as construction, manufacturing, and hospitality.
- vi. Prioritize skill-building and upskilling programs to help young people acquire the skills necessary for employment, including training in new technologies and digital skills.





## 1.26 Rectifying mismatch in the labor market

Amid rapidly changing demands of labor markets the world over, we need to prepare our youth both for the national and international job markets. We will prepare them to be employable wherever they wish to work. We understand the importance of aligning education with the job market to reduce the mismatch between supply and demand and providing students with the skills and training they need to succeed in the modern economy.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Impart skills and trainings to the job seekers to be readily employable in both national and international job markets.
- ii. Provide career counseling and guidance to students, helping them to make informed decisions about their education and future careers.
- iii. Review and update our educational curricula to ensure they are in line with the latest developments in technology, industry, and the job market.
- iv. Support internships and apprenticeships, giving students hands-on experience in the workplace and helping them to develop the skills they need to succeed in their careers.
- v. Provide continuing education programs, giving employees the opportunity to develop new skills and adapt to changes in the job market.
- vi. Conduct regular evaluation and monitoring of the outcomes of our educational programs to ensure that they meet the demands of the job market and help students to find meaningful employment.

## 1.27 Harnessing the potential of fellow Bhutanese living overseas

We recognize that almost 20% of our population lives overseas. We are grateful to our Bhutanese abroad for supporting their family members, relatives and community members back home. The Bhutanese population living abroad has become central to Bhutan's dream of becoming a well-developed prosperous nation. They will continue to matter in shaping our country's future as their financial, intellectual and social contributions to our national endeavors increase.





Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Institute incentives to encourage Non-resident Bhutanese to invest in Bhutan.
- ii. Support activities to cater to social and spiritual needs of Bhutanese diasporas overseas.
- iii. Launch a governmental initiative entitled ‘A Smart and Expanded Bhutan’, which will engage Bhutanese individuals residing abroad in the nation’s developmental endeavors, while simultaneously addressing their cultural and social needs, thus enabling them to uphold their Bhutanese identity regardless of their geographical location.
- iv. Institute mechanisms and platforms to make use of expertise, capital and exposure of Bhutanese living overseas to build our nation.

### **1.28 Promoting Bhutan as a premier MICE destination: in pursuit of prosperity through productive exchange**

As we look towards the future of Bhutan, we recognize the significance of economic diversification and sustainable development. To achieve these goals, it is imperative to tap into the potential of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) as a powerful driver of progress. MICE offer a unique opportunity to showcase our nation’s natural beauty, rich culture, and warm hospitality to the world while generating economic growth and fostering cultural exchange. By pledging to make Bhutan a premier MICE destination, we will embark on a path that not only enriches our economy but also strengthens our global standing, ensuring a brighter and more prosperous future for our beloved nation and her people.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Invest in MICE infrastructure development to make them state-of-the-art infrastructure, including modern convention centers, exhibition halls, and conference facilities. Preference will be given to the private sector to carry out such works.
- ii. Undertake strategic marketing and promotion campaigns and participate in renowned MICE exhibitions to raise awareness about Bhutan’s unique offerings.
- iii. Streamline regulations and offer attractive incentives to encourage MICE organizers to choose Bhutan.





- iv. Undertake capacity building and skill development against the backdrop that the success of MICE events depends on skilled professionals. We will invest in training programs for event organizers, hospitality personnel, and local vendors.-
- v. Adopt sustainable practices in all aspects of MICE tourism to honor our commitment to environmental conservation.
- vi. Ensure cultural integration to incorporate Bhutanese culture into MICE events, providing attendees with authentic experiences and opportunities for cultural exchange.
- vii. Collaborate with industry (MICE) experts and organizations to leverage their expertise in event planning and execution to ensure Bhutan is on par with global MICE standards.
- viii. Adopt public-private partnership model in driving the MICE industry’s growth.

**1.29 Rural Life Insurance**

- i. Revise the rural life insurance scheme by increasing both beneficiary and government contributions to increase the takeaway benefits.





## 2

## In pursuit of environmental conservation

### Leading the world in championing environmental and ecological well-being

One noble thing Bhutan is known for is championing the protection of the natural environment. Its efforts in conserving the environment have earned global recognition and goodwill resulting in green development partners. Even as the country is confronted with developmental challenges, it has not resorted to indiscriminate extraction of natural resources and timber at the cost of ecological health – remaining true to the vision of our Druk Gyalpo who promulgated environmental protection and conservation as one of the primary national goals. Ecological well-being is important for Bhutan given its geographical location that is ecologically fragile and vulnerable to both natural and man-made disasters. We recognize that the well-being and future of mankind is intertwined with the well-being and sustenance of the natural environment. We shall not waver from Bhutan’s commitment to stay environmentally healthy and green – where our people thrive in harmony with nature.

### 2.1 Protecting and nurturing our environment: leaving a legacy of environmental stewardship

We are proud to live in a country whose Constitution mandates to maintain a minimum of 60% of forest coverage at all times. Having approximately 70 percent of the country under green cover today is our pride. However, we recognize the environmental and ecological danger for our future generations and the region if we get complacent in safeguarding our already fragile ecological sphere. We shall remain committed to promoting sustainable development that strikes a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. And also leave a legacy of environmental stewardship for future generations.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Maintain Bhutan as a carbon-neutral country.
- ii. Maintain forest coverage at 60 percent at all times.
- iii. Increase forest coverage to protect natural resources, biodiversity and wildlife habitats.





- iv. Promote ecotourism as one of the world-class tourism products with focus on local community development.
- v. Invest in renewable energy sources such as hydropower, biogas, wind and solar energy to minimize the harmful impact of depending on fossil fuels.
- vi. Promote and support renewable energy-based transportation to reduce carbon footprint and promote sustainable energy practices.
- vii. Promote and support waste reduction strategies, recycling programs, and composting initiatives.
- viii. Collaborate with other countries and international organizations to address climate change and promote sustainable development given that environmental degradation has become a global concern.

### 2.1.1. Mitigating and adapting to climate change: sustaining life and livelihood

We recognize that climate change is the greatest man-made threat to the survival of human race the earth's history and future is confronted with. Like any grave pandemics, climate change knows no national boundaries. It is a pervasive encompassing global danger that looms large to eat into the mankind and natural environment's life. Bhutan is no exception and even more vulnerable given its ecological fragility and limited economic resilience. We will take holistic regional and global approach to tackle climate change.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Establish a global center for environment and climate studies in Bhutan using the current available physical infrastructures, viz. RUB colleges and other relevant government institutions.
- ii. Establish a high-powered body to undertake carbon trading to leverage our carbon neutral position.
- iii. Introduce world-class higher studies degrees on environment and climate change in relevant RUB colleges to attract international students and scholars.
- iv. Initiate and bring in Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects.
- v. Review and strengthen climate adaptation policy and its implementation.
- vi. Incentivize community projects geared toward mitigating and adapting to climate change.



## 1.2. Protecting and conserving water sources: ensuring human lifeline

The depletion of water sources because of climate change, global warming and environmental degradation has been a global concern. We are aware of the lack of timely intervention to protect and preserve our water sources, which pose existential threat to human survival. Therefore, we shall give priority to ensuring our citizens have access to adequate clean drinking and irrigation water to enable them to live a quality life.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Provide sufficient clean drinking and irrigation water to all the citizens.
- ii. Put in place financial resources and a strategy to conserve all water bodies in the country, with focus on those that support communities.
- iii. Undertake an aggressive national project to revive dried-up water sources throughout the country. This will be one of the flagship programs.
- iv. Coordinate with neighboring countries to harness our water resources without compromising their riparian rights.
- v. Review Water Act of Bhutan 2011 to address the changing needs especially to strengthen the water flagship program.

### 2.2.1. Sustainable use of forest resources: generating rural income and employment

There is an urgent need to address a contradiction of increasing rural-urban migration and abundant forest resources that can be harnessed sustainably. A strategy that allows and supports a mindful and sustainable use of forest resources has a huge potential to empower our rural population and help conserve the environment.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Encourage and support community and private forests as a major source of income for rural people.
- ii. Address the anomalies regarding Tsamdro and Sokshing.





- iii. Address the difficulties of people in getting access to forest-based resources such as timber, sand, stone. We will undertake a comprehensive review of the existing policies to ensure our people have access to these important basic resources at reasonable and affordable price.
- iv. Ease the export rules and formalities of timber from private and community forests.

### 2.3. Protecting our biodiversity: ensuring intergenerational wealth

We are cognizant that our country's international image is anchored to our efforts and respects to protecting and maintaining our biodiversity. At home, our country's future is dependent on the national ability and agility to exist with the nature. The rich biodiversity is our national wealth. And its protection could not be more important as the global community faces the onslaught of ruthless impact of climate change that is shaping a grim inter-generational future.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Protect Bhutan's image as a top global biodiversity hotspot.
- ii. Ensure timely and proper protection of species and their habitats through appropriate legislative interventions and capacity building of relevant agencies.
- iii. Educate and incentivize people to conserve our biodiversity.
- iv. Compensate communities and stakeholders to protect critical habitats of species and ecosystems.
- v. Explore opportunities in bio-trading in line with national and international laws.

### 2.4. Managing waste: keeping the country clean and green

Inadequate and ineffective waste management adversely impacts not just the human population's health, but also the natural environment, including river systems and biodiversity. The quality of our lives is intricately tied to the cleanliness of both our immediate surroundings and the broader environment.



Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Make Bhutan one of the cleanest countries in the world by privatizing waste management and enforcing stringent waste management rules. We would do this without much cost by advocating community and institutional responsibilities.
- ii. Put in place a comprehensive strategy to ensure proper waste management in the country.
- iii. Put in place accountability mechanisms to ensure waste management by central agencies and local functionaries.
- iv. Incentivize private enterprises that engage in recycling and reusing wastes.
- v. Undertake adequate advocacy programs to educate and involve people in managing waste.

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# 3

## In pursuit of advancing cultural identity and creativity

### 3.1. Preservation and Promotion of Culture

The rapid spread of globalization and economic expansion has led to the erosion of distinct cultures and traditions in nations that lacked the financial resources to shield from the influence of more dominant popular cultural values and norms. Bhutan is acutely experiencing this phenomenon as a growing number of Bhutanese move to foreign lands in pursuit of improved economic and social prospects. The pressing concern and imminent risks before us are the potential fading of our cultural and traditional essence as time progresses. Our nation runs the risk of becoming weakened in this regard. After all, our exceptional culture and traditions have long served as the bedrock of our national identity and heritage.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i) Establish a world-class research center for Himalayan Studies where both national and international scholars and students interested in the Himalayan studies can work.
- ii) Facilitate the establishment of Bhutanese cultural centers in the countries where Bhutanese diasporas are growing to cater to their cultural needs.
- iii) Broaden and strengthen cultural education in schools.
- iv) Promote traditional arts and crafts and further the country's reputation as a source of unique artistic traditions.
- v) Support local artisans and artists in exploring international markets and collaborations.
- vi) Preserve and promote traditional festivals to maintain our cultural vibrancy and traditional values that bind our communities.
- vii) Support the promotion of traditional music and dance, language and literature as they are critical and integral ingredients of our cultural personality, integrity and uniqueness.
- viii) Review all the existing Acts, rules and regulations on cultural conservation and promotion to make Bhutanese culture responsive to changing times.



### 3.2. Enhancing cultural creativity: supporting and promoting entertainment industry

The entertainment industry is an essential part of any society, as it serves as a platform for cultural expression, creativity, and storytelling. It brings people together, creates jobs, and drives economic growth. For Bhutan, the entertainment industry has been her cultural identity that is deeply ingrained in the fabric of the society. Therefore, both from cultural and economic perspectives, we recognize the need to support and promote the industry.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Create more platforms and events to showcase local talents, provide training and mentorship, and offer financial support, where necessary, to help them develop their skills.
- ii. Foster and facilitate collaborations between local and international artists to learn from each other and to create time-responsive cultural contents.
- iii. Invest in cultural conservation and promote traditional Bhutanese music, dance, and arts through various channels such as television, radio, and online platforms.
- iv. Explore to provide incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, and other financial incentives to promote the growth of the industry and attract more investment.
- v. Strengthen the Copy Right Laws to protect the intellectual property rights of artists, creators, and production houses.
- vi. Work with the Film Association of Bhutan to leverage Bhutan's cultural and scenic beauty to promote film tourism and create employment opportunities for local communities.
- vii. Establish a clear and transparent regulatory framework for the entertainment industry to operate efficiently.

### 3.3. Building a compassionate society: taking care of our elders

The number of our elderly people is on the rise. We recognize their significant contributions to our society and economy. It is our honor and responsibility to ensure their dignity, comfort, and well-being in their golden years.







Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Ensure that our aging population has access to high-quality healthcare services.
- ii. Initiate social security programs to ensure our senior citizens are able to have financial freedom and comfortable life in their later years.
- iii. Support spiritual teachings for our senior citizens.
- iv. Institute priority provision for senior citizens on public transport including special discount on domestic air fare.
- v. Collaborate with NGOs and community-based organizations to provide additional support and assistance to elderly citizens.
- vi. Initiate social programs to inculcate in the minds of our people that it is the intergenerational responsibility to take care of senior citizens.
- vii. Initiate social programs to educate and inculcate in the youth the value and honor of taking care of elderly members of our society.

### 3.4. Caring for the guardians of wisdom: empowering Bhutan's pensioners

Pensioners play a crucial role in Bhutanese society and community, serving as the custodians of traditional knowledge, cultural heritage, and wisdom. They are the living bridges between the past and the present, embodying the values and teachings that have shaped the nation's unique identity. As respected elders, they provide guidance, support, and a sense of continuity to younger generations, contributing significantly to the social fabric and cohesion of Bhutanese communities.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

1. Review monthly pension payments for retired citizens to ensure a more comfortable and dignified life.
2. Implement regular adjustments to pension amounts to keep pace with inflation and rising living costs.
3. Conduct regular assessments to identify and address the evolving needs of pensioners, ensuring their well-being is continually prioritized.
4. Enhance communication channels to actively seek feedback and suggestions from pensioners on improving their quality of life.





### 3.5. Nurturing a deeply Spiritual Bhutan

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa strongly believes that future of Bhutan rests in her ability to strike a chord of balance between spiritualism and materialism. More so, the spirituality has been the country's pride and moral compass. We are committed to do what a government can to advance the country's morality and spirituality. We are of the conviction that politics must be guided by compassion, spirituality, and morality of the highest standard.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Initiate and support various programs and activities to increase the spiritual well-being of our population.
- ii. Initiate targeted programs to enhance spirituality among the youth.

### 3.6. Supporting culture of sports and recreation: enhancing physical and mental well-being

We recognize that the overall well-being of an individual hinges on three different but interrelated well-beings – physical/economic well-being, mental/emotional/psychological well-being and spiritual well-being. Sports and recreation contribute to all the three well-beings. We will focus on nurturing a population with healthy mind and body.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Establish four regional sports centers.
- ii. Invest in public sports facilities, including parks, playgrounds, and sports fields for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in physical activity.
- iii. Prioritize the promotion of youth sports, including after-school programs, summer camps, and competitive leagues.
- iv. Collaborate with healthcare providers to promote physical activity as a means of disease prevention and treatment.
- v. Support athletes to take part in regional and international sports championships and tournaments. And increase the number of athletes in range of sports.
- vi. Initiate wellness programs based on the science of Sowa-Rigpa.
- vii. Undertake sports and recreational facilities development on private-public partnership.





# 4 In pursuit of strengthening good governance and administration

We recognize and believe the quality of governance determines the health and future of a country. This truth applies more to smaller countries like ours whose absorptive capacity for governance mishaps is less and margin of errors is narrow. Our Party places the highest of importance on good governance as the country's foundational lifeline. In this sphere of our work, we shall focus on building a government that is efficient, transparent, futuristic, and people-oriented, placing their welfare on top of our governance priority.

**4.1.** We respect and understand that a democratically elected government is the custodian of the people's mandate and aspirations. It has the responsibility to fulfill the pledges it made during the election campaigns and be responsive to the changing needs of the people and long-term interests of the country. To fulfill these important and sacred mandates, Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will make professional competence, leadership caliber, intellectual depth and experience non-negotiable criteria to assign cabinet portfolios. A dynamic cabinet shall ensure our government is efficient, transparent, people-oriented and futuristic.

## 4.2. Civil Service: strengthening the heart of governance

We are grateful to our civil servants for their contributions toward building our nation. The civil service has been at the heart of our nation's success and aspirations, manned by committed and disciplined professionals of leaders and cadres. In our endeavors to serve the people of Bhutan, we shall be guided by the insights and expertise of our civil servants whom we know love our nation no less than the most patriotic Bhutanese. We shall also be guided by the democratic norm that political leaders come and go following each election cycle, but the bureaucracy continues to remain a custodian of our state machineries. Therefore, we will ensure our bureaucracy is independent, competent, professional, and respectable.



Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

#### 4.2.1. Remuneration and social security for civil servants

- i. Ensure salaries are attractive and rewarding through periodic review and revision depending on the economic situation of the country and government's fiscal position.
- ii. Start home ownership scheme for civil servants (based on their affordability in different regions of the country).
- iii. Through rationalization, ensure that our civil servants are paid TA/DA that is enough to sustain while on official duty depending on the economic situation of the country and government's fiscal position.
- iv. Review the pension scheme for civil servants.

#### 4.3. Motivating civil servants for efficiency

Our party believes that financial remuneration is not the only determinant that defines a civil servant's performance. It is also the intrinsic motivation the system provides her. We are committed to building an enabling environment that allows a civil servant to realize her optimum potential to serve her fellow citizens. Further, we understand the success of Bhutan depends on the quality of services the civil service delivers. We shall be steadfast in our efforts to ensure civil servants have the resources and support they need to deliver quality services to the people.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Improve work environment by providing adequate resources and safe and secure conditions.
- ii. Make recruitment and vacancies for higher position competitive based on transparency and meritocracy, in consultation with RCSC.
- iii. Consider study period as active service to ensure timely promotions are not affected, in consultation with RCSC.
- iv. Incentivize upgradation of qualification through increased remuneration and vertical position movement, in consultation with RCSC.
- v. Support civil servants to pursue undergrad programs without having to resign from the service and with salary, in consultation with RCSC.





- vi. Give three years of business leave without pay with an option to come back to civil service. But the period will not be considered for grade promotion, in consultation with RCSC.
- vii. Put in place mechanisms to protect civil servants while performing their duty. This will allow civil servants to take risks to take impactful decisions. (For example, strengthening appellate body).
- viii. Review and amend the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) Act to include the changing roles, duties and functions of civil servants.
- ix. Promote transparency and accountability in service delivery to improve performance of civil servants.
- x. Regularize contract employees whose service is required for more than a year. And minimize the number of civil servants on contract employment.
- xi. Arrange civil servant spouses to be placed in the same location to respect the ‘institution of marriage’ and to ensure a happy and healthy family, in consultation with RCSC.

#### 4.4. Undertaking structural improvement to strengthen good governance

We believe in the importance of good governance in building a strong, prosperous and democratic Bhutan. We shall stick to the ethical and moral principles of good governance.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Strengthen the institutional framework for governance to ensure government agencies and institutions are effective, efficient, and accountable to the citizens.
- ii. Promote a transparent and accountable administration through use of modern technology and data analytics.
- iii. Empower local governments to serve the people most efficiently and services are taken closer to the people.
- iv. Streamline and ease the protracted taxation issues faced by Dzongkhag and Yenlag Thromdes.
- v. Engage people in governance through regular civic engagement and public consultation on important policy issues.



- vi. Strengthen the rule of law to ensure everyone is equal before the law, and that justice is accessible and affordable for all.

#### 4.5. Building an independent and respectable judiciary: a foundation of good governance

As one of the critical branches of government, we recognize an independent and impartial judiciary is key to ensuring the rule of law in the country. We pledge and are committed to take steps to make our judiciary trust-worthy and respectable institution that gives equal treatment to all the people.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Strengthen the independence and impartiality of the judiciary to reinforce the principles of ‘independence, impartiality and speedy administration of justice’.
- ii. Support the judiciary to protect itself from outside interference.
- iii. Increase the number of courtrooms, judges and other required human resource to improve access to justice as a ‘fundamental right of the people’.
- iv. In consultation with the judiciary, strengthen the legal framework of the country to ensure it is responsive to the changing times and in line with the global legal and justice standards.
- v. Provide timely and advanced training and support to law enforcement agencies to ensure effective and impartial law enforcement in the country.
- vi. Review and amend the Judiciary Act of Bhutan, 2007, to support the judiciary to perform better.
- vii. Reduce overall crime rates and number of people coming in conflict with laws by at least 50%.

#### 4.6. Strengthening the constitutional bodies

Protecting, respecting and supporting the independence of our constitutional bodies will be the most important guiding principle of our endeavors in ensuring efficient, responsible, and transparent governance system of our country. Within the bounds of our constitutional framework, we will strengthen the constitutional bodies and work closely with them to ensure they are able to carry out their sacred duties efficiently.





#### 4.7. Protecting and strengthening the sanctity of Parliament

As inspired by the Constitution and guided by the Druk Gyalpo, we will work hard to protect and strengthen the sanctity and sovereignty of Parliament as the highest legislative and decision-making democratic intuition in the country. We recognize the philosophical and substantive significance of Parliament as a ‘House of Democracy’ which is the undefeatable democratic expression of the will of the people in the figures of their political representation through the exercise of their ‘right to vote’ that our Constitution guarantees. We will make Parliament more accountable to the people through timely review and amendment of relevant Acts and laws. We shall set the highest of democratic standards, improve the quality of legislation and involve the local government functionaries in making laws.

#### 4.8. Supporting free press: keeping the government transparent and people informed

The quality of governance hinges on the vibrancy of the press – as it shoulders the mandate to exercise the checks and balances on government affairs and keep the people informed. Respecting the letter and spirit of the Constitution, we will ensure press freedom by giving media houses access to all information, except for concerning national security. We shall promote, support and protect the press as a responsible and effective fourth estate.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Defend the constitutional mandate to protect the freedom of the press by ensuring that the press is free to report without fear of reprisal, censorship and/or intimidation.
- ii. Work closely with Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF), The Journalists’ Association of Bhutan (JAB), Private Media Houses Association (PMHA) to build a strong press.
- iii. Promote media literacy in schools and communities to help citizens better understand how to critically evaluate news and media sources.
- iv. Foster diversity and plurality in the media sector by encouraging the growth of media outlets that enable the dissemination and representation of a wide range of perspectives and opinions.
- v. Ensure that public broadcaster/s are independent and free from political interference.





- vi. Explore to license a private broadcaster to the quality of broadcasting services.
- vii. Support the collaboration and knowledge exchange between our media houses/journalists and their counterparts in other countries to protect and promote press freedom and independence.
- viii. Introduce the Right to Information (RTI) Bill.

#### 4.9. Rooting out corruption: cleaning our society of the social ill

Corruption is a cancer that erodes the foundations of any society, and it can have devastating consequences on the political, social, and economic systems. When corruption is allowed to flourish, it can undermine the rule of law, weaken institutions, and diminish public trust in government. It can also lead to inequality, poverty, and human rights abuses, and can discourage foreign investment and damage the reputation of a country on the global stage.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Strengthen the capacity and independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to enable it to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption more efficiently.
- ii. Provide adequate financial and human resources to ACC.
- iii. Ensure that all government procurement processes are transparent, and contracts are awarded based on merit and value for money.
- iv. Implement measures such as public disclosure of government transactions, including the allocation of contracts, to prevent the abuse of power and the use of public funds for personal gain.
- v. Put in place a strong legal framework to ensure that whistleblowers are protected from retaliation and intimidation.
- vi. Promote awareness among the public about the importance of reporting corruption.
- vii. Empower civil society organizations to play a greater role in fighting corruption.
- viii. Build public trust in government by ensuring the government is transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the people.
- ix. Ensure regular communication with citizens, the establishment of grievance redressal mechanisms, and the promotion of open government initiatives.
- x. Invest in education and training programs that promote ethical behavior, accountability, and transparency in our institutions and schools.







#### 4.10. Empowering Civil Society Organizations: engaging people for effective governance

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in promoting good governance and social justice. They are critical in advocating for the rights of citizens, especially marginalized and vulnerable sections. Serving as a bridge between the government and the people, they promote transparency and accountability in the system. They also provide critical services and support to communities where the government cannot reach. Innovation and creativity in addressing social problems often originate from CSOs. Thus, their involvement in decision-making processes contributes to ensuring inclusive and participatory governance. Importantly, they contribute to the building of a strong, resilient and democratic society that protects and respects the voices and rights of citizens.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Initiate effective Government-CSO collaboration with a clearer strategic framework.
- ii. Provide operational freedom to CSOs by ensuring the protection of their freedom of association, expression, and assembly.
- iii. Work with CSOs to develop policies and programs that address critical issues affecting our society such as poverty, education, health, and environment.
- iv. Encourage public-private partnerships between CSOs and the private sector to promote sustainable development and social welfare.
- v. Streamline regulatory processes to make it easier for CSOs to register and operate in the country.
- vi. Increase engagement with CSOs through regular dialogue and consultation to enable them to contribute to policy development and implementation.
- vii. Promote transparency and accountability in the works of CSOs to ensure Bhutan has CSOs of the highest ethics and standards.

#### 4.11. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a crucial aspect of creating inclusive government policies that prioritize gender equality and fairness. It helps to reduce gender-based discrimination and ensure that everyone has access to equal opportunities, regardless of their gender. Incorporating a gender perspective into policy-making, we will cater to the unique needs and experiences of women and men and promote a more just and equitable society.



Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Establish a task force dedicated to promote gender equality and mainstream gender issues in all government policies.
- ii. Ensure that all gender-violence survivors have access to appropriate support and services.
- iii. Strengthen laws and policies to protect women's rights.
- iv. Conduct gender audits to identify areas where gender disparities exist and develop policies to address them.
- v. Implement gender-responsive budgeting, which involves analyzing the budget's impact on different genders and allocating resources accordingly.
- vi. Frame gender-sensitive indicators to track progress towards achieving gender equality.
- vii. Develop policies that address the unique needs and experiences of marginalized women, including women with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ communities.

#### **4.12. Combating drug and substance abuse: eradicating the nemesis of our society**

The problem of drug and substance abuse is a serious issue that requires a comprehensive strategy to address it. We pledge to prioritize the health and safety of our youth population by taking bold and decisive actions to control drug and substance abuse.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Ensure policy environment where all stakeholders work together to control drug abuse and take care of our youth.
- ii. Work closely with schools, colleges and public institutions to ensure that our citizens have access to accurate and reliable information about drugs and their effects.
- iii. Initiate early intervention by investing in programs that identify at-risk youth and provide them with necessary support.
- iv. Improve rehabilitation programs that provide counseling and medical treatment to overcome addiction.
- v. Strengthen and provide adequate financial and human resources to law enforcement agencies to prevent drug and substance abuse.





- vi. Work with neighboring countries to control drug trafficking in the region as it is an international problem that requires international cooperation.
- vii. Review Narcotics and Psychotropic Substance Abuse Law.
- viii. Strengthen the Law enforcement Units that looks after drug trafficking.

**4.13. Preventing suicide: saving our precious lives**

It is heart-wrenching to lose many of our dear ones to otherwise preventable tragedy of suicide. We are committed to do what the most caring government of the people can do to eliminate such social threats by promoting national mental wellness.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Support and work closely with The Pema Center.
- ii. Provide adequate funding for mental health services and ensure that mental health professionals are available to those who need help.
- iii. Eliminate barriers to mental health care such as cost and location to ensure everyone has access to high-quality care.
- iv. Establish suicide prevention hotlines staffed with trained professionals to provide individuals with a safe space to discuss their problems.
- v. Implement suicide prevention programs in schools, workplaces and communities in coordination with relevant institutions and stakeholders.
- vi. Collaborate with community organizations and CSOs.
- vii. Organize spiritual counselling from time-time.

**4.14. Taking care of the LGBTQ community**

As a citizen, it is our sacred responsibility to uphold the fundamental human rights of every individual regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We recognize the challenges our LGBTQ+ community faces, which prevent them from fully participating in social, economic, and political life.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa will:

- i. Initiate programs to educate our public about the realities of being LGBTQ, including in schools and by engaging the press.
- ii. Provide targeted support for LGBTQ individuals.



- iii. Amend laws and policies that discriminate against LGBTQ individuals.
- iv. Ensure equal access to all services.
- v. Support a national LGBTQ advocacy organization.
- vi. Collaborate with international organizations and NGOs that work on LGBTQ issues.

#### **4.15. Foreign policy: strengthening our sovereign and international personality**

While we acknowledge the necessity of staying attuned to the rapidly evolving global and regional geopolitical and economic landscape, we are committed to upholding our longstanding bilateral and multilateral ties. Our aim is to position Bhutan as a responsible and trusted member of the global community. Our foreign policy foundation will be rooted in advancing Bhutan’s security, sovereign identity, economic well-being, and national integrity while championing peace and the welfare of humanity. Throughout all our foreign policy initiatives, our Party will prioritize strengthening our connections with the People and Government of India and maintaining friendly relations with our neighboring nations.

#### **4.16. Strengthening national security: securing our future**

Bhutan’s security, sovereignty, and independence will always be Druk Phuensum Tshogpa’s core national interests. We will render our unwavering support to the security guardians of our nation – The Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Body Guards and Royal Bhutan Police.





**NA Elections  
2023-24**

# Conclusion

In this manifesto, we have earnestly laid bare our core beliefs, values, unwavering convictions, and solemn pledges, with the sincere hope that our people will exercise their collective wisdom to make the best possible judgments. We firmly believe in the indomitable power of the collective wisdom, knowing that it shall always triumph, illuminating the path we tread. Integrity and transparency have been the guiding stars throughout the creation of this document. Our pledges are not mere political rhetoric but a solemn commitment to the well-being and prosperity of our beloved nation and its citizens. We have striven to be honest, sincere, and eminently reasonable in our promises, recognizing the weight they carry in shaping our nation's future.

Perceptive readers would observe that approximately 70 percent of our pledges are intricately woven into the fabric of economic development. This emphasis is not accidental; it is a conscious choice we have made to steer our nation towards the coveted goal of economic self-reliance. We firmly believe that economic sovereignty is the bedrock upon which political and policy sovereignty stand.

Our overarching objective is to usher in an era of unparalleled economic prosperity, enhanced social well-being, and unwavering national harmony. These three objectives, we hold, are the foundational pillars of our *Tsa-wa-Sum*, the essence of our nation. Each pledge contained within this manifesto is designed to bolster these pillars, ensuring their enduring strength. In these times of rapid change, a government must be nimble and adaptable, embracing policy dexterity to respond to the ever-evolving needs of our people and our country. This manifesto shall not be a static relic but a dynamic framework that will evolve to accommodate new plans and programs aimed at realizing our country's economic prosperity and social well-being. We pledge to implement this manifesto with unwavering commitment, guided by sound policies and a resolute commitment to fiscal prudence.

In conclusion, this manifesto is not just a document; it is a solemn covenant between us and our people. It is a roadmap to a brighter, more prosperous future, a future where Bhutan's sovereignty, security, and independence stand as unassailable monuments to our collective endeavor and dedication.

*Tashi Delek*

