

IN THE NEWS

Youth anticipate the arrival of Gyalsung, embracing its promising opportunities with sense of duty

...Gyalsung leading the way as a trailblazing initiative for the youth of Bhutan

By Sonam Choki
Thimphu

The Gyalsung, Bhutan's National Service, announced its first batch of Cadets for the inaugural Gyalsung Training program, which will run from September 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025, sparking excitement among the youth.

The training for the inaugural batch will last for four and a half months. Due to its shorter duration, cadets will undertake Basic Military Training followed by courses in National Education, Leadership Development, Life Skills, and other activities.

Tenzin Syelden, a Class X student at Changangkha Middle Secondary School, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "I



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GYALSUNG

am really excited about Gyalsung. We discuss gender inequalities, and I personally believe that this program offers a great platform to bridge this gap. With a wide array of disciplines, it provides an opportunity to explore our potential and hone our skills. Most importantly, it offers a wonderful opportunity to serve our country and the King. I shall be forever grateful for this opportunity and for the noble vision of our King. I can't wait to be a part of the program."

Sangay Lhamo, a 17-year-old student at Sonamthang Central School in Zhemgang, expressed her enthusiasm for the Gyalsung program, saying, "I am excited about the Gyalsung program because I anticipate gaining various skills. Initially, I wanted

Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering's Final Report Highlights Bhutan's Resilience and Progress

...A comprehensive overview of achievements, challenges, and the path forward for Bhutan's prosperous future

Royal Wedding. In his final report as Prime Minister, Lyonchen expressed profound gratitude to His Majesty The King and Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen for their unwavering guidance and blessings that have shaped Bhutan's progress over the past five years.

The comprehensive report delved deep into the challenges faced by Bhutan, particularly during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing

Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering unveiled the fifth State of the Nation Report before the Parliament on October 13, coinciding with the 12th Anniversary of the

Bold Economic Transformation with 13th Five-Year-Plan for Private Sector Prosperity

...private sector growth and foreign investment take center stage in Bhutan's vision for economic prosperity

By Sonam Deki
Thimphu

primarily focus on boosting the private sector, signaling a strategic shift in Bhutan's economic landscape.

Prime Minister Dr. Lotay Tshering presented the State of the Nation Report to Parliament on October 13, unveiling an ambitious roadmap for the future. According to the report, the 13th Five-Year Plan will

The government aims to significantly increase private sector investment, aiming to raise it from the current 40% to over 50% by 2029, and further to 60% by 2034. Efforts will be made to

The National Digital Identity (NDI) Journey, A Digital Revolution

...nationwide launch of NDI puts Bhutan on the Global Digital Map

By Sonam Choki
Thimphu

Bhutan celebrates a milestone in its digital transformation journey with the nationwide launch of the Bhutan National Digital Identity (NDI) on October 13. The NDI serves as the cornerstone of the nation's digital economy, ushering in an

era of fast, secure, and trusted interactions between individuals and service providers. This groundbreaking achievement follows the inauguration of the National Digital Identity (NDI) project earlier this year when His Royal Highness Crown Prince Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck became Bhutan's first digital citizen on February 21, 2023.

Initiated by Royal Command, the National Digital Identity Project forms the bedrock of Bhutan's national digital transformation strategy, the Digital Drukyl Flagship Program, which aims to create an inclusive and connected tech service ecosystem across the Kingdom. Spearheaded by the Government Technology (GovTech) Agency in close cooperation with Druk Holding & Investments (DHI), the commercial arm of the Royal Government of Bhutan, the NDI aims to provide Bhutanese citizens with an advanced system for accessing government and commercial services



Bhutan Addresses Agricultural Trade Challenges and Market Dynamics

...Farmers' concerns, government initiatives, and the role of cold storage facilities discussed in National Assembly session.

By Susmika Subba
Thimphu

During the National Assembly (NA) session on October 9, Karma Wangchuk, the Member of Parliament for

Chhumig Ura constituency, highlighted the pressing issue of agricultural trade and market access in Bhutan. The concerns of farmers about the lack of domestic

Hundred Countries on a 55-Year-Old Scooter and Counting – Bhutan Marks His 100th Visited Country

...Italian adventurer shares tales of triumphs, challenges, and Bhutanese wonders

By **Sonam Deki**
Thimphu

In the realm of extraordinary travel adventures, few tales rival that of Ilario Lavarra, the intrepid Italian traveler who has embarked on a six-year odyssey exploring the world astride his trusty two wheels. Bhutan marks his 100th visited country. Recently marking a significant achievement - a century of countries covered - Ilario shared his awe-inspiring journey,

the world on a vintage Vespa. "To be honest, I never thought I would be able to cover 100 countries in this Grand Tour on a Vespa from 1968. It's already difficult on a modern motorbike, imagine on a scooter, a 55-year-old scooter! That's why, for me, it's a kind of dream, and hopefully, many more countries are still to come," he exclaimed, marveling at his own feat.

His journey is not just about racking up miles; it's a profound philosophy encapsulated in his words:

much as I can. One life, live it!"

Bhutan, a country known for its breathtaking landscapes and unique cultural heritage, left Ilario utterly enchanted. "Bhutan is like a dream come true, where all the good purposes and deep meanings become tangible in everyday life. What I am enjoying most is the wonderful connection with nature. We are part of it, and in Bhutan, it's so evident. Without it, human beings cannot be happy or seek real,

without challenges. Navigating through various countries, including those in conflict zones, he faced obstacles ranging from bureaucratic hurdles to mechanical breakdowns. Recalling his experiences, he revealed, "When you travel solo, you have to face and resolve them alone, far away from your home and comfort zone. Probably, this is the most challenging part of this journey."

Yet, amidst these challenges, Bhutan stood out as an oasis of peace and happiness. "I noticed no stress, a slow pace of life, no pollution (air or noise), and an incredible amount of green nature all around. I think this is part of the secret of Bhutanese happiness. The world could learn from this wise little country," Ilario observed, praising the Bhutanese way of life.

Ilario's wisdom, earned through his extensive travels, serves as a guiding light for aspiring adventurers. His advice is simple yet profound: "Don't be afraid of other people's fears. Do whatever makes you feel alive, don't care about other people's values or ideas, just respect them, of course, but follow your dreams strongly and deeply."

As for his future adventures, Ilario remains



as open-minded as the road ahead of him. "Mine is a world tour, but honestly, I am just following the flow of it. You cannot have any schedule or route map in such long journeys. I am going to Australia, then America, and when I finish one day, I think I have just the moon to explore! I need a Vespa spaceship!" he exclaimed with an infectious spirit of exploration.

Amidst the vast tapestry of his adventures, one particular incident in Bhutan stands out, leaving a smile on his face. "When I visited the 'Tiger's Nest' monastery, there was a group of faithful people offering 300 bottles of beer to their God. After a few hours when I came down from my visit at the monastery, there was a cow, completely laid down and a bit strange. I asked if it was dying. They just replied to me it was completely drunk! She drank all the beer from the ground! Cheers!"

Ilario's journey continues, weaving through countries and cultures, reminding the world that dreams are best pursued on two wheels, under the vast open sky.



filled with challenges, profound realizations, and heartwarming encounters in Bhutan.

Ilario's journey began with a dream that many deemed impossible: touring

"I am traveling because, as I wrote on my Vespa, I don't want to have any regrets in my life, in this unique and wonderful gift we have received. I try to enjoy it as

deep meanings," he shared, emphasizing the profound impact of Bhutan's natural beauty on his soul.

However, Ilario's journey has not been

Bhutan's Public Accounts Committee Urges Comprehensive Reforms in National Irrigation Policy for Food Security

By **Phurpa Wangmo**
Thimphu

Bhutan is taking significant steps to enhance its irrigation systems and achieve food self-sufficiency, as recommended by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The Department of Agriculture (DoA) is now the lead agency tasked with overseeing irrigation system development and management, including integrating the National Irrigation Master Plan (NIMP) into successive five-year plans, aligning with the goal of food self-sufficiency.

In a parallel effort, the Department of Water (DoW) is urged to expedite the operationalization of the National Integrated Water

Resource Management (IWRM) Plan, aiming to bolster food security.

The PAC conducted a performance audit of irrigation systems, focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, and economic aspects. The audit exposed deficiencies, such as the lack of an institutional framework for Integrated Water Resources Management, failure to implement such an approach, and coordination challenges among agencies involved in irrigation development.

During committee sessions, the spotlight was on distribution challenges within villages, exacerbating irrigation issues. Effective guidance and policy interventions were deemed essential.

Insufficient collaboration among agencies added to the challenges of managing and resolving these issues.

Reviewing the operationalization of long-term plans in the National Irrigation Master Plan (NIMP) and National Irrigation Policy (NIP) through Five-Year Plans unveiled anticipated benefits from irrigation investments, including increased crop yields, employment generation, support for livestock development, and climate-resilient agriculture. However, it also highlighted challenges, including insufficient research, maintenance issues, incomplete irrigation system inventories, and declining paddy production.

To address these issues, the PAC has proposed measures: the Department of Water (DoW) leads the implementation of the National Integrated Water Resource Management Plan, and collaboration between the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the Department of Infrastructure and Development (DoID) is encouraged to adopt sustainable irrigation technologies. Maintaining a comprehensive inventory of irrigation systems and multidisciplinary feasibility studies for proposed projects are urged.

The importance of strategic policy interventions to tackle water distribution challenges was stressed. Water resource allocation

based on specific land requirements and revising the Water Act of Bhutan 2011 to overcome distribution challenges are vital. While the establishment of Water Users' Associations (WUAs) is legislatively required, functional WUAs are still limited, except for major irrigation schemes.

The committee proposed five key recommendations, including establishing WUAs in collaboration with Local Governments and implementing a Standard Operating Procedure among relevant departments. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests was urged to establish administrative mechanisms for the development and monitoring of irrigation infrastructure.