



Commemorating His Majesty's 41st Birth Anniversary

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To pay tribute to a great leader and to commemorate the 41st Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the King, a photographic competition was organized whereby participants were asked to highlight the spirit of Bhutan-India Friendship in a digital still photo.

The chief guest Foreign Secretary Kinga Singye and Indian Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj gave away the prizes to the winners of a photo story competition based on the theme of India Bhutan Friendship. The competition was jointly launched by the Embassy of India and Bhutan Echoes on 16 December.

In her address, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj



The prize winners with a merit certificate and a smart phone each with the latest features

paid tribute to His Majesty the King and his wisdom, vision and compassion in steering the unique partnership and friendship between India and Bhutan. She also conveyed her warm wishes on the occasion of His Majesty's 41st birthday.

Bhutan-India friendship crossed more than 50 years and Ambassador said that this is ever growing,

ever-strong. "Through the myriad areas of cooperation and collaboration, not least our people to people ties, there is a clear emotional thread that runs through this friendship."

She added that she has been in Bhutan for a while and she do know that Bhutanese youths are supremely talented. "We saw that through the painting competition that we organ-

ized in tribute of 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi last year and we have seen that again through the photography competition that we have helmed this time."

The Foreign Secretary during the prize awarding ceremony, referred to the multi-faceted elements of bilateral cooperation between both countries. He also complimented the winners of the photo

story competition that had brought to the fore several elements of the strong bonds of amity between both countries over the last five decades.

The first prize-winning entry was a photograph by Norbu Gyeltshen of the reception hosted by His Majesty for Indian teachers in 2018 organized as an event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan.

The other three winners were Dechen Choden, Milan Gurung and Kencho Wangmo whose photo entries depicted the unique bonds of friendship between both countries. All prizewinners received a merit certificate and a smart phone each with the latest features from the Embassy of India.

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Age-old Melodies from Trongsa

him but leave him a night there, and that everyone from the village must come for the reception next day with well-prepared songs and dances.

The following day, people gathered in front of statue with all the offerings while the women started performing the zhem. It was said that right after the zhem was sung the men could easily carry the Jow statue as it had turned as light as the dried leaves.

The culture officer Tsewang Rinzin added that people of Tangbi have plans of keeping the copyright for the zhem as they won't teach or perform in other communities and even the gewogs of Trongsa district.

The zhem is significantly preserved with the strong trademark that doesn't allow to perform in other communities out of the Tangbi village and now it has become correspondent performing traditional art dances for the Choetse dzong during the National events and dzongkhag celebrations.

Will the Zhem survive the tides of time?

The trends of main vo-

calist defines the survival of zhem which congenital pass onto the daughters of existing lead singer. However, the congenital track of lead zhem singer changes if the daughter is not perfect.

Currently, a 54 year old Phurba Wangmo leads the zhem performance. She took the role after Tshewang Lhatshok as she is not direct successor to 84 years old Aum Seldon who is mother of existing lead vocalist.

Aum Phurba said, after my mother, "Tshewang Lhatshok took care of leading zhem as I was not perfect and very young. Now, I am have been 30 years being main vocalist".

Meanwhile, a 37 year old Ugyen Zam was nominated as the next main vocalist of the zhem though she doesn't belong to family member of the current lead singer. The track changes if the daughter of lead singer fails to lead the member.

Lam phuntsho shares that Tangsibji zhem will not be sent away from the confines of Zalamchu in the west and Kikila in Bumthang towards east, and will remain forever in their soils.

Aum Phuba, one of the Zhem singers in her community said the song will never go extinct in the community as there are people like her who will keep the flames of the zhem burning.

However, she feels it that it has become less familiar than early days with the invasion of new songs and modern gadgets like mobile phones, TV and radio that belt out songs after songs.

In addition, she says the zhem is not easily catchable as it is a classic song with tricky lyrics which are hard to understand. Aum Phuba believes that young girls today are keener on learning new zhungdra songs as it is easy to learn and sing. She, however, is confident that there are women who are capable of teaching the zhem to their daughters and keep the tradition alive.

The dzongkhag Culture Officer rigidly said that although it is never a guarantee they still believe that the zhem will survive the ravishes of time.

Promotion and preservation

Home Minister Lyonpo Sherub Gyeltshen said

that culture is essentially important and without which peace and sovereignty of the nation cannot be emboldened. He said Bhutanese culture and traditions are closely adapted to spiritual actions to minimize the five poisons and transform to a good human being.

He suggested that promotion and preservation of culture should start from the basic foundation of education. "It is time to introduce advocacy learning in schools to impart the knowledge about importance culture," he said.

The lyrics and recorded version of the zhem is expected to be archived in Royal Art of Performance Academic (RAPA) as it was studied under supervision of late principal Kinzang Dorji.

According to senior instructor Pema Samdrup in RAPA claimed that there no archived lyrics of Tangsibjee zhem as the late principal couldn't present the research paper before he passed away.

He said, "the RAPA have plans set to delve upon traditional songs and music for preservation and promotion of regional or

local songs to promote."

However, Bhutan Songs and Music Research Centre has full recorded version with audio visual presents and the organization is under study of the songs for more details.

Tangsibji Gup Gembo dorji said that in order to preserve the zhem the local government will look upon the possibilities to set concrete agenda to ensure more youth participations with regulations to learn zhem for students during winter vacations.

Ugyen Tshomo from Tangbi residing in Thimphu aspires to preserve the zhem as she had been compiling lyrics and coping with tones. She said, "an advanced research on zhem need to conducted because numerous sources with different tales can confuse the zhem lovers."

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