

The Bhutanese

VOL 11 ISSUE 17 SATURDAY 30 APRIL 2022 NU 10

LEADING THE WAY



Unemployed and affected by the pandemic people are leaving for Australia in search for a brighter future

Page 04



Film industry says reopening movie theatres at 50 percent capacity will not be enough to recoup losses and expenses

Page 09



29 April 2022: His Majesty The King granted an Audience to the Foreign Minister of India, who is on a two day visit to Bhutan (Story on page 09)

Mandatory quarantine for inbound travelers likely to be removed in next 2 to 3 months

Karma Yuden/ Thimphu

According to the Chair of Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) Foreign Minister Dr Tandi Dorji, the government is discussing about removing quarantine requirements for inbound travelers and discussing on the formal opening of tourism.

cont. on pg 07

ACC Director stabbed and Commissioner assaulted at SC

Tenzing Lamsang/ Thimphu

In a major security lapse at the Supreme Court, the former JDWNRH President and former Trongsa Dzongda, Lhab Dorji, stabbed the ACC Director of Investigation Gyeltshen and Lhab Dorji and his family members also

assaulted the ACC Commissioner Jamtsho.

The incident happened around 3 pm on Friday just after the full bench of the Supreme Court upheld the verdict of the High Court in the Trongsa Land case.

Lhab Dorji and family members walked out of the court first and

into the passage outside. Then the ACC team comprising of the ACC Director of Investigation Gyeltshen, ACC Commissioner Jamtsho and the ACC Chairperson Deki Pema bowed to the full bench and proceeded to

cont. on pg 10

India and Nepal decline to share copy of agreement whereby Nepal gets cheaper fuel than Bhutan

Tenzing Lamsang/ Thimphu

As of April 2022 Bhutan is paying Nu 12.23 more per liter for petrol and Nu 11.48 more per liter

for diesel than Nepal from the same companies and even from the same geographical locations.

Unlike Bhutan, Nepal has a bilateral agreement between the two

countries on the sale of fuel which was renewed in March 2022 between

cont. on pg 11

Monitoring is next challenge after Enagic is declared to be a Pyramid Scheme

Tenzing Lamsang/ Thimphu

With the Office of the Consumer Protection (OCP) declaring the the Enagic Alkaline Water Ionizer and Water Filtrations of Kangen Water Machine as a Pyramid Scheme that is forbidden in Bhutan, the next big headache is monitoring.

Though there are no exact figures there are significant numbers of those claiming

cont. on pg 03

STCBL
State Trading Corporation of Bhutan Ltd.

HIGH PERFORMANCE LUBRICANTS

POWER TO PERFORM

Please Contact at (Pling) - 17939427 | 17451016 (Thimphu) | email - cash_division@stcb.bt

HP LUBRICANTS™

PREMIUM AUTOMOTIVE AND INDUSTRIAL OILS

India's MEA Minister makes a visit



Prime Minister Lyonchhen DASHO Dr. Lotay Tshering with Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India

Staff Reporter/ *Thimphu*

Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India is in Bhutan for an official visit from 29-30 April 2022, at the invitation of Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Dr. Jaishankar is accompanied by senior officials of the Government of India. This is the first high-level official visit since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The External Affairs Minister received Audiences with His Majesty The King and His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. He also called on Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister, and met with Lyonpo Dr. Tandi

Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and discussed matters of mutual interest.

During the visit, Dr. Jaishankar and Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji virtually inaugurated the Four-lane road from Jungshina to Chubachu, Bajo-Khuruthang Secondary National Highway and new Bus Terminal in Bumthang. To support Bhutan's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Jaishankar handed over 2,000 boxes of essential medical supplies to Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji.

A release from the foreign minister said the visit is in keeping with the long-established tradition of regular exchange of high-level visits

between Bhutan and India. It said the External Affairs Minister's visit will further strengthen the already existing close ties of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

The MEA Minister in a tweet said he covered hydropower, connectivity, trade, space, health and digital issues in his discussion with the Foreign Minister.

While with the PM the MEA minister said they exchanged views on current global and regional developments that impact us all and he appraised the PM on the progress of bilateral cooperation, including the development partnership.

Film industry says reopening movie theatres at 50 percent capacity will not be enough to recoup losses and expenses

Tshering Ngedup Thobchog/
Thimphu

With the movie theatres closed for more than two years, the film industry incurred considerable losses as shootings were impeded, and the film releases and screening were put on halt, owing to the pandemic.

About 40 films are waiting to be screened at various movie theatres limited to just a few dzongkhags, according to Chencho Dorji, the President of Film Association of Bhutan.

"In order for the movies to be screened across the country, it will generally take two years due to limited theatres, and also due to the fact that we do not have official movie distributors; the producers, themselves, are the distributors and have to travel around screening the movie, seeking permission from schools etc. Also, screening two different movies simultaneously in the same area at the same time will thwart the revenue generated from each movie, as the consumers may not watch two movies on the same day, so we generally screen one movie at a time. Our main worry is

that it will take a long, long time to screen all 40 pending movies across the country," said Chencho Dorji.

He also said that financial institutions, like banks, do not have enough confidence to invest in the film industry, and they are not willing to give loans and production budget since the revenue generated from the tickets is barely able to recoup the expenditure. So the production budget are either generally borrowed from private moneylenders or met from their own pockets. Out of the 40 films, 25 films are running on heavy losses, Chencho Dorji pointed out.

For those who took loans from the government, there was a certain waiver and Kidu, but for those that borrowed from the private moneylenders, there was no such thing and they are in dire predicament, said the President.

In terms of ngultrums, this could translate to about a loss of Nu 15-20 million suffered by each filmmaker that borrowed from private moneylenders.

Another official from the film association said that the government's decision to operate theatres at 50 percent

capacity would seriously hamper the film industry.

"Our biggest problem is limited number of theatres in the country. When the number of audience is reduced, the movie will have to be screened again and again, which will reduce the customer turnover (like the law of diminishing return) and the revenue generation will be negatively impacted. A bad movie that has 100 percent watchers will make far greater revenue than a marvelous movie that has been screened at half its capacity for over and over again. Moreover, when the movies are screened again, they lose their 'freshness', some audience may even spoil the movie to other audiences or it might get leaked outside," said the official.

Regarding the sequence in which the movie will be screened, the official said generally the order in which the review certificate has been issued, is followed at the theatres.

"It depends on the date on which the review certificate has been issued from the NFC for the movie. The NFC has set of guidelines and criteria to

determine if the movie is fit to be screened to the public. If it does not meet certain criteria, the film will be asked to be amended to fit the criteria," said the official.

The pandemic has greatly affected the industry, but according to the official, the film industry has been surviving on the Kidu initiative and also on the fact that OTTP streaming services, like Samuh has been screening their movies, not withstanding the fact that revenue generated from streaming online is far less than from screening.

However, those that did not get a chance to stream their movies did not generate any revenue. Other challenges faced are inefficient distribution system, market constraint, unwillingness of financial institutions to invest in the industry and providing advanced training to the film crew.

The filmmaking has three processes; production, distribution and exhibition, out of which exhibition proved to be the most challenging process while there was no decline in production.

"The production team

produces the content while the distributor buys the movie from the producer and distributes to the exhibition centers like movie theatres. Right now, we have production teams, limited exhibition centers, and we don't have distributors at all and the main reason why we don't have distributors is because we don't have cinema halls in all twenty dzongkhags," added the President.

A major problem faced by the film industry is the leakage and piracy of movies.

"It (piracy) is something that we have no control over. It is difficult to catch the perpetrator but if they are found, they are made to pay fines. Especially during the pandemic times, the filmmakers have lost a lot of skilled and professional crews. They had to find alternative sources of livelihood, and all of our filmmakers have been suffering. But we are hopeful that we might be in the position to revive the industry, and get the full support from the government, in terms of both finances and policies. We have submitted a request to the PM's Office," said Chencho Dorji.