

INTERNATIONAL JURISTS AWARD, 2011 FOR HONORABLE CHIEF JUSTICE OF BHUTAN

Thimphu 28th June 2011: The Honorable Chief Justice of Bhutan has been awarded the International Jurists Award for 2011 by the International Council of Jurists in a special ceremony.

The award was to be presented by a friend and fellow Chief Justice, the Right Honorable Lord Phillips of the Supreme Court of UK in a ceremony on 22nd June in London. However, owing to prior commitments, Honorable Chief Justice could not be in London to receive the award. Therefore, the President of the International Council of Jurists has travelled to Bhutan directly from London after their annual Conference to present the award.

The President of the International Council of Jurists in his address said that *"...with the unanimous consent and approval from the renowned jurists for the contribution and selfless effort made by the Chief Justice of Bhutan as respected and appreciated by the members of the International Jurist Council for his contribution in the field of judicial reforms, establishment of the democratic institutions under the dynamic leadership and the establishment of Supreme Court of Bhutan, with its first renowned Supreme Court Judgment. ..."*

In a letter to the Chief Justice of Bhutan, the Right Honorable Lord Phillips, President, Supreme Court of the United Kingdom stated that *"No one deserves such an award more than you. I have been singing the praises of the Constitution to all whom I meet. Your work is first in all leading the drafting this and then persuading the people and the General Assembly of Bhutan to accept it mean that much of the credit for it goes to you personally."*

The award ceremony was attended by Justices of Supreme Court and High Court, Judges from the Dzongkhags, Staff, media persons and many well wishers. The Cabinet Ministers also offered their good wishes. The award conferred on the Honorable Chief Justice of Bhutan is also recognition of the rightful place of the Bhutanese legal system amongst the judiciaries of South Asia and the world at large.

In his acceptance speech the Hon. Chief Justice of Bhutan, Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye stated that *"...recognition is one of the most powerful forms of motivation which encourages excellence and deters mediocrity. Therefore, it is my distinct pleasure and a great honour to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the International Council of Jurists for bestowing upon me this Award. I am deeply touched. It is a pride for me to join the luminaries and the galaxy of past recipients. Thank you for acknowledging my modest contribution to the cause of Justice and the evolution of Bhutanese political system under our enlightened Monarchs. This Award honours and propagates the vision of the Council 'to promote the administration of justice and law', to which I renew my commitment. I will endeavor to be worthy of the noble vision of the council."*

This honour is not only for me but also a timely gift to the Judiciary of Bhutan with the unfolding of parliamentary democracy and changes in judicial, legislature and political systems of our country. I am privileged to be a part of these profoundly meaningful changes initiated by our visionary Monarchs...

Rabjam Pelden Wangmo, Registrar General of the High Court in her opening remarks said, *“...the honorable Chief Justice is a premier scholar of Bhutanese jurisprudence, palace etiquette, customs and tradition, a deeply religious and humble personality, a patient teacher and a leader, a dedicated champion of justice who has worked tirelessly for the development of the Judiciary and therefore, a man worthy of our gratitude and respect.”*