“There is no substitute to living by a simple rule... I will not be corrupt and I will not tolerate corruption in others”

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Personal leadership of leaders and managers as practiced by some of the notable international organizations like the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) www.gopacnetwork.org, are very effective initiatives in promoting good governance. In Bhutan, the parliamentarians can play a pivotal role in promoting good governance, a clean and transparent system; run efficiently and effectively for the needs of the people and is judicious and righteous for the good of the nation as a whole. Parliamentarians’ wise influence on legislation and perhaps most effectively through exemplary personal leadership role model, can make a big difference. An important requirement for such a blossoming of an exemplary governance system that best serves the interest of the nation and its citizens. And it should rightly be so because the public has entrusted their confidence in our leaders by electing them.

Corruption has many adverse impacts on the political, social and economic system of a country. In an effort to combat corruption through exemplary leadership, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) organized an interactive session with the parliamentarians on 31st July 2008. The members were briefed on the forms and causes of corruption in Bhutan, policies and strategy adopted by ACC to fight corruption and the challenges faced in upholding the government’s policy of “Zero Tolerance to Corruption.”

The members pledged their support to fight corruption. They also pointed out that an improved coordination between the ACC and Royal Audit Authority (RAA) is important to limit the duplication of efforts. Similarly harmonization between ACC and the grievance cell at the Prime Minister’s office is necessary for effective action. ACC was also asked for proactive investigation to increase risks and costs of corruption. The parliamentarians emphasized that remunerations and incentives for officials working in ACC is essential for integrity and performance of their duties without fear and prejudice. Value education in schools in partnership with the Ministry of Education was also acknowledged as potential long term preventive strategy.

The role of media in good governance

“One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it. Another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects” - Mahatma Gandhi.

A responsible media has an important role in upholding freedom, and in expanding education and social reforms and change. Media can help people by giving them the voice to be heard and heeded to; the information for people to make choices, decide rationally and take the right course of action beneficial to them and in building an informed citizenry culture. Corruption, transparency and accountability are challenging issues that need to be addressed.
According to Section 129 declaration “was organized with the national Council and national Assembly total 25 total 47 analysis of the causes and in developing effective strategic systematic process. It provides framework for identifying alternative to help spark plans into action. CRM is a tool to are some of the concerns of the public organizations. corruption risks and address it with appropriate measures, we start? How do we start? How do we identify and assess indicating the seriousness to fight corruption. But where do the exercise proved useful and very interactive. ACC decided to adopt the tool to assess corruption risks and developing preventive measures. It will be piloted with some agencies before it is adopted as standard tool for corruption risk management. CRM is one output of a short course attended by ACC officials in South Korea. The course was conducted by the Anti-corruption & Civil Right Commission (ACRC) – KOICA and UNDP.

LIFESTYLE WATCH-PARLIAMENTARIANS DECLARE ASSETS

The Anti-Corruption Act of Bhutan 2006 states "A public servant or a person serving under a non-governmental organization or such other organization using public service shall declare his income, asset and liability and that of his spouse and dependent in accordance with the guideline and from prescribed by the Commission". According to Section 129 declaration has to be made within three months after assuming office, annually thereafter and three months prior to vacation of the office. Taking 1st May 2008 as the appointment day the parliamentarians were notified to declare their assets on or before 31st July 2008. The notification was served through the National Assembly and National Council Secretariat. As on 22nd August 2008, ACC received the declaration forms of all the members.

DETAILS OF THE ASSET DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT

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<th>National Council</th>
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<td>Submitted on time</td>
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CORRUPTION RISK MANAGEMENT

Corruption ranks amongst the biggest threats to social and economic prosperity. The negative and prejudicial impacts of corruption always outweigh any perceived benefits. And, the unfortunate reality is that corruption too often occurs where there is power, and unequal access. Yet ACA does not define gifts and therefore deciding what is a gift and what constitutes gift is tricky.

ACC is drafting a comprehensive Gift Rules to address such dilemma. The gift will specify what are prohibited gifts and conditional exceptions. It will set the procedures for disposal of prohibited gifts and for public disclosure by recipients of any gift. It will also prescribe penalties for breach of its provisions. A national consultative workshop will be held in Thimphu during October 2008 before the rule is adopted for implementation.

THE ASSET DECLARATION RULES

The obligation to declare assets by the civil servants is an essential part of civil service code of conduct. The purpose of obtaining public officials’ declarations is to identify what wealth is not fairly attributable to licit sources of income. ACA also envisages asset declaration as an important tool for monitoring an unacceptable behavior of public officials. However, both ACA and civil service code do not contain exhaustive provisions and therefore certain ambiguities exist.

To simplify ambiguities and gaps a comprehensive revision to consolidate asset declaration laws and rules is on since 2007. Details of coverage (who is governed), declaration content, filing frequency and method, declaration processing, penalty for breach, public access to declarations and punishment for illegitimate use of information contained in the declarations are covered in the rule. To ensure public confidence in the process, asset declarations will be accessible to general public upon application.

The enforcement agencies are empowered not only to receive but also monitor and verify the accuracy of such declarations. The provision for online declaration and simplification of form to make it more user-friendly will be other hallmarks of the Rules. A national consultation workshop is scheduled in October 2008 in Thimphu which would be attended by amongst others the asset declaration focal persons of the agencies. Since asset declaration was done for the last three consecutive years, ACC will now invoke the provisions of the Anti-corruption Act, 2006 for default and noncompliance.

THE DEBARMENT RULES

There is no comprehensive law enabling the government agencies to debar a firm engaged in corrupt practices to obtain government contracts or transact with the government. As a result, those firms debarred by one agency are taken in by another government agency.

To plug these loopholes, ACC is drafting a comprehensive Debarment Rules in consultation with various stakeholders. The Rules will allow government agencies to solicit offers from, award contracts to, and consent to subcontracts only with responsible contractors. The Rules will not only debar a disqualified firm from entering into contract in any manner with any government agency for the duration of the debarment or suspension, it will also debar firm’s divisions, subsidiaries, affiliates and parent corporations from entering into contract in any manner with any government agency for the duration of the debarment or suspension.

To reportXMLLoader write to the Anti-Corruption Commission, P.O. Box: 1113, Thimphu, Bhutan. Call: 023-344863/6768, 3364070/FAX US ON: 023-344865. For more information visit: www.anti-corruption.org.bt