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ལྷན་རྒྱུས་གཞུང་ཚོགས་ཡིག་ཚང་།

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

Cabinet Secretariat
Gyal Yong Tshogkhang
Thimphu : Bhutan

Press Release

The Committee of Secretaries (CoS) is an important institutional arrangement established to enhance good governance and promote transparency, accountability, efficiency and professionalism. The CoS meets once every week to ensure that the executive functions of the Royal Government are implemented efficiently and effectively by coordinating government policies, programs and projects among the ministries.

The CoS, whose membership comprises of all the government secretaries and the cabinet secretary, functioned independently without any interference of the Lhengye Zhungtshog. The CoS enjoyed the complete trust and confidence of the Government and their considered views and recommendations were taken seriously by the Lhengye Zhungtshog.

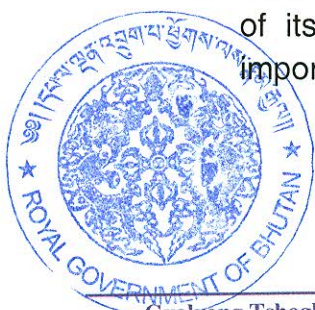
The CoS had discussed the allegations of corruption made by ENERTIA, an Indian publication, on four consecutive meetings conducted between 2 October and 27 November 2014. The proceedings and decisions of these meetings were not reported to the Prime Minister or any other minister.

The CoS decided to request for the Government of India's intervention in the allegations of corruption made by ENERTIA against a senior civil servant in Bhutan. A letter to that effect was sent on behalf of the Royal Government by the Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2 December 2014 without consulting or informing the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The content and language of the letter could have serious foreign policy implications. The Office of the Attorney General had advised against raising the issue formally with the Government of India without the Royal Government first verifying the allegations and facts.

The Lhengye Zhungtshog learnt about the letter on 9 December by accident, one week after it had been sent, and almost 10 weeks after the CoS first decided to inform the Government of India.

In view of the above, the Lhengye Zhungtshog has noted the following:

- a. That the CoS has exceeded its mandate by discussing issues outside the scope of its terms of reference, and has purposely withheld information, including important decisions, from the Government.





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- b. That members of the CoS have breached important provisions of the Civil Service Act of Bhutan and the Bhutan Civil Service Rules governing the code of conduct of senior civil servants.
- c. That the Secretary of Ministry of Economic Affairs has misused the institution of the CoS to raise, discuss and take action on allegations made on him by a foreign magazine.
- d. That the Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs misrepresented the Royal Government by sending a formal letter to the Government of India without the approval of the Foreign Minister or Prime Minister.
- e. That the Cabinet Secretary had not kept the Prime Minister informed of the CoS discussions and decisions.

In view of the above, after extensive deliberation and careful consideration, the Royal Government is compelled to take the following actions:

1. To request the Anti Corruption Commission to undertake an investigation on the allegations of corruption on the appointment of Bhutan Ventures Trading as agent for Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd.
2. To discontinue the Committee of Secretaries with immediate effect till further notice. The Government shall establish a task force to review the functions of the CoS and recommend if and how the Committee needs to be reinstated.
3. To "surrender" the Cabinet Secretary, Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Secretary of Ministry of Economic Affairs to RCSC with immediate effect for RCSC's action and/or till the completion of ACC's investigation.

Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Gyal Yong Tshogkhang, Thimphu, Bhutan
12 December 2014

