



Technicians drill into a mud-rammed wall to draw samples to be used to determine the level of earthquake resistance of traditional buildings

## Construction

### Testing traditional structures for quality

Tshering Palden

The techniques employed to build traditional buildings are increasingly being put under the scanner.

Department of Culture engineers and researchers from Japan are questioning if they are earthquake resistant.

The mud-rammed traditional buildings are being tested for earthquake resistance.

In the fifth test, researchers pulled down two walls in Depsi, Thimphu. The structure resembled the ground floor of a traditional house and was built three months ago. Officials from disaster management, engineering services, and culture departments observed the tests.

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## Policy

### New name for BOiC

*The new SOE will still have to wait for the SME banking regulation*

Tshering Dorji

The Business Information and Opportunity Centre (BOiC) is likely to be transformed into the Rural Enterprise Development Corporation, a state enterprise.

However, the former has to hang on for a while because the transition requires a regulation for SME banking, which is obligatory for the SOE to obtain a financial license.

The economic affairs minister Lekey Dorji said while the concept for the new SOE has been formed, the central bank will have to come up with a regulation to implement.

“Rural Enterprise Development Corporation will be the new name of

the SOE,” he said.

During the dzongdag conference last week, the Prime Minister also announced that similar to the Better Business Council, a better business committee would be constituted in the dzongkhags. With dzongdags as ex-officio chairpersons, the committee can approve projects worth Nu 5 million (M).

Until the Royal Monetary Authority has a small medium enterprise banking regulation, the Bhutan Development Bank will deal with the financing of projects under the Revolving Fund (RF) I as an interim measure, while the BOiC will continue with the RF II.

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## IN BRIEF

CAB annual general meeting  
» Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay will chair the annual general meeting of the Construction Association of Bhutan at the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry hall today. The three-day meeting of contractors will end tomorrow.

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## Weather

Thimphu		
Max	Min	
23	8	

Kanglung		
Max	Min	
27	12	



## Transport

# Committee to be formed to review transport issues

Tempa Wangdi

A committee will be formed to address national transport issues through improved co-ordination in transport policy and planning, it was decided at the second high level Transport Coordination Meeting held yesterday at Ministry of Works and Human Settlement (MoWHS).

The committee will review and explore the possibility of having one common transport policy to guide the currently disjointed transport sector.

"What we have in fact agreed is that a committee will be formed and a terms of reference (ToR), which encompasses all the stakeholders will be drafted by the agencies," Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) minister DN Dhungyel said. "As per that ToR the committee is going to work."

Since ToR is going to be the determining factor of the effectiveness of the committee, the MoIC minister suggested involving all stakeholders. The ToR will be drafted by representatives from relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Roads, Road Safety and Transport Authority, thromde and the policy planning divisions of MoIC and MoWHS. "If at all required you might as well have a meeting. Then only the ToR should be drafted," the minister said.

The ToR would cover the policy, implementation and financial aspect, which will be the basis for the committee to work. The ToR will be based on the outcome of yesterday's meeting.

"We see disjointed activities everywhere. Now this meeting is merely to make it more connected and viable to make sure that all the agencies involved work together trying to bring out a long lasting solution," Lyonpo DN Dhungyel said.

A brief write up from MoWHS stated that the transport sector despite being the enabler of development for other sectors is highly disjointed with no one lead agency to take up the strategic role in its development. "Components of transport sector are scattered amongst several stakeholders like transport while policy is with MoIC/Road Safety and Transport Authority, urban transport planning is with Local Government/thromdes," the report stated.

The roads are with Department of Roads. Tunnels and dry ports are with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and highway inspections are entrusted to the traffic police. "For a long time none of the agencies took up alternate modes of transport such as ropeways and waterways effectively."

Urban transport especially in Thimphu and Phuntsholing is confronted with challenges with an increasing number of Bhutanese moving to the urban areas. Subsequent increase in rates of vehicles is exerting pressure on urban environment such as land use, emissions, congestion and noise.

While measures were taken, they proved insufficient and difficult to sustain, which necessitated the need for more collaboration and effort to im-

**"We saw lot of fragmented responsibilities among different ministries, agencies, thromdes but transport as you all see is an emerging issue"**

prove urban mobility.

"We saw lot of fragmented responsibilities among different ministries, agencies, thromdes but transport as you all see is an emerging issue," MoWHS minister Dorji Choden said. "Even environmentally it is emerging as one of the main pollutants. For Bhutan transport sector is the main con-

tributor to pollution."

"We are important stakeholders and we need to do something to collaborate and coordinate on important issues of transport," Lyonpo Dorji Choden said.

The meeting was aimed to come up with one ideal common transport policy to guide the sector, one legal instrument (Act) to govern the sector and one masterplan to guide effective implementation.

Secondly, the high level meeting also intended to streamline functions among agencies by addressing duplication of efforts and ironing out inconsistencies in the RST Act 1999 and Road Act 2013. The meeting also aims at working towards structural re-organisation in the 12th Plan by placing

key transport mandates with one ministry, which is currently lacking.

The meeting is also aimed to improve urban transport in Thimphu by understanding existing policy, strategies, programmes and discoursing on the issues, gaps and solutions for effective coordination.

The outcome of the meeting will help develop a masterplan identifying gaps and consolidating existing programmes and resources to frame clear implementation strategies with a time frame. The meeting will also help mobilise resources to implement infrastructure development plans within the thromde.

The next step will be the MoWHS and MoIC PPDs meeting to draft the ToR for the policies.

## Testing traditional structures for quality

**From Pg.1**

Engineers used a backhoe to bring down the wall to record the strength of earthquake that it would withstand. The samples from the walls were taken for lab tests.

The culture department has a project, Bhutan: Improving Resilience to Seismic Risk with funding of USD 1.285 million from the Japanese government through the World Bank. The project completes next year.

One of the components of the project is to improve seismic resilience of traditional Bhutanese buildings.

There is no information or research on mud-rammed buildings, culture department officials said. There is no empirical data or research to show the properties of the materials.

The department's officiating director, Nagtsho Dorji,

said that such research is also necessary to preserve and improve upon the culture of the country.

"Of the numerous methods that are there, we're looking for the best combination of techniques and technology to build strong buildings," Nagtsho Dorji said. Without documenting through research, such culture could be lost forever, she added.

After completion of the policy and human resource development project, the department will publish a guideline for improved earthquake resilient construction techniques for mud-rammed structures in the country. It also includes the training of the technical personnel and the craftsmen.

The department conducted a three-year study in 2012 on traditional mud-rammed structures and construction

practices in local context. It was found that there is not much information on this type of construction.

The department's typology study in Punakha, Paro, Wangdue, and Haa identified architectural designs, construction techniques and damage patterns.

Last year, a test was carried out on the structures of Paga Lhakhang in Chukha in 2012. Two further tests were carried out in the same year.

"This is the third test, and we've plans to carry out more," said the project's focal person, Phuntsho Wangmo. "This pull down test is limited to the actual representation of the behaviour of the building and we will have to carry out many more tests."

The department is working on establishing an advanced laboratory with equipment for specialised tests.

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