

# Transforming Uncertainty into Hope

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Bhutan is facing one of the most challenging times in recent decades and, in the light of the upcoming elections, the nation is looking at five political parties for sustainable solutions.

## **Introduction: Sinking Economy, Rising Concerns**

A wave of national transformation is currently shaping Bhutan's socio-economic and political landscape. It is in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic which brought the global economy to its knees. In Bhutan, efforts taken to curb the virus transmission - like social distancing, directives to stay home, and limiting commercial activities - arrested the economy and drained the State of resources as it provided support to the people at all levels.

The pandemic forced Bhutan to close its international borders, which meant the closure of the tourism industry, for about two years, and thousands in the tourism and hospitality industry lost jobs and sources of income. Worsening the economic scenario is the delay in the construction of two hydropower projects which directly translates into lower revenue projections. The private sector literally collapsed.

Bhutan also saw an alarming number of people leaving the country, mostly to Australia. The Royal Civil Service Commission reported that 5,000 civil servants resigned in the 2022-2023 fiscal year - an attrition rate of 16 percent, double that of the year before.<sup>1</sup> This mass exodus in unprecedented numbers has been attributed to many reasons, but no credible study has been done. It is a loud message that the people need hope and inspiration to remain in Bhutan.

A cash-strapped government is dealing with a sinking economy riddled with uncertainties. As the nation prepares for the fourth democratic elections, it falls on political parties to rally the nation with vision and confidence towards a sustainable future. While past elections have seen parties offering impulsive and attractive freebies, this election will test the

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<sup>1</sup> Yangden, 2023, Record Number of Civil Servants Left Service between July 2022 – June 2023 - BB-SCL

real mettle and tenacity of aspiring leaders and parties. The nation will judge them for their vision and their ability to deliver sustainable solutions. It is significant that political parties prioritise embracing this transformation as a central commitment in the approach to the elections, as their vision of a better Bhutan.

## **A Wave of National Transformation**

Today, Bhutan is poised at a pivotal juncture as changes give birth to feelings of both uncertainty and hope. The nation is trying to comprehend the underlying aspirations that define this transformational wave. Changes are sweeping across all sectors, with some feeling unsettled, while others see the beginning of a newer Bhutan – a better Bhutan.

## **The Guardians of Peace**

Many notable initiatives have come from the Throne. A remarkable venture that has today become a national symbol of solidarity and volunteerism is the De-Suung programme which was launched on February 14, 2011.<sup>2</sup> During the pandemic, graduates of the De-Suung programme, called desuups, meaning “guardians of peace”, proved pivotal in the fight against the virus. Rising to the call of the nation, people came forward and enlisted in the thousands. In September 2023, there were 39,318<sup>3</sup> desuups which is 5.15 percent of the 2022 projected population of 763,249.<sup>4</sup>

The De-Suung programme has taken up many projects that have transformed people’s lives and continue to do so. The projects include water projects, dog population management, and rabies control, planting fruit trees, road construction, and desuups deployed for Gyalsung (national service) projects.<sup>5</sup>

## **Building Tomorrow’s Leaders**

Addressing the nation on National Day, 2019, His Majesty the King announced the launch of the national service, called Gyalsung.<sup>6</sup> It will be

2 Guardian of Peace, 2023. [desuung.org.bt](http://desuung.org.bt)

3 Guardian of Peace, 2023

4 National Statistics Bureau, 2023. “National Statistics Bureau”. [Nsb.gov.bt](http://Nsb.gov.bt), Feb 17, 2023

5 Guardian of Peace, 2023

6 Gyalsung Infra – the National Service, 2023. [Gyalsunginfra.bt](http://Gyalsunginfra.bt). 2023

a one-year integrated training programme for all youth who turn 18 or complete 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It is aimed to “provide direction and encourage our youth to be strong, independent thinkers, capable of serving the country”.<sup>7</sup> It will provide training on basic life skills, including military.

The organisation tasked to institutionalise the Gyalsung project, Gyalsung Infra, estimates that about 13,000 youth will undergo the training annually.<sup>8</sup> The introduction of the national service demonstrates a proactive step in alignment with the national transformation to prepare youth for productive careers.

## **Reforming Education and the Civil Service**

At the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the nation was glued to their television sets listening to the National Day address on December 17, 2021, His Majesty the King reminded the people of the importance of preparing for future challenges.<sup>9</sup> Among many other national priorities like the economy, hydropower, technology amid global challenges and the need to maintain accountability, His Majesty placed special focus on education and the need to reform the civil service. Injecting a sense of urgency, His Majesty commented: “We need to resolve these issues as soon as we can, before it tears our nation apart.”<sup>10</sup>

His Majesty said: “We need to strengthen our foundation by improving the educational standards, craft policies to diversify economic opportunities for our youth, and support private sector growth. The role of the civil servants is critical for this endeavour. Therefore, efforts are underway to reform the civil service.”<sup>11</sup>

As part of the reforms, 500 positions in the civil service were removed. A series of trainings was instituted for civil servants, the most notable being leadership assessments conducted at top levels of the civil service.<sup>12</sup>

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7 Gyalsung Infra – the National Service, 2023

8 Gyalsung Infra – the National Service, 2023

9 Kuensel, 2021 – Translation of His Majesty’s Address to the Nation on the 114th National Day. Kuensel online

10 Kuensel 2021- Translation of His Majesty’s Address to the Nation on the 114th National Day. Kuensel online

11 Kuensel 2021- Translation of His Majesty’s Address to the Nation on the 114th National Day. Kuensel online

12 Lhamo, 2022 – RCSC takes major step towards Civil Service Reforms. Kuensel Online

On March 24, 2022, the Royal Civil Service Commission announced that 44 top executives who failed the leadership assessments - comprising seven secretaries, 22 director generals, and 18 directors - lost their jobs.<sup>13</sup> A measure of such magnitude had never been taken in the civil service before. It was a clear indication of Bhutan's commitment to change.

## The Pandemic and Mental Wellbeing

The plunge in the economy started with the pandemic in 2020. All activities – economic, governance, and livelihood – came to a halt. Showing exemplary leadership, His Majesty toured the country multiple times, inspiring the nation in the fight against the pandemic.

His Majesty also commanded the welfare scheme, the “Druk Gyalpo’s Relief Kidu”, which provided supplementary income to people severely affected by the pandemic. It supported 54,783 affected people between April, 2020, and March, 2022.<sup>14</sup> The World Health Organisation records show that there were 2,660 Covid-19 cases and four deaths in Bhutan, which was a lower disease burden than most countries.<sup>15</sup>

Bhutan’s response to the pandemic has been widely applauded. The World Bank notes that “Bhutan established one of the world’s most effective vaccination campaigns”<sup>16</sup> and UNICEF notes it to be “arguably the fastest vaccination campaign to be executed during a pandemic”.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, an area that received limited public scrutiny is its impact on mental health and wellbeing. The pandemic saw a rise in depression and anxiety cases in Bhutan. In every 10,000 people, the average number of depression cases between 2011-19 was nine; it shot up to 16 in 2020 and alarmingly doubled to 32 in 2021.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, anxiety in every 10,000 people rose from an average of 18 in 2011-19 to 29 in 2020 and 55 in 2021.<sup>19</sup> Such psychological and mental health impacts were associated with

13 Lhamo, 2022 - RCSC takes major step towards Civil Service Reforms. Kuensel Online

14 Druk Gyalpo’s Relief Kidu, 2022, Press Release Release – Druk Gyalpo’s Relief Kidu.” Royalkidu.bt. March 21, 2022

15 WHO, 2023, A Rapid and Coordinated Response to COVID-19 in Bhutan.” Who.int. 2023

16 World Bank Group, 2022, Two Years of Bhutan’s Pandemic Response, World Bank, April 11, 2022

17 IMF, 2022, Containing COVID-19 in the Land of the Thunder Dragon.” IMF. February 7, 2022

18 Tsheten et al., 2023, Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health in Bhutan, The Lancet Regional Health 11 (April)

19 Tsheten et al., 2023, Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health in Bhutan

negative outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

A tour operator who owns a six-storey building in the capital, Thimphu, who had a good business before the pandemic, was left shattered by the closure of his tourism business and ultimately ended up taking a life-changing decision to migrate to Australia. “I never thought I would move away from Bhutan, but the mental strain of securing a stable source of income forced me to come to Australia,” he says.

A PhD student in Perth opines that Bhutan needs to invest in academic research on the reasons behind the exodus of people from the country, and it should begin with the impact of the pandemic. “Everyone in Bhutan is concerned with the exodus of people and everyone is speculating about the reasons, but there is no focus to scientifically study the evidence,” he says, and adds that solutions to address the mass exodus will only arise from understanding the evidence(s) of the issue.

### **External Shocks Trigger Crisis**

Towards the tail end of the pandemic, Russia invaded Ukraine and the war weakened already frail economies worldwide. Among other problems, it created an acute shortage of fuel, and the impact on India had a domino effect on Bhutan.<sup>21</sup> Fuel prices dictate inflation in India and Bhutan, leading to a direct increase in food prices, fuelling further inflation. India’s restriction on wheat exports added to concern about food supplies for import-dependent Bhutan.<sup>22</sup> The strengthening dollar against the falling Indian rupee – to which the Bhutanese ngultrum is pegged – led to higher import costs.<sup>23</sup> Bhutan is clearly facing an economic crisis as its economy is headed towards an “uncharted destination”, in the words of the finance minister, Namgay Tshering.<sup>24</sup>

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20 Tsheten et al., 2023, Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health in Bhutan

21 Acharya, 2023, War in Ukraine: Perspective from Bhutan, Friedrich Naumann Foundation. February 24, 2023.

22 Krishnan, 2022, How Serious Is Bhutan’s Economic Crisis, Dw.com. Deutsche Welle. August 17, 2022.

23 Krishnan, 2022, How Serious Is Bhutan’s Economic Crisis

24 Krishnan, 2022, How Serious Is Bhutan’s Economic Crisis

## Rising Trade Deficit, Diminished Reserves, and Depleted Funds

The pandemic has left overbearing imprints. As of September, 2022, the trade deficit rose to Nu 48.14 billion, which was an increase of Nu 15.9 billion from the year before.<sup>25</sup> A worried finance minister described it as a “chronic problem” and commented that it should be fixed “rather than focusing on the country’s economic growth or gross domestic product”.<sup>26</sup> This statement clearly suggests that the government is focused on addressing current issues, with no long-term plan.

When the Bartsham-Shongphu MP voiced the need for economic recovery strategies in the short, medium, and long-term, in the summer session of Parliament this year, the Prime Minister acknowledged the need for “innovative solutions” but did not outline what the government had in its plans or whether it had any plan at all.<sup>27</sup>

The trade deficit plummeted the country’s foreign currency reserve by over 37 percent from the year before to USD 773.8 million in November, 2022.<sup>28</sup> Measures to address the falling foreign currency reserves included the government banning the import of vehicles, except for utility vehicles, heavy earth-moving machines, and agriculture machinery, from August 19, 2022.

The central bank, Royal Monetary Authority (RMA), revised the foreign exchange quota for travellers on February 6, 2023.<sup>29</sup> To encourage inward foreign remittance, the RMA increased the government’s incentive paid on amounts sent to Bhutan from two percent enforced in May, 2021, to 10 percent from June, 2023.<sup>30</sup> Kuensel reports that there is a possibility of the government suspending construction loans and banning the import of furniture, processed meat and food items, junk food, alcohol, and LED televisions.<sup>31</sup>

25 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike for Civil Servants.” Kuensel Online. 2023.

26 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

27 Zangpo, 2023c, No Amendment Planned for Tourism Levy Act Says Prime Minister.” Kuensel Online. 2023.

28 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

29 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

30 RMA, 2023, Launch of Revamped Incentive on Inward Remittance Scheme, Rma.org.bt. June 14, 2023.

31 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

Despite the economic impasse, the finance ministry projects the economy to grow by 4.83 percent in 2023,<sup>32</sup> while the World Bank forecasts a growth of 3.7 percent, keeping it modest, mainly in tune with high inflation and lower investments in hydropower.<sup>33</sup>

With the dire financial position Bhutan is in, it is yet to officially declare how it intends to cope with the additional pressure of graduating from the UN's List of Least Developed Countries (LDC) in December 2023.<sup>34</sup> The graduation will substantially lead to a decline in the flow of foreign aid and grants. It could lead the government to explore concessional borrowings<sup>35</sup> which will further unbalance its books.

### **Hydropower Impasse**

Hydropower provides an economic lifeline to Bhutan as the main revenue generator. Most projects are undertaken in Bhutan on an inter-governmental bilateral understanding with India. As such, timely completion of ongoing projects is of huge importance to Bhutan because a delay directly translates to an opportunity cost in revenue loss.

Having already failed in its original aim to produce 10,000 megawatts by 2020, Bhutan has revised its aim to generate 7,600 megawatts from 10 projects.<sup>36</sup> Even the reduced aim is shrouded in uncertainty, with two projects being delayed consistently and talks with Delhi not yielding concrete results. The Punatsangchu-I Hydroelectric Project, originally scheduled to be completed by 2016, and Kholongchu Hydropower Project, supposed to be completed by 2020, have been delayed<sup>37</sup> and Bhutan is currently helpless.

Moreover, there is also an increasing urgency for Bhutan to reduce its dependence on hydropower and diversify its revenue base. Even His Majesty has said that “hydropower may soon lose its competitive edge”, given the “rapid advancements in harnessing nuclear, hydrogen, fusion,

32 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

33 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

34 Patel, 2023, How Bhutan Graduated from the 'Least Developed Country' Status."The Indian Express. The Indian Express. March 12, 2023

35 Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

36 Dolkar, 2023, 10 hydropower projects in Pipeline to Generate 7,600MW." Kuensel Online. 2023

37 Dolkar, 2022, NC asks Govt to Expedite Decision on Delayed Hydropower Projects." Kuensel Online. 2022

solar, thermal and wind energy”.<sup>38</sup>

## Uncertainties in Tourism

After the pandemic, tourism is finally picking up. But tourism stakeholders were utterly dismayed with the government’s Tourism Levy Act of Bhutan 2022, and the increase of the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) from USD 65 to USD 200 a day.<sup>39</sup> It was finally reduced to USD 100 a day on August 25 this year, after repeated appeals to the government. The SDF is a fee a tourist pays for every night spent in Bhutan. The new rule made it more expensive for tourists to visit Bhutan. SDF did not go down well with people in the tourism industry who constantly advocated for the SDF to be revisited.<sup>40</sup>

## Private Sector Wants Assurance and Hope

Often referred to as the “engine of growth”, the private sector in Bhutan is experiencing one of its worst times. The 2018-19 economic census of the National Statistical Bureau reports on 14,000 business establishments in the country, employing 74,000 people.<sup>41</sup>

The pandemic cost the private sector in Bhutan Nu 125.81 billion<sup>42</sup> according to the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), the apex private sector body. The BCCI has drafted a Private Sector Recovery Plan (PSRP) to revitalise the economy in the next five years. The Plan outlines its objective under five broad goals of building access to fiscal incentives and finances, strengthening local value chains across sectors, use of digital technology, public-private partnerships, and developing a globally recognised human capital.<sup>43</sup>

The PSRP reports that, between 2020 and 2023, revenue losses in the private sector included Nu 48.31 billion in the industry sector, Nu 33.74 billion in mining and quarrying, Nu 10.98 billion in manufacturing and

38 Kuensel 2021, Translation of His Majesty’s Address to the Nation on the 114th National Day.” Kuensel Online. 2021

39 Zangpo, 2023c, No Amendment Planned for Tourism Levy Act, Kuensel Online, 2023

40 Zangpo, 2023c, No Amendment Planned; Zangpo, 2023d, Private Sector Charts Recovery Plan

41 Wangchuk, 2020, Supporting Private Sector Growth for Our Economic Well-Being.” Kuensel Online. 2020

42 Zangpo, 2023d, Private Sector Charts Recovery Plan

43 Zangpo, 2023d, Private Sector Charts Recovery Plan



production, Nu 18.71 billion in construction, Nu 47.88 billion in trading and services, Nu 25.25 billion in transport, storage and communications, Nu 5.2 billion in the finance, insurance and real estate, Nu 1.4 billion in the social and recreational services sector, and Nu 20.51 billion in the hotel and restaurant sector.

A report by the Asian Development Bank published in April, 2022, notes that the private sector in Bhutan “continues to identify tight access to finance, high rents, erratic electricity supply, multiple licensing requirements, delays in getting clearances, and high-interest loans as the main obstacles affecting their operations’.<sup>44</sup>

For the economy to bounce back, the report recommends creating a conducive environment for private sector development, diversifying from hydropower, and simultaneously reducing dependence on the hydropower sector and state-owned enterprises (SOEs).<sup>45</sup>

The legality of the government competing with the private sector by doing business through SOEs has even been questioned in Parliament by the Economic and Finance Committee of the National Assembly. In November, 2022, the committee asked the government to restrain the SOEs from venturing into businesses that offer better prospects and opportunities to the private sector.<sup>46</sup>

It highlighted that the operation of the 38 SOEs violate the Public Finance Act 2007, which states (section 74) that SOEs should undertake significant commercial activities which are not catered for by the private sector or are required to be undertaken solely or partly by the government for social policy or security.<sup>47</sup>

Ongoing restructuring in the SOEs includes the merger of the Royal Bhutan Helicopter Services with Drukair. There are plans to merge the National CSI Development Bank with the Bhutan Development Bank, and Farm Machinery Corporation Limited with the Food Corporation of Bhutan.<sup>48</sup>

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44 Zangpo, 2022b, Bhutanese Economy Moving Forward. Kuensel Online, 2023

45 Zangpo, 2022b, Bhutanese Economy

46 Dolkar, 2022, SoEs Should Let Private Sector Grow

47 Dolkar, 2022, SoEs Should Let Private Sector Grow NA's Economic and Finance Committee.”  
Kuensel Online. 2022

48 Dolkar, 2022, SoEs Should Let Private Sector Grow

The government has taken steps to facilitate private sector participation in business. In January, 2022, the government lifted the moratorium on the operation of mines by the private sector, with the adoption of the Mines and Minerals Management Regulations 2022.<sup>49</sup> The moratorium was introduced in June, 2020, following which the State Mining Corporation Limited took over all gypsum, dolomite, and coal mines operated by private companies.

A key concern within the private sector is the rise of and the economic domination by some major business houses in the local market, which could lead to monopolies in various manifestations. Even the Constitution (Section 14.16) forbids monopolies (except to safeguard national security) and it falls on the government to appropriate the right legislation to prevent it.

### **Economy and Emigration to take Centre Stage in the 2023 Elections**

Before the formal campaign for the upcoming elections, the five political parties have engaged with the people on only “familiarisation” mode and their pledges are not yet public. It is not yet clear how the five political parties plan to address the multi-sectoral challenges facing the country. The nation can only expect to get more details after the government dissolves by the end of October, but a report in the August 12 issue of *The Bhutanese* provides valuable insights into the “biggest national issues” from the five party presidents for the upcoming elections.<sup>50</sup>

The party presidents clearly acknowledge the need for a process of national transformation, and it becomes increasingly clear that the two dominant issues for this election will revolve around the economy and emigration – the exodus of Bhutanese.

The ruling Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT) president, Prime Minister, Dasho Dr Lotay Tshering, accepts that the economy is a “problem” and says there is no “magic bullet” to correct it. One could read between the lines to say that it implies the current government has no specific plans. The Prime Minister highlights that addressing the issue entails a complex process. “Economy is not only about FDI or trading with a big foreign country, but it is also about how it has become much easier to run your family,” he says.

<sup>49</sup> Zangpo, 2023a, Govt. Proposes 55-74 Percent Pay Hike

<sup>50</sup> Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues for the 2023 Race. *The Bhutanese*, August 12, 2023

He, however, reassures the nation that projections of the finance ministry show positive signs of increasing revenue.<sup>51</sup>

On the sharp increase in the attrition of civil servants, the Prime Minister concedes, “I cannot take care of it immediately.” Calling for answers, he adds: “If anyone has brilliant ideas, I want to know. Let us not wait for tomorrow and let it damage our system.”<sup>52</sup>

The president of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa and the opposition leader, Dorji Wangdi, says that “70 percent of the debate has to be on the economy.” He asserts that revisiting the tourism policy and halving the current SDF of USD 200 (which has been done) would be crucial “from a business point of view.”<sup>53</sup>

Dorji Wangdi says that sound economic policies should be complemented with a focus on demography, which is also required to address emigration. “The stronger the demography, you have a better economy,” he says, adding that the international trend of emigration shows that most people who move out do not return. He adds that another issue that needs to be sorted out is the role of the government vis-à-vis the private sector.<sup>54</sup>

The president of Bhutan Tendrel Party (BTP), Dasho Pema Chewang, says that given the dire economic situation, “there’s absolutely no room for fiscal expansion”. He points to the need to address the issue of non-performing loans (NPL) in banks and build up foreign currency reserves and current account deficits. He says that economic governance could be improved by addressing the issue of excessive and redundant rules and regulations, inefficient public service delivery, systemic flaws, and structural barriers. Other major issues include energy security, improving agriculture productivity, education quality, and increasing rate of drug abuse.<sup>55</sup>

The president of Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa (DTT), Kinga Tshering, says, “The three pressing issues are lack of economic philosophy, lack of economic perception, and lack of an economic road map.” He outlines that Bhutan must prepare for exploiting the greatest economic opportunities

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51 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

52 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

53 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

54 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

55 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

and it could be done with a once-in-a-generation mega project, although he doesn't name what it is the party has in mind.<sup>56</sup>

Kinga Tshering philosophises about the need to prepare Bhutan for the upcoming “great waves of change,” and build a “more prosperous, economically independent and self-reliant nation.” Such an approach of looking at the big picture, Kinga Tshering says, would address other issues like emigration, hydropower impasse, private sector dilemma, and public service transformation, and things would fall into place like the little pieces of a puzzle.<sup>57</sup>

The president of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Dasho Tshering Tobgay, describes issues like the economy, emigration, and population as “existential” and asserts that Bhutan currently has multiple threats with a multiplier effect. He highlights the need to address the fundamentals of the economy, like dwindling foreign exchange reserves, decreasing revenue, increasing debt, high inflation, and facilitating the private sector to do business. The economy can also be empowered by enhancing the tourism and hospitality sectors, cottage and small industries (CSIs), and reducing the tax burden.<sup>58</sup>

Describing emigration as a threat, Dasho Tshering Tobgay says it is necessary to offer salaries competitive with other countries. It could be done by facilitating foreign direct investment (FDI) at a scale that Bhutan has never seen before and create jobs. He reasserts that Bhutan cannot wait to address the emigration issue and it must be done immediately. Other issues PDP identifies include the provision of meaningful and quality education, a shrinking population, and a low fertility rate.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The process of national transformation continues in Bhutan, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic having drained the government of resources. With the elections around the corner, the nation waits to see what the political parties have to offer.

Eventually, the economy and emigration have emerged as the two top

56 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

57 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

58 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

59 Lamsang, 2023, Party Presidents Identify the Biggest National Issues

priorities that need immediate attention, and political parties appear to be drafting manifestos around the two themes. In this light, the 2023 elections appear to be for the one who can offer the best sustainable solution to these challenges. We have heard more than once that our voters have come of age. They are listening.

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