

WORLD OZONE DAY OBSERVED

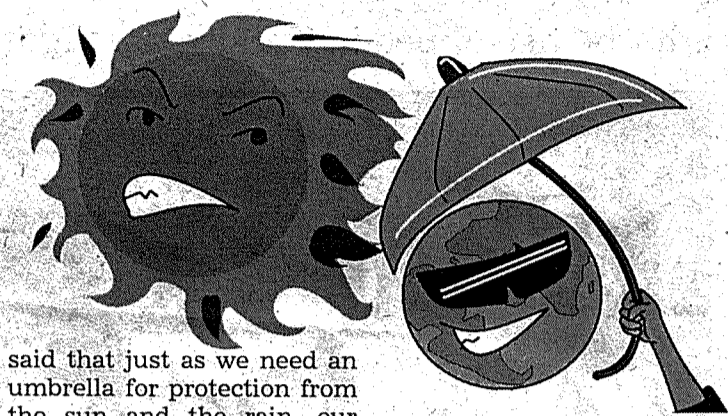
Chencho Dema THIMPHU

Bhutan celebrated Ozone Day yesterday at the Swimming Pool Complex's Taekwondo Hall. The occasion was graced by the Minister for Economic Affairs, Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk.

Children from different schools recited poems on Ozone, and the National Taekwondo Federation gave demonstration on martial arts and displayed an ozone message. Besides demonstrations a short cartoon film 'Ozzy Ozone' was also screened.

This year the theme was, "Universal participation: Ozone protection unifies the world", while last year it was, "Montreal Protocol - Global partnership for global benefits."

The Deputy Minister of National Environment Commission, Dasho Nado Rinchen,



said that just as we need an umbrella for protection from the sun and the rain, our earth also needs a protection called the ozone layer.

"Ozone layer is the primary protection from the sun's harmful rays and so it is our responsibility to reduce the use of these harmful gases," he added.

Speaking on the occasion of ozone day, Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk said: "The Ozone day provides focus on one of

the most successful global environmental challenges, namely, the protection of our Ozone layer. Two decades ago, when a large hole was discovered in the Ozone shield around the earth over the South pole, it was attributed to the use of long range of chemicals called Ozone Depleting Substances or ODS that were literally 'eating' the

protective ozone layer around the globe. This urged the international community to come together to combat the depletion of the earth's umbrella."

"So today is the day, when we renew our pledges to commit to this honourable goal and remind ourselves that it is the effort of each one of us which will make a difference," he added.

Harmful gases like chlorofluoro carbon (CFCs) used in modern appliances like refrigerators, fire extinguishers or air-conditioners are creating a hole in the ozone layer. The hole lets in harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun which cause the destruction of the environment and the spread of many diseases.

Bhutan has been celebrating "World Ozone Day" since 2004, when it joined the Montreal Protocol, with a commit-

ment to reduce harmful gases by 50 per cent by 2005, 80 per cent by 2008 and complete reduction by 2010.

The Montreal Protocol was signed on 16 September, 1987, by number of countries concerned about the depletion of the earth's protective ozone layer. The hole in the ozone layer in 2003 was the largest ever recorded.

Representatives from NGOs, Members of Parliaments, students and parents took part in the celebration.

Since 1995, on 16 September each year, the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer is celebrated. This date has been designated by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 49/114, to commemorate the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Tibetan medicine: legality issue in India discussed

Sonam Phuntsho THIMPHU

On the final session of the Seventh International Congress on Traditional Asia Medicine concluded last week, the discussion focused on the various aspects of trade and globalisation of medicine across Asia.

Stephan Kloos of the University of California made a presentation on 'Is Tibetan Medicine Indian? He also dealt with the topic "Recognising Sowa Rigpa (Tibetan Medical System) in India."

In his presentation he talked briefly on how Sowa Rigpa came into practice in India. He said "Although Tibetan medicine has been practiced for centuries in the Himalayan states of India Ladakh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh - it is only with the arrival of Ti-

betan refugees in 1959 that Tibetan medicine began to be noticed by the Indian government and people alike.

He said, however, that in 1964, four years after the establishment of a small Tibetan medical centre in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, the Indian government sent Bhagwan Das, now a reputed Ayurvedic scholar-practitioner, to investigate Tibetan medicine and its practice.

"Bhagwan Das' first remark, when he met Yeshe Donden who ran the centre, was that medical practice without the permission of the Indian Medical Council is not allowed on Indian soil. In other words, the practice of Tibetan medicine was technically illegal," said Kloos.

Kloos said that as of now,

over 60 Tibetan clinics are running all over India and cater to over 700,000 patients per year, over 90 per cent of whom are Indian. From poor villagers in Bihar and Orissa to business leaders like the Tatas or Ambanis, from individual MPs to elite institutions like the AIIMS or the Indian Ministry of Defence, India seems to have embraced Tibetan medicine.

Indeed, despite its technical illegality, the embrace has become a bear-hug, and many contemporary exiled Tibetan amchis (traditional medical healer) feel suffocated as Tibetan medicine is claimed to be Indian.

The claim itself is not new, Kloos said, and has in fact served the Tibetans well for over three decades. Deeply impressed by Tibetan

medicine after his visit to Dharamsala, Bhagwan Das wrote a report to the Indian Health Ministry arguing that Tibetan medicine was actually a form of Ayurveda that India had lost, and that it was therefore in India's own interest of cultural preservation to support it.

With some material support from the Indian government, the Tibetan medical centre could thus expand without any restrictions into today's prestigious Men-Tsee-Khang. According to the semi-official Indian rationale following Bhagwan Das' report, Tibetan medicine did not need any separate recognition, as it was 'just another form of Ayurveda'.

"For much of the next three decades, both sides - Indians and Tibetans - were happy

in the belief that their own unique culture was being preserved," Kloos said.

Following Dr Kloos, Dr Dorjee Raptan Neshar, chairman of Central Council of Tibetan medicine (CCTM) talked on the Legalisation and Status of Tibetan Medical System under CCTM.

He said the aims and objectives of this is to preserve and promote the rich tradition of Tibetan Medical System (Sowa-Rigpa), to regulate and standardise the quality, sales and manufacture of Tibetan medicine, regulation and recognition of Tibetan medical practitioners, colleges and institutions and to work for the legalisation and recognition of Tibetan medical system and its practices across the world.

WORLD BANK RANKS BHUTAN LOW

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a business, dealing with construction permits, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and closing a business.

The "Doing Business" report uses two types of data: The first comes from readings of laws and regulations. The second are time and motion indicators that measure the efficiency in achieving a regulatory goal (such as granting the legal identity of a business).

Within the time and motion indicators, cost estimates are recorded from official fee schedules where applicable.

To start a business in Bhutan, entrepreneurs can expect to go through about 8 procedural steps, compared to the South Asian average of 7.3 and high-income economy (OECD) average of only 5.7.

The time taken on an average to go about starting a

business is also higher than the regional and OECD averages, with 46 days required in Bhutan on an average compared to 28.1 (South Asia) and 13.0 (OECD).

When dealing with construction permits, entrepreneurs can expect to go through 25 procedures, take up to 183 days, and use up 149 per cent of income per capita in the process.

It is easier to employ workers in Bhutan, and it is not difficult for employers to hire or fire workers, the report noted. Bhutan also fares well in terms of registering property by world standards.

It is tough to get credit in Bhutan, as shown by the low index values indicating credit information sharing and the legal rights of borrowers and lenders.

The Legal Rights Index ranges from 0-10, with higher scores indicating that those laws are better designed to expand access to credit.

The strength of legal rights index in Bhutan is two, compared to 5.3 in South Asia and 6.8 in OECDs.

The Credit Information Index measures the scope, access and quality of credit information available through public registries or private bureaus.

It ranges from 0-6, with higher values indicating that more credit information is available from a public registry or private bureau. Bhutan stands at zero, compared to 2.9 for South Asia and 4.9 for OECDs.

Investors do not enjoy a great degree of protection in Bhutan, says the Bank report.

Three dimensions of investor protection: transparency of transactions (Extent of Disclosure Index), liability for self-dealing (Extent of Director Liability Index), and shareholders' ability to sue officers and directors for misconduct (Ease of Shareholder Suits Index) and Strength of Investor Protection Index are reflected in the study.

The indexes vary between 0 and 10, with higher values indicating greater disclosure, greater liability of directors, greater powers of shareholders to challenge the transaction, and better investor protection. Bhutan is not very different from its neighbours in this area, and OECDs seem to be doing only a slightly better job of protecting their investors.

Bhutanese entrepreneurs must make an average of 18 payments a year for tax, and must spend 274 hours preparing, filing and paying taxes, compared to 31 taxes paid 284.5 hours spent by South Asian entrepreneurs, and 12.8 payments made and 194.1 hours spent in a year by OECDs.

Bhutanese entrepreneurs pay a much higher percent of profit taxes, (35%) compared to 17.9 per cent paid by South Asians, and 16.1 by OECDs.

However, Bhutanese do not pay a large percentage of labour and other taxes, so the total tax paid by the Bu-

tanese, South Asians and OECDs are almost the same at around 40-45 per cent of the total profit.

Trading across borders is rather difficult for Bhutanese, with the cost of importing going up to USD 2140 per container (compare with 1,509 for South Asians and 1145.9 for OECDs).

It is easier to enforce contracts in Bhutan, thanks to the smoothly functioning judiciary. It is much cheaper and takes a lot less time to get payment after a plaintiff files a lawsuit, compared to the regional and OECD averages.

Bhutan continually ranks bottommost in closing business, which is the time and cost required to resolve bankruptcies.

Weaknesses in existing bankruptcy law and the main procedural and administrative bottlenecks in the bankruptcy process is measured, and so far, there has been no practice to reflect data in Bhutan, which explains the abysmal ranking.