



དཔལ་ལྷན་འབྲུག་གཞུང་།  
གསོ་བ་རྒྱན་ལག།  
ཐིམ་ཕུ།

ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
THIMPHU : BHUTAN  
P.O.BOX : 726



ལྷན་པོ།  
MINISTER

### Message from Hon'ble Sowai Lyonpo

The last day of 2019 will be remembered for a long time, especially amongst the health fraternity around the world. The outbreak of COVID-19 spread from its epicentre over the days and weeks to offshore states. Infections soared, and lives were lost. The global phenomenon put health systems and governments to test as they began acting on an unknown virus.

Back home, the news immediately got us in action. On January 11, ten days after the initial outbreak, we meticulously prepared for the onslaught. We charted out our plans and reached out to all health professionals in the country. In less than two weeks, we had put all our preparedness measures in place. The health fraternity was operating as a single unit towards a common goal.

On March 5, 2020, around 11:30 pm, Bhutan saw the first confirmed case of COVID-19, which led to the activation of "orange" stage of our preparedness and response plan. Amid all the fraught and concerns, just like a ray of hope, His Majesty the King led the way. Staying up the whole night, His Majesty was at the helm of affairs, as we went about designing the response plan. With His Majesty's blessing, the country witnessed one of the fastest responses to address the situation.

The index patient, an American man, was given the best of care at the isolation room, and all primary contacts were traced and put on quarantine. While overseeing the response efforts, His Majesty held dearly in his heart all the health workers battling the virus in the frontlines, often inquiring about your safety and wellbeing. As health minister, while overwhelmed by such leadership and compassion, I offer my sincere gratitude for all the inspiration and blessings we received from Your Majesty.

At this moment, with our confirmed case airlifted to the United States on the request of his family, and all primary contacts testing negative and currently under quarantine, I take a moment to pause and thank all of you. I view with deep appreciation the health workers who exuded the best of human qualities while caring for the index case and all primary contacts with utmost compassion. I also thank each and every member of the public for your empathy, concern and solidarity.

But now, let us all continue with the ongoing efforts of containing the virus, which has been declared a pandemic. As the lead agency, the Health Ministry commits to persevere to steer our country out of the mysterious waves of COVID-19.

I share my feelings at a time when we are all burning the midnight oil to brave the worst-case scenario, should multiple confirmed cases be diagnosed in the country. In such difficult times, I draw my confidence from His Majesty the King. I find solace in His Majesty's sharp guidance, and I remain deeply inspired by our health workers who are constantly battling the virus at all fronts.

I have no doubt Bhutan will triumph over this phase, and emerge as a stronger nation.

**Together, we can.**

  
(Dechen Wangmo)  
Health Minister