

21 GC roads to be resurfaced this FY

This would mean that around 445kms of Gewog Centre roads across the nation will see the light of the day during the current fiscal year

By Tashi Namgyal,
Thimphu

26 year old Kharkay from Tsirangtoed Gewog under Tsirang dzongkhag dances in jubilation the moment he learns that the road leading to the Gewog Centre will be resurfaced in this fiscal year. Other villagers join in the mirth to express their elation.

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport plans to resurface 21 Gewog Centre (GC) roads, which comes to around 445kms in 20 dzongkhags during the current fiscal year. Although drafting of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and other studies took a lengthier time, works will commence from December this year according to the Ministry of

Infrastructure and Transport (MoIT).

“The news about resurfacing our GC road is the best gift one could ever expect on Dassain. Although it has been long overdue, we are happy that it is finally going to happen very soon,” he says, taking a breather from his busy schedule preparing for the auspicious hindu festival on Saturday. Like Kharkay, many others in different parts of the country shared the same sentiments upon hearing about the government’s plans.

Other than the 12km Tsirangtoed GC road in Tsirang, the 20 other GC roads which are to be resurfaced during this current fiscal year are the 10km Lingmukha GC road

in Punakha, 7km Laya GC road in Gasa, 18km Dangchu GC road in Wangdue Phodrang, 14km Chongshing GC road in Pema Gatshel, 13km Martshala GC road in Samdrup Jongkhar, 67km Shingkar GC road in Zhemgang, 17km Nubi GC road in Trongsa, 17km Tang GC road in Bumthang, 17km Norgaygang GC road in Samtse, 44km Dungna GC road in Chhukha, 15km Rangjung-Phongmey GC road in Trashigang, 8km Bundeling GC road in Trashi Yangtse, 5km Khoma GC road in Lhuentse, 65km Silambi GC road in Monggar, 2km Dotey GC road in Paro, 13km Sangbaykha GC road in Haa, 29km Naro GC road in Thimphu, 10km Sengye GC road and 48km Chudzom GC

road in Sarpang, and 14km Dorona GC road in Dagana.

The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Chandra Bdr Gurung said the government has allocated Nu 867M for the work but it may not be sufficient and may cost Nu 1.2B instead. He said that the government is looking for sources to procure the remaining funds from. All the works will be carried on concurrently within this fiscal year.

The GC road network across the twenty dzongkhags stretches to over 2000kms approximately.

Dzongkhag-wise, Bumthang has around 18kms of GC road, Chhukha has over 170kms, Dagana has close to 130kms, Gasa has over 8kms, Haa has 53kms,

Lhuentse has around 90kms, Monggar has 290kms, Paro has over 20kms, Pemagatshel has over 142kms, Punakha and Samdrupjongkhar has 44kms and 119kms respectively, Samtse has over 165kms, Sarpang has around 98kms, Thimphu has close to 35kms, Trashigang has over 210kms, Trashiyangtse has 70kms, Trongsa has 36kms, Tsirang has over 57kms, Wangduephodrang has 84kms, and Zhemgang has 134kms.

The national road network has expanded rapidly since the construction of the Phuentsholing- Thimphu Highway, the country’s first road. At present, there are over 12,000 km of motorable roads of 15 various categories constructed and maintained by various agencies.

Bhutan’s Journey Towards a Knowledge Economy

Insights from Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate who made his maiden visit to Bhutan in 1998



By Tashi Namgyal,
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At the Bhutan Innovation Forum (BIF) in Paro, Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz highlighted Bhutan’s remarkable socio-economic advancements over the past 75 years, including a 15-fold increase in GDP and a threefold growth in population. Stiglitz, a renowned economist and professor at Columbia University, underscored the importance of education and English proficiency in integrating Bhutan into the global economy.

Stiglitz addressed several challenges Bhutan faces, particularly in retaining skilled youth and enhancing private sector involvement in job creation. He emphasized the need for careful management of special economic zones to avoid pitfalls like tax arbitrage. His discussion also encompassed the critical balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability, as well as the importance of lifelong learning and adapting to climate change.

Reflecting on his long history with Bhutan, Stiglitz noted the country’s

significant transformation since his first visit in 1998. He recalled a time when Bhutan had almost no cars and life expectancy was under 50 years. Today, with Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a guiding principle, Bhutan is poised to further develop as a knowledge economy, leveraging its education system to enhance global integration.

Stiglitz stressed that Bhutan’s journey to a knowledge economy aligns with historical trends of economic development, where advances in knowledge have led to improved living standards. He argued that the key to sustaining this growth lies in creating job opportunities that match the skills of its youth.

“The private sector has a vital role to play,” he said, noting that Bhutan’s economy is evolving towards service-oriented and knowledge-based industries. He highlighted the need for good governance and a supportive environment to attract private investment while maintaining the principles of GNH.

In response to audience questions, Stiglitz discussed how a focus on lifelong learning can foster innovation beyond traditional educational settings. He advocated for an education system that adapts to the 21st century, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning in an ever-changing global landscape.

Stiglitz concluded by sharing examples of successful business models that align profitability with societal well-being. He cited companies in the ed-tech sector, such as Coursera, that leverage technology to make education more accessible and beneficial for economic growth.

In summary, Stiglitz’s insights reaffirmed Bhutan’s commitment to sustainable development, emphasizing the interconnectedness of knowledge, economic progress, and overall well-being. As Bhutan continues on its path to becoming a knowledge economy, the focus on education and private sector engagement will be crucial for future success.

Joseph Stiglitz is a renowned American economist, author, and professor at Columbia University. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2001 for his analysis of markets with asymmetric information, which highlighted how information disparities can lead to market failures.

Stiglitz has served in various influential roles, including as Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank, and he was also a member of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Bill Clinton. His work spans various fields, including development economics, public policy, and international trade.

He is well-known for his critiques of free-market policies and globalization, advocating for more equitable economic systems. Stiglitz has authored numerous books and articles, addressing issues such as income inequality, climate change, and the role of government in the economy. His contributions have made him a prominent figure in contemporary economic discourse.