



International Forum on Mindfulness, Sustainability, & Peace

17th, 18th and 20th December, 2025

Harvard/MIT – Bhutan Trek

The Institute of Happiness (IOH), in collaboration with participants from Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), Harvard Business School (HBS), Harvard graduate School of Design (GSD), Harvard Graduate School of Education (GSE), and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is organizing a two-day international forum on “*Mindfulness, Sustainability, and Peace*” during the 2025 Bhutan Trek. Highlight will be the 118th National Day on 17th at Changlimithang, where participants will not only immerse themselves in the festive celebration but also join the people in listening to the profound visions for the nation as His Majesty the King addresses the nation.

As Bhutan recently hosted the historic Global Peace Prayer in November, 2025 and is also celebrating the 70th birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth King and the father of the Gross National Happiness (GNH), this lends a special meaning for the 16th Harvard Bhutan Trek Winter 2025 where over 45 students and professionals from Harvard and MIT will be visiting Bhutan this winter. We have organized 15 trips since 2017 with over 450 professionals and students from Harvard and MIT have visited Bhutan on this popular trek.

Summary of Itinerary – Harvard MIT GROUP ONE

DAY	ACTIVITY	WHERE & BY?
DAY-1 (16 th Dec.)	Arrive at Thimphu	Hotel Thimphu Towers
DAY-2 (17 th Dec.)	National Day HALF DAY SYMPOSIUM	Changlimithang
DAY-3 (18 th Dec.)	Symposium FULL DAY	Zhichenkhar
DAY-4 (19 th Dec.)	Visit to Punakha and return to Thimphu	Hotel Thimphu Towers
DAY-5 (20 th Dec)	HALF DAY SYMPOSIUM	To Paro in the afternoon
DAY-6 (21 st Dec.)	Paro Taktsang	Dinner at Zhiwaling
DAY-7 (22 nd Dec.)	Departure	

Description:

This forum explores the intersection of mindfulness, sustainability, and peace, focusing on Bhutan's visionary efforts to promote environmental balance, social and economic stability, and collective well-being.

Leveraging Bhutan's unique leadership, the forum brings together mid-career professionals from Harvard and MIT schools to exchange insights, foster collaborative research, and develop innovative strategies that integrate mindfulness into economic, environmental, and educational development frameworks. Participants will engage in keynotes, panel discussions, workshops, and networking sessions aimed at advancing policies and practices that promote not only economic and psychological well-being, but also ecological resilience and enduring global peace.

Profiles of the International participants:

We have 22 participants from the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), 3 from other Harvard Schools (Harvard Business, Education) and 12 from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and 3 from Stanford and many others. Together they represent over 13 countries, 10 global and national organizations, and some of the most notable academic institutions.

Country	Company/Organizations	Schools and Programs
USA	WRDPL	Harvard Kennedy School (HKS)
China	MG Design Collective, New Delhi, India	Harvard Business School (HBS)
India	U.S. Air Force Reserve	Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD)



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Hungary	EY	Harvard Graduate School of Law (GSL)
Chile	NYU Langone Health	NYU School of Law
South Korea	GoldenMax Energy	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Canada	BLOCK - Guards Your Ride	
Japan	Capital One	
Mexico		
Spain		
UK		

With almost 50 mid-career students from Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) of Government, Harvard Business School (HBS) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the forum shall inspire international participants and curate ideas with national counterparts on these transformational initiatives. These areas of studies aptly combine to provide the opportunity to analyse and design ideas (GNH application) for public policy (HKS) for peace, stability, and sustainable societies; explore business efficiency and innovations (HBS and MIT Sloan) for inclusive prosperity; envision sustainable urban and territorial planning (GSD); advance education and leadership for future generations (GSE); and apply cutting-edge technology (MIT) to build resilient and mindful communities.

DAY 2: 17th Dec. 2025

(Changlimithang)

We celebrate the 118th National Day on 17th December at Changlimithang with the Royal Address on national issues. People start lining up from the day before (pretty much like tail gate parties during football matches) but no drinking is allowed. However, this year the main event is at Bumthang, a district in Central Bhutan but we will be going to national stadium where the Royal Address will be broadcast live and there will be lot of cultural items for the day. Since the hotel is only two minutes from the stadium we can enjoy the day without having to line up the night before.

Our first day of the forum will be held in the afternoon of the 17th December, 2025 at the Institute of Happiness in Hotel Thimphu Towers.

Time		Day-1 (16 Dec 2025)
18:00-18:30	S1	Orientation
18:30-19:30	S2	Bhutan Street Fashion: Learning Bhutan's Driglam Namzha, the fun way. One of the best ways of immersion into the Bhutanese culture is to learn and appreciate the unique identity of the nation through our



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traditional ghos and kiras. The participants will not learn about our national identity but also wear them.

Karma Tshering Wangchuk, a leading fashion designer and a pioneer fashion blogging featured in BBC and VICE and an international speaker on sustainable fashion will not only open the rich Bhutanese culture through its textile history but also teach you how to wear it gracefully for the Parliament visit the next day.

Time		Day-2 (17 Dec 2025)
8:15-13:00	S3	<p>118th National Day Celebration</p> <p>The trekkers will attend the celebration at Changlimithang National Stadium which is just 2 minutes walk from the Hotel Thimphu Towers. While His Majesty the King will be in Bumthang this year for the National Day, the Dasho Dzongdag (Governor of the capital district) and Venerable Lam Neten will be hosting the program in Thimphu.</p> <p>A special invitation has been obtained for the Harvard-MIT group in front of the VIP pavilion. Programs include procession of the First King of the Wangchuk Dynasty and students march past and cultural programs. The Royal Address will live on stadium screen.</p>
15:00-16:30	S4	<p>Bhutan's gift from the Throne to the people:</p> <p>This session will explore Bhutan's transition to democracy in 2008 which was a gift from the throne to the people. Unlike other nations where democracy was won through struggles and bloodshed, it was handed down to the people by the Fourth King of Bhutan, whose 70th birthday we are celebrating this year.</p> <p>Speaker: Dasho Duba Yoten, who was the former Director and also later became the Secretary General of the National Assembly and whose meticulous presentation to the past Harvard Group was extremely sought after. Duba is currently the Director General of the Medical Services in the Health Ministry.</p>



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Time		Day-3 (18 Dec 2025)
9:30-10:00	S5	<p>Traditional Opening Ceremony with offering of Marchang</p> <p>(literally offering of local brew to the local deities) acknowledging the use of their space, time and energy that will set the tone for the rest of the day.</p> <p>Opening Address by the Chief Guest</p> <p>Dasho Thrompon Ugyen Dorji, the Mayor of the Capital City of Bhutan.</p>
10:00-10:30		Coffee Break & Photo Session
10:30-11:00	S6	<p>Presentation on GNH by CBS and GNH Studies</p> <p>The Center for Bhutan and GNH Studies is the leading state agency for all research and surveys carried out for GNH studies in Bhutan. The CBS carries out a comprehensive GNH National Survey every 5 years with the last in 2022. This session by Mr. Karma Wangdi will allow you to understand the technical and data driven approach behind the whole concept and philosophy of the GNH.</p> <p>Karma Wangdi currently works as a Chief Research Officer at the Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies (CBS), Thimphu, Bhutan. He has coordinated and led the GNH survey conducted in 2010 besides co-authoring the survey reports with three other colleagues. He was also the chief coordinator for the 2015 and 2022 Nationwide GNH surveys. He is an associate editor of the Journal of Bhutan Studies (JBS), a bi-annual publication of the Centre. He also served as a member of the Research Ethics Board of Health (REBH), an Institutional Review Board of the Ministry of Health, Bhutan from 2013 - 2021.</p>
11:00-12:00	S7	<p>Mindfulness, Sustainable and Peace Policies - Beyond GDP</p> <p>The relevance of GNH, as a measurement beyond GDP and, as we embark on the digital and ever materialistic world, shall then be debated in this session. The session will share international experiences and learning primarily from the mid-career professionals from the Harvard Kennedy</p>



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		<p>School of Government, known for their data driven and cutting-edge policy analysis skills in addition to their experiences ranging from global consultancy firms like McKinsey, BCG and advisors to the UN and governments. They will explore and recommend a policy framework highlighting key takeaways from GNH domains and other international experiences.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>You Ting Lee</p> <p>Camilo Jose</p> <p>Koichi Tsukioka</p>
13:00-14:00		Lunch Break
14:00-15:00	S8	<p>Visit to the Parliament of Bhutan : This is one of the highlights of the trek as the group gets to see the venue of the political arena subsequent to the lecture and discussion on the introduction of democracy and Bhutan's transition to democracy in the earlier sessions.</p>
15:00-16:00	S9	<p>Entrepreneurship and Investment Opportunities</p> <p>The Government will be hosting the Bhutan Investment Forum (BIF) in February 2026 and launched the Bhutan Innovation Fund (BIF- again) of Nu.4.00 billion (\$40million) in addition to the Bhutan Innovation Lab at the Prime Ministers Office (PMO).</p> <p>This session with experts from Harvard Business School (HBS) and Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), with experiences in various start-ups and working in global firms like McKinney, BCG, E&Y, Amazon, Google, Goldman Sachs, and IBM will interact with local entrepreneurs and financial sectors to discuss on start-ups and VC fundings.</p> <p>Presentation by – Mrs. Sonam Lhamo, Chief Industries Officer, Invest Bhutan Division, Department of Industry, Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Employment, Royal Govt. of Bhutan.</p> <p>Panelists:</p>



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		Boya Gong Nikki Vereczkey Raessa Pradeep Rane
16:00-16:30		Coffee Break
16:30-17:30	S10	<p>Governing for Happiness : How the OCASC does it in Bhutan?</p> <p>The Office of the Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination (OCASC) is a pivotal and high-level office within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) of Bhutan. It functions as the central nerve center for ensuring the effective and coherent functioning of the executive branch of the Royal Government with core mandates including Cabinet Affairs, Strategic Coordination, strategic planning and strategic evaluation of the national programs.</p> <p>Presentation by:</p> <p>Leading this is Director Chencho who is a veteran civil service with extensive experiences working directly under the Prime Ministers for the past successive governments.</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p>Adin Becker Dharshan Baskar Feiyang Dai</p>

DAY 4: 19th Dec. 2025


(Punakha)



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Time		Day-5 (20 Dec 2025)
8:30-9:30	S11	<p>Inspirations from Global Peace Prayer</p> <p>Bhutan has hosted the Global Peace Prayer from 4th to 19th November, 2025 where over 100 Buddhist masters from all over the world will be congregating in Bhutan.</p> <p>Given the highly uncertain geopolitical situation starting from tariff war to actual conflicts between nations, Bhutan will be leading this special peace prayer for a better future where practice of compassion, love, joy and equanimity as universal human values will reinforce the value for peaceful co-existence.</p> <p>This session will include speakers from the event and also from the trek where they will share their vision for a global peace both at policy level and personal practices.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Margherita Bruti</p> <p>Lydia Brosnan</p> <p>Julian Gluck</p> <p>Felipe Vergara Iduya</p>
10-11:00	S12	<p>Wrap up, Feedbacks and Conclusions</p> <p>The session will consolidate all the discussion of the forum and draw conclusions and action plans both for the national and international participants. Some of the participants will be submitting articles on the topics and the themes discussed to be published in collaboration with the Institute of Happiness (IOH).</p> <p>Kinga Tshering, Institute of Happiness (IOH)</p>

Speakers from Bhutan

	<p>Ugyen Dorji</p>
	<p>The Mayor- Thimphu Thromde (Municipality), Royal Government of Bhutan, Kingdom of Bhutan (udorji@thimphucity.gov.bt) WhatsApp (+97517342344)</p> <p>Ugyen Dorji is the mayor of Thimphu City, the capital of Bhutan and home to over 20% of the population and the seat of both political and financial powers of the nation since 2021.</p> <p>Mr. Dorji was formerly the Deputy Chief Urban Planner at the Urban Planning Division in Thimphu Thromde and was responsible for overseeing the critical city projects such as the diplomatic enclave plan, City transport terminal development, and City Core enhancement plan. Apart from his duty, he also served as the planning advisor to the Chief Urban Planner and the management, and played a key role in resolving several urban land management issues and the development of Local Area Plans for the 11 urban villages within Thimphu City from 2010-2020.</p> <p>Prior to joining Thimphu Thromde he was an Assistant Lecturer at Jigme Namgyel Engineering College (JNEC), the Royal University of Bhutan training the young minds on engineering and building sustainable human settlements. He also served as the JNEC's member secretary for the RUB sport Federation, JNEC's program coordinator for the continuing education offering degree and diploma program, and project guide for the college.</p> <p>Mr. Dorji has an MBA from the University of Canberra, Australia in 2020 and a Bachelor's Degree in Civil engineering from the College of Science and Technology, Royal University of Bhutan in 2006.</p> <p>He continues to sever the people of Bhutan with an aim to make the capital city as an exemplary city of Bhutan and currently focused on revitalization of city through several urban infrastructure projects and digitalization of urban services.</p>



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Speaker on Parliament	Dasho Duba Yoten
	

His Majesty the King appointed Mr. Duba as the Secretary General of the National Assembly Secretariat on 28th September, 2023. Mr. Duba has graciously been hosting the Harvard Trek's visit to the Parliament since he was the Director of the National Assembly. Currently Mr. Duba is the Director General at the Ministry of Health Services.

His presentation on the Bhutan's evolution from its formation of the nation state back in 1616 to the introduction of the parliamentary systems in 2008 is one of the highlights of the trek.

Mr. Duba brings with him a wealth of parliamentary expertise and administrative acumen. Prior to being appointed to the esteemed post, Mr. Duba was serving as the Director of Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority, Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD). Mr. Duba was also appointed the Dzongdag (Governor) of Dagana Dzongkhag where he implemented a lot of the developmental activities at the grass roots.



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Karma Wangdi

Chief Research Officer – Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies (CBS), Bhutan
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Interested in the nuts and bolts of the studies and statistics on Gross National Happiness? Then Mr. Karma Wangdi is the one with the extensive wealth of knowledge on Bhutan's GNH studies.

Karma Wangdi currently works as a Chief Research Officer at the Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies (CBS), Thimphu, Bhutan. He has coordinated and led the GNH survey conducted in 2010 besides co-authoring the survey reports with three other colleagues. He was also the chief coordinator for the 2015 and 2022 Nationwide GNH surveys. He is an associate editor of the Journal of Bhutan Studies (JBS), a bi-annual publication of the Centre. He also served as a member of the Research Ethics Board of Health (REBH), an Institutional Review Board of the Ministry of Health, Bhutan from 2013 - 2021.

Karma has a Bachelors Degree in Commerce from Sherubtse College in Bhutan and Masters Degree in Business Administration from University of Canberra, Australia. He also has a Post Graduate Certificate in Development Management from the Royal Institute of Management, Bhutan.



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Sonam Lhamo

Chief Industries Officer, Invest Bhutan Division, Department of Industry, Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Employment
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Sonam Lhamo has been active in the field of Foreign Direct Investment for over 15 years. She has a Master's degree in Business Administration with specialization in Finance from the Australian National University under Endeavour Awards and a Postgrad Diploma in Financial Management from the Royal Institute of Management, Thimphu. She currently serves as the Chief Industries Officer at the Invest Bhutan Division, Department of Industry, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment.

She started her career with the Department of Industry in 2009. Her initial work mostly involved reviewing project proposals and helping foreign investors obtain business license in the country. Over the years, she has been involved actively in the Policy front and on the promotion of FDI. During her time with the office- the Invest Bhutan Division has expanded its services from a reactive approach to pro-actively promoting investments in the country.



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Ven. Choten Dorji

Secretary

Council for Administration and Development Affairs
(Policy, Planning & International Monastic Affairs)
Central Monastic Body of the Kingdom of Bhutan

Short Bio

Ven. Khenpo Choten Dorji is currently the Secretary of the Council for Administration & Development Affairs of the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan. Prior to the present position, Khenpo Choten worked as the Chief Editor at the Organization for the Promotion of Buddhist Practices. From 2016 until 2022, Khenpo Choten worked as the Personal Interpreter and Translator to His Eminence Sangay Dorji, Chairperson of the Council for Administration and Development Affairs. He has both authored and translated periodic teachings of His Eminence Sangay Dorji, while accompanying HE on overseas visits and teachings.

Ven. Khenpo Choten Dorji has completed bachelor's degree in Buddhist studies from Bhutan and master's degree from International Buddhist College in Thailand. In addition, Ven. Khenpo pursued PhD in Textual Studies at Mahidol University in Thailand and concurrently worked as Research Fellow of Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai at Kyoto University, Japan. Ven. Khenpo gives periodic talks on Mental Well-being and leads guided meditation on mindfulness and clam abiding.

In his capacity as Secretary, Ven. Khenpo Choten represents the Central Monastic Body as a BoardMember of Gey Rab Nyed-Yon (GNY) and Bhutan Health Trust Fund.



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Hon. Chencho

Director, Office of Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination Director at the Prime Minister's Office, Royal Government of Bhutan .

Short Bio

Hon Chencho has been the Director of the Office of Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination, Office of Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination, Prime Minister's Office, Royal Government of Bhutan since 2021.

The Office of the Cabinet Affairs and Strategic Coordination (OCASC) is a pivotal and high-level office within the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) of Bhutan. It functions as the central nerve center for ensuring the effective and coherent functioning of the executive branch of the Royal Government with core mandates including Cabinet Affairs, Strategic Coordination, strategic planning and strategic evaluation of the national programs.

Prior to his present position, Mr. Chencho has been the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of Bhutan. He was also the Chief Planning Officer at the Gross National Happiness Commission and also the Head of the Performance Management Division of the Royal Government.

Hon Chencho got his masters from LKY Institute of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore and his bachelors in Information Technology from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.



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Kinga Tshering

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Kinga the founder of the Institute of Happiness (IOH), a think and do tank for curating ideas that bridge Bhutan's traditional wisdom towards the digital future in the service of a happy humanity. He had established the IOH in 2018 with alumni members from Harvard and MIT, as a platform for exchanging ideas on development policies inspired by GNH. Since then, IOH had hosted various international seminars including the first GNH Conference at Harvard Divinity School in 2019 and has been responsible for bringing in over 450 Harvard and MIT students and alumni members to Bhutan.

Kinga is a change leader for making compelling and transformational impacts on the society at the intersection of politics, development, technology (AI), finance and investments. He is the former Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Bhutan, the largest commercial bank in Bhutan. He was also on the board of Druk Holding and Investments (DHI), the commercial investment arm of the Royal Government where he provided strategic direction for the company during its early formation in 2007 and later during its foray into technology and digital assets in 2019.

Kinga is a former Member of Parliament in the National Assembly of Bhutan (2013-2016) and had contested in the parliamentary elections also in 2023 as the president of a new progressive party called Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa with its manifesto centered around the concept of "Buddhist Capitalism with the Spirit of the GNH".

A lifelong student, Kinga is a Fulbright scholar (Kansas University, USA), Royal Government of Bhutan Fellow (Pepperdine University, USA) and a Ford Foundation Fellow (Harvard University, USA). He is still enrolled for the Masters in Divinity program at the Harvard Divinity School and is now undergoing Dzogchen practices focusing on mind training and awareness sharpening.

	Karma Tshering Wangchuk
	Founder- Bhutan Street Fashion
<div></div> <p>Karma Tshering Wangchuk, also known as "Lhari," is a prominent Bhutanese fashion designer, photographer, and textile expert who champions traditional Bhutanese dress (Gho & Kira) and street style through his influential platform, @BhutanStreetFashion. He elevates the artistry of everyday Bhutanese people, revealing the hidden stories and skills of unnamed weavers, while also researching Himalayan textiles and showcasing modern interpretations of national dress, blending heritage with contemporary trends in global exhibitions.</p> <p>Karma has recently led the first ever Bhutan Fashion Week in October where over dozens of international fashion designers and models gathered in Thimphu and showcased some of the most creative designs rooted in the Bhutanese traditional values and textiles. One of the highlights was closing off the whole street at Paro for the most memorable runway with the stunning backdrop of Paro Dzong.</p>	



Sonam Dorji

HKS -2024

Sonam Dorji is former Urban Economist of Department of Human Settlement, Royal Government of Bhutan. He started as an urban planner from 2013 to 2016. He completed MSc Economics in 2018 Symbiosis International University in India. He completed Masters in Public Administration from Kennedy School in May, 2024. In the last five years, he was involved important projects like Thimphu structure plan, property tax and government housing priority. Currently he started a non-profit in Boston and a consulting firm in Bhutan. Sonam is the key coordinator of the trek from Harvard and MIT.