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**Royal Government of Bhutan
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

22 March 2025

Press Release

Launch of Nation-wide River Cleaning Initiative

Bhutan is blessed with abundant freshwater resources, including glaciers, lakes, wetlands, and rivers. With an annual per capita water availability of 94,508 cubic meters—one of the highest in the world—the country's river systems contribute approximately 70,576 million cubic meters of water each year. These resources are not only crucial for Bhutan but also for downstream regions.

However, despite the abundance, Bhutan faces increasing challenges related to water pollution. Wastes from plastics, construction debris, and household refuse are deteriorating water quality. Rapid urbanization has intensified these issues, threatening both aquatic biodiversity and the integrity of Bhutan's conservation efforts. This growing menace undermines our strong environmental credentials and poses a serious risk to the health of our rivers.

Coinciding with The World Water Day, the Royal Government of Bhutan has launched the Nationwide River Cleaning Initiative, a comprehensive program aimed at restoring and protecting the nation's rivers. The initiative will be carried out over a span of 4 years across the 20 Dzongkhags. For the first year, the Wangchhu basin (Thimphu, Paro and Haa rivers) will be taken as the pilot area. The first year is divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 (March–June 2025): A pre-monsoon clean-up to remove accumulated waste and debris from rivers.
- Phase 2 (November–December 2025): A post-monsoon clean-up to tackle seasonal pollution and ensure long-term river health.



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In the following three years from 2026-2028, the same approach will be taken for the other basins: Punakha and Wangduephodrang; Central and Southern Dzongkhags followed by fishing prone areas; Eastern Dzongkhags and important rivers in the east. By the end of 2028, the project is expected to wind-up and the monitoring works will be handed over to respective Dzongkhags and relevant agencies/departments for strict compliance.

The program will mobilize a diverse range of stakeholders, including Desuups, civil servants, local and business leaders, and volunteers from communities, schools, and institutions. Additionally, the Prime Minister's Office will collaborate with relevant agencies to develop long-term strategies for maintaining Bhutan's river cleanliness. This initiative will be spearheaded by Mr. Gyeltshen Dukpa from His Majesty's Secretariat, who has been appointed as the National Coordinator and will report directly to the Prime Minister of Bhutan.

To kick start the initiative, over 4000 volunteers will gather today across Thimphu, Paro, and Haa for a large-scale river cleaning campaign.

An Appeal for a Nationwide Effort for Cleaner Rivers

Our rivers are the lifeblood of our nation and a source of immense pride. However, their declining health is a stark reminder of the urgent need for action. This initiative is not just about cleaning rivers, it is about safeguarding our future and reaffirming our commitment to environmental stewardship. The Royal Government urges all citizens, businesses, and organizations to join this national effort. River protection is not solely the government's responsibility; it is a shared duty that requires active participation from every individual and community in keeping our rivers clean. By working together, we can preserve Bhutan's pristine rivers for generations to come.

For more information or to get involved, please contact Mr. Gyeltshen Dukpa:

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