

Press Release

Bhavana-Karma Retreat: cultivating mindfulness

The Royal Civil Service Commission in collaboration with the Institute of Science of Mind, Simtokha of Zhung Dratshang is conducting the 3rd Mindfulness Retreat Program for 28 senior Civil Service leaders. The retreat is held at the Professional Development Training Centre, Royal Audit Authority, Tsirang from 18th - 23rd November, 2019.



The objective of this retreat program is to cultivate and harness the qualities of mindfulness based emotional intelligence in the Civil Service. Mindfulness is key to the development of emotional intelligence competencies, like self-awareness, self-management, empathy, motivation and leadership. The practice of mindfulness builds one's ability to see things with clarity and purpose, deepen inner wisdom, be more resilient and agile, be more empathic and compassionate etc. It is one ability that enhances all other abilities, be it from making better decisions, processing information and communications, shifting perspectives to managing emotions. These are qualities that have been accepted and recognized worldwide for outstanding leadership. The good news is that all such qualities and other social skills are highly trainable, using mindfulness. The other benefits of the program are promoting mental health and psychological wellbeing in the Civil Service. The program supports promotion of good governance and cultural preservation by building leadership founded on age-old practices and wisdom.

It was found that among the many activities that can enhance mindfulness, such as journaling, reflecting, martial arts etc., meditation is found to be the single most powerful activity to enhance mindfulness. Bhutan as the only thriving Vajrayana Buddhist nation, has a rich and age-old wisdom and method of cultivating mindfulness awareness with a large number of accomplished practitioners, especially in the Zhung Dratshang. Taking advantage of the rich resources available in-country and based on the age-old tradition of Shamatha and Vipassana, experts from the Institute of Science of Mind, Zhung Dratshang, created the five day silent mindfulness retreat.

The five day program is based on the method of Bhavana Karma, the first stage of meditation. The meditation techniques have been designed strictly based on the authentic teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, and texts such as Manjushri Namasangiti (Jamphel Tsenjoed), the Sutra of the ten wheels of Ksitigarbha (Sayinyingpo Khorlochupai dho), Shantideva's the way of the Bodhisattva, Vasubandhu's Treasure of Abhidharma, and the age-old tradition of Mahamudra and Dzogchen teachings. Some of the skillful methods of the world –renowned and widely practiced Vipassana meditation program have also been incorporated.

Given its benefits and the valuable feedback received from the participants of the earlier retreat, the Commission will strive to ensure that all interested civil servants will be able to attend the retreat at least once in their lifetime. However, priority for the first few programs will be given to those in leadership positions and senior Civil Servants.

The other program that focuses on building mindfulness based-emotional intelligence is through the training collaboration with Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute, USA. The SIY is a neuroscience based mindfulness training. It begins with an insight that emotional intelligence is a collection of emotional skills and, like all skills, emotional skills are trainable. Both programs contribute to enhancing emotional intelligence abilities and build GNH leadership in the Civil Service. The Commission is hopeful that it would be the bureaucracy's example that others would follow.

The Commission would like to thank Khenpo Sangay Khandu and Lopens of Institute of Science of Mind, Simtokha and Zhug Dratshang for the collaboration.
