**Press Announcement**

**Bhutan to send its first delegate to the Miss Universe 2022 pageant**

***Tashi Choden, Miss Bhutan 2022 will be the first ever Bhutanese woman to compete in the Miss Universe pageant***

**(Thimphu, December 23, 2022):** Bhutan is all set for its first ever debut at the Miss Universe 2022 pageant, which will be held in New Orleans, US, on January 14, 2023, where India’s Harnaaz Sandhu will crown her successor. The tiny Himalayan kingdom is firmly making its place in the creative world, as this is happening in the same year Bhutan earned its first ever Oscar nomination at the 94th Academy Awards.

Tashi Choden, 24, was crowned Miss Bhutan on June 04, 2022 at the third edition of Miss Bhutan, with the last event held more than a decade ago. Stunning, outspoken, intelligent, confident and a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community, Tashi is thrilled to represent her country at one of the world’s biggest international beauty pageants. She sees this as an opportunity to learn from her fellow delegates and most importantly to represent Bhutan on a global stage. Born to a Bhutanese mother and a Tibetan father, Tashi was raised in Nagaland, India until the age of three. Tragedy struck and she lost her father when she was only four-years old, and a decade later she also lost her mother, when she was just 14-years old.

Even before winning the Miss Bhutan title, Tashi was a successful model and actress. She began modeling at the age of 15 when she came across Project Bhutan, a Bhutanese modeling agency based in Thimphu, where she started taking part in shows and even pageants, both inside and outside Bhutan. She had also established herself as an actress through movies like Singye and Nyingtob.

Personally, she sees beauty pageants as a journey of discovering herself, through which she has become a strong, passionate and driven young woman. It is also a platform where she can be the voice of the youth, represent her country to the outside world and advocate for causes that are close to her heart, like LGBTQ+ rights. She believes she can take Bhutan to the top. Tashi embodies the energy of the youth of Bhutan in the 21st century, forging her own path and taking her country to the global stage.

“I knew I had the passion, the motivation and the right reasons to want to win the Miss Bhutan pageant, and it was a beautiful journey of celebrating my identity. Miss Universe to me is an opportunity to represent my country. As a global event watched by millions of people, I see this as a great platform to help share the voice of my country, highlight our beautiful land, and advocate for important causes. Bhutan is going through a period of major transformation, and I’m so proud to be part of this. I believe in the future of our country and everything that we can achieve together,” Tashi Choden concluded.

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**About the Department of Tourism**

The Department of Tourism of Bhutan is responsible for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in Bhutan. It works to share the Kingdom’s remarkable places, people and experiences with conscious travellers, guided by the principles of high value, low volume tourism.

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