

Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj's Address to the 15th Round Table

Meeting between the Royal Government of Bhutan and its Development

Partners, Thimphu, 2 September 2021

Your Excellency Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji;

Excellencies;

Distinguished Colleagues.

Greetings to all! I begin by extending our warm gratitude to the Royal Government for organising this 15th Round Table Meeting.

Bhutan and India share a special connect which goes back in time. Both our nations share civilisational and people-to-people linkages. In the 6th century BCE, Buddhism travelled from the plains of *Magadh* in *Bihar* to the land of the *Thunder Dragon*. In later times, the precious *Guru Padmasabhava* carried the message of peace, humanity and brotherhood from India to Bhutan.

The *sine qua non* of the relationship is trust, understanding and affection. The foundation was laid and thereafter carefully nurtured by the visionary *Druk Gyalpos of Bhutan* and our leaders over the years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said during his State Visit to Bhutan in 2019, **“It is natural that the people of Bhutan and India experience great attachment to each other. After all, we are close not just due to our geography; but our history, culture and spiritual traditions have created unique bonds between our people and nations.”**

In 2020, as humanity faced the black swan COVID - 19 pandemic, India

acted quickly in responding to and addressing the challenges in the region. As a close friend and neighbour, India particularly accorded top priority to Bhutan, in keeping with the wishes, priorities and aspirations of the Bhutanese people. Since March 2020, the Government of India has delivered essential medical equipment and supplies and vaccines, besides ensuring the uninterrupted flow of essential and non - essential commodities. New trade routes were facilitated. India has also collaborated with Bhutan to formulate a regional strategy to fight the COVID - 19 pandemic. To this end, Bhutan participated in the SAARC Leaders' Virtual Meeting in March 2020; the Global CoWIN Conclave in July 2021 as well as in other Virtual Training Programs organised by the Government of India from time to time, for strengthening clinical trial research capacity in the South - Asian region. Importantly, and to ensure that Bhutan's Development Projects stay on track, India front - loaded funds to the tune of Nu. 5.1 billion, upon request of the Royal Government.

Excellency,

India is proud to be Bhutan's partner. And Bhutan **is** central to our commitment in the region. As in the past, we will continue to support the aspirations of the people of Bhutan – in Agriculture & Healthcare, Education & Training, Infrastructure & Energy, Space Science & Fintech, IT & IT-enabled Services, Capacity building in Government and Training in Defence. **Bhutan will be at the top of our priorities.** Our partnership has been prompted as much by economic impulse as by moral principles and emotional bonds.

In 2019, Prime Minister Modi had said, **“As Bhutan soars high in all endeavours, its 1.3 billion Indian friends will not only just look on and cheer you with pride and happiness. But also they will partner you,**

share with you and learn from you.” As Bhutan is soon to graduate to middle - income country status, we warmly congratulate you, we wish also to assure you that the people and the Government of India stand resolute with you to collaborate and cooperate in new avenues and sectors, as this uniquely special partnership between our two friendly countries continues to accelerate and grow.

I will close by saying that India is privileged to make that extra effort for Bhutan. And will always do so. For Bhutan's benefit.

Thank you!
