



## Bhutan receives additional 400,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine



Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Tandi Dorji, receives the consignment in a ceremony held at Paro airport

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In keeping with the uniquely close and friendly relations between Bhutan and India, the Government of India (GoI) gifted a second consignment of 400,000 doses of the 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccine to Bhutan on 22 March.

Indian Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj handed over the vaccine consignment to Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Tandi Dorji, in a ceremony held at Paro airport.

During the ceremony, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said that India prides itself upon being a committed partner and friend to Bhutan.

"The exemplary relationship between our two nations, rooted in its mutual respect, has been blessed by the Druk Gyalpos of Bhutan and Indian leadership. Today is yet another testimony to our enduring partner-

ship that has stood the test of time," ambassador Kumboj said.

Lyonpo Dr Tandi Dorji conveyed the deep appreciation and gratitude of the government and the people of Bhutan to PM Modi and the GoI for this generous gift as well as for the GoI's unconditional and unstinted assistance to Bhutan's efforts in managing the pandemic.

Lyonpo said the arrival of the second consignment will enable the Ministry of Health to launch the nationwide vaccination programme which starts on 27 March.

Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj recalled Indian PM Modi's virtual address to the UN General Assembly in September 2020 where he had declared that in keeping with the ancient Indian ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' India's vaccine production and

delivery capacity would be used to help humanity in fighting the COVID-19 crisis.

She also reiterated PM Modi's words that 'India will be a force for good in the neighborhood. It is committed to improving the well-being of the region.'

The GoI has gifted 400,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine to Bhutan which brings the total doses in Bhutan to 550,000 enabling Bhutan to embark on its nation-wide mass vaccination program. The first consignment of 150,000 doses of Covishield vaccines was received in January this year.

The press release from the Indian Embassy in Thimphu states: "The entire eligible population of Bhutan will be inoculated with the first dose of the 'Made in India' COVID vaccine. Thus, Bhutan is likely to

be one of the first countries to protect its entire population against COVID-19, with assistance from India."

Through the unique initiative of Vaccine Maitri India has supplied more than 60-million vaccines to 72 countries across the globe.

The press release further added that Bhutan was the first country among neighbours and partners to receive the 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccine from India.

As a reflection of the special bonds of trust and understanding between India and Bhutan that have existed over decades, the GoI had earlier handed over ten consignments of medical supplies, one portable X-Ray machine, essential medicines and medical equipment in addition to the vaccine consignments.

"Going forward, India will continue to resolutely stand by Bhutan in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic," the press release stated.

The press release from the Foreign Ministry further states: "As a steadfast friend of Bhutan, India has stood firmly by Bhutan at all times. India's unwavering support to Bhutan's COVID-19 response efforts is a clear indication of its commitment and high importance accorded to Bhutan-India relations. Bhutan was also the first country to receive the Covishield vaccine under the 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative in January this year."

It further states that India has assured Bhutan of its full COVID-19 vaccine requirement of around 1.2-million doses to cover the country's entire eligible population.