

# BHUTAN TODAY



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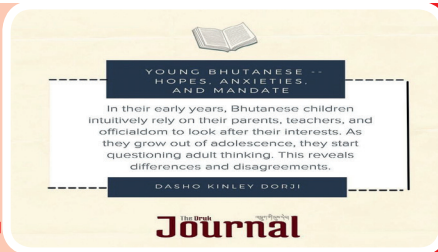
## IN THE NEWS



### Druk Neykor to promote domestic tourism, cultural conservation

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**29 April 2022:**  
His Majesty The King granted an Audience to the Foreign Minister of India, who is on a two day visit to Bhutan.

# Strengthening Indo-Bhutan ties



By Staff Reporter

To strengthen the already existing close ties of friendship and cooperation between India and Bhutan, and following the long-established tradition of regular exchange of high-level visits between the two countries, Dr. S. Jaishankar visit to Bhutan is country's first high-level official visit since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India was in the country for a two-day official visit from April 29 to April 30, at the invitation of Dr Tandri Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Dr Jaishankar was accompanied by senior officials of the Government of India.

The External Affairs Minister received Audiences with His Majesty The King and His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. He also called on Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister, and met with Lyonpo Dr. Tandri Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs,

and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Speaking at the Handing-Over Ceremony and E-Inaugurations in Bhutan, Dr. S Jaishankar said: "I congratulate His Majesty who has led from the front, and the Government and the people of Bhutan, for the resilience that you have shown." Adding, "It is a matter of great satisfaction as well that our bilateral cooperation has continued to flourish even during this difficult period."

Additionally, he also said: "Given our long-standing ties and special bilateral partnership, Bhutan was the natural choice to be the first country to receive the Covishield vaccines under our Vaccine Maitri Initiative."

On emerging partnership across various sectors, Dr Jaishankar said: "Our two countries are collaborating closely on STEM through regular placement of Bhutanese youth in our IITs; we have successfully linked up the Start-Up systems of our two countries via structured workshops; **Continued on Pg. 11**

# DTT, a party as old as democracy in Bhutan

... Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa to hold party convention on May 2

By Puran Gurung  
Thimphu

A new party in the political fray, Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa is as old as democracy in the country, there has been a grassroots movement, a candidate says.

The party will hold a party convention on May 2 to adopt the party charter, and elect its president, vice president, and members of the executive committee.

For now, the party wraps

up its position as - "We stand to serve, better." Encapsulating the stand further, it says: "A political party is only as good as the **Continued on Pg. 11**



# Tourism reopening expected this fall

... However, there are no concrete decisions yet

By Puran Gurung  
Thimphu

Tourism industry in the country has been idle for the past two years, the government is expecting to reopen tourism this fall.

Restarting tourism in the country will adopt a new reform package.

The government is discussing to completely scrapping the mandatory quarantine in the country for inbound travelers and consequently opening the tourism sector too, said foreign affairs minister, Dr Tandri Dorji.

Lyonpo said, the formal opening of the tourism will require some time. "It will be most probably around

the fall because it needs lots of preparations, and changes for the reform package," added Lyonpo.

He elaborated that 'businesses cannot be as usual like in the past, we are making lots of changes and we must learn the lessons from COVID-19. The lessons are learned and incorporated and they are put into a new reform package.'

The reforms will be ready very soon within the month of May, then, the government will give one or two months of preparation time to the hoteliers and all the stakeholders.

However, Lyonpo said 'there are no concrete decisions as of now, the government is still **Continued on Pg. 11**



## Editorial

### Indo-Bhutan ties, a sacred tie

From the frontiers of space to aesthetic values of societies and religion to everything under the sky, Bhutan and India is continuously signing pacts shoulder to shoulder, strengthening the friendship, deepening the tested bilateral relations.

This journey is 100 years old, and it growing stronger by the year.

As years unfurl, and as such episodes depict to us, the two countries have tremendous spaces to collaborate and grow the bond of brotherhood.

Bhutan was a natural choice for India to send the first consignment of COVID-19 vaccine under India's Vaccine Maitri Initiative, this is truly a sign of friendship that cares, not just as two countries, as living souls.

It is a testimony of friendship that has been carved out of care and love.

Indo-Bhutan tie is a historic relationship based on brotherhood, warmth and mutual trust.

This was reiterated by Dr Jaishankar too. "India and Bhutan share a unique and time tested bilateral relationship, characterised by utmost trust, goodwill and mutual understanding."

Additionally, said that Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has often emphasized that Bhutan being a close friend and a privileged neighbour, the friendly people of Bhutan enjoy a special place in the hearts and minds of Indians. This relationship, rooted in history and yet forward looking, always delivers!

With the gift of 12th medical consignment, Dr Jaishankar also the two countries will launch INDIA BHUTAN-SAT into Space shortly.

Further, he highlighted that the two countries are collaborating closely on STEM through regular placement of Bhutanese youth in IIT colleges of India.

India and Bhutan have successfully linked up the Start-Up systems via structured workshops; through the National Knowledge Network and the Druk-REN connection and the e-Library project, and opened up new vistas of education and knowledge sharing between our two countries.

Dr Jaishankar also inaugurated three projects.

The counterparts discussed matters on mutual interest including the upcoming high-level exchanges, economic development and hydro-power cooperation.

Dr Jaishankar remarked, 'all visits to Thimphu and to Bhutan are always memorable, but, I think this one has a very special sense. I will return with a great sense of satisfaction that our partnership is as solid as it is special, that it always delivers results, especially in face of daunting challenges as we have experienced in the last two years and above all it responds to the wishes, aspirations and priorities of the people of Bhutan'.

In this episode of official visit, we understand that the special bond is nurtured not just by words, it is done through actions.

This exemplary friendship is a sign of great trust, warmth, and brotherhood.

## Remarks by External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar at Handing Over Ceremony and E-Inaugurations in Bhutan

April 29, 2022

Excellency Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji;  
 Foreign Secretary Aum Pema Choden;  
 Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj; Ambassador Vinay Kwatra  
 Colleagues from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs;  
 Kuzuzampo! Namaste!

I am, as my delegation is, deeply honoured to be your first visitor as Bhutan opens up after a two year gap in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

Our gathering here today is also a celebration of your success in the fight against COVID-19 these past two years. This has been a difficult journey for all of us. I think, it is a testimony to our friendship that we have displayed the kind of solidarity that we have done in these times. I congratulate His Majesty who has led from the front, and the Government and the people of Bhutan, for the resilience that you have shown. It is a matter of great satisfaction as well that our bilateral cooperation has continued to flourish even during this difficult period. Given our long-standing ties and special bilateral partnership, Bhutan was the natural choice to be the first country to receive the Covishield vaccines under our Vaccine Maitri Initiative.

Our relationship, Excellency, is based on a genuine concern for each other's welfare and interests. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often emphasized that Bhutan being a close friend and a privileged neighbour, the friendly people of Bhutan enjoy a special place in the hearts and minds of Indians. This relationship, rooted in history and yet forward looking, always delivers!

I am happy that our traditional relations have grown in new sectors since the Prime Minister's visit in 2019, in keeping with the wishes and aspirations of the Bhutanese people.

In this vein, financial connectivity has touched new heights through the launch of the RuPay card and the BHIM app; our two countries are collaborating closely on STEM through regular placement of Bhutanese youth in our IITs; we have successfully linked up the Start-Up systems of our two countries via structured workshops; through the National Knowledge Network & the Druk-REN connection and the e-Library project, we have opened up new vistas of education and knowledge sharing between our two countries. I am also pleased to share that the INDIA BHUTAN-SAT is due to launch into space shortly.

Today, excellencies, dear friends, it gives me particular pleasure to join you excellency in inauguration of three projects and dedicate these to the people of Bhutan. It is heartening to know that these were completed within these last two years, despite the logistical challenges posed by the COVID pandemic. India's development cooperation paradigm is unique, prompted as much by economic impulse as by moral principles and emotional bonds.

It is also my honour to handover the 12th consignment of medical supplies to Bhutan, as a gift from the Government and people of India to the Government and people of Bhutan. We will continue to stand resolutely by your side through a post COVID sustainable recovery which is your current focus.

It promises today, to be a very busy and almost an action-packed day. I was honoured to have an audience with His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo earlier today. I now look forward to my audience with His Majesty The King of Bhutan, as I do to my call-on on the Prime Minister and excellency, my meeting with you. I am confident that these meetings will be fruitful and outcome oriented, leading to further strengthening of our bilateral relations.

I also take this opportunity to thank His Majesty, His Excellency The Prime Minister, Excellency The Foreign Minister and the people of Bhutan for being such excellent hosts. I am deeply touched by the gesture of hosting me and my delegation, and for the very warm and gracious hospitality that has accompanied us all along.

All visits to Thimphu and to Bhutan are always memorable, but, I think this one has a very special sense. I will return with a great sense of satisfaction that our partnership is as solid as it is special, that it always delivers results, especially in face of daunting challenges as we have experienced in the last two years and above all it responds to the wishes, aspirations and priorities of the people of Bhutan.

Tashi Delek! Thank you!

## Strengthening Indo-Bhutan ties



...Pg 01 through the National Knowledge Network & the DrukREN connection and the e-Library project, we have opened up new vistas of education and knowledge sharing between our two countries.”

He further added: “I am also pleased to share that the INDIA BHUTAN-SAT

is due to launch into space shortly.”

The visit reinforces the special relationship Bhutan and India share, founded on trust and mutual respect, states a release from Prime Minister’s Office.

Embassy of India in its press release states: “India and Bhutan share a unique and time tested bilateral re-

lationship, characterized by utmost trust, goodwill and mutual understanding.” Further stating, the two sides will discuss all issues of mutual interest, including the upcoming high-level exchanges, economic development and hydro-power cooperation.

During the visit, Dr Jaishankar and Lyonpo Dr

Tandi Dorji virtually inaugurated the Four-lane road from Jungshina to Chubachu, Bajo-Khuruthang Secondary National Highway and new Bus Terminal in Bumthang.

To support Bhutan’s fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr Jaishankar handed over 2000 boxes of essential medical supplies

to Lyonpo Dr Tandi Dorji.

Between the two counterparts, the Minister discussed matters of mutual interest covering hydropower, connectivity, trade, space, health, and digital issues.

## DTT, a party as old as democracy in Bhutan

...Pg 01 collective aspiration and efforts of its citizens.”

Thuendrel, in short stands for ‘Unity’. “Thuendrel is about unity, and it is not just a clichéd unity,” says a party candidate, also a former parliamentarian, Kinga Tshering.

He elaborates that ‘it is a way of the whole grand idea of structuring process right from the household, all the way to society, all the way to the international level in line with Gross National Happiness, the overarching paradigm’.

The party has been working since the advent of democracy, says Kinga Tshering. “The movement as a whole, the party is as old as democracy in the country, the movement started in 2008,” he said. Adding further, he said that most of their candidates have been involved in the democratic process for the last 15 years.

Additionally, Kinga Tshering also unfurls that the party candidates’ cumulative experience is also vast. He said that some of the members have contested earlier elections, and that

party supporters of other political parties have shifted their allegiance to DTT.

However, he said that the branding, strategy, and ideology are completely new for a new change.

Confirming that there are candidates for all the 47 constituencies, they are yet to get a Letter of Intent from the Election Commission of Bhutan.

Revealing provisional party candidates’ vast experience, he said more than 16 provisional candidates have more than 20 years of experience in various capacities,

five of them hold Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees, and 17 of them hold master’s degrees and double-master degrees.

Adding further, he said that professionally, there are five engineers, four agriculture experts, three digital and technology experts, and six business administrators among others. “In terms of demographic and profile, we are as experienced as any established party,” said Kinga Tshering.

The convention, according to the party’s release, the event endorsed by the Elec-

tion Commission of Bhutan will be an official launch of the party in preparation for the 2023 elections.

May 2, coinciding with the birth anniversary of the third Druk Gyalpo is considered particularly auspicious for us, in that, it signals hope, a new lease on life and a new beginning, states the party’s release.

## Tourism reopening expected this fall

...Pg 01 working on it,” adding a formal announcement is expected when the reform package is ready, it will hopefully come out within the next few weeks.’

Lyonpo said: “The government will open the tourism sector with renewed impetus in the long interest of the country.”

According to the State of The Nation report, the direct reduction in tourism earnings is estimated at 40

percent for financial year (2020) and 100 percent for financial year (2021) as international tourism has not yet resumed as of September 2021. On a calendar year basis, gross receipts fell by 92 percent to \$19.84 million in 2020, from \$225.87 million in 2019. Direct revenue is estimated to have dropped by 90.4 percent to \$2.63 million in 2020, from \$27.23 million in 2019.

According to Asian Development Bank (ADB)

report of ‘Lessons from coping with the pandemic in a tourism-dependent economy’ (December, 2021), it states the tourism sector is strategic for Bhutan on multiple fronts. In the years prior to the pandemic, the sector was a strong driver of growth that also facilitated the growth of auxiliary sectors such as transport, hotels and accommodations, and handicrafts. Tourism inflows in the last five years grew at a near compounded

annual average of 30 percent.

The report further states that during the pandemic, 50,737 people from the tourism sector have been affected directly and indirectly.

A rapid socioeconomic assessment conducted by the United Nations Development Programme and the National Statistics Bureau involved the designing of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index for Tourism

(MVI-T) which identified eight deprivations: (i) income loss, (ii) coping strategy, (iii) loss of livelihood, (iv) food security, (v) limited savings, (vi) indebtedness, (vii) vulnerable household members, and (viii) tourism dependence, states the report.