

**Embassy of India
Thimphu**

Press Release: Virtual Workshop with Women Tech Entrepreneurs from Karnataka (India) and Bhutan

1. As a part of the Government of India's 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (India@75) celebrations to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence, the Indian Embassy – in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs [*States Division*], Government of India; the Government of Karnataka [*Department of Electronics, Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science & Technology*]; and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan – organised a virtual workshop today with women tech entrepreneurs from Karnataka (India) and Bhutan.

2. Dignitaries at the event included **Lyonpo Karma Dorji**, Hon'ble Minister of Labour & Human Resources of Bhutan; **Dr. C. N. Ashwathnarayan**, Minister of Electronics, Information & Biotechnology and S&T; Minister of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, Government of Karnataka; **Dr. E.V. Ramana Reddy** (IAS), Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Electronics, IT, Bt and S&T, Government of Karnataka; **Mr. C. Rajasekhar**, Officer on Special Duty, States Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; **Mrs. Kunzang Lhamu**, Director General, Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Labour & Human Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan; and **Ms. Meena Nagaraj** (IAS), Director, Department of Electronics, IT & Bt, Government of Karnataka.

3. Speaking at the event, the Ambassador of India to Bhutan **Ms. Ruchira Kamboj** said that "India's robust relationship with Bhutan is expanding across all sectors, with the IT sector and startups gaining momentum in recent years. We are confident that there is immense potential for exchange of knowledge between the two startup ecosystems of India and Bhutan, with particular focus on Karnataka, the premier IT hub of India".

4. Leading women tech entrepreneurs from Bhutan and Karnataka shared lessons from their respective startup journeys in the tech world, in a knowledge-sharing format. The focus sectors of the workshop included Virtual Reality in Advertisement & Marketing, ICT, Tech-Stack, Coding, Programming Education, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics, Digital Therapeutics, etc. The speakers included two startups from Karnataka – **Ms. Bharathi Vasanthakrishna**, Founder of *Kornerstone Analytics*, and **Ms. Meera**, Founder of *Vyli Health* – and three startups from Bhutan – **Ms. Srijana Giri**, Founder of *Daisy's Advertisement and Marketing Network*; **Ms. Kesang Om**, Founder of *Institute for Learning Solutions*; and **Ms. Tshering Choki**, Promoter/Director of *Athang Private Limited*. The workshop included an interactive session by **Mr. Navratan Katariya**, Director – Innovation, Entrepreneurship at *NASSCOM Center of Excellence for Internet of Things & Artificial Intelligence*, Karnataka.

5. About 150 entrepreneurs and officials from Bhutan participated at the event, including functionaries from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Cottage and Small Industry, Ministry of Labour & Human Resources, Ministry of Information & Communication, as well as members from relevant organizations such as the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI); The Loden Foundation; Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE); Respect, Educate, Nurture, Empower Women (RENEW); Bhutan Youth Development Fund (YDF); Bhutan Association of Entrepreneurs (BAEyul); Druk Gyalpo's Institute (The Royal Academy); Organization for Youth Empowerment (OYE); Thimphu TechPark Limited (TTPL); Tarayana Foundation; Druk Holding & Investments (DHI), iHub Bhutan, etc.

6. The Indian state of Karnataka – the Silicon Valley of India – is globally renowned for its nurturing ecosystem that has facilitated the growth of innovation and entrepreneurship. The Government of Karnataka plays the role of an enabler through the Global Innovation Alliance program for collaboration with leading innovation hubs of the world in providing opportunities for startups in Karnataka to obtain global exposure.

7. In recent years, the Government of India has been actively engaging with Bhutan to connect the startup ecosystems of the two countries. The Indian Embassy had organised the first ever Bhutan-India Startup Summit on 28-29 February 2020 in Thimphu, which was attended by the Hon'ble Commerce and Industry Minister of India Shri Piyush Goyal, during which Bhutanese startups exchanged ideas and knowledge with top Indian industry representatives. Flowing from the successful Startup Summit, there have been a number of collaborative initiatives including capacity building programmes for Bhutanese entrepreneurs as well as a feasibility study to establish an entrepreneurship development centre in Bhutan.

8. The workshop with Karnataka provided the startups a platform to connect together for focused discussions. In the context of Bhutan's emphasis on economic recovery, this workshop is in line with various up-skilling initiatives of the Royal Government such as the Skills Development Plan (SDP), Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP), and Build Bhutan, with its emphasis on knowledge-sharing among startups. The Indian side is working on several more initiatives for collaboration between the Government of Karnataka and the Royal Government of Bhutan in the areas of Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Machine Learning and Robotics, etc. India remains a steadfast development partner of Bhutan across all sectors including such new and emerging areas of startups and technology.



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