

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India pays a State visit to Bhutan

Announcements made related to the Launch of RuPay Card in Bhutan, cooperation in the construction of small satellites and the use of space technology, post-graduate scholarships, among others

The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi paid a State visit to Thimphu, Bhutan from 17th to 18th August 2019. He said that it is a privilege of India that we are a major partner in the development of Bhutan. India and Bhutan enjoy excellent bilateral ties exemplified by our extensive development partnership, mutually beneficial hydro-power co-operation, and strong trade and economic linkages. These are, reinforced by a shared spiritual heritage and robust people-to-people ties. India-Bhutan partnership today is of a special character and substance and forms an important pillar of Government of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

Hydro-power is an important area of cooperation between the two countries. The two countries have together transformed the power of the rivers of Bhutan into not only electricity but mutual prosperity also. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi said that both India and Bhutan have achieved another historic milestone of this journey with the inauguration of the Mangdechhu project. With the cooperation of both countries, hydro-power generating capacity in Bhutan has crossed 2000 MW. He said that he is confident that India and Bhutan will also take other projects forward very fast. He further added that to meet the growing needs of the common people of Bhutan, the supply of LPG from India is being increased from 700 to 1000 MT per month. This will help in bringing clean fuel to the villages.

Under the SAARC Currency Swap Framework, India remains positive to increase the limit of currency swaps for Bhutan. Meanwhile, an additional USD 100 million will be available to Bhutan under the standby swap arrangement to meet the foreign exchange requirement.

India is committed to accelerate the development of Bhutan using space technology. The earth station of South Asia Satellite has been inaugurated. This will increase coverage of communication, public broad-casting and disaster management in Bhutan. For these purposes extra bandwidth and transponders will also be made available as per Bhutan's requirements. Both countries will also cooperate in the construction of small satellites and the use of space technology.

Connection with the National Knowledge Network of India will connect Bhutan's students and researchers to the new resources of Indian universities. This is an important step for the establishment of a Common Knowledge Society between the two countries, which will particularly benefit our youth. The collaboration and relationship between Royal Bhutan University and IITs of India and some other top educational institutions are in line with today's requirements for education and technology.

Also, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi launched the RuPay card in Bhutan. This will further enhance the bilateral relationship in digital payments, and trade and tourism.

He added that our shared spiritual heritage and strong people-to-people relationship is the

heart of India-Bhutan relations. Keeping this in mind, post-graduate scholarships for Bhutan at Nalanda University are being increased from two to five.

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