

Remarks by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj on 7 December 2020
at a special event to mark the Nehru-Wangchuck Scholarship Scheme

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Dasho Lhendup Wangchu, Focal Commissioner for Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship, Royal Civil Service Commission

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Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship Recipients,

Distinguished Guests and Colleagues

We are indeed delighted to welcome you to this special event!

Many of you would recall that the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship Programme was envisaged in order to implement Article 7 of the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 2007, which mandates both countries to further enhance educational cooperation. **This unique full-ride Scholarship Programme** was appositely named after two prominent leaders of our countries whose warm friendship and trust kindled the uniquely close and special relationship between India and Bhutan.

Indeed, I do pleasantly recall the brief but significant ceremony at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 17 January 2020 when Dasho Kinga Singye and I inked the Memorandum of Understanding effecting the renewal of the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship Programme for another five years. **Both of us thus continued the legacy of this prestigious Scholarship Scheme which was originally initiated with the signing of a MoU between Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India in June 2009.** The extension of the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship MOU reflected the understanding shared by both the Government of India and the Royal Government of Bhutan on the importance of educational exchanges and for giving recognition to talented Bhutanese youth.

The primary objective of the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship Scheme was to provide opportunities for Bhutanese nationals to undertake postgraduate studies in select premier Indian Institutions. And it is extremely satisfying to note that since its institution in 2009, more than 105 Bhutanese students have been awarded the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship through the last decade.

During his visit to Bhutan in June 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had announced doubling of the scholarship fund for this scheme from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 2 crores per annum. The new corpus of funding for the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship was made available to the Royal Government of Bhutan with effect from the academic year 2015-16. You would also recall that in order to make the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship Scheme more prestigious and to attract the best talent from Bhutan, the monthly stipend was doubled from the academic session 2015-16. Let us see how this has practically worked!

In 2018-19, the eight selected candidates were placed in reputed Institutes/Universities of India such as VIT University, Vellore, Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Hospitality and Tourism Management at Chandigarh University, **IIT Roorkee, Amity University (Delhi)** etc. From the year 2020-2021, the number of Nehru Wangchuck Scholarships have been increased from 8 to 9 every year. **And I am proud to state that this year, three Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship recipients have been admitted into M. Tech programmes at the best of Indian institutions namely the Indian Institutes of Technology at Bombay and at Delhi.** And I am very happy that one of these brilliant engineering professionals is present here today and she will be sharing some of her personal scholastic experiences shortly. We will also have the pleasure of listening to one more Nehru Wangchuck scholarship recipient who has already completed his studies in India a few years back.

May I also take this opportunity to share with you information regarding some of the other educational initiatives and scholarships that we at the Embassy of India offer to Bhutanese students on behalf of the Government of India.

The first of these GOI scholarships that I would like to spotlight is the newest and little known Scholarship i.e. the India-Bhutan Friendship Scholarship introduced by the Prime Minister of India on the occasion of the 40th birth anniversary of His Majesty the King in February 2020. Every year, we will provide three of the best Bhutanese technical & engineering students who are offered admission into M. Tech programmes at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. We are delighted that the first two of the India-Bhutan Scholarship recipients namely Srijana Gajmer and Sonam Tshering are well on their way to complete their first semester of studies at IIT, Kanpur with full scholarship support from the Embassy of India. It is our aspiration that next year as well i.e. in 2021-2022, all the three India-Bhutan Friendship Scholarship slots will be availed of by Bhutanese students at IIT, Kanpur. Please do encourage the best and the brightest tech students from Bhutan to apply for this unique scholarship.

Then, we have the Ambassador's Scholarship which is probably the longest running scholarship scheme for Bhutanese students studying India since 2001. **Almost a thousand Bhutanese students pursuing their studies in Indian colleges, institutes and universities receive this scholarship every year.** This scholarship is open to Bhutanese students studying Buddhist and Monastic Studies also at institutions like the **Namdroling Monastery** and the **Ngagyur Nyingma Institute** in India. **Even this year, we have received an overwhelming number of applications from Bhutanese students this year for the Ambassador's scholarship.**

There are two other Scholarship programmes that we coordinate closely with the Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan at the undergraduate level. One of these is the **Under Graduate Scholarship Scheme** administered by the Department of Adult and Higher Education and financed by the Government of India through Five Year Plan assistance to the Royal Government of Bhutan. Every year, 75 Under Graduate scholarships are provided to school leaving students of Bhutan to study their Bachelor's degree courses in Indian institutions. This amounts to a total number of 375 Under Graduate scholarships supported by the Government of India through the 12th Five Year Plan.

Another prestigious scholarship that we offer is the ICCR Engineering Scholarship through which 20 scholarships are offered to Bhutanese students topping the science stream and shortlisted by DAHE at the National Institutes of Technology in India and a few other top engineering institutions like the Delhi Technological University for pursuing Bachelor's degrees in engineering disciplines.

And how can I forget the **Nalanda University**, where every year there are five GOI scholarships offered to students from Bhutan admitted to the Post Graduate schools of Nalanda University. You would recall that following the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Bhutan in August 2019, the number of scholarships at Nalanda University has been increased from 2 to 5 every year. I am pleased to inform you that there are 13 Bhutanese students who enrolled in Master's programmes at Nalanda University this year including 5 top-level performers who were awarded the GOI Nalanda University scholarships.

And this is not all, we do offer other scholarships such as the SAARC Scholarships for Post Graduate Programmes at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun; AYUSH Scholarships for degrees courses in Ayurveda, Yoga and other AYUSH streams of traditional medicines.

The latest scholarship to join this list **are two full tuition-waiver scholarships from the Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar**. Pursuant to outreach efforts of the Mission, Prof. Bimal Patel, Director General of the Rashtriya Raksha University has offered two annual tuition waiver scholarships (worth the value of US\$2500 per annum) on nomination basis by the Ambassador of India to Bhutan for Bhutanese students who join Bachelor's degree courses at RRU. May I inform you that the Rashtriya Raksha University has recently been upgraded (through an Act of Parliament) to an Institution of National Importance and given the status of a Central University.

We are pleased to share that after seeking and receiving recommendations of two students on merit basis from the Department of Adult and Higher Education, two Bhutanese students have been nominated for admission to the Rashtriya Raksha University undergraduate programmes in (i) Bachelor's degree in Defence & Strategic Studies and (ii) B. Tech degree in Information Security.

Last but not least, is our ITEC Programme, which through the decades since its launch in 1964, has become the flagship training programme of the Government of India for development cooperation. In the background of COVID-19, it has been not possible for Bhutanese civil servants, professionals and private individuals to travel to India and undergo ITEC training programmes – in the usual way.

In the new normal, our ITEC training have been transformed into e-ITEC training programmes. These training courses are delivered in a facile and professional manner through digital channels and web-conferencing facilities. And, I am pleased to inform you that we witnessed participation of a total number of 86 Bhutanese nationals in e-ITEC training programmes has been facilitated by the Mission from April – November 2020.

Just last week, a customized e-ITEC training programme on **'Familiarization of SEBI's policies and Regulatory Framework'** was organized by the National Institute of Securities Markets

from 25-27 September 2020 in coordination with the Embassy of India, the Development Partnership Administration of the Ministry of External Affairs for employees of Druk Holdings & Investments. The 3-day intensive training programme delivered through virtual mode was appreciated by all the participants.

Next is a series of e-ITEC training programmes **for Judicial Officers of Bhutan** specially designed in consultation with the Bhutan National Legal Institute to be delivered by the National Law University, Jodhpur. The first of these 14 3-day intensive capsule style e-ITEC training programmes on ‘International Commercial Arbitration’ commences from 9 December 2020 for judicial officials of Bhutan.

In this vein, we would like to reach out to all Departments and Ministries of the Royal Government of Bhutan as well as other organizations with the offer to customize e-ITEC training courses as per your training objectives and training requirements. And we promise to ensure that they are implemented within a reasonable time period.

I conclude with the words of Rabindranath Tagore, our first Nobel Laureate, who said and I quote “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.” Thus, it is our privilege to partner with Bhutan in the sector of education through the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship and other GOI scholarships so that Druk Yul – the land of the Thunder Dragon can attain even greater heights, and of course with the greatest happiness quotient in the world.

Tashi Delek! Thank You!