

Remarks by EAM at the Signing Ceremony of the Concession Agreement of Kholongchhu HEP

June 29, 2020

**Your Excellency Lyonpo (Dr.) Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister of Bhutan,
Your Excellency Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, Minister of Economic Affairs, Bhutan,
General V. Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan to India,
Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj
Distinguished dignitaries from the Royal Government of Bhutan,
Dignitaries from DGPC, KHEL and SJVNL
My colleagues from Ministry of Power, MEA and our Embassy in Thimphu,**

Namaskar! Kuzu Zangpo La!

Bhutan and India have a truly unique relationship and are bound together by ties of geography, history, culture, spiritual traditions and centuries-old people-to-people interactions. Our shared values have shaped a common world view. These special ties have not only benefited our two nations. It has also created an example for the whole world: of two neighbours, living and working together for shared growth and welfare bound by a deep friendship.

2. Our time tested relations, characterized by so much trust and understanding, have matured over the years & have been sustained by the tradition of regular high level visits and dialogues between the two countries. Most recently, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had undertaken a State Visit to Bhutan on 17-18 August 2019. During this visit, the two Prime Ministers had formally inaugurated the 720 MW Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project.

3. Hydro power sector has been the most visible symbol of the mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation between our two countries. The recently completed 720 MW Mangdechhu Hydro Electric Power Project has brought the GoI assisted installed capacity to more than 2100 MW. With continued working together, we are in process of expediting the completion of other ongoing projects including the 1200MW Punatsangchhu-1, 1020MW Punatsangchhu-2 and now the 600 MW Kholongchhu HEP.

4. I am delighted to witness along with my esteemed colleagues from Bhutan, Lyonpo Dr. Tandi Dorji and Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, the signing ceremony of 600 MW Kholongchhu hydro electric project. This is the first ever Joint Venture project to be implemented in Bhutan. I congratulate both the JV partners - SJVNL of India and DGPC of Bhutan- for this remarkable feat and hope that they will leave no stone unturned in expeditiously completing the project.

5. This is yet another milestone in our diverse and multifaceted bilateral cooperation. This has come at a time when our two countries are fighting COVID-19 pandemic. I am sure that the commencement of the construction activities of the Project will create economic and employment opportunities in Bhutan in this critical time. Excellency, our two countries are together in fighting this global pandemic. GoI has provided support, as it should, to Bhutan in terms of medical equipment, kits and medicines as per RGoB's requirements. Besides continuing with our developmental partnership, we have also ensured uninterrupted supply of essentials and other goods to Bhutan despite the lockdowns.

6. As I conclude, let me reassure Your Excellencies that as a special and privileged partner, India stands together with

Bhutan in dealing with the health and economic challenges posed by this pandemic. I am delighted and truly honoured today to join this event.

Thank you.

Tashi Delek!