

Press Release: **Grand Finale of the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi**

The Embassy of India organized a special function to mark the Grand Finale of the **Gandhi@150** celebrations, culminating in his birth anniversary on 2 October 2020 at the India House Auditorium, Thimphu.

2. Lyonpo Sherub Gyeltshen, Hon'ble Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, was the Chief Guest at this commemorative event. He paid a tribute to Gandhiji, also giving away the prizes to the winners of various online competitions, to mark this occasion. Dasho Paljor J Dorji, Special Advisor, National Environment Commission of Bhutan, Mr. Arun Kapur, Founder-Director of the Royal Academy and Ms. Tshewang Pelden, Principal, National Institute for Zorig Chusum were the other prominent guests in attendance.

3. Over the last two years, the Embassy of India had collaborated with different organizations of Bhutan to organize multifarious activities and events to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. While the most eye-catching of these were the installation and unveiling of the walking life-size statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the front lawns of the Chancery and the Khadi-Thagzo Textile Presentation held at the Royal Textile Academy in October 2019, there were others, including the Mountain Bike race arranged by the Bhutan Olympic Committee, the Embassy of India and Project Dantak; a 'Satya Vaarta' by Lyonpo Sonam Topgye; tree planting at the Kuenselphodrang Park on World Environment Day 2019; release of commemorative postage stamps on Mahatma Gandhi by Bhutan Post and, of course, a stellar presentation of Gandhiji's favourite bhajan 'Vaishnav Jan To' by the melodious Yanchen Drukpa, a Bhutanese youth.

4. In July 2020, the Embassy had hosted 'Gandhi Katha' by Dr. Shobana Radhakrishna, a well-known Gandhian scholar. On 30 September, an online audio-visual presentation on Mahatma Gandhi by Mr. Birad Rajaram Yajnik, renowned Gandhian and Curator of the Digital Museums of Gandhiji in Hyderabad, Delhi, Johannesburg and Pietermatizburg was livestreamed on Facebook LIVE, attracting a large audience in Bhutan.

5. In September 2020, an Art Competition was launched by the Embassy along with the National Institute of Zorig Chusum of Bhutan, through which participants were asked to showcase the correlation between Gandhiji's thoughts and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The top three winners received attractive prizes from the Embassy, the winning entries are proposed to be showcased at the UN offices in Bhutan/Embassy of India, Thimphu.

6. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations is hosting a Webinar titled Weaving Relations: Textile Traditions on 3 October 2020 to conclude the Gandhi@150 birth anniversary celebrations. Her Majesty Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck, the Royal Queen Mother of Bhutan is the Special Guest at the Textiles Webinar, she is expected to share little-known facts regarding the tradition of Royal Textiles in Bhutan through a recorded message. Ms. Chandrika Tamang, sustainable fashion designer from Bhutan will also participate live in the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Webinar, she is expected to highlight the unique textile traditions and special weaves of Bhutan.

7. The special event by the Embassy of India on 2 October 2020 was another occasion to spotlight and share Gandhiji's thoughts, philosophy and message in Bhutan, much of which is especially relevant in present day times.

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