

Speech by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj on the occasion of the India-Bhutan Friendship Photo Story Competition

19 February 2021, India House Estate

His Excellency Dasho Kinga Singye, Foreign Secretary; Friends!

Today is indeed special! For two very good reasons.

One, we are gathered here to pay tribute to His Majesty The King on the happy occasion of his 41st birthday. His Majesty epitomizes wisdom vision and compassion as he leads Bhutan onwards and forwards. Thus, today's event is a small tribute to a great leader.

His Majesty is of course no stranger to India having visited India on several occasions, both officially and privately. We were honored that he attended the 45th course at the National Defence College New Delhi in 2005, where he is yet remembered and loved. Let me assure you that he has many, many fans and friends in India,

On a personal note I had the privilege to steer two of his visits to India in 2011 and 2013 in a previous hat that I have donned.

There is another India connection that we are proud of- through Her Majesty The Queen who studied at some of our most prestigious institutions in India- St Joseph's Kalimpong and the Lawrence School Sanawar.

Please join me therefore as we extend the warmest wishes to His Majesty on his birthday, wishing him and beautiful *Druk Yul* the very best from India, always.

And the second reason to be here today is the India-Bhutan friendship. We have crossed 50 years in 2018, and today I am sure that all of you will agree that this is ever-growing, ever-strong. Through the myriad areas of cooperation and collaboration, not least our people-to-people ties, where there is a clear emotional thread that runs through this friendship.

Ladies & Gentlemen, I have been in Bhutan for a while and I do know that the youth of this country are supremely talented. We saw that through the Painting Competition that we organized in tribute to #MahatmaGandhi150 last year and we have seen that again through the Photography Competition that we have helmed this time. May I thank *Bhutan Echoes* for partnering with us in this journey, a brand that we all respect under the patronage of Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk-thank you Your Majesty, and thank you Ngawang for your invaluable inputs as you curated this special event with us, not least in judging the deluge of entries that we received.

I am more than thrilled to recognize the winners- Norbu Gyeltshen, Dechen Choden, Milan Gurung and Kencho Wangmo. Congratulations all- you were simply brilliant!

Finally, may I take this opportunity to commend and applaud all participants to this photography competition. I am sure that the rich experience that all of you have gained will further open the gates to progress.

My tributes once again to His Majesty The King;

My grateful thanks to Dasho for giving off his precious office time in being amongst us today and gracing this event;

My salute to *Bhutan Echoes*;

My gratitude to the Embassy team for putting this event together. Congratulations!

Thank you!

Tashi Delek!
