

Today, the Government of India has gifted a second consignment of 400,000 doses of the 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccine to the Royal Government of Bhutan in keeping with the uniquely close and friendly relations between both countries. Ambassador of India Ruchira Kamboj handed over the vaccine consignment to the Foreign Minister of Bhutan Dr. Tandi Dorji in a ceremony held at Paro airport on 22 March 2021.

On this occasion, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj recalled Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's virtual address to the UN General Assembly in September 2020 where he had declared that in keeping with the ancient Indian ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' India's vaccine production and delivery capacity would be used to help humanity in fighting the COVID-19 crisis. She reiterated Prime Minister Modi's words that "India will be a force for good in the neighbourhood. It is committed to improving the well-being of the region."

Through the unique initiative of Vaccine Maitri, India has supplied more than 60 million vaccines to 72 countries across the globe. From the countries in the immediate neighbourhood to nations beyond the Indian Ocean to the Gulf, Africa and the Caribbean, India is truly demonstrating global leadership, internationalism and vaccine equity. The driving force behind Vaccine Maitri is the sentiment of humanitarian global cooperation found in India's ancient scriptures that are full of wisdom.

Earlier, Bhutan was the first country among neighbours and partners to receive the 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccine from India on 20 January 2021. On that occasion, the Prime Minister of Bhutan had said, "It is the display of altruism at best, and an exhibit of India's sincerity in the relationship we cherish. It is of unimaginable value when precious commodities are shared even before meeting your own needs, as opposed to giving out only after you have enough."

The provision of a total number of 550,000 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccine by India will enable Bhutan to launch its nationwide vaccination drive from 27 March onwards. The entire eligible population of Bhutan will, thus, be inoculated with the first dose of the 'Made in India' COVID vaccine. Thus, Bhutan is likely to be one of the first countries to protect its entire population against COVID-19, with assistance from India.

As a reflection of the special bonds of trust and understanding between India and Bhutan that have existed over decades, the Government of India had earlier also handed over ten consignments of medical supplies, one portable X-Ray machine, essential medicines and medical equipment in addition to the vaccine consignments. Going forward India will continue to resolutely stand by Bhutan in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

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