

Embassy of India
Thimphu

Press Release : Reconstruction of Wangdue Phodrang Dzong

Buddhism - the shared spiritual heritage of India and Bhutan- is in many ways the unchanging constant in the age-old bilateral relationship. The precious *Guru Padmasambhava* is credited with introducing *Vajrayana* Buddhism to Bhutan in the 8th century A.D. Today, Buddhism is embedded into the very landscape of the Kingdom: the Bhutanese constitution declares that Buddhism is the spiritual heritage of Bhutan and that it is the responsibility of the state to preserve, protect and promote the cultural heritage, including monuments, *Dzongs* (fort-monastery), *Lhakhangs* (temple), and other places and objects of artistic and historical interest. Preservation of culture is also one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness, a development paradigm espoused by His Majesty the 4th Druk Gyalpo.

In keeping with our shared spiritual heritage as well as the developmental priorities of the Royal Government, India is honoured to be a part of the reconstruction of *Wangduephodrang Dzong* which was damaged in a tragic fire incident in 2012. The objective of the project is to rebuild the *Dzong* to its former glory, keeping the traditional architecture intact while making the structure disaster resilient.

The reconstruction works are aimed to rebuild and consolidate the existing Dzong structure while maintaining the heritage value associated with the historical site. It will help create better conditions for the district administrative officers and the *Rabdey* monks residing in the *Dzong* as well as the visitors to this prominent heritage site of Bhutan. The reconstruction of the Dzong is being funded by India through its Project Tied Assistance of Nu./Rs. 1 billion spread over the 11th and 12th Five Year Plans of Bhutan. The project will be completed in July 2022.

For the 12th Five Year Plan of Bhutan, India has committed a financial support of Nu./Rs. 45 billion comprising Nu./Rs. 28 billion of Project Tied Assistance, Nu./Rs. 8.5 billion of assistance towards High Impact Community Development Projects and Nu./Rs. 8.5 billion of Program Grant assistance. Since the start of the 12th plan,

India has released Nu./Rs. 23.36 billion till date, which is 52% of the total commitment. To mitigate the effects of COVID - 19 pandemic, Government of India has provided early releases of Nu./Rs. 5.01 billion from the committed development assistance since March 2020.

The precious thread of Buddhism which ties India and Bhutan continues to be an important pillar of the bilateral relationship. Government of India is committed to furthering these engagements with the people and the Royal Government of Bhutan in order to preserve and celebrate the rich intangible cultural heritage of our region.

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