

**Address by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj at the 15th
Authority Meeting, Punatsangchhu – II – 21 September 2021**

**Lyonpo Loknath Sharma, Minister of Economic Affairs
of Bhutan;**

**Maj Gen. V. Namgyel, Ambassador of Bhutan to India;
Distinguished Colleagues from India and Bhutan.**

Bhutan and India enjoy a stellar cooperation in the field of hydropower generation and the last 30 years are testimony to this. Starting from the commissioning of the Chukha Hydroelectric Project in 1988, we have jointly implemented and commissioned four Hydroelectric Power Projects, taking Bhutan's Hydroelectric generation potential to 2,326 Mega Watts.

As we all know, the revenue generated from the sale of hydropower accounts for about 24 percent of the revenue of the Royal Government and is key to its Development Agenda based on the principle of Gross National Happiness. In 2020 alone, Bhutan increased its Hydropower generation by 31%. During the testing times of the COVID - 19 pandemic, the revenues from the hydropower sector have provided the much-needed financial cushion to the Royal Government, when tough choices like nation - wide lockdowns and restrictions on tourism had to be made. This cooperation has also provided energy security to the region, ameliorating the lives of millions by increasing economic activity and generating employment. Going forward, the Government of India assures its fullest support to the Royal Government to take this win-win cooperation to even greater levels.

Turning to the Punatsangchhu - II Project, I am happy to share

that this has achieved good progress and is 90.75% complete. I wish to particularly appreciate the steps taken by the Management to keep the Project on track, despite setbacks such as **the cloudburst on the Phelraychhu Nala in August 2019** and **the collapse of the Downstream Surge Gallery in March 2016**.

It was expected that the first two Units of the Project would be commissioned by mid-2022 but regrettably due to the black swan COVID – 19 pandemic, the Project is expected to be delayed by almost a year. The Project faces a scarcity of workforce, as it does a paucity of equipment and materials. As a concrete and positive takeaway today, I would request Authority members to ensure that adequate workforce plus equipment and materials are brought to the Project site, leading to its completion in the now freshly projected timelines. The Government of India stands resolute with you, and will continue to offer its fullest support and cooperation in the completion of these tasks.

I will close on a positive note. The Punatsangchhu - 2 Project, once commissioned promises to be a state-of-the-art Project incorporating the latest technical and geological innovations, and is sure to be another feather in the already well-plumed India-Bhutan hydro cap!

I am confident of productive outcomes today.

Thank you!
