

**Embassy of India
Thimphu

Joint Press Release on the visit of Secretary (Power), Gol to Bhutan

At the invitation of Mr. Karma Tshering, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA), Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), Mr. Alok Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Power (MoP), Government of India (Gol) led an Indian delegation to Bhutan from 29-31 October 2022 to review all aspects of Bhutan-India energy cooperation. During the visit, Mr. Alok Kumar called on Hon'ble Prime Minister Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering and Minister of Economic Affairs Lyonpo Loknath Sharma. The discussions focused on the bilateral cooperation in energy sector, including the newer areas of cooperation in the field of renewable energy particularly solar power and e-mobility. Mr. Alok Kumar also visited the Punatsangchhu-I and II Hydroelectric Power Projects.

On 31 October 2022, bilateral talks to review Bhutan-India hydropower cooperation, led by Secretary, MoEA, RGoB and Secretary, MoP, Gol were held in Thimphu. The two sides reviewed the progress in the implementation of all the ongoing bilateral hydropower projects, exchanged views on aspects relating to power trading, and discussed ways to further expand the hydro-power cooperation for mutual benefit. Both sides reaffirmed to take the long standing cooperation forward in a mutually beneficial way in the spirit of friendly relationship between the two countries. Bhutan appreciated the important role played by the revenue generated from hydropower projects in supporting Bhutan's economy, especially during the pandemic. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment towards completion of the ongoing hydro power projects in a timely manner.

In view of the geological challenges faced while implementing the Punatsangchhu-I Project, both sides agreed to jointly work towards achieving a technically safe and cost effective solution in a timebound manner. The delegations expressed satisfaction on the overall progress of Punatsangchhu-II project and the pace of works despite challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed to maintain a steady oversight under the existing mechanisms to ensure timely completion of the project

Both sides underscored the importance to complete the Kholongchhu project and agreed to revise its implementation modality as per the request of the RGoB. The Bhutanese delegation thanked India for the technical support extended by experts from SJVNL. The Indian side reaffirmed continued support for the successful completion and operation of the Project.

It was agreed that technical groups and bilateral mechanisms will meet as per timelines agreed by the two sides, for continuous oversight of the ongoing projects and to make progress on all aspects of bilateral hydropower cooperation. Noting decades of successful cooperation in this sector, both sides expressed their firm commitment to widen and diversify the existing energy cooperation.

Mr. Alok Kumar, Secretary, MoP, Gol extended an invitation to Mr. Karma Tshering, Secretary, MoEA, RGoB to visit India to further strengthen the Bhutan-India energy cooperation.

Thimphu, 02 November 2022