



PRESS RELEASE

BHUTAN: A perfect balance of Human Development & Sustainable Development in Region & World

India and Bhutan share a unique and special bilateral relationship. Despite huge differences in size and economy, the two have shown how peace and mutually beneficial cooperation can be the outcome of far sighted policies of friendship, trust and responsive engagement. **Ananta Aspen Centre** organised a session on "*India & Bhutan: Strengthening a Unique Relationship*" in New Delhi.

New Delhi, 17th May 2016: It's important for India to align with Bhutan on several issues like development, job creation and other opportunities. This dialogue has been extremely successful in bringing together young voices from both nations & constructing new perspectives on issues like hydropower, social capital and people to people engagements. It will surely yield substantive results for the people of this region.

Ananta Aspen Centre invited panellists from India and Bhutan who shared their insights on deepening the relations between the two countries and discuss various opportunities to strengthen bilateral ties.

Ambassador **Shyam Saran**, Chairman, Research & Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research asserted that the dialogue has yielded positive results and India's involvement has been worthwhile, he said:

"We can look at this dialogue from 2 perspectives. From one perspective this nurturing relationship may witness minor issues arising from time to time but in the end it will reap major dividends for both the nations. Other perspective is that there is a forum that allows frank and open exchange of ideas on pending issues. Though over the period of time there has been certain amount of resentment. But one of the advantages of this relationship has been constant dialogue. Both sides have recognise that both India and Bhutan should jointly deal with the issues, involve the citizens and take forward the relationship".

In the hope of searching the new element in this intense relationship between the two countries, **Dasho Karma Ura**, President, Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research emphasised on the human capital and said,

"The relationship should happen between people. We have developed a wide network of this kind of relationship. In bringing people together who have positive ideas to exchange – at official level, media, academicians. The widening network of people is extremely important for understanding each other's requirements and needs. This is the real capital. We must involve young people in this relationship."

Dasho Karma Y. Raydi, CEO, Druk Holding & Investments highlighted the importance of education which can completely change the dynamics between both the countries. Sharing a childhood anecdote he said,

" During my growing up years there were many Indian school teachers and there was affinity towards India's culture, language and people. It was like home away from home. But in the current scenario

the Bhutanese children have no exposure to Indian traditions due to lack of Indian involvement in Bhutan's education system."

The discussion also raised an important question on whether there is life beyond Bhutan's hydropower sector and Dr. **Arunabha Ghosh**, CEO, Council on Energy, Environment and Water said,

" Certainly we hope so. We should recognise that these baskets don't fill up overnight. First of all, even within hydropower sector one needs to think strategically about how both countries can benefit from trade in terms of capacity. The 3 important C's in any relationship are Concessions, Contracts and Capacity. It lays down the foundation of trust." He further added that Bhutan is the only country in the world that has achieved perfect balance between Human development and sustainable development.

Indrani Bagchi, Diplomatic Editor, The Times of India who moderated this session reflected upon the state of Bhutanese economy, domestic issues that confront the state and India's chance of ratifying the motor vehicle agreement that allows free transit of vehicles in India, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Thus, under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, India- Bhutan relationship has demonstrated how public diplomacy can be a yardstick to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation in order to nurture the friendship to its fullest potential. This can only be pursued with continuous efforts in improving skill-building, employability and enhancing economic cooperation with a focus on hydropower, and building robust people-to-people links between India and Bhutan.

About Ananta Aspen Centre

An independent organization, Ananta Aspen Centre is registered under the Indian Trust Act. It focuses on leadership development and encourages frank and open dialogue on the most important issues facing Indian society, to help foster its transformation. The Centre also engages civil society, business, governments and other key stakeholders on issues of importance to India's development, foreign policy, strategic affairs and national security.

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