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India considers Bhutan to be part of its own family: Vice President India and Bhutan equal partners in their endeavor to achieve peace, prosperity and development; Bhutan's development model is unique feat worthy of emulation; Inaugurates the Bhutan Week

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that India considers Bhutan to be part of its own family. He was addressing the gather after inaugurating the Bhutan Week, along with Her Majesty the Queen Mother of Bhutan, Sangay Choden, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan, here today. He was give the traditional Bhutanese welcome on his arrival at IGNCA.

The Vice President said that India-Bhutan partnership is anchored on utmost trust, goodwill and mutual understanding at all levels. It is a celebration of the shared values that we cherish and we feel Bhutan is part of our family, he said.

Calling India & Bhutan equal partners in their endeavor to achieve peace, prosperity and development of our two peoples, the Vice President lauded the contribution of people on the both sides for strengthening India-Bhutan friendship.

The Vice President said that India Bhutan partnership is multi-faceted and encompasses several areas of cooperation in sectors such as trade and economic ties, infrastructure development, security cooperation and most importantly people to people contacts.

The Vice President said that Bhutan's rich cultural traditions and its unique way of life have charmed and fascinated the people of India over the centuries and added that events such as Bhutan Week would further strengthen the bond between the two culturally rich nations. This event will also enable people of India, including youth, to experience first -hand the rich cultural heritage of Bhutan, its arts and crafts, cuisine, textile and other organic and home-grown agricultural produce, and its enchanting music and dance traditions, he added.

Lauding Bhutans development model, the Vice President said that Bhutan has managed to combine sustainable development with enhanced quality of living and happiness quotient of its and called it a feat worthy of emulation.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am overwhelmed by the warmth of the traditional reception given to me this morning. I am delighted to be part of this festive atmosphere celebrating the unique ties of friendship and cooperation between India and Bhutan.

Your Majesty, I thank you for your gracious presence today to participate at the Golden Jubilee celebrations and to inaugurate the week-long 'Bhutan Week'.

I warmly welcome all the participants and accomplished artists who have come from Bhutan to showcase rich cultural traditions and the Bhutanese way of life during the 'Bhutan Week'.

As we celebrate the golden five decades of the India-Bhutan diplomatic journey, it would be fitting to pay tribute to the sagacity and wisdom of successive political leadership in India and Their Majesties the Kings of Bhutan, who laid the strong foundation of the unique partnership and nurtured it for the benefit of our two peoples.

On behalf of the people and Government of India, I also pay tribute to every individual and institutions and, most importantly, our two peoples for their invaluable contribution and service to the cause of India-Bhutan friendship.

It may be only fifty years since the two countries have established formal diplomatic relations, but the cultural, religious and historical ties and people-to-people relations between India and Bhutan have existed for many centuries.

During these five decades, while both India and Bhutan have witnessed momentous changes as a society and as a nation, our bilateral ties have also grown in scope and content. We have been equal partners, working together for peace, prosperity and development of our two peoples.

The Golden Jubilee celebrations in Bhutan and India so far have encompassed vibrant set of events, which have been held in a spirit of friendship and goodwill. The commemorative events have highlighted the extraordinary relationship and strong people to people linkages between our two countries.

The Bhutan Week is timely and a fitting celebration of our unique bond of friendship. I understand that the Bhutan Week is the largest event on Bhutan ever held in India with participation from a cross-section of over 300 participants from Bhutan to showcase Bhutan's diverse cultural heritage to the people of India.

Bhutan's rich cultural traditions and its unique way of life have charmed and fascinated the people of India over centuries. The Bhutan Week will enable people of India, including youth, to experience firsthand the rich cultural heritage of Bhutan, its arts and crafts, cuisine, textile and other organic and home-grown agricultural produce, and its enchanting music and dance traditions.

Under the guidance of His Majesty the King, Bhutan has achieved tremendous socio-economic transformation and consolidation of democratic polity. Bhutan has achieved its socio-economic transformation while preserving its cultural traditions and values, respecting the fragile eco-system, and combining sustainable development with enhanced quality of living and happiness quotient of its people. Bhutan has managed to establish a unique model of development, which is an example to the rest of the world, and a feat worthy of emulation.

The people of India greatly appreciate and admire His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan's role in the development of modern Bhutan and his visionary philosophy of Gross National Happiness, combining spiritual values with economic principles that has global resonance and relevance today.

At every step of Bhutan's development journey, India has been privileged to be Bhutan's partner. We applaud the remarkable progress made by Bhutan in its pursuit of economic growth and happiness for its people, under the guidance and wisdom of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. I have fond memories of my meeting with His Majesty the King of Bhutan, Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Gyalsey when they visited India last year in November 2017.

India-Bhutan partnership is anchored on utmost trust, goodwill and mutual understanding at all levels. It is a celebration of the shared values that we cherish. Today, our partnership is multi-faceted and encompasses several areas of cooperation, which include joint endeavors in sectors such as trade and economic ties, infrastructure development, security cooperation, health, culture, education, information technology, capacity building and skill development, and most importantly people to people contacts.

Our special relationship is not just characterized by political exchanges at the highest levels, but deeply strengthened at the people to people level by such interactions as the Bhutan Week.

Even as we celebrate many successes of the past, a milestone moment in history gives an opportunity to envision and shape the future of things to come. As we celebrate the glorious moments of the last fifty years, on behalf of the Government and the people of India, I reaffirm India's abiding commitment to advance cherished partnership between India and Bhutan. I am confident that our close and friendly ties will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Before I conclude, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Namgyel and his team for their commendable efforts in organizing these week-long celebrations. I am confident that the people of India would participate in the Bhutan Week in large numbers and enjoy the rich heritage of Bhutan. I wish the Bhutan Week a resounding success.

Long live India-Bhutan friendship!

Thank you."

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