

**Embassy of India
Thimphu**

Press Release: Bilateral trade meeting to urgently facilitate Bhutan's agri-exports to India

The Embassy organised a virtual bilateral trade meeting today to address and urgently facilitate Bhutan's exports of key agricultural commodities to India, with focus on:

- i. Inclusion of seven crops (Chilli, Bean, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Carrot, Pea, and Soyabean) in the Plant Quarantine Order of India, to enable their export to India;
- ii. Exempting Bhutan from the 'minimum import price' policy condition on Arecanut from Bhutan;
- iii. Exempting Bhutan from the 'import restriction' on Ginger from Bhutan;
- iv. Deployment of a new plant quarantine officer at the Land Customs Station at Jaigaon on the India-Bhutan border, to facilitate exports of Bhutan's agri-products to India.

2. The meeting was chaired by India's Ambassador to Bhutan Ms. Ruchira Kamboj, and co-chaired by Mr. Amitabh Kumar, Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India and by Ms. Rinchen Lhazom, Officiating Director-General in the Department of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan. Representatives from the respective foreign ministries and agriculture ministries of India and Bhutan also participated in the meeting.

3. In October last year, India had granted new market access for five agri-exports (Arecanut, Mandarin, Apple, Potato, Ginger) of Bhutan and had opened a new plant quarantine office at Jaigaon. At Bhutan's request, the Government of India had lifted the import restriction on Potato only for Bhutan up to June 2022, thereby alleviating the difficulties faced by Bhutanese traders in exporting potato to India.

4. During the meeting, the Bhutanese side conveyed the concerns raised by farmers and traders who are facing hurdles in transitioning to the formal sector. Given the perishable nature of these commodities and the livelihoods adversely affected, the Bhutanese side requested the Indian side to grant exemption to Bhutan for the current export season. The Indian side agreed to look into Bhutan's requests favourably and expedite the approval process, as feasible, in view of the exceptionally close and friendly relations between India and Bhutan.

5. India has been extending the fullest cooperation and support to Bhutan in terms of ensuring uninterrupted movement of commodities through the COVID-19 pandemic. Our close trade and economic ties are a reflection of the special bonds of trust and understanding between India and Bhutan that have existed over decades.

6. The Government and the people of India stand resolutely committed to the long term well-being and prosperity of the Government and the people of Bhutan.

Thimphu
02 July 2021