

Statement for Hon'ble Foreign Minister for the handing over ceremony of Lord Buddha's statue on 19th June at 10 AM(BST) at MFA Conference hall

**H.E. Mrs. Ruchira Kamboj, Ambassador of India to Bhutan,
Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President of ICCR,
Mr. Dinesh K Patnaik, Director-General of ICCR,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning,

- On behalf of the people and the Royal Government of Bhutan, I would like to convey our warmest greetings to everyone joining us today for the virtual handing-taking ceremony of the statue of Lord Buddha, a special gift from the people and Government of India to Bhutan, on the auspicious occasion of the birth anniversary of Guru Rinpoche.
- I am honoured to be receiving this gift on behalf of the people and the Royal Government, and would like to thank the people and Government of India, and in particular, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Embassy of India in Thimphu for this kind gesture of goodwill and friendship. This is a fitting tribute to our special relationship, as the close bonds of friendship that we enjoy today have roots in our deep religious and spiritual connections.
- Buddhism spread from its cradle in India, and since its arrival in Bhutan, many great Buddhist masters from India, most notably Guru Padmasambhava, travelled to our country and blessed the land and its people. The teachings of Lord Buddha and Guru Padmasambhava continue to influence the lives of every Bhutanese.
- Buddhism, which is our shared spiritual heritage, is indeed the unchanging constant in our age-old relationship, and continues to play an important role in maintaining and promoting friendship between the people of our two countries. A large number of Bhutanese monks and nuns continue to study in monastic colleges in India, and every year, thousands of Bhutanese travel to India on pilgrimage to the sacred Buddhist sites such as Bodh Gaya, Sarnath and Nalanda.

- This kind and special gesture from the people and Government of India will reinforce connections between the Buddhist communities of our two countries and spread the timeless message of loving kindness and compassion, especially during these difficult times.
- I eagerly look forward to receiving the statue of Lord Buddha tomorrow at the Tashichhodzong, and pray that the special friendship between Bhutan and India continue to grow and flourish in the coming years.

Thank you!