



Vaccine, the one word on everyone's mind

**Ambassador's Virtual Address to
Students of Sherubtse College, Kanglung, Bhutan**

Topic:
India - Bhutan Cooperation During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Date: **Tuesday 9 February 2021** **Time:** **10:30 hrs (Bhutan Time)**

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Embassy of India
Thimphu, Bhutan



Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, in a virtual talk to students of Sherubtse College on the theme; "India Bhutan cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond," on 9 February.

Sonam Penjor

Ever since the COVID-19 became a pandemic there has been one word on everyone's mind – vaccine.

Let's find a cure to this, said Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, during a virtual talk to students of Sherubtse College on the theme; "India Bhutan cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic and beyond," on 9 February.

Ambassador Ruchira told the students to let us all get our lives back to what they were. "Let's make and manufacture this vaccine, let's save the world," she said, narrating the story of a group of scientists who were trying to save the world with a vaccine.

She said the work to manufacture vaccines began in January 2020 in a lab with researchers in their long white coats working long hours so come up with a vaccine that could save the world. She said the world went into a state of extreme focus with one goal; to make a successful vaccine.

However, there were issues. Historically, the fastest

vaccine to be ever made had taken five years to be developed. And so this time, scientists had to defy the realms of possibility. Five years wasn't acceptable as the world needed its armour now.

"It didn't matter what had happened in the past, we needed to break a record."

Three months later, she said trials began and then two months later countries around the world began to help. Some partnered and had their scientists work on the technology while others pledged billions of dollars.

Trials continued for four months. Brave citizens volunteered and health-care workers had upto 20 hour work days. The doses are administered and those receiving the jabs are observed carefully.

She said everything seemed to be going great until one day someone got sick. "A volunteer gets ill because of the vaccine. It's been nine months since the work began but today, one person got very ill and trials are suspended. The news is made public. The world feels as if it has

gone back to square one. Sometimes it just takes one person and one reaction to scrap months of progress and effort."

However, over time, she added that the situation was assessed and the vaccine re-tested once again as trials resumed. Then two months later and 12 months since the research began, the Serum Institute of India announces it has authorized of a version of the vaccine. One day later, the first scientific paper on Phase three clinical trials for the coronavirus vaccine is published. And less than a month later, the vaccine is authorized.

The government of India the authorised a version of this vaccine, Covishield, with the Serum Institute of India pledging to produce two billion doses by end of 2021.

"This vaccine I spoke of is one of 4-5 leading vaccines within the world, so I encourage you to read the other stories too, but this one is particularly inspiring for us Indians, given the Serum Institute's monumental role in its production," Ambassador

Kumboj said.

There is no place in the world which possesses such a manufacturing capacity. And as a result, a multitude of countries have already been given doses of vaccine and a multitude of lives are potentially being saved, said the Ambassador.

"This vaccine took one year and, yes, we broke the record. We forged the armour and maybe, just maybe, we got a little bit closer to saving the world."

She said: "I find this story particularly heart-warming because this story isn't about one country stealing the glory and taking a victory lap. It's not about you versus me, it's about the collective; the collective us, who all faced the pandemic in a variety of ways and how we all walk into a new world."

In announcing the roll out within India on 16 January 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised that the Made-in-India Vaccine would serve humanity. And he kept to that promise, as vaccines were dispatched

among India's neighbours and friends within days of the national launch. Needless to say, Bhutan was a top priority for immediately being given doses of the vaccine.

"But I hear a lot of people say that once the world is vaccinated, we'll just go back to normal. But I think I disagree. There is no going back to normal. That would be foolish and irresponsible. That would be a complete waste. Because in my experience, practically everything in our lives are out of control."

A pandemic could start, your car might break down and you might fail that test you studied really hard for. "Chaos and entropy are an intrinsic and fundamental part of existing in this Universe."

Ambassador Kumboj said: "You can't outrun the laws of physics. And so that leaves us with the only thing in our control: our reactions to the world around us. What we learn and how we act. And so, I hope we never go back to normal. I hope we emerge as greater individuals with more strength and deeper empathy."