

**Report of the Minister of Health, Lyonpo Zangley Dukpa's  
visit to New Delhi, India on the occasion of the Third South  
Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN III)  
(16-20<sup>th</sup> November, 2008)**

## **Abstract**

The Minister of Health, *Lyonpo Zangley Dukpa* attended the Third South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN III), which was held from the 16-22nd November, 2008 in New Delhi, India. This opportunity also facilitated senior government officials of the Government of India to call on *Lyonpo* to discuss on the follow up actions taken on the outcome of the bilateral meetings that were held during the South East Asian Health Ministers' meeting in September, 2008. The following is a brief report of *Lyonpo's* visit.

### **November 18, 2008.**

Before the inaugural session of SACOSAN III, all Ministers were welcomed to an exhibition, where different countries had installed stalls depicting sanitation schemes adopted in their respective countries. The stalls also illustrated modern, cost effective and sustainable schemes in conjunction with preferred models of sanitations based on geography, climate and demographic factors.

The theme of the Conference was “*Sanitation for Dignity and Health*”. Countries of the eight South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), namely, Afghanistan,

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka participated in the Conference. In addition, there were a large number of participants from United Nation agencies, civil societies, and Non Government Organizations (NGOs) from all over the world.

His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India graced the inaugural session as the Chief Guest on the 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2008. Delivering the key note address, His Excellency welcomed all participants and spoke about the importance of sanitation and the social and economic burden caused by poor sanitation.

The opening ceremony was followed by a cultural show at Lal Kila, choreographed by renowned artist Bansi Kaul, where invitees were offered a glimpse of India's rich cultural diversity.

### **19<sup>th</sup> November, 2008**

The sessions began with the Federal Minister for Environment, Pakistan, His Excellency Hameed Ullah Jan Afridi stepping down as the Chairman of SACOSAN and handing it over to His Excellency, Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Hon'ble Minister of

Rural Development, Government of India. This was followed by Ministers of the eight participating nations making brief statements.

The Minister of Health, Bhutan conveyed his appreciation to the Government of India in general and the Ministry of Rural Development in particular for the warm welcome extended to all participants. *Lyonpo* also informed the forum about Bhutan's peaceful transition to democracy and the Centenary and Coronation celebrations.

In line with the theme of the conference, "*Sanitation for Dignity and Health*", *Lyonpo* underlined that sanitation cannot be improved effectively without changing the mind sets of the people. This statement was made against the background that society looked down on people working for sanitation, such as sweepers, cleaners and janitors. The need to confer dignity to this group of people was highlighted. *Lyonpo* stated that measures like referring to sweepers as sanitation engineers, sanitation technicians etc. would be a major step towards improving the dignity of people involved in sanitary works. The suggestion or idea was well received as was evident from the applause of the participants.

A round table meeting of the Ministers ensued, wherein His Excellency Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development, Government of India, was consensually chosen as the Chairman for the round table meeting.

All members agreed that a drafting committee should be formed for the Delhi Declaration, which would be signed on the 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2008. *Lyonpo* informed the Chair that the Health Secretary of Bhutan would represent Bhutan and also sign the Delhi Declaration as *Lyonpo* would be leaving for Bhutan on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 2008.

**Discussions held with Mr. Satish C. Mehta, Joint Secretary (North), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.**

**Venue: *Ashoka Hotel***

**Date: *18<sup>th</sup> November, 2008***

**Time: *1100 hrs, Indian Standard Time (IST).***

Mr. Satish C. Mehta, was accompanied by Mr. A. Natarajan, Under Secretary (Bhutan), Ministry of External Affairs. The Deputy Chief of Mission, Royal Bhutan Embassy, New Delhi, Mr. Kinga Singye, and the Personal Secretary to the Health Minister were also present during the discussions.

**1. Admission of Bhutanese students for Post Graduate Programmes in different clinical disciplines.**

*a. Admissions to Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh*

Hon'ble *Lyonpo* apprised Mr. Mehta that Dr. K.K Talwar, Director, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, had concurred that upon receipt of a letter from the Government of India, Bhutanese doctors could

be admitted in PGIMER to pursue their post-graduate studies in different disciplines.

Further, *Lyonpo* informed the Joint Secretary that though the last date for submitting applications was the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2008 (for admission of PG students in January 2009), the Director, PGIMER has conveyed that the admission of Bhutanese students will be considered, upon the receipt of a letter from the Government of India..

Mr. Mehta said that the Ministry of External Affairs has already written to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and that they would follow up again.

*b. Admissions to Christian Medical College, Vellore, India*

Concerning the admission of students to Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, for post-graduate programmes, *Lyonpo* informed Mr. Mehta that if the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, issues an Executive Order to the Medical Council of India (MCI), three to four Bhutanese students could be admitted in addition to the normal seats allocated at CMC.

Assistance from the Ministry of External Affairs regarding this issue was sought.

Mr. Mehta agreed that the Ministry of External Affairs would look into the matter and accordingly inform the Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi.

## **2. Gift of Ambulances by the Government of India (GoI)**

Upon enquiry about the status of the request for ambulances made by the Royal Government of Bhutan, Mr. Mehta informed *Lyonpo* that the Government of India has decided to gift 10 ambulances. Additionally, Mr. Mehta said that fabrication and the installation of life saving equipments in the ambulances are being done. He expressed his hope that the ambulances would be ready in three to four months.

Expressing his gratitude for the forthcoming gift, Hon'ble *Lyonpo* apprised Mr. Mehta of the significance of 2008 as a special year due to the Centenary and Coronation celebrations. *Lyonpo* proposed that if three to four ambulances could be sent in December 2008, it would be of great symbolic value to Indo-Bhutan friendship and cooperation.

Mr. Mehta acknowledged Lyonpo's proposal and said that the Government of India would endeavor to provide three to four ambulances in December, 2008. The training of paramedics and drivers for the ambulances was also discussed.

### **3. Visit of a team of experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), concerning the establishment of the Medical College.**

The Minister of Health informed Mr. Mehta that the Prime Ministers of India and Bhutan had met on the sidelines of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit held in Delhi and that the establishment of a Medical College in Bhutan was again highlighted. Saying that the project has become a priority for the Bhutanese Government and that it would stand as a colossal symbol of Indo-Bhutan relations, *Lyonpo* enquired about developments pertaining to the visit of a team of experts from AIIMS.

Mr. Mehta expressed his regrets for the delayed visit, which occurred due to *Diwali* holidays and said that a letter was sent to the Indian Embassy in Bhutan on the 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2008. *Lyonpo* was told that the letter is a proposal from the Government

of India to send a team of five experts led by the Director of AIIMS, Mr. T.T. Dogra, Deans of Academics and Examinations from AIIMS and others to visit Bhutan from the 15-19<sup>th</sup> December, 2008. Mr. Mehta asked if it would be convenient for the Bhutanese Government.

*Lyonpo* said that the dates should not be a problem and that he would instruct the Ministry of Health, Bhutan to contact and follow up with the Indian Embassy in Bhutan.

#### **4. Inauguration of Jigmi Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH)**

*Lyonpo* informed Mr. Mehta that the JDWNRH would be inaugurated on December 14, 2008 by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck.

#### **5. Government of India's support in the 10 FYP**

While conveying the gratitude of the Bhutanese Government for the assistance rendered in the 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, discussions were held on projects supported by the Government of India in the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP. Reference was made to the construction of a regional and a

district hospital in Gelephu and Samtse respectively, and the construction of the Public Health Laboratory at Thimphu. Lyonpo informed Mr. Mehta that lessons learnt from the construction of the Mongar Regional Referral Hospital would be applied in the forthcoming construction of hospitals. The support of the Government of India in Human Resources Development was also discussed.

## **6. Short-term trainings**

Discussions on Human Resource Development was held as it is an important component of the Government of India's assistance to the Ministry of Health. The acute shortage of Medical professionals at all levels as the biggest hurdle faced in delivering health services was highlighted.

*Lyonpo* requested that the Government of India could assist the professional development of Bhutanese nurses and Assistant Clinical Officers (ACOs) by offering opportunities for short courses, attachments, visits etc. in reputed Medical Colleges such as AIIMS in India. *Lyonpo* suggested that groups consisting of four to five medical professionals could be sent from Bhutan.

Acknowledging *Lyonpo's* proposal, Mr. Mehta said that the Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan should write a formal letter to the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, to process with concerned agencies. He also suggested that the matter be raised with the visiting team from AIIMS in December 2008.

A list of 13 Bhutanese doctors who have been identified to pursue Post Graduate courses in different clinical disciplines was handed over to Mr. Mehta.

**Discussions with Mr. Vineet Chawdhry, Joint Secretary,  
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of  
India.**

*November 18, 2008.*

*Hotel Ashoka, 1300 Hrs, Indian Standard Time (IST)*

Mr. Vineet Chawdhry, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India called on Hon'ble Lyonpo at 1300 Hrs, Indian Standard Time (IST). The Secretary, Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan, Mr. Kinga Singye, Deputy Chief of Mission, Royal Bhutanese Embassy, New Delhi and the Personal Secretary to the Health Minister were also present during the discussions. Over working lunch the following issues were discussed.

Hon'ble *Lyonpo* revisited most of the discussions held with Mr. Mehta, especially pertaining to admission of Bhutanese students for post graduate programmes in different clinical disciplines, gift of ambulances and support in Human Resources Development.

## **1. Ambulances**

Mr. Chawdhry also mentioned that the Government of India had released funds for the procurement of 10 ambulances fitted with life saving equipments.

On *Lyonpo's* enquiry if the ambulances could be gifted in December to coincide with the centenary celebrations, Mr. Chawdry said that it would take 3-4 months as the ambulances would require fabrication.

Mr. Chawdry acknowledged that if provided before December 2008, it would be of great symbolic value in Indo-Bhutan relationship and said that he would look into the possibility of providing two to three ambulances. He also enquired about the choice of colours of ambulances. It was informed that white is the normal colour of ambulances in Bhutan.

Mr. Chawdry said that the Ministry of Health, Bhutan would have to identify paramedics and drivers to be trained for the ambulances. The Government of India would train them at Hyderabad as soon as the Royal Government of Bhutan identifies the candidates.

## **2. Admissions to Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGMIER), Chandigarh**

Concerning admissions to PGIMER, Mr. Chawdry said that he would speak to Dr. K.K Talwar, Director, PGIMER and issue whatever letter is required.

As for admissions to CMC, he said that he would have to check on it as the Medical Council of India is an independent body. Lyonpo handed over to Mr. Chawdhry a list of 13 Bhutanese doctors, who have been identified to pursue Post Graduate courses in different clinical areas.