

OPENING REMARKS BY DASHO KARMA URA

I am very honoured to have the first few words at this Conference. Thank you all for making the effort to come to this event as a whole and particularly to this reception after such a long day, beginning, for some of you, at 3am to board your flights. I am very grateful for your attendance at this opening ceremony that must appear hectic to you, having coming from abroad and landing just over an hour ago.

This opening ceremony is also a dedicatory ceremony through which we both inaugurate and set apart for the next three days, committing ourselves to higher purposes, enduring impacts and beneficial results.

I feel tempted to say that the Conference is being held in the foreground of the famous Tiger's Nest, which is a very symbolic act to my mind. In the mid 8th Century, Guru Pema Jungney founded the Tiger's Nest. Guru was the first global figure in this part of the world to have connected parts of Central Asia, China, the Indian Continent and the Himalayas, by travelling part of the southern Silk Road – where monks, merchants and migrants walked. He was born in northern Pakistan, became the Abbot-Teacher of the Nalanda University, and later operated throughout the region from Pamirs to the Himalayas. He was the first concrete link among the SAARC region as well as the SAARC and Central Asia. So history is closer and more inspiring than we think.

The other reason why I want to mention the founder of Tiger's Nest and other similar sites, is that Guru Pema Jungney was also a pan-Himalayan figure with a divinely imparted sense of the need to commit to opening, educating and freeing ourselves and others in the broadest ethical sense of the term. These are ultimately one of the main reasons behind this Conference on Democracy. So this is a special moment when we dedicate ourselves today to commit to these universal values of democracy.

My other pleasure this evening is the honour of introducing two distinguished individuals: firstly, HE Ajay Chhibber and secondly, HE Jigmi Y Thinley.

HE Dr Ajay Chhibber

HE Dr Ajay Chhibber is the Assistant Administrator and Regional Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. He directs and manages the overall policy and programmes and operations of 25 country offices in Asia and the Pacific, which consists of more than 50% of the global population. He earned his BA from St Stephen's finishing as the Best All-Rounder, got his MA from the prestigious DSE and a Ph D from Stanford University in 1983 on a Stanford Fellowship.

Thereafter, his story seems to be one of aiming high in hope and work. He began his career in universities, teaching economics in St Stephen's in DU, and Georgetown University. For a year, he worked at the Indian Planning Commission, and then became a consultant researcher. In the early 1980s, he joined the World Bank, where animated by his commitment of time, energy and knowledge, he began to touch the lives of peoples in many countries from a number of senior positions he held in the World Bank between 1983 and 2007. In 2007, he switched over to the UNDP.

Ajay was the Director of the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, between 2003-2007, which reported directly to the Bank's Board and produced 15 country and thematic evaluations every year. Ajay was the lead author of the 1997 seminal report, 'The State in the Changing World' on the role of the government in economic and social development, that brought a major shift in the World Bank's approach to public sector reform and governance. He contributed critically to the earlier World Development Reports on Trade Issues in Agriculture in 1986 and the World Development Report on the Environment in 1992. These are documents which had huge positive ramifications in both realms of thinking and on the World Bank's operations.

Some of the countries on which he has focussed intellectually and which have benefited from his services as a World Bank economist are Turkey, Egypt, Western Africa, Pacific Islands, Indonesia, India, and Vietnam. He was crucially responsible for one of the World Bank's most successful and largest ongoing multi-billion IDA programme in Vietnam, that was launched while he was the World Bank's country director from 2006-2007.

Weaving many responsibilities seamlessly with writing, HE Ajay Chhibber has published extensively: five major books and some 30 articles, on such critical contemporary issues as agricultural pricing policies, food security and grain market, environment, poverty, public finance, inflation, banking, debt, private sector development, trade, governance and corruption, and natural disasters.

It must be his sensitive humanitarian ability to understand and act decisively during the disaster in Turkey in 2001, that Ajay Chhibber was awarded the Turkish President's Award for Best Project on Earthquake Response in Turkey. At that time, HE Ajay Chhibber was the World Bank Country Director for Turkey and Macedonia.

HE Jigmi Y Thinley

Gifted academically, HE PM Jigmi Thinley got his BA (Honours) from St Stephen in DU and MPA, Pennsylvania State University. As Bhutan was modernising its public administration, he became a civil servant in 1976 and, not surprisingly, he rapidly rose through the newly emerging administrative hierarchy.

In his long and distinguished and diversified career, he was progressively the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission, Director of Education, Jt Secretary of Ministry of Commission, Secretary of Ministry of Home Affairs, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Simultaneously, he was the chair of many key commissions and committees, imparting visionary directions for many generations to follow. In between, and for several years, he was also Ambassador to the UN in New York, and Ambassador to the UN and EU at Geneva, from where he was also accredited to many Nordic and West European countries. During this period, his initiatives served to sharply enhance the presence of Bhutan internationally.

When the system of government changed, he formed a political party (DPT) and as its President, became the first elected PM in 2008. This was not a completely new responsibility for him: he had been twice PM on a yearly rotational basis before under a different system, when cabinet ministers took turn to be heads of government. Thus he brought experience and insight to the task of nurturing democracy and developing the country. He combines the present post as PM with

several other Chairmanship of important bodies such as NEC, GNHC, TCB, REC etc.

Our PM is a member of many professional bodies, and also abroad such as the Asia Society in New York and the Smithsonian Leadership Committee in Washington. I know that due to his present responsibilities at home, he cannot fulfil invitations to be member of many august organisations, for example, such as World Economic Council. The PM has been a sought after speaker in many well-known fora, and has given keynote talks in international gatherings, universities and other institutions across the world. In spite of his rich, packed and manifold responsibilities, he has found time to write and published several articles.

Not only in the nation, the PM's distinguished achievements have received huge recognition repeatedly from his Penn State University, which gave him the Alumni Fellow Award in 2001 and Distinguished Alumni Award in 2009.

For the precious, outstanding, fruitful services to the King, the country and the people, HE was bestowed by His Majesty the 4th King the honour of the Order of Heart Son of Bhutan in 1999 and by His Majesty the 5th King the highest civilian decoration, the Druk Wangyal.