

INDIA'S BHUTAN HYDEL PROJECT READY

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Vijay Gokhale

India is expected to commission a major hydropower project in Bhutan in the coming weeks, Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said on Tuesday.

Delivering a speech on India-Bhutan relations, the top diplomat said cooperation in the hydropower sector was a sign of strength of the time-tested ties between the two countries.

“This year we hope to commission the flagship 750 megawatt Mangdechhu hydropower project, hopefully this month itself, and we are also working on a number of ongoing and planned projects that will ensure our relationship in this sector continues in the future,” said the Foreign Secretary assuring Bhutan of India’s commitment to work with the Himalayan country.

Adapting to the times

The Mangdechhu project was bagged by the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) and it will be implemented on a bilateral basis. The Foreign Secretary said India-Bhutan ties had adapted to the changing times. Bhutan’s latest democratic election had firmed up its position as a leading democracy in the region, he said.

Commissioning of the project will mark a highpoint in bilateral ties in the coming months.

The official said India and Bhutan were now interacting at the level of parliamentarians and civil society participants, while also maintaining close dialogue at the official levels.

Special ties

The Foreign Minister of Bhutan Tandi Dorji told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that Bhutan would maintain its special relationship with India in the future.

The Foreign Secretary’s comments came at the end of a conference organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) that was organised to mark half century of diplomatic ties between Delhi and Thimphu.

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