**Celebrating World Telecommunication and Information Society Day** (17th May, 2020)

The Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) joins the rest of the world in celebrating “World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD)” 2020.

This year the theme of the celebration is "Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". The theme “Connect 2030: ICTs for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” will allow ITU membership to reflect on the ICT advances for transition to smart and sustainable development. It will focus on specific ICT-enabled solutions and emerging trends for fostering economic, environmental and social sustainability, contributing to the five strategic goals of the Connect 2030 Agenda: Growth, Inclusiveness, Sustainability, Innovation and Partnership. (Source: ITU’s website)

Bhutan as a member of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has been celebrating WTISD every year on 17th of May to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, as well as bridge the digital divide.

On this special occasion, MoIC would like to revisit His Majesty the King’s address to the graduates of Royal Institute of Management (RIM) in 2019. His Majesty said, “Being a small nation makes us a smart nation, this is not out of choice but out of necessity. Technology is an indispensable tool that will be necessary to realise this aspiration.”

Since the Internet was first launched in 1999, Bhutan has come a long way in terms of information technology and telecommunication. Today the Telecom Service Providers(TSPs) and Internet Service Providers(ISPs) of Bhutan are providing Telecom and Internet services to some of the remotest parts of the country. Especially during the current COVID-19 pandemic period, when everyone is required to maintain social and physical distance, the role of ICT is ever more pronounced. It has become the sole medium for communications, learning and entertainment. For instance, despite the schools and institutes being closed, students are able to access their lessons through social media platforms and online education platforms. Further, government and non government institutions are continuing to provide public services online. Businesses and enterprises are utilizing e-commerce to continue serving customers.

Despite applauding the success so far, it is also crucial to reflect on works yet to be achieved in ICT to truly realise His Majesty the King’s vision of a ‘SMART BHUTAN’. While the majority of the students are able to access online classes, let us remind ourselves that there are still a substantial number of students who do not have access to these services. The mobile network is the primary channel for accessing the Internet in Bhutan. This is not able to cater to the abnormal increase in demand. Ideally we need to provide fiber and wireless connections that are more resilient to sudden increase in demand and would make us ready for deploying future technologies. The ministry commits to work tirelessly to enhance the capacity of this critical infrastructure to fulfill His Majesty’s vision for Bhutan.

In addition, coinciding with the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, the MoIC would like to announce the result of the National Website Competition for the year 2019-2020. The winner of the website competition is the Ministry of Work and Human Settlements, and the Ministry of Finance and Election Commission of Bhutan are first and second runners up.

Hence, let us take this day to not only celebrate the success of ICT development in the country but also to reflect and plan for further development of the sector. The MoIC would like to wish everyone a Happy World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD).