

Bangladesh-Bhutan friendship

BHUTAN attaches a lot of importance to its relations with Bangladesh. Ever since Bangladesh's emergence as an independent nation, friendship between Bhutan and Bangladesh has been steadily growing and is being further strengthened with increased economic co-operation between the two countries. The friendship is based on mutual trust, goodwill and understanding bound by common hopes and aspirations.

Bhutan was one of the first countries to have recognized Independent Bangladesh in 1971. Diplomatic relations between the two countries was established in 1973 and resident missions set up in 1980. His Majesty the King made state visits to Bangladesh in 1973 and 1984. He also visited Bangladesh during the first SAARC summit in 1985 and the seventh SAARC summit in 1993.

Various visits were also made to Bhutan from the Bangladesh side. Bangladesh President Mohammedullah attended the coronation of His Majesty the King in 1974. In 1986 President Hussain Mohammed Ershad visited Bhutan. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visited Bhutan in 1994 in her capacity as the chairperson of SAARC. Quite a number of Bangladesh nationals visit Bhutan for tourism purpose and equally so for business ventures.

Bhutan started sending students to Bangladesh for higher studies in the field of medicine, engineering and agriculture since 1980. So far Bangladesh has accepted 41 Bhutanese students and 32 have completed their studies. At present there are 9 medical students studying in various medical colleges in Bangladesh.

The Agreement on Economic and Technical Co-operation was signed in 1984 under which the two countries agreed to promote a programme of development co-operation consisting of exchange of expert missions for co-operation projects and provide training facilities in institutions.

The Air services agreement between the two countries was signed in 1986 and Druk Air held its first inaugural flight to Dhaka on

30th October 1986. However scheduled flights started from 6th November 1986. Currently Druk Air operates twice a week to Bangladesh.

Trade Relations:
Trade Talks between the two countries began in 1978 when a Bhutanese trade delegation visited Dhaka. The President of Bangladesh then, H E Mr Zia-ur Rahman took note of the difficult geo-political situation of Bhutan and the very low level of economic development. The President assured that Bangladesh would extend all types of help and assistance to its small neighbour by way of trade and transit. The exports of Bhutan would receive favourable treatment and Bhutan would be allowed to use any area or port in Bangladesh for its transit trade. Bhutanese officials will be allowed to travel anywhere in Bangladesh. If necessary, Bangladesh would assist Bhutan in making available free of cost leases of transit sheds and land. In case of Bhutan- reciprocity would not be expected by Bhutan.

Following the above visit, a Bangladesh trade delegation led by then Commerce secretary Mr Mariur Rahman visited Bhutan in 1980. The Trade Agreement was signed in 1980 wherein both countries agreed to take all necessary measures to promote bilateral trade. The trade agreement also made provisions for according to each other the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment in respect of custom formalities, duties and other taxes levied on exports and imports of goods to be exchanged. Pursuant to the signing of the trade agreement, on December 27, 1983 Bhutan and India signed a trade agreement to facilitate Bhutan's trade with other countries and on the same day Bangladesh and India signed a memorandum of understanding to facilitate movement of goods between Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The protocol to the trade agreement was signed on 5th February 1984. The signing of the protocol to the trade agreement was a milestone in the history of bilateral relations between Bhutan and Bangladesh. With the inclusion of a transit route for Bhutan-Bangladesh trade

through Changrabandh/Burimari in Bangladesh in 1987, actual trade between Bhutan and Bangladesh commenced in 1988.

Bhutan's export to Bangladesh mainly consists of fruits, namely apples and oranges, minerals (limestone, coal, Dolomite etc) stones and boulders and processed fruits. Major imports consists of ready-made garments, jute carpets, pharmaceutical products, ceramic and melamine products, vehicle spare parts and other manufactured goods.

Bhutan accords duty free access to all products originating from Bangladesh while Bangladesh continues to impose duties on Bhutanese goods.

Bhutan continues to take many steps to increase imports from Bangladesh. Currently there are 31 import houses in Bhutan with specific mandate for imports exclusively from Bangladesh. Several single country trade fairs have been held in Bhutan with the latest held in November 2002 solely to promote products from Bangladesh. Various trade delegations from Bhutan visited Bangladesh to identify products that have potential markets in Bhutan. There also exists brisk and significant informal trade that is usually undertaken by small time Bhutanese business retailers and shop owners, who import substantial amount of garments and house ware from Bangladesh to Bhutan, especially during the winter season.

Trade fairs have been organized five times in Bhutan to display products from Bangladesh. These efforts were taken unilaterally by the Royal Government of Bhutan. Apart from the formal ties mentioned above, Bhutan's support to Bangladesh's candidature in various international bodies, Bhutan's unreserved support to SAARC, the brainchild of President Zia-ur-Rahman, extension of material support by Bhutan to Bangladesh in the aftermath of the cyclones of 1985 and 1991 and financial support in 1998 have contributed to the strengthening of relations between Bangladesh and Bhutan.

It is a day of manifestation of unity and harmony among all the



His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck King of Bhutan

Significance of National Day

THE Kingdom of Bhutan celebrates its 95th National Day. It is the day when people of Bhutan unanimously elected Gongsar Ugen Wangchuck as the first hereditary King of Bhutan on the 17 of December 1907. By uniting the country and establishing a central authority, he brought peace and stability to the country and laid the foundation for the emergence of modern Bhutan. Since then Bhutan has been enjoying unprecedented peace and stability and achieved faster economic development greatly enhancing the well-being and the quality of the people. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck is the fourth and the present King of Bhutan.

Background
Since the beginning of our recorded history dating back to the 7th century, Bhutan has remained as an independent, sovereign country, which has not been colonized by anyone for which our forefathers had to overcome many internal and external threats. Although planned development was initiated only in 1961 when the first Five Year Plan was launched, Bhutan has achieved greater progress and development than many other countries, which began development much earlier. At the same time Bhutan has been able to strengthen its unique national identity through the promotion and preservation of our culture and tradition. Also Bhutan's effort in the

preservation of natural environment has become an outstanding example for the rest of the world... For the people of Bhutan, Government and religion are blended into political culture. The form of Government is two-fold, spiritual and temporal according to the code of rules and regulations of Shabdrung. The spiritual laws are said to resemble a silken knot that is easy and light at first but gradually becoming tighter and tighter. The temporal

or monarchical laws resemble a golden yoke that is growing heavier and heavier by degrees. Mr. Sen Gupta describes "perhaps there is no other country in Asia where the weight of government is lighter than in Bhutan and as light as the spiritual-cultural heritage of one of the gentlest of peoples to be found in this planet."

MESSAGE

ON the auspicious occasion of the 95th National Day of Bhutan, I would like to take this opportunity to convey the good wishes and warmest greetings of the Bhutanese people to the brotherly people of Bangladesh.

December 17, celebrated as the National day of Bhutan, is of special significance to all Bhutanese. On this day in 1907, Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck was unanimously elected as the first King of Bhutan, ushering in a new era of peace and stability and laying down the foundation for the emergence of modern Bhutan. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck is the fourth and the present king of Bhutan, under whose dynamic and wise leadership, Bhutan has seen far reaching changes and tremendous progress in all fields, lead-

ing the country to the forefront of the modern age.

The relations between Bhutan and Bangladesh date way back to the emergence of Bangladesh as an Independent country. Bhutan and Bangladesh share a close bond of friendship and cooperation that have been strengthened over the years by the leaders of our two countries. Ours is a relation based on mutual trust and respect bound by common hopes and aspirations for the welfare of the peoples of our countries.

As the Ambassador of Bhutan to Bangladesh, I shall endeavor to further promote and strengthen the ties of friendship, understanding and cooperation existing between our two countries. There exists tremendous amount of affection and goodwill between our two countries

and the peoples, which needs to be nurtured and translated into meaningful economic co-operation.



Dophu Tshering Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Warmest Greetings on the National Day of Bhutan



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Our Heartiest Greetings and Warm Felicitations to our most Brotherly & Friendly People of Bhutan on their National Day



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