

Dhaka

Below is the full text of Bangladesh-Bhutan joint statement. It was issued yesterday (December 8) on the occasion of the visit of His Excellency Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan.

1. At the invitation of H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, H.E. Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay, Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan paid an official visit to Bangladesh from 06-08 December 2014. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan was accompanied by H.E. Mr. Rinzin Dorje, Hon'ble Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Norbu Wangchuk, Hon'ble Minister of Economic Affairs and other senior officials. There was also a high level business delegation from Bhutan.

2. During the visit, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan paid a courtesy call on H.E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble President of Bangladesh.

3. The Prime Minister of Bhutan laid a wreath at the National Martyrs' Memorial at Savar as a mark of respect to the memory and contribution of the valiant freedom fighters of Bangladesh. He also paid tribute and respect to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum.

4. The official talks between Bangladesh and Bhutan were held on 06 December 2014 in an atmosphere of great warmth and cordiality reflecting the excellent bilateral relations and age-old friendship between the two countries. The two Prime Ministers led their respective sides. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh hosted a banquet in honour of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan and the accompanying delegation.

5. H.E. Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP, Hon'ble Foreign Minister; H.E. Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, MP, Hon'ble Finance Minister; H.E. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, MP, Hon'ble Commerce Minister; H.E. Mrs. Raushan Ershad, MP, Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition; H.E. Prof. Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Hon'ble Adviser on International Affairs to the Hon'ble Prime Minister; and some other dignitaries paid courtesy calls on the Prime Minister of Bhutan.

6. During the official talks, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh recalled with gratitude Bhutan's invaluable supporting role to the War of Liberation of Bangladesh. She also recalled that Bhutan was the first country to recognize Bangladesh on 6 December 1971. The Bhutanese Prime Minister handed over to the Bangladesh Prime Minister a text of the wireless message that was sent on 06 December 1971 by the Third King of Bhutan to the then Acting President of

Bangladesh conveying recognition of Bangladesh by Bhutan as a sovereign independent country.

7. The two Prime Ministers agreed that this visit by the Prime Minister of Bhutan gave the two sides an opportunity to take stock of the progress in bilateral relations as also to infuse further impetus towards deepening and strengthening the relations between the two countries.

8. The two sides expressed satisfaction at the excellent Bangladesh-Bhutan relations which have particularly blossomed over the past six years. They discussed ways and means to further intensify their mutually beneficial cooperation, including inter alia, in hydro-power, water resources management, trade and commerce, connectivity, climate change, tourism, culture, education, agriculture, health and human resources development. They noted with satisfaction the institutionalization of regular meetings at the Foreign Secretary and Commerce Secretary levels, which provide the opportunity to further promote the friendly bilateral relations.

9. The Prime Minister of Bhutan recalled the inspiring leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He lauded Bangladesh's tremendous socio-economic advancements during the tenure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The Bhutanese Prime Minister also expressed his admiration for the able leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in forging dynamism into the relations between the two countries and among the countries of the region as also for her contribution towards advancement of global peace.

10. Referring to the huge hydro-power potential of Bhutan, Bangladesh Prime Minister reiterated interest to obtain hydro-power from Bhutan to Bangladesh and requested for Bangladesh's partnership in Bhutan's future power projects. The Bhutanese Prime Minister agreed to work together with Bangladesh in this sector.

11. Recognizing the utmost importance of enhancing regional connectivity, both sides agreed to jointly work towards that end both bilaterally and sub-regionally.

12. The Bangladesh side agreed to consider Bhutan's request for sharing internet redundancy.

13. Both sides agreed to work together to enhance collaboration in Water Resources Management and Power/Hydro-power and Connectivity in the sub-regional context.

14. Emphasizing the need for enhancing trade relations for mutual benefit and recognizing the huge potential it holds in bringing prosperity, the two sides

agreed to diversify bilateral trade and take further trade facilitations measures for deeper market access. Bangladesh side offered to export more products such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, jute and jute goods, agricultural produce to Bhutan. Bhutanese side agreed to look into it.

15. Recognizing Bangladesh's lead role in developing global awareness and international partnership on Autism and other neuro-developmental disorders, the two sides agreed to work together to contribute to the process regionally and internationally. Both sides also agreed to actively engage in the work of the Southeast Asian Autism Network (SAAN) and the formulation of a multifaceted Global Action Plan on Autism. The Bhutanese Prime Minister appreciated the personal commitment and leadership of the Bangladesh Prime Minister and Ms. Saima Hossain, Member of WHO's Expert Advisory Panel on Mental Health in promoting the rights and well-being of persons affected by Autism.

16. Both sides put emphasis on having a Cultural Exchange Programme to further strengthen the common and unique cultural linkages that date back to history.

17. Recognizing the huge potential of tourism, the two sides agreed to further increase cooperation in this sector.

18. To enhance cooperation in agriculture, the two sides stressed on early commencement of work by the Joint Technical Committee formed in this regard.

19. It was also agreed to enhance collaboration in other sectors namely, education, health and human resources development.

20. Referring to the 18th SAARC Summit, the two leaders exchanged views on various issues under SAARC and reiterated their commitment to strengthen the SAARC process.

21. The two sides also exchanged views on cooperation in other regional and international fora including UN and BIMSTEC and noted the commonality of their views and positions on all major issues and agreed to continue to work together for mutual benefit.

22. Expressing concern about the adverse impacts of climate change on the two countries, both the sides put emphasis on securing climate justice and equity based on the principles of UNFCCC; balanced allocation between adaptation and mitigation; clear provision of new, adequate and predictable financing; and enhanced technology development and transfer.

23. As a token of friendship, the Government of Bangladesh provided a piece of land for the Royal Bhutanese Embassy at Baridhara in Dhaka, as a gift to Bhutan and its people.

24. Following the official talks, two agreements were signed between Bangladesh and Bhutan on 06 December 2014:

--The bilateral Trade Agreement and its Protocol (renewed for ten years);

--Agreement on allotment of land to Bhutan for construction of its Embassy Premises at Baridhara diplomatic enclave in Dhaka;

25. During his stay, the Prime Minister of Bhutan visited a pharmaceutical company and the National Museum.

26. The Prime Minister of Bhutan expressed his deep appreciation for the cordial welcome and warm hospitality extended to him and the members of his delegation during his stay in Bangladesh.

27. The Bhutanese Prime Minister, on behalf of His Majesty the King of Bhutan and on his own behalf, extended invitations to the Hon'ble President and Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh to visit Bhutan. The invitations were accepted and it was agreed that the dates of the visits would be finalized in due course.

Dhaka

08 December 2014
