

**Official Luncheon hosted by
H.E Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh to
H.E Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand**

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Pan-Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka, Saturday, 08 Poush 1419, 22 December 2012

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Excellency Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra,
Prime Minister of Royal Thai Government,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Afternoon to you all.

It gives me immense pleasure in extending a very warm welcome to you, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, on your first official visit to Bangladesh.

I am happy that your visit is taking place at a very auspicious moment in our bilateral relations and carries historic significance as it coincides with the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and Thailand.

Moreover, December is the month of victory in our national life as in this month in 1971 we achieved our freedom in the war of liberation under the leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

This month is also very dear to the people of Thailand as you celebrate the birth anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Excellency,

The steady growth in bilateral trade, increased number of high political level interactions, and greater people to people contacts, bear testimony to the time-tested relationship between our two countries, which is now moving towards a much higher plane.

We admire your stewardship of Thailand in the most challenging circumstances at domestic and global levels. Your astute leadership in steering the country out of the difficult economic situation, particularly following the devastating floods of 2011, has been most admirable.

Thailand occupies a very special place in our foreign policy priority. We deeply value our relationship with Thailand which is firmly rooted in our shared linguistic, religious and cultural heritage.

Our unwavering commitment to democracy, common concern on global and regional peace and security, and common aspiration for socio-economic development of our peoples, have brought our two nations closer. Your visit will further deepen the existing engagement and collaboration between our two countries.

I believe enormous opportunities exist for greater collaboration in the areas of trade and investments, agriculture, energy, tourism, culture and education, science and technology, ICT, and security. We need to tap these exciting real potentials.

The unique situation of Bangladesh and Thailand has turned them as the gateway to South and Southeast Asia and is destined to develop it as the natural bridge between the two regions.

Enhanced connectivity through road and sea links between Bangladesh and Thailand would not only benefit our two countries and our peoples, but also the entire region. We need also to expand air links connecting cities other than Dhaka and Bangkok, starting with resuming the Chiangmai and Chittagong flights.

With over 150 million populations and a steady 6.5% annual GDP growth rate, a vast and vibrant workforce and most liberal investment climate, Bangladesh offers an ideal

destination for Thai investment, especially in infrastructure development, food processing, power generation, and oil and gas exploration sectors.

Facilitating greater market access to each other's products and services would further boost bilateral trade. There is however, a need to bring about more balance in our trade relations.

We need to work together with our private sectors to harness the full potential in our trade relations for our mutual gain and benefit.

Madam Prime Minister

We are witnessing a dynamic and productive phase in our bilateral relations. Your visit has added a new momentum to the existing friendly relations and ushered in a new era of engagement, cooperation and partnership between our two countries.

After all, as you will agree with me, Madam Prime Minister, "Sonar Bangla", as dreamt by our Father of the Nation and "Suvarnabhumi" are destined to be natural allies and partners in charting a 'golden future' for our two peoples, our two Suvarnabhumis, and for our two regions.

I wish Your Excellency and members of your delegation good health, long life and happiness. I also wish the friendly people of the Kingdom of Thailand happiness, peace, progress and prosperity.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever
Long live Bangladesh-Thailand Friendship.

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