

# **Banquet in Honour of Prime Minister of Bhutan, H.E. Jigme Y. Thinley**

Speech

Her Excellency

**Sheikh Hasina**

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon, Monday, 27 Poush 1417, 10 January 2011

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Biamillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Your Excellency Jigme Y. Thinley,  
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good evening to you all.

I have great pleasure in extending to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and to all members of your delegation, our warmest welcome to Bangladesh. Soon after my assumption of the office of Prime Minister, I made my first official bilateral visit to the Kingdom of Bhutan in 2009, and again in 2010 for the 16th SAARC Summit. I cherish fond memories of both those two heartwarming visits. Your visit to Bangladesh now is of special significance as it would forge further the enviable bonds between our two neighboring countries.

The Kingdom of Bhutan has a special corner in the hearts of all Bangladeshis, and a permanent niche in the history of Bangladesh. The unstinted support of His Majesty the Third King and the people of Bhutan to our War of Liberation in 1971, and your country's recognition of the blood-soaked independent Bangladesh, evokes powerful emotions in our hearts even today. Besides, Bangladesh and Bhutan share ancient linkage, common cultural values, religious traditions and geo-political realities.

History records of exchanges between Buddhist scholars of Paharpur and Mahasthangar in Bangladesh, and the ancient monasteries of Bhutan. History also reveals of travel and trade through the ages between these two regions along the River Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Indeed, a natural link existed between the Kingdom of Bhutan, nestled in splendid isolation on the Himalayas, and the open deltaic plains of Bangladesh from time immemorial, bonding close relation among our peoples, their destiny, progress and prosperity.

This extraordinary relation now needs to be made really meaningful for mutual benefits and the overall well being of our two peoples. The areas of our cooperation are many, but to name a few, these may include trade, tourism, hydro-power, climate change impacts, health, bio-diversity, agro-processing, agriculture, forestry, IT, education, water resources management, etc. Both the two countries should, of course, be working in close cooperation to harness our synergies on these and other areas for the good of our two nations.

I am happy that Your Excellency would be visiting the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sunderbans, and the world's longest golden sandy beach in Cox's Bazaar. If packaged with the beautiful natural hills and vales of the Kingdom of Bhutan, tourism could thrive with eco-tourists.

I am also delighted that Your Excellency would be visiting some of our ancient Buddhist relics to rediscover our past ties, and the Chittagong Port to see the potentials for use by Bhutan for transit to third countries.

We have observed with great admiration the transformation Bhutan had undergone under the visionary guidance of the Fourth King, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. It is today a democratic, modern and a progressive country. His concept of "Gross National Happiness" or GNH has also won the admiration of the world. His able and wise son and successor, His Majesty King Jigme Khessar Namgyel Wangchuck, the Fifth King, has astutely continued with his father's policies in leading the Kingdom of Bhutan.

In Bangladesh, our aim is the same and that is to strengthen democracy, achieve economic growth, and make our citizens happy individuals.

Today, our democratic institutions are stronger, and our economy is on a sound footing. The rule of law and human rights are established, and terrorism with all forms of extremism is on the wane. We shall soon be reaching our "Vision 2021," and "Sonar Bangla" as envisioned by the greatest Bengali of all times, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Already significant progress has been made on food and energy security, education, poverty alleviation, empowerment of women, social welfare, and development with sustained economic growth.

As we strive to reach our goals, we want the valuable cooperation of our friends and neighbors to strengthen our government's initiatives, including regional connectivity designed to make all of us in the region prosperous. Indeed, great opportunities lie before us and let us seize them with both hands.

I conclude with my sincere wish that Your Excellency and the distinguished members of your delegation enjoy a very happy and fruitful stay in Bangladesh.

I also wish Your Excellency good health, long life and continuing success in all your endeavors, and peace, progress and prosperity of the brotherly people of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever

May Bangladesh-Bhutan Friendship Live Forever.

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