



BIMSTEC Newsletter

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KING AND QUEEN OF BHUTAN PAID A GOODWILL VISIT TO BANGLADESH



His Majesty the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the Queen Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck paid a goodwill visit to Bangladesh on 14-19 February 2013. His Majesty the King and the Queen were accorded a warm and hearty welcome by the people of Bangladesh.

The King of Bhutan met the Hon'ble President Md. Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban on 18 February 2013. Welcoming the King and Queen at Bangabhaban, the Hon'ble President said that an excellent bilateral relation was prevailing between the two countries. The President also said that the visit would further strengthen the existing relations between the two countries. The President expressed his gratitude to Bhutanese people recalling that Bhutan was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as an independent nation. The Bhutanese King invited the Bangladesh President to visit Bhutan in his convenient time. After the meeting, His Majesty the King and Queen joined a dinner at the Bangabhaban hosted by Hon'ble President Md. Zillur Rahman, which was attended by, among others, Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 15 February 2013 hosted a dinner in honour of the Bhutanese King and Queen at her official residence Ganobhaban. Welcoming the Bhutanese Royal guests to Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the visit would further strengthen the existing relations between the two countries. Terming the Bangladesh-Bhutan relation as historical, the Hon'ble Prime Minister recalled Bhutan's support to our war of independence and being the first country to accord diplomatic recognition to the independent state of Bangladesh, Bangladesh with Bhutan historical. The dinner was followed by a cultural programme.

Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP paid a courtesy call on His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. The Royal dignitaries visited places of historic importance, some pharmaceutical, ceramic and RMG factories in Bangladesh.

Source: Embassy of Bangladesh, Bangkok

ALMSGIVING CEREMONY TO CELEBRATE THE 260th ANNIVERSARY OF SIAM NIKAYA IN SRI LANKA



In the morning of 13 January 2013, H.E. Mr. Poldej Worachat, Thai Ambassador to Sri Lanka, in association with Venerable Galboda Gnanissara Thera, Chief Incumbent of Gangaramaya Temple, Venerable Seewali Thero, Head of Thai-Sri Lanka Buddhist Cultural Center, organized the almsgiving ceremony (Pindapatha in Sinhala) at the Ambassador's Residence to mark the beginning of 260th Anniversary of Siam Nikaya in

Sri Lanka in 2013 to jointly celebrate the New Year with Thai community in Sri Lanka.

The event started when Venerable Galboda Gnanissara Thera led a group of 26 Thai and Sri Lanka monks to start an almsround from Gangaramaya to the Ambassador's Residence. At the residence, the monks received food offering from Thai and Sri Lankan participants, notably H.E. Mr. Karunatilaka Amunugama Secretary of External Affairs, Mrs. Nirmalie Gunatilleke, Sri Lanka-Thailand Society President and Mr. Thongchai Tungkasareeruk, Thai Airways' General Manager for Sri Lanka. Afterwards, the monks offered chanting to the participants.

The Royal Thai Embassy held the event in order to introduce the almsgiving ceremony (Pindapatha) in Sri Lanka. Almsgiving can hardly be seen in the country as Sri Lankan Buddhists prefer to offer breakfast and lunch to monks at the temples.

Source: <http://sameaf.mfa.go.th>

PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN RECEIVES INDIAN LOK SABHA SPEAKER AND PARTY



H.E. U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar received an Indian delegation led by

LOK SABHA Speaker Honourable Smt. Meira Kumar on 13 February 2013 at the Presidential Palace. They exchanged views on the implementation of Kaladan Project, sooner completion of India-Myanmar-Thai highway construction, gearing up of repair works of Moreh - Tamu-Kalay- Kalewa-Mandalay route, reemergence of Lido Road built in WWII that would be of benefit to India, Myanmar and China in trade, effective cooperation for ensuring peace and stability in border region, further cooperation in ICT sector with the Ministry of Science and Technology and boosting cooperation between the two countries and cementing bilateral friendship.

Source: *The Embassy of Myanmar, Bangkok*

BANGLADESH-INDIA SIGNED SEVERAL INSTRUMENTS IN JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

Indian Home Minister Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde and Indian Foreign Secretary Mr. Ranjan Mathai visited Bangladesh on 28-29 January 2013 and 9-11 February 2013 respectively. Bangladesh Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr. A.F.M. Ruhul Haque, MP visited India on 10-12 February 2013. During the visits, Bangladesh and India signed a Treaty relating to

Extradition, Revised Travel Arrangements, an MOU on Cooperation between the Foreign Service Academy of Bangladesh and the Foreign Service Institute of India and an MOU on Cooperation in the Fields of Health and Medical Sciences.

Source: *Embassy of Bangladesh, Bangkok*

PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA AND THAI AMBASSADOR TO SRI LANKA PAY HOMAGE TO BUDDHA RELIC



On 25 January 2013, H.E. Mr. Poldej Worachat, Thai Ambassador to Sri Lanka attended the opening ceremony of the public display of the Buddha relic at Sri Subhuti Maha Viharaya Temple in Waskaduwa, Sri Lanka. The opening ceremony was presided by H.E. Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the President of Sri Lanka.

The displayed Buddha relic belonged to the Chief Incumbent of Sri Subhuti Maha Viharaya. It was discovered in Kapilavastu, India, by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1898. The discovery became a great success thanks to Venerable Rajaguru Waskaduwe Sri Subhuti Thero, the Chief of Sri Subhuti Maha Viharaya Temple in the period. As a great expert of ancient foreign language, he helped Sir Cunningham to translate the inscription on the relic container so they can identify that the relics was the Buddha's. Consequently, Sir Cunningham gave some part of the found relics to the

Venerable as a token of appreciation and it was kept at the temple up to the present.

The public display of the relic was held on 25-27 January 2013. It could draw 400,000 worshippers to the temple during the 3 days. Another part of the relic from Kapilavastu is also at the Indian National Museum in New Delhi and the Golden Mount in Saket Temple in Bangkok. Also, the relic of Sri Subhuti Maha Viharaya Temple was also partly given to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn by Venerable Shasthrapathi Waskaduwe Mahindawansa Maha Nakaya Thero, the current Chief Incumbent of Sri Subhuti Maha Viharaya in 2000.

Source: The Royal Thai Embassy, Colombo



BANGLADESH-INDIA HOLD THE SECOND MEETING OF JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION



The External Affairs Minister of India Mr. Salman Khurshid visited Dhaka on 16-17 February 2013 to attend the second meeting of Bangladesh-India Joint Consultative

Commission (JCC) held on 16 February 2013. Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP led the Bangladesh delegation while the Indian delegation was led by External Affairs Minister Mr. Salman Khurshid. The meeting reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations between the two friendly neighboring countries and expressed satisfaction at the significant forward movement in implementation of the decisions earlier taken by the two sides. During the visit, the two sides signed three instruments: (i) MOU for Establishment of the Bangladesh

-India Foundation; (ii) MOU on Establishment of Akhaura-Agartala Rail link; and (iii) Protocol amending the Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income. The Indian External Affairs Minister also paid a courtesy call on the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 17 February 2013.

Source: Embassy of Bangladesh, Bangkok

APRC CALLS ON PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN



Chair of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council (APRC), Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, paid a courtesy call on President U Thein Sein of Myanmar at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw to introduce the APRC.

The APRC has been established in Bangkok since September 2012, gathering a network of experienced leaders from in - and outside Asian continent. The body is intended to help regional peace efforts in a fast-moving and more complex world.

Source: www.matichon.co.th

THE 2ND MEETING OF THE AD HOC THAILAND – INDIA JWG ON VISA AND CONSULAR MATTERS

On 13th February 2013, the Department of South Asian, Middle East and African Affairs held the Second Meeting of the ad hoc Thailand – India Joint Working Group on Visa and Consular Matters. It was co – chaired by Mr. Tomwit Jarnson, the Deputy Director – General of the Department, and Mr. Prashant Agrawal, Deputy Chief of Mission

and Deputy Permanent Representative to UNESCAP, the Embassy of India in Bangkok, and was also attended by representatives from the Department of Consular Affairs. This meeting was a follow – up to the first one held on 6th June 2012.

Source: <http://sameaf.mfa.go.th>



KATHMANDU-TOP TEN DESTINATION IN ASIA



Tripadvisor.com, an international popular portal for travel has ranked Kathmandu as top ten destination in Asia in 2012 out of 25 listed. Its website has mentioned that Nepal's capital is surrounded by a valley full of historic sites, ancient temples, shrines, and fascinating villages.

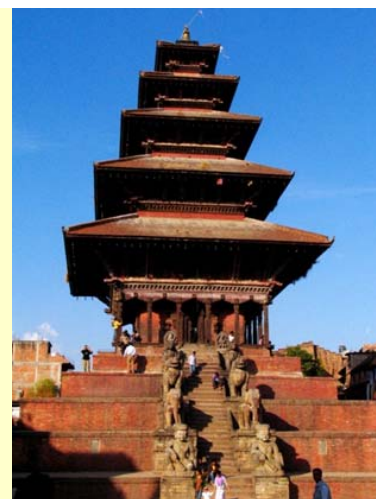
Kathmandu Valley comprises the three ancient cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. UNESCO website says 'The cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley is illustrated by seven groups of monuments and buildings which

display the full range of historic and artistic achievements for which the Kathmandu Valley is world famous. The seven include the Durbar Squares of Hanuman Dhoka (Kathmandu), Patan and Bhaktapur,



the Buddhist stupas of Swayambhu and Baudhanath and the Hindu temples of Pashupati and Changu Narayan'.

Source: *Embassy of Nepal, Bangkok*



THAI SMILE STARTS 3 NEW FLIGHTS LINKING THAILAND-INDIA



Ahmedabad(AMD)-Bangkok(BKK)-Ahmedabad (AMD)

Route	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival	Days of Operation
Ahmedabad-Bangkok	TG766	2359	0620+1	WED, SUN
Bangkok-Ahmedabad	TG765	1930	2300	WED, SUN

THAI Smile, the new sub-brand business unit of Thai Airways will start new services between New Delhi-Phuket, Mumbai-Phuket, and Ahmedabad-Bangkok, effective from 31st March 2013, Mr. Korakot Chatasingha, General-Manager, Thai Airways in New Delhi, announced.

The new 3 routes of THAI Smile to India are in response to the growing demand for Indian travelers to travel to Thailand. Phuket is one of the top destinations in Thailand for Indians, apart from Bangkok, Pattaya, and Hua Hin. And Ahmedabad (the largest city and former capital of the Indian state of Gujarat) is a city with growing potentials in tourism. Gujaratis are also well-known for being great travelers.

The schedules of the 3 new services effective from 31st March 2013 are;

New Delhi (DEL) – Phuket (HKT) – New Delhi (DEL)

Route	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival	Days of Operation
New Delhi-Phuket	TG762	0155	0755	TUE, FRI
Phuket-New Delhi	TG761	2205	0055+1	MON, THU

Mumbai (BOM)-Phuket (HKT)-Mumbai (BOM)

Route	Flight No.	Departure	Arrival	Days of Operation
Mumbai-Phuket	TG764	0220	0820	THU, SUN
Phuket-Mumbai	TG763	2230	0110+1	WED, SAT

The operation of 3 routes will further increase the number of Indian travelers to Thailand which already exceeded 1 million in 2012. Recently on 15 January 2013 the Tourism Authority of Thailand organized a Million Thanks party to celebrate million Indian travelers to Thailand and express thankfulness to Indian fans of the land of smiles.

The THAI Smile operates with brand-new, fuel-efficient Airbus A320-200 jets. Each aircraft is configured with 166 seats (16 in Smile plus & 150 in Economy class). The first five rows are designated as 'Smile Plus', a short-haul business class service.



Features and highlights of the new services to India include hot meals and drinks, free passenger seat selection and counter check-in procedures, 20 kg baggage allowance for economy class and 30 kg for THAI Smile plus. THAI's Royal Orchid Plus frequent flyer members can also accrue miles for redeemable awards on THAI Smile.

Source: <http://www.thaiindia.net>

SRI LANKAN MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS PAID AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO BANGLADESH ON 13-14 FEBRUARY 2013



Sri Lankan Minister of External Affairs Professor Gamini Lakshman Peiris paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina during his official visit to Bangladesh on 13-14 February 2013.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh expressed appreciation of the noteworthy progress achieved by Sri Lanka during the brief period since the eradication of terrorism, said that she was looking forward to attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka in November this year. She wished the Summit all success, adding that her government would do everything in its power to ensure an entirely positive outcome.

She made these remarks when Professor G.L. Peiris, Minister of External Affairs, called on her at the Prime Minister's Office in Dhaka on Thursday during his two-day official visit to Bangladesh.

Prof. Peiris briefed her comprehensively on the discussions which the government of Sri Lanka held with Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, during his visit to Colombo this week. He explained to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh the plans being made by Sri Lanka to ensure that the themes and the emphasis of the discussions at the upcoming Summit would yield results which are immediately beneficial to all Member States of the Commonwealth, especially developing nations which comprise the overwhelming majority of the Commonwealth.

Recalling with pleasure his previous meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when he visited Dhaka in August

last year to deliver a keynote address at the international seminar on "Development and People's Empowerment" organized by the government of Bangladesh, Prof. Peiris made reference to her remarks on that occasion about the sustained initiatives on the part of her government to make banking and sound financial practices popular among the rural people. In line with President Mahinda Rajapaksa's strong emphasis on prosperity and innovation in the rural hinterland, Prof. Peiris said that, at his recent meeting in New Delhi with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh of India, he had expressed the emphatic support of the Government of Sri Lanka for the proposal by the Commonwealth Secretary-General with regard to the establishment of a Commonwealth Bank for Trade and Investment.

Entirely in keeping with priorities in countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, he said that, throughout the deliberations at the Commonwealth Summit in Colombo, Sri Lanka will place stress on sustainability in respect of attainment of Millennium Development Goals, with particular reference to such areas as poverty alleviation, social mobility and climate change. Of special concern to the host country, Sri Lanka, he observed, are practical strategies for skills development through the spread of technology to enable talented youth to make the maximum use of opportunities now increasingly opening up in the wake of unprecedented development of highways, ports, harbours and other infrastructure. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh commented that current developments in Sri Lanka already indicate the potential which peace and stability make possible in this regard.

The Sri Lankan Minister of External Affairs also had a meeting with the Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 14 February 2013. In the meeting, they expressed satisfaction about the cordial relations between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Both the Ministers stressed on further strengthening cooperation in bilateral trade and connectivity through establishing direct shipping and air links for mutual benefit of the two countries. Recognizing the importance of institutional mechanism for strengthening bilateral relations, the two sides agreed to set up two joint working groups-one on trade and the other on shipping. They also emphasized on strengthening linkages between the business people of both the sides.

Source: Embassy of Bangladesh and Embassy of Sri Lanka, Bangkok

BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities

Date	Activity	Venue
6 – 8 March 2013	The 5 th Sub-Group Meeting on Combating the Financing of Terrorism	Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand has compiled this issue on behalf of the BIMSTEC Working Group.