

Bangladesh, Bhutan to enhance connectivity, trade

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Dhaka: Bangladesh and Bhutan have reached a consensus to enhance connectivity and trade between the two countries, said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on March 24, adding, "Bhutan wants direct flights from Bangladesh."

He made the announcement at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy in the capital, following a meeting between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Bhutanese counterpart Dr Lotay Tshering.

Tshering arrived on March 23 to join the celebrations of Mujib Borsho and golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence.

Momen said passenger trains on Chilahati-Haldibari route will be starting soon, and that route can be linked to Bhutan via India. "We will make the proposal to India to allow such a link. Bhutan can also raise the issue with India."

According to reports, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina put emphasis on constructing necessary infrastructures to reap the highest benefits from the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed between Bangladesh and Bhutan last year.

The Bhutanese PM requested Hasina to issue one-time multiple full-term visa for their

students studying in Bangladesh. She agreed on the issue and asked the officials concerned for taking necessary steps. Some 100 Bangladeshi products will get duty-free access to Bhutan under the PTA and 34 Bhutanese products to the Bangladeshi market.

President Abdul Hamid, meanwhile, said Dhaka and Thimphu can explore new areas of cooperation, including tourism, information and communication technology, agriculture, horticulture, and fisheries, to enhance trade and investment between the two friendly countries, during Lotay Tshering's call on the president at the Bangabhaban on March 24.

President's Press Secretary Joynal Abedin briefed the media after the meeting.