

PM arrives in Bhutan

Manmohan Singh arrived in Bhutan on a two-day visit Friday, the first trip by an Indian prime minister after the Himalayan nation became the youngest democracy in South Asia. He was received by his Bhutanese counterpart Jigme Thinley at the airport.

While leaving New Delhi, Manmohan Singh had described India's ties with Bhutan as a 'model of inter-state relations' and had said his visit would reinforce that relationship.

The prime minister will address a joint session of the newly elected parliament of Bhutan, becoming the first international leader to be given the honour.

'The India-Bhutan relationship is a model of inter-state relations. We enjoy open borders and free trade between our two countries,' he said in his departure statement.

'I am confident that my visit, coming at a time when Bhutan moves toward a new democratic system of governance, will reinforce this unique relationship and that we will continue to work together for the economic benefit and prosperity of our two peoples,' he added.

Manmohan Singh pointed out that India has been assisting Bhutan's five-year plans since 1951.

'The hydropower sector has emerged as an area of win-win cooperation for both countries,' he said.

The visit will focus on developing a more diversified and contemporary economic and energy partnership in tune with emerging realities in the two countries.

Manmohan Singh will hold talks with the previous king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, and his son and the present monarch, 28-year-old Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk.

He will discuss a host of issues with Thinley, including India's development cooperation with Bhutan.

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