

National Day of the Netherlands



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H. M. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands

When Queen Juliana abdicated at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam on 30 April 1980, her eldest daughter Beatrix became head of state and was inaugurated as queen the same day at a joint session of both Houses of Parliament in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. 30 April is also celebrated as Queen Beatrix's official birthday.

She was born on 31 January 1938 and spent most of the Second World War in Canada (May 1940 - summer 1945) in order to ensure her safety. After secondary school she studied law at Leiden University, graduating in 1961. Even as a student, she followed the operation of the Dutch parliamentary system closely, and she has been a member of the Council of State (which advises the Crown) since her eighteenth birthday since her accession she has been its president as provided for by the Constitution, although the vice-president directs the Council's everyday work.

Queen Beatrix has always shown great interest in social and cultural matters, both at home and abroad. In 1956 for example she became patron of the National Polio-myelitis Fund, which was later renamed the Princess Beatrix Fund and has widened its sphere of activities over the years. She is also very interested in sculpture, painting, dramatic art and ballet, regularly attends exhibitions and performances and enjoys talking to artists and performers.

As Crown Princess she paid visits to many countries and international organisations and accompanied her parents on a number of state visits.

On 10 March 1966 she married Claus von Amberg, a German diplomat born in 1926, on whom the titles Prince of the Netherlands and Jonkheer van Amberg were conferred by Royal decree. The Royal couple have three sons, Prince Willem-Alexander, born 1967; Prince Johan Friso, born 1968 and Prince Constantijn born 1969.

After her accession, Queen Beatrix and Prince Claus visited the Netherlands Antilles (in late 1980), and in spring 1981 the new Queen made her first state visits, to Belgium and Luxembourg, also in the company of Prince Claus.

In August 1981 the Royal Family moved from their home in Drakenstein Castle near Haarlem to Huis ten Bosch in The Hague, which has long been a Royal Palace.

As Head of State, Queen Beatrix closely follows the affairs of government. She is in regular and direct contact with her ministers and state secretaries, the Vice-President of the Council of State, the Queen's Commissioners in the provinces, the burgomasters of major towns and Dutch ambassadors abroad. The Queen's duties are both legislative and executive.

However, no statutory provision can enter into force unless one of more ministers are answerable to Parliament for it. Acts of Parliament and Royal Decrees are countersigned by them, and neither the Queen nor ministers nor Parliament can amend legislation on their own.

The Queen's Secretariat acts as a link between the Monarch and the various government departments. Much of the Queen's time is taken up with reading and signing state documents. She is also very much involved in the formation of new governments, when she holds consultations with the formateurs and informateurs whom she appoints to form the new Cabinet, and with the Vice-President of the Council of State, the speakers of both Houses of Parliament, the leaders of the parliamentary parties, Ministers of State and other leading political figures.

In addition the Queen has many public duties as head of state, one of her principal tasks being the annual opening of Parliament on the third Tuesday in September. She also regularly receives in audience the heads of diplomatic missions to the Netherlands when they present their letters of credence or take their leave.

The people and the government of the Netherlands celebrate today, April 30, the Queen's official birthday known as "koninginnedag." Twelve years ago when her majesty Queen Beatrix succeeded Queen Juliana her first decision was to make her mother's birthday the Queen's official birthday.

The Dutch celebrate their National Day by expressing their adherence to the House of Orange as the symbol of our freedom and independence. As a sign of that allegiance the orange-coloured banner is attached to our National Flag of red, white and blue. Similarly, people wear orange knots and buttons while enjoying the many festivities held in every village and town. And abroad, Dutch communities send congratulatory messages to her majesty from faraway places. The Queen herself, her husband Prince Claus and their three sons, participate in the celebrations in a town chosen each year for this purpose; this year it will be the city of Rotterdam, vibrant symbol of Dutch industrial activity and bustling gateway to and from Europe.

The eminent role of the house of orange played in the history of the Netherlands goes back to the sixteenth century when William of orange, the forefather of Queen Beatrix, gave leadership to the struggle for independence. It led to the formation of the United Netherlands Republic consisting of seven states one of which, Holland, became particularly identified with the role of the Dutch as traders between many parts of the world. More than two centuries later, in 1815, the Kingdom of the Netherlands was established under his majesty King William I. Parliamentary democracy was established in

Ambassador's Message

the latter half of the century. Limited natural resources and a favourable geographical location in Western Europe provided the Dutch people with the need for and the opportunity to earn their living through liberal trade and co-operation with other nations. These have remained essential for Dutch economic policies as they are presently committed to furthering European integration. The formation of a United Netherlands Republic four centuries ago and the process of European integration today have much in common, in terms not only of difficulties to overcome but also of opportunities to grasp.

The celebration of a National Day abroad provides the opportunity to take stock of the relations with the host country. Since the independence of Bangladesh the relations between our two countries have developed with particular emphasis on support to Bangladesh's development efforts. Evidence of the wide-ranging co-operation between the Netherlands and Bangladesh can be found across the country. Activities under Dutch-Bangladesh development cooperation include support for crop diversification, food godowns, utility ferries, country boats, health programmes, water control projects in the southeast and southwest, district towns water supply drainage and sanitation schemes, various small scale industries and natural gas supply systems.

A year ago we all listened as horrifying reports on the devastation and loss of life came in following the cyclone and tidal surge in the southeastern part

of the country. Among the Dutch people there was a great sense of solidarity with the plight of the disaster ridden people. Their own centuries old struggle against the destructive forces of the sea and flooding of lowland provided the special feelings the Dutch felt towards the people of Bangladesh. Reconstruction efforts with Dutch assistance following the cyclone are bearing fruit: sunken vessels in Chittagong harbour have now been expertly salvaged, and preparations are being made for the repair of the Karnaphuli bridge.

Commercial relations between this part of the world and the Dutch date back to the middle of the 17th century. In recent years the trade relations between Bangladesh and the Netherlands have developed to Bangladesh's advantage; exports to the Netherlands have grown substantially and changed the trade balance in Bangladesh's favour. Industrial relations and Foreign Investment cover a number of Dutch based multinational companies whose products are familiar in many households.

Dutch entrepreneurs have similarly good relations with their Bangladesh counterparts in producing, importing and exporting their products. The critical importance of export growth to the economy of Bangladesh and the attraction of Foreign Investment is recognized by the government and business circles. In this context it is noted that during the past year negotiations between our two countries on a treaty for the avoidance of double taxation were successfully concluded, while an agreement on promotion and

protection of private investments is expected to be concluded soon.

Now is the season of the flowering bulb fields in the Netherlands. The Tulip is a well-known trademark for the Netherlands around the world. The Dutch are not only the world's largest flower-exporters, we are also great flower lovers. We love to have flowers around us: in our homes and gardens, and to share them with friends.

Once every ten years a worldwide Horticultural Exhibition—floriade—is being held in our country. This year a million visitors from abroad are expected to come and enjoy the gardens and exhibits with flowers, bulbs, trees, plants, fruits and vegetables from many countries around the world. Bangladesh is represented in a special way on the floriade exhibition. A Bengal garden shows how a family lives and works around a homestead on a small patch of land in Bangladesh: a few square meters of polder land. Some vegetable crops, together with a few chickens and goats provide the visitor with a living picture of rural life in this country.

Early 1991 the people of Bangladesh choose freely to embark on voyage towards a democratic and accountable government. While expressing the hope for a strengthening of the relations between our two countries, we extend our support to the determination of the people and the government of Bangladesh to give further institutional shape to democratic and parliamentary form of government to the benefit of all its citizens.

H. Gajentaan

Ambassador of the
Netherlands in
Bangladesh

The Netherlands and Bangladesh

THE Netherlands development cooperation with Bangladesh began shortly after its independence in 1971. Initially Dutch assistance was primarily aimed at providing emergency assistance, at rebuilding the infrastructure and at financing imports of food and commodities for industry and agriculture. In the following years emphasis gradually shifted to development-related project activities and programme assistance. In addition, following the floods in 1987 and 1988, emergency assistance was provided for through government agencies and non-governmental organisations to the population in the disaster-stricken areas.

During the last twenty years some 1.8 billion Netherlands guilders (or the equivalent of one billion US dollars) have been provided to Bangladesh by the Netherlands government under its development cooperation programme. In recent years the overall size increased to approximately 90 million guilders annually. Bangladesh belongs to the four "programme countries" with which the Netherlands has established a long term development relation covering four year periods. Annual bilateral negotiations determine the contents of the programmes.

Programmes of financial and technical assistance have been developed in accordance with priorities of the government of Bangladesh, as laid

down in its Five Year Plans, and the development cooperation policy of the Netherlands. Main sectors are identified as:

- agricultural development and food production,
- physical infrastructure including water transport and water control,
- social infrastructure, covering health, population, education and water supply,
- industrial and
- energy resource development.

The shifting of the emphasis to project activities coincided with a gradual increase in the size of the programme to its present level. Since 1985, all assistance is provided in the form of grants.

As set out in the recently adopted policy framework for development cooperation in the 1990's sustainable poverty alleviation is the central objective of the Netherlands development cooperation. In addition, Dutch development cooperation focuses on the poorest countries; provides support to local non-governmental organisations in which the local population participates in planning and implementing activities; aims at strengthening the productive basis of economy in developing countries; and emphasizes the prevention of human rights violations. Special emphasis in the Dutch development cooperation is placed within the context of the spearhead programmes on environment. On enhancing the role of women in development, on urban

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*Warmest Felicitations to Her Majesty the Queen
and the friendly People of the Netherlands
on their
National Day*



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