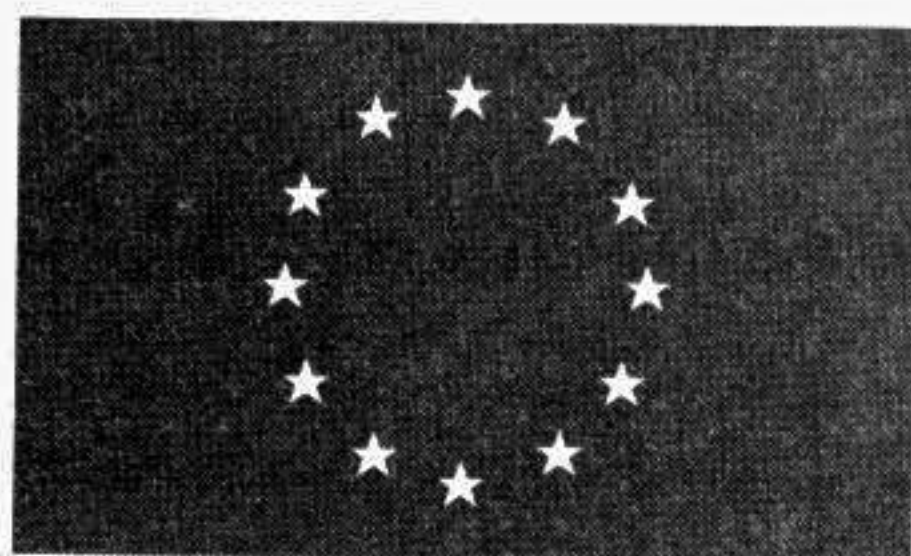
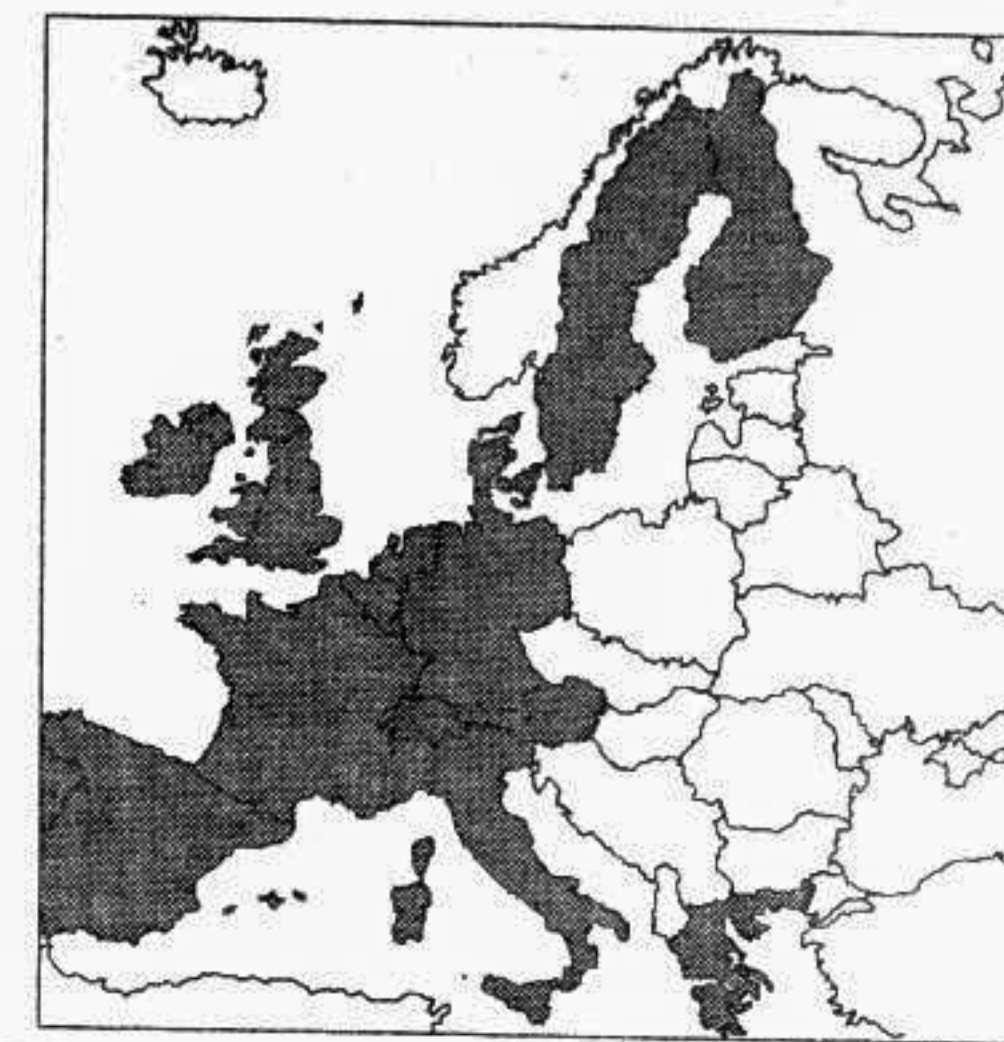


EUROPEAN UNION



EUROPE DAY

9 MAY 1999



Message of Partnership

I am very pleased to address the readers of this newspaper as the newly arrived Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Bangladesh on the occasion of Europe Day. On the 9th of May, the declaration of the former French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman on European integration is commemorated as the starting point of the construction of the "European House." The day is an occasion at which the citizens of the European Union ought to count the blessings of peace and economic prosperity brought about by the successful process of regional integration in Europe for almost half a century.

Over the past years, the European Union and Bangladesh have enjoyed a growing relationship equally in trade and development cooperation. The European Union has become Bangladesh's largest market, notably for exports of its textile products, favoured by the preferential import arrangements granted by the EU to Bangladesh. The successful European integration process has consolidated the European Union's position not only as a significant development partner of Bangladesh, but also in global affairs. On the basis of agreed Co-operation Strategies, the EU, taken in conjunction with its Member States, is one of the largest bilateral sources of financial and technical support for Bangladesh and its people successfully to advance its social and economic development. The new Co-operation Agreement between the European Community and Bangladesh will provide ample opportunity to enhance and deepen the relationship. It will be a particular task of my mission in Bangladesh to implement the Agreement's programme to its full potential including support of the Government of Bangladesh for its continued efforts to eradicate poverty, develop the economy through liberalisation and investment, thus preparing for the challenges of the next millennium, safeguarding the environment, and achieving regional economic integration.

The European Union admires the courage and the spirit of the people of Bangladesh in striving, often in the face of daunting setbacks inflicted on them by natural catastrophes, to attain their social, economic and political aspirations. The European Union is prepared to support these endeavours wholeheartedly. I pledge once again to build a strong partnership for development and cooperation.



Ambassador Antonio de Souza Menezes
Head of Delegation of the European Commission

The EC Delegation in Bangladesh

In 1973, formal diplomatic relations were established between Bangladesh and the European Community. In 1982, the European Commission opened an office in Dhaka, initially under the responsibility of the European Commission's Delegation for South Asia in New Delhi. The office was subsequently upgraded in 1988 as a full diplomatic mission to Bangladesh under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The Head of the Delegation, having the rank and courtesy title of Ambassador, was accredited to the Head of State in 1990. The European Commission Delegation, the offices of which are now located in the Gulshan area, comprises nine diplomats and technical and administrative staff, and some 15 local staff, ranging from economic, financial, development and administrative officers to drivers.

ECHO

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) was established by the European Commission in 1992 in order to increase the effectiveness, the efficiency and the visibility of the humanitarian assistance provided to the victims of man-made and natural disasters in third countries, particularly in the developing world.

ECHO is not directly involved in the provision of humanitarian aid. It works in partnership with UN agencies, the Red Cross family and European non-governmental organisations. The only exception to the rule has been ECHO's direct involvement in former-Yugo-slavia, which at some point amounted to some 15% of the overall assistance.

Taking into account the contributions of both the European Commission and EU Member States, the European Union is nowadays the largest humanitarian donor in the world.

Since October 1998, ECHO has reinforced its assistance to Bangladesh and the region by opening a regional office in Dhaka, responsible for South Asia.

In Bangladesh, ECHO's purpose is twofold: to provide relief and rehabilitation assistance during and after a disaster, and to support disaster preparedness activities designed to reduce the impact of natural hazards on the most vulnerable, in the framework of the DIPECHO programme.

The Challenges facing the European Union

Robert Schuman French Foreign Minister in 1950 whose declaration of 9 May 1950 on European integration is commemorated on this day, would be moved to-and-fro between being pleased, displeased and perhaps healthily worried with European politics in May 1999.

The rapid pace of the integration process in Europe on the eve of the new millennium is certainly pleasing. There is much to be proud of in the events of the past year and the perspectives for the immediate future. The European Union successfully launched its single currency, the Euro, which is a sound currency having already been confirmed its place in the financial world. On 1 May of this year, the Treaty of Amsterdam went into force, providing a substantial boost to the European integration process. The reforms undertaken include a much needed simplification of the EU's bewildering decision-making procedures, a stronger role for the next President of the European Commission, new powers to the European Parliament, a strengthened common European foreign and security policy, and an increased cooperation in the areas of justice and internal security.

At the same time, the European Union achieved much progress in the process of enlargement. At present, the Union is conducting accession negotiations with six countries (Estonia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Cyprus).

whilst five other countries are in a pre-accession phase (Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania). Malta has re-activated its membership application, while Turkey, though being recognised as a full candidate for membership, still has some way to go in reforming its economy and improving its record on human rights. On the European Union side, difficult preparations for taking in new

encouraging developments, there is dismay to observe the events in former Yugoslavia. Here, there is little for European society to be proud of and the perspectives for the immediate future remain grim. But the war against Milosevic's Serbia is not in any way proof of a failure of European unification and the pursuit of its objectives, precisely to render intra-European war impossible. For fifty years now, there have not been armed conflicts, nor is there risk of there being any in the future between countries of the European Union. Where European conflict still exists, it is between countries that have not yet been able to join the integration process, which is based on the principles of solidarity, community, responsibility and tolerance.

There is certainly concern of many European citizens to see the European Union in the midst of a political and administrative crisis. In March of this year, the twenty European Commissioners have been obliged, for the first time ever, to resign as a result of pressure from the European Parliament and many criticisms of the way in which the Commissioners managed Euro-pan affairs. The resignation of the European Commissioners is proof of a maturing democratic control in the EU. It has changed, though, the relationship of the Commission to the European Parliament, bringing it into the wider context of comprehensive

and far reaching institutional reform within the European Union on which the EU is obliged to embark on.

In the coming years there will necessarily be an international dimension to the activities of the EU. The giant strides made towards economic and monetary integration have introduced a major actor to the international stage - the euro - and brought with it a major responsibility for ensuring monetary stability stimulating growth after the financial crisis of recent years. This significant development together with the impending enlargement makes the EU a project on a continental scale with considerable weight in the international fora. The challenge for Europe now is to know how to play this new role constructively in dialogue with its allies and friends in the world.

THE EUROPEAN ANTHEM

A shared anthem, the prelude to the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, officially the 'Ode to Joy', but which in this context also means the ode to freedom, to a sense of community and to peace between the citizens of the 15 countries which have decided to unite and to others which will freely decide to join them.

Member States were successfully undertaken, squaring the circle between three elements: stabilisation of EU expenditure for the years to come, reforming core common policies, such as the common agricultural policy, and adjusting a balance between the contributions of the Member States.

Despite these gratifying and

THE EUROPEAN FLAG

A shared flag, blue with twelve gold stars symbolizing completeness. The number will remain twelve no matter how many countries there are in the European Union.

New Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and Bangladesh

Cooperation between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh date back to 1976 when the foundations for close cooperation between the Community and Bangladesh were laid down in an Agreement signed on 16 November 1976. In 1995, both partners agreed that a new cooperation agreement with a broader scope should be negotiated. This new agreement which will enter into force later in the year, is based on the common commitment of the partners for respect for human rights and democratic principles. On this basis the relationship between the European Community and Bangladesh is broadened and deepened, and the various aspects of cooperation are enhanced and developed. The areas covered by the agreement are varied and embrace development and economic cooperation, promotion of trade, commerce and investment, support to sustainable economic growth, aid to social development, protection of the natural environment, support for regional cooperation, cooperation in the fields of information, culture and communications and support in the fight against drugs and drug trafficking.

The new agreement is considered an important milestone in the development of relations between the EC and Bangladesh and in the promotion of comprehensive interests of both sides.

On 9 May 1950 the first move was made towards the creation of what is now known as the European Union. In Paris that day, the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman read the following declaration:

"World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts equal to the dangers which exist to world peace. By the pooling together of basic production processes and the setting-up of a new High Authority whose decisions will link France, Germany and the other countries which will accede, this proposal will bring to pass the first concrete steps of a European Federation which is indispensable to the preservation of peace."

Rural Health Complexes in Better Shape

European Community had been providing development assistance to Bangladesh on the average of 100 million euro a year which includes project aid, food aid, humanitarian aid and co-financing to NGOs. One of the projects in the social sectors, is the Thana Functional Improvement Pilot Project (TFIPP).

The little two-storied Thana Health Complex (THC) at Fakirhat was crowded with young mothers, mostly at their initial reproductive age. They gathered at the THC, some 20 km from the district headquarters at Bagerhat, because judged by local standards the clinic was rated one of the best. The THC is a government clinic - which the Thana Functional Improvement Pilot Project (TFIPP) helped to modernize with substantial financial and technical supports from the European Union (EU).

Once a place totally lacking in basic amenities, the THC is reverberating with life. Thanks to the services of the THC. It saved my life," said a teen mother who recently gave birth to a child in the hospital. She was rushed to the hospital in a critical condition.

Like this young mother, many others suffering from serious complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth were treated in the clinic. Doctors, nurses and other staff trained under the TFIPP are available in the clinic ready to render services to distressed mothers.

The project funded by the EU was introduced in all nine thana health complexes in the district with a view to imparting health and family welfare services at thana level. Introduced in 1993, the project presently covers 55 thanas in six districts of Barisal, Bagerhat, Comilla, Rangpur, Sunamganj and Nilphamari and is being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Like Fakirhat, the Rampal Thana Health Complex situated in an old and dilapidated house, now takes a new look after necessary

port for construction and renovation of the centres with a view to make them effective to strengthen and integrate maternal, child healthcare and family planning services.

Since 1995, the TFIPP has spent some Tk. 1.9 million for each of the THCs for improvement of health services. Besides training, the project also provided maternal assistance in the form of ambulances, motorbikes and bicycles to facilitate communications and transportation of patients.

Under the training programme,

and family welfare assistants even at field levels.

From each of the THCs, one medical officer was trained in gynecology, one in anaesthesia and another in surgery.

The bottom-up planning is another aspect of the project. To execute all its activities, plans are designed at local level without any interference from executive agencies.

The project provides thana managers with appropriate tools and funds to plan and manage the functional improvement programme for health and family planning services.



Minor operations are performed at THCs. Specialized training to Doctors, OT management training for Nurses and provision of medical equipment are being provided by EU-funded TFIPP.

repairs and construction. All the THCs at Bagerhat are now packed with patients who come from far flung areas of the district. The TFIPP has extended its sup-

port to the TFCs have been renovated and extended with construction of training centres. Up-to-date trainings are being-given from senior health and family planning welfare officials to health

The European Union is the world's largest trader

The European Union (EU) represents around one fifth of total world trade in goods and a quarter of total trade in commercial services.

The EU is the world's largest exporter of goods and has maintained a stable share of around 20% of total world exports (intra-EU trade excluded) since 1990. The figures for the USA and Japan are around 16 and 11% respectively.

Exports of services outside the EU reached 26% of the world total in 1996. In the same year, it was 20% and 5% respectively for the USA and Japan.

With a share of 20% of total world imports, the EU is neck and neck with the USA as the world's largest importer.

The Union is the leading partner for many developed country markets and is the second largest exporter of goods to both the USA and Japan. Among the emerging economies, the EU's share of trade is also significant. The EU accounts for a quarter of the imports of Latin America's regional trade organisation Mercosur, making the EU its largest supplier. Almost 15% of the Asian-ASEM countries trade is with

the EU as well.

The EU's openness towards the least developed countries is significant. Growth in EU trade with these countries has been strong. Over the last three years, EU exports to and imports from them have grown to over 10% and almost 38% respectively.

European Union is Bangladesh's biggest commercial partner. It is an important source of the capital goods - heavy machineries, vehicles, chemicals, precision instruments - which the economy of the country needs as it matures. Less widely known perhaps is that Bangladesh exports well over twice as much to Europe as it imports from there. This is thanks to the success of Bangladeshi exporters in using the facilities of the Generalised System of Preferences and the country's restriction-free status under its Textiles Agreement with the Community. As a result, Bangladesh enjoys a trade surplus with the European Community of between 3000 and 4000 crores of Taka a year. Bangladesh exports about 45% of its total exports to EU.

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SMC is a private not-for-profit company engaged in the marketing and distribution of health products, such as, contraceptives and oral rehydration salt at highly subsidized prices. SMC was founded in 1974 with funding from USAID, and over time it has grown to be the largest private social marketing company in the world. SMC's current donors include USAID, British ODA and European Community.

SMC's goal is to enhance the quality of life of the socially and economically disadvantaged population of Bangladesh. To this end SMC's MISSION is to increase awareness through promotion, access through mass distribution and acceptance through affordability of modern contraceptive methods and oral rehydration salt (packaged saline).

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