



Queen's Day

NATIONAL DAY OF THE NETHERLANDS



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H.M. Queen Beatrix

Early years: H.M. Queen Beatrix, then Princess, was born at Soestdijk Palace in Baarn, where she lived until May 1940, when, on the German invasion of the Netherlands, the family left for Canada. It was not until five years later, on 2 August 1945, that the family again set foot on Dutch soil. In Canada, Princess Beatrix attended nursery and primary school. On her return to the Netherlands, she continued her primary and secondary education at regular local schools. In 1956 the Princess enrolled as a student at Leiden University. She became an active member of the Leiden Women Students' Association. In July 1961 she obtained her law degree.

On 31 January 1956, Princess Beatrix celebrated her 18th birthday. From that date, under the Constitution of the Netherlands, she was entitled to assume the royal prerogative. From that date too, she was installed in the Council of State.

Marriage and family: Princess Beatrix got married to the German diplomat Claus von Amsberg in Amsterdam on 10 March 1966. On this occasion, Claus von Amsberg received the title of Prince of the Netherlands and the designation Jonkheer van Amsberg. The royal couple took up residence in Drakenstein Castle in Lage Vuursche, where the Princess had lived since 1963. Three sons were born to Princess Beatrix and Prince Claus: Prince Willem-Alexander in 1967, Prince Friso in 1968 and Prince Constantijn in 1969.

Prince Claus, who had become a highly respected member of the royal family, passed away on 6 October 2002.

Social issues: From an early age,

the Princess showed great concern for disabled people. In 1956, she became Patron of the National Fund for the Prevention of Poliomyelitis, which was established after a serious outbreak of the disease. The Fund was renamed the Princess Beatrix Fund and later expanded its work to include support for victims of other, congenital, muscular disorders. The interest Princess Beatrix had shown in social welfare was also apparent from the purposes to which she and her husband Prince Claus put the sum of money the nation gave them as a wedding present. Part of it went to four national associations of parents of disabled children and part was earmarked for additional medical facilities on board the Henri Dunant, the Dutch Red Cross hospital ship. The Prince and Princess also donated a sum of money to help disabled children in Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. The many activities Princess Beatrix undertook included Chair of the European Working Group on volunteer development work in Asia and Africa, membership of the Executive Board of the Silver Centres (residential schools for children) and her work for the National Youth Fund and UNICEF.

Queen of the Netherlands: On 30 April 1980, Queen Juliana signed the Act of Abdication and Princess Beatrix succeeded her as Queen of the Netherlands. On the same day, her investiture took place at a special plenary session of both Houses of the States General in the New Church in Amsterdam. Since then, the Queen's birthday has been officially celebrated on 30 April. Apart from being the day of her investiture, it is also Princess Juliana's birthday. The Queen's

birthday is an official national holiday.

In 1981, the royal family moved into Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague.

Social involvement: The Queen devotes much attention to important events in the Netherlands. She keeps herself informed of what is going on in society and every year she attends many openings, commemorations and other official events. Regular visits to the provinces provide the Queen with the opportunity to learn of the problems that affect people at local level. During specially organised working visits, she examines issues relating to such subjects as justice, agriculture, minorities, the environment and the interests of both employers and employees. The Queen also shows a keen interest in organisations in the field of health care and social welfare.

Culture: The Queen is particularly interested in sculpture, painting, ballet and music. She regularly visits exhibitions and attends performances, and she enjoys talking to the artists themselves. She takes a great personal interest in awarding the annual Royal Grant for Painting. The Queen, as guest curator of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, selected works from the museum collection to form an exhibition, which was held from 9 December 2000 to 4 February 2001.

Leisure pursuits: The Queen enjoys sculpting, horse-riding and sailing. Her favourite sailing boat is De Groene Draeck, her 18th birthday gift from the nation. She also enjoys playing tennis and skiing.



H.M. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands

The Netherlands monarchy Power and responsibilities of the Queen

THE Kingdom of the Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy. The monarchy is based on the constitution and the monarch's position is regulated by the constitution, certain Acts of Parliament and unwritten constitutional law.

The Netherlands Government consists of the Queen and the Cabinet ministers. Since 1848, the constitution has laid down that the King/Queen is inviolable and that the ministers bear responsibility for affairs of government, which means that they are answerable to parliament for all legislation. Acts of Parliament and Royal Decrees, for which the approval of parliament is not required, are signed by both the sovereign and the minister responsible. By so doing, the Queen gives the royal assent, and the minister accepts full constitutional responsibility.

The Queen closely follows affairs of government and maintains regular contact with ministers, state secretaries, the vice-president of the Council of State, the Queen's Commissioners in the provinces, burgomasters, and Dutch ambassadors etc. She meets the Prime Minister every Monday. Much of her work consists of studying and signing State documents. She regularly receives members of parliament, as well as other authorities on social issues.

The Queen is closely involved in the formation of a new government. After a general election or the fall of a government, she consults the vice-president of the Council of State, the speakers of both houses of parliament, the leaders of the political parties represented in the Lower House and sometimes distinguished elder statesmen known as the ministers of state, and then pro-

ceeds to appoint formateurs and informateurs to form a new government on the basis of the election results. When the political parties reach agreement on the policies to be pursued by the new government, she appoints and swears in the ministers and state secretaries. During H.M. Queen Beatrix' reign, nine governments have been formed.

At the official opening of parliament on the third Tuesday of September, the Queen rides in the Golden Coach from Noordeinde Palace to the Binnenhof. A plenary session of both Houses of the States General is held in the Knights' Hall, during which the Queen delivers the Speech from the Throne in which the govern-

ment announces its policy plans for the coming year. The pageantry of Prinsjesdag (Prince's Day), as it is called, draws numerous visitors to The Hague.

The Queen regularly receives heads of state and heads of government who are visiting the Netherlands. She also receives in audience the heads of foreign diplomatic missions to the Netherlands, when they come to present their letters of credence or take their leave. The Queen makes several state visits to other countries every year.

The Queen has three palaces at her disposal: Noordeinde Palace and Huis ten Bosch Palace, both in The Hague, and the Royal Palace in Amsterdam. The buildings are state property.



The traditional windmill



MESSAGE

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to address the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of our National Day, the day that Her Majesty Queen Beatrix celebrates her birthday. When Queen Beatrix succeeded Queen Juliana in 1980, she decided to celebrate her birthday on the same day as Queen Juliana did, April 30. Thus Queen's Birthday, our National Day, continued to be on that day. This year, for practical reasons festivities in Bangladesh will be on April 26.

Queen's day in the Netherlands is an occasion of happiness and getting together. Normally the 30 of April is a sunny day and with the country full of spring flowers, people are in an excellent mood to celebrate our national holiday. Children's parties and plays are organised by so called "Orange-committees" in each city and village (Orange refers to the name of the Royal Family). While participating in all sorts of festive events throughout the country, on this day the Dutch again are with Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, wishing her and her family well.

As Netherlands' Ambassador in Dhaka, I gladly use the celebration of Queen's day as an opportunity to also dwell upon the relations between the Netherlands and Bangladesh, countries that have so much in common and peoples that have had thirty years of intensive interactions; historic ties between this part of the world and the Netherlands even go back many years more.

The Netherlands was among the first countries to recognize Bangladesh after its turbulent emergence as an independent state in 1971. Ever since, we have been cooperating as development partners. Currently Bangladesh figures prominently on the list of the 35 countries that have structural bilateral development relations with the Netherlands. Over the years, support from the Netherlands has exceeded one and a half billion Euro (at present rates: some sixteen thousand crore Taka). Support in the seventies and early eighties were directed to improvement of infrastructure and to enhancement of industrial production. Till today we can observe the legacy of this cooperation in the form of well producing polders, warehouses

and storage facilities for seed production and food security, gas distribution systems and improved drainage and village roads. In the nineties, more emphasis was put on direct poverty alleviation and the strengthening of the social sectors by funding government programs and strengthening relevant institutions.

Today our joint development program focuses on four sectors: primary education, integrated water resources management; basic health (including nutrition and population issues), and rural electrification. Special attention is given to the role and position of women and to private sector development. At present disbursement level for the bilateral development co-operation programme is in the order of 50 mln Euro and support increasingly takes the form of joint financing with other donors in order to lower overheads.

Development assistance has most impact if it contributes to an inducing business environment. In the end, economic policy, trade and private investments, both local and foreign, will determine the pace and direction of development. Apart from being development partners, Bangladesh and The Netherlands have had fruitful economic relations over the past thirty years.

Trade has inspired also our forefathers to visit what now is Bangladesh. Historians of both countries have studied early presence of the Netherlands in Bangladesh during our Golden Age, the 17 century; when Dutchmen settled at Tejgaon and at Mitford area on the bank of the Buriganga, at a site known as *Kutti Ollandaz* (Dutch Cottage). In 1666 Nawab Shasta Khan sought material assistance from the Dutch in his war against the Arakanese. The Dutch Governor of Batavia in the East Indies reportedly offered ships of war to Bengal to facilitate the transport of the Mongol's troops to Chittagong. One-century later Dutch silk traders were active in another part of East Bengal, Rashahi, where today still traces of their presence are found. A few 18 century graves of Dutchmen are reported to be found in Dhaka at the Christian Cemetery and in Wari in Old Dhaka. Rembrandt, the famous Dutch painter, owned a collection of Mughal paintings and other artifacts, most likely carried to Europe by the VOC, the Dutch East India Company.

Art lovers and pre-historians of both countries have examined witnesses of old civilizations and modern historians and social researchers have worked together with Bangladeshi to describe the rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh. Modern painters have visited the Netherlands with successful exhibitions.

Bangladesh' economic performance remains impressive and the country's growth by now is much more fuelled by trade in stead of aid. Bangladesh is a good example of how international trade and globalisation can benefit countries in their development. Trade between our two countries can be much better. The Netherlands is the sixth

largest importer of goods from Bangladesh, imports totalling approximately 2000 crore thaka in 2004. On the other hand, Dutch exports to Bangladesh over the same year were only 18% of that amount: 360 crore Taka. Of course, we should realise that imports from BD are part of the overall trade with the EU, as goods can travel freely within the Union. The Netherlands proves to be an important gateway to Europe. Annually the Netherlands Embassy provides some 1000 Bangladeshi with a visa to visit our country.

Close to 85% of the exports to the Netherlands are garments. To assist Bangladesh in export diversification and growth, the Netherlands has always strongly supported Bangladesh' case within the EU and in other multi-lateral organisations such as the WTO. Additionally the embassy has lately opened a programme to support joint ventures of the Dutch and Bangladeshi entrepreneurs for innovation of production methods and of new products. The embassy is also trying to attract more Dutch investment as a key to reducing existing trade imbalance, which is heavily in favour of Bangladesh.

A few final words on the business climate in the Netherlands, which is considered attractive on several grounds: political stability, openness to foreign investors, and access to capital. Business people prefer stability and predictability, economic as well as political and judicial. We have an efficient & effective banking system, stock market and an excellent physical and social infrastructure.

As to our political position in the world, The Netherlands believes in partnerships. We play our role in Europe and the United Nations family. On the international level our policies and interventions are directed towards an international system that is just and at peace, that favours free movements of goods and services and one that respects human rights and law. The Hague is getting prominence as the legal capital of the world. Particularly in the unsettled times that we live in at present, there is a great need for institutions that recognise and strengthen international law. Increasingly our position becomes an integral part of the European Union. The second half of last year, the Netherlands held the presidency of the European Council. In Bangladesh the Netherlands Embassy remains in the chair on behalf of Luxembourg during the first half year of 2005. Further strengthening the joint character of development programmes of the EU member states present in Bangladesh, together with the programmes of the European Commission, figures high on our agenda, as will the promotion of human rights and democracy, values so deeply embedded in the European thinking.

We at the Royal Netherlands Embassy are honoured to play our part in further strengthening the relations between our countries.

Kees Beemsterboer
Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh.



heartiest felicitations
to Her Majesty
the Queen of the Netherlands
on Queen's Day.



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