

NATIONAL DAY OF FRANCE



France in brief

HISTORY

Although France's documented history starts at the very beginning of the Christian era, its status as a well known country outside its own region was considerably enhanced by the French Revolution of 1789 which came to be symbolized by the takeover and destruction of a former royal prison called "La Bastille", situated in Paris.

One year after, on 14th July 1790, delegates from all parts of the country flocked to Paris to celebrate the "Federation Day" and proclaimed their allegiance to a single, common nation. The ideals proclaimed were: individual freedom and mutual respect, the right of people to self-determine and institutions that would protect the welfare of the citizens.

These aspirations, which were codified in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 26th August 1789, grew out of the works of the enlightenment philosophers in the eighteenth century and were heavily influenced by the ideas of authors like Montesquieu, who wrote down the principle of separation of legislature, executive and judiciary powers in his book "The Spirit of the Law" of 1748, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who developed theories of political equality and the sovereignty of the people in "The Social Contract" (1762).

These texts had considerable influence on the writers of the constitution of the United States of America in 1787. The values propounded in them are seen as universal and may be considered the cornerstone of modern democracy. They have had widespread repercussions and provided a model of national liberation movements during the nineteenth century. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10th December 1948, signed in Paris, also owed much to the French Declaration of 1789.

INSTITUTIONS

The Constitution, dated 4th October, 1958, is the cornerstone of the French Fifth Republic. The Head of State is elected for a five-year term by direct universal suffrage: the present president, Mr Jacques Chirac, was first elected in 1995 and re-elected in May 2002, the next elections being in May 2007. The President of the Republic appoints the Prime Minister and, on the latter's recommendation, appoints the other members of the Government.

Under the direction of the Prime Minister, the Government sets National Policy and carries it out. It is answerable to Parliament. The President only acts independently as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and in a few domains where he is traditionally pre-eminent like foreign policy.

Parliament comprises two assemblies: the Senate, elected for a six-year term by indirect universal suffrage, and the National Assembly whose members, called Deputies, are elected by direct universal suffrage every five years. The last election was held in June 2002. The Parliament provides a check on the Government, it draws up and passes legislation and may lead enquiries.

The judicial system is independent from executive power and is generally structured on three levels: first court, appellate court and reviewing court. It is organized on the basis of a fundamental distinction between ordinary courts and administrative courts with jurisdiction of all cases involving some form of dispute between citizens and the public authorities; the supreme administrative court is called "Conseil d'Etat". Ordinary courts are divided in Civil courts and Criminal courts; a special tribunal, the "Cour d'Assises" involving jury, deals with blood crimes.

FRENCH SOCIETY

There are about 60 millions French citizens, 25% being under 20 and 20% being over 65. There are no precise statistics regarding religion because the French Republic is a secular state, but it is estimated that there are about 5 millions Muslims in France, the rest being mainly Christians.

Education is an exceptionally important aspect of the French society: it represents 7% of the GNP and 38% of the State Budget, which can be translated as 1.3 lack takas per inhabitant. The Education ministry is the first employer of the country.

About 30% of the labour force is white-collar while 26% are manual workers and only 2.4% are farmers. Unemployment runs high at about 10%. The net average annual earnings stands at 20,440 euros; of course, prices are much higher than in Bangladesh, so this figure does not directly translate into buying power; for instance the minimum salary in France is around 83,000 takas and buys what can be obtained in Dacca with 2,500 takas.

One of the characteristics of France is a very comprehensive social welfare system. It weighs heavily on public expenses, but French citizens are extremely attached to it and tentative reforms often end in social unrest.

France is synonymous with its culture and is blessed with both a rich heritage and a vibrant cultural life in every possible field. France is renowned for its rich architectural heritage: starting with religious monuments dating back to the 11th century, it can boast the cathedrals of the late middle-age (13-14th century), the castles of the renaissance (17-18th century), mostly along the river Loire, and the classical architecture of the Baron Hausmann in Paris (1800-1891). Nor does it stop there: French architects are well known both in France and outside and Paris for instance has many recent building that are considered as masterpieces, such as the Pompidou Center or the Louvre pyramid.

The museums of course are among the best in the world: who has not heard of the Louvre, the Musée Guimet which specialises in Asian art, or the Musée d'Orsay which houses, among others, the French painters of the 19th century called "impressionists". Modern art is an integral part of French cultural life and the Government has kept alive the tradition to commission artists to enrich the cities. The Museum of Modern Art of Paris is fantastic and exhibitions are never ending.

Intellectuals are also thriving and although they are better known to French speaking audiences, everybody has heard, indeed has been influenced one way or the other by people like Sartre, Camus or Derida just to mention a few recent authors.

Based on a rich theatrical tradition going back to Molière and still vibrant, the French film industry, invented in France by the Lumière brothers in 1895, produces over 200 movies a year with a very special

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Jacques Chirac
President of the Republic of France

Straight leg project

French physicians fighting against deadly rickets

SHAKHAWAT HOSSAIN
back from Cox's Bazar and
Moheshkhali

ISMAT Ara, a beautiful daughter of Amir Hamza at the remote hilly village of Cha Bagan under Chokoria Thana, in the district of Cox's Bazar, had to drop out of her school as soon as she was attacked by a deadly disease rickets. She had been suffering from such a severe disease since she was only four years of age.

She could not even walk to her near-by primary school as both her legs got a bent shape due to the deterioration of the calcium deficiency bone disease known as rickets. She became almost a disabled girl and she used to feel shy in the class room because of her disability. Finally, she decided to quit the school and to hide herself inside the house.

Her parents were also worried about the future of their daughter as they knew that nobody would be interested to marry their disabled girl.

But a French surgeon has changed the life of Ismat Ara and her parents just undergoing an operation in her legs. She is now

15. She can now play, walk and even run. She is now the student of class seven and she does not feel any shy to go to the school as she is no more a disabled girl. The joys of her parents know no bounds as they are not at all worried about the future of their daughter.

French orthopaedics surgeon

(SARPV)" jointly introduced the Straight Leg Project in 2003 in a bid to improve the health situation of the children suffering from rickets in the region of Cox's Bazar.

Aide Medicale et Development and Kinesitherapeutes DU Monde of France approved a grant of Taka 511250 to SARPV over a period of two years up to December 2005 for



Ismat Ara before and after the operation

Thierry who visited Bangladesh in 2004 under Straight Leg Project, examined Ismat Ara, very carefully and advised her parents to go for an immediate operation. As soon as her parents agreed, surgeon Thierry finished the operation successfully, and it did not cost them anything.

"We pray to almighty Allah for further flourishing of The Straight Leg Project as we are grateful to them for curing our daughter from a deadly disease Rickets," said mother of Ismat Ara at her home yard.

Like Ismat Ara, many other victims of rickets across the entire coastal areas of Cox's Bazar, are being cured either by French orthopaedics or French physiotherapists under the Straight Leg project.

Beside Chakoria, a huge number of Children living all around the coastal district of Cox's Bazar are suffering from calcium deficiency rickets.

Against such backdrop, two French non-government organizations "Aide Medicale Et Development" and "Kinesitherapeutes DU Monde" along with a Bangladeshi non-government organization "Social Assistance and Rehabilitation

the collaboration on rickets prevention project.

Besides, as per the agreement both the Aide Medicale et Development and Kinesitherapeutes DU Monde of France are sending surgeons, administrators and physiotherapists from its volunteer-pool for temporary stay and work for one month to twelve months for providing the required support to the rickets affected population.

French orthopaedics, physiotherapists and expert nurses are visiting Bangladesh round the year to dedicate their volunteer services to the poor children suffering from rickets all over the Cox's Bazar district, said Kazi Maksudul Alam, project officer of the Straight Leg Project sitting at the Chakoria branch office of Social Assistance and Rehabilitation (SARPV).

The bone of the children with calcium deficiency rickets is soft and when the children walk the deformation appears and often goes worth if no treatment is given. Lots of children become disabled if they don't receive any treatment and some children suffer from such severe deformations that they are even unable to walk.

Referring to survey conducted by

MESSAGE

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to address your readers on the occasion of the National Day of France.

I have been representing my country in Bangladesh since October 2004, and my mission here has already been very enriching thanks to the warm and generous welcome I have received from all walks of the Bangladeshi society, and to the discovery of the very rich and ancient culture of this beautiful country, most parts of which I have already visited.

France has always attached great importance to its relationship with Bangladesh since the call of André Malraux to the world community in support of the brave people of this land fighting for their independence.

Since 1971, the bilateral relationship has steadily grown. France appreciates greatly Bangladesh's foreign policy and particularly its role as spokesman of the LDCs, its involvement in the United Nations system and its important contribution to peace-keeping operations, where French and Bangladeshi troops often operate side by side. My country also admires the achievements made by Bangladesh in the field of micro-credit and empowerment of women.

Exchanges of high level visits have taken place and the economic relationship has also been fruitful. Several internationally renowned French companies have invested in Bangladesh, such as Lafarge in the cement sector, Alcatel in telecommunications, Total Gaz in energy or Degremont in water treatment. More will come. France is also one of the major global importers of Bangladeshi garments. And I am happy that Biman Bangladesh Airlines, which links Paris to Dhaka with a weekly direct flight, has Airbus planes in its fleet.

France mainly contributes to the development of Bangladesh through the projects funded by the European Union (in which it is a major contributor), International Organisations and NGOs. But it believes that in export oriented countries like Bangladesh, trade is as important as aid, and that is why France has always defended a favourable approach of import taxation in favour of developing countries and maintains close contact with the Bangladeshi delegation during the WTO meetings.

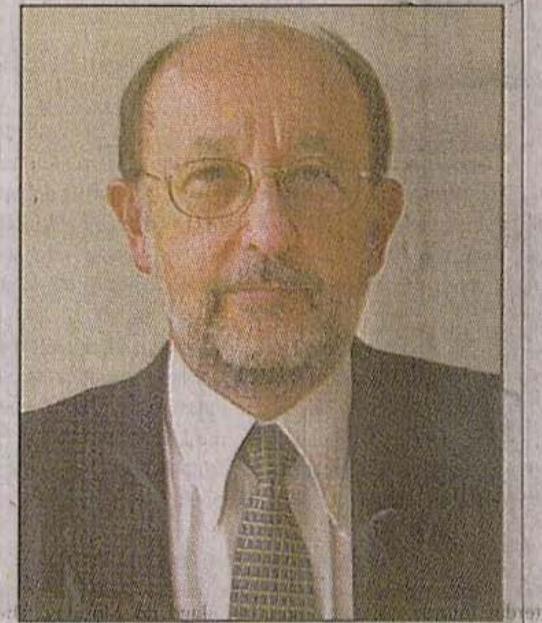
I would like to stress also the importance France attaches to its relationship with Bangladesh in the field of culture. The people of both our countries, which are lands of very ancient civilisation and rich culture and traditions, have a lot to gain intellectu-

ally in deepening their knowledge of each other. As far as French culture and language are concerned, the "Alliance Francaise" of Dhaka (its "Galerie" is famous in the capital) and Chittagong are active and successful. Our cooperation in archeology in Mahastangarh is also proving to be fruitful. Scholarships are provided by the embassy in the fields of aeronautics, medicine, biodiversity, archaeology, public administration, fine arts, pedagogy, international relations, etc.

I am determined to deepen all these fields of the "win-win" cooperation between our two countries.

On this 14th of July, the people of France and their friends all over the world celebrate the storming of the Bastille in 1789 which led to the spreading in the world of the values of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". Here in Dhaka, this day gives me the opportunity to reiterate my expression of friendship and respect to the people of Bangladesh, and my confidence in the democratic and peaceful future of this country through social and economic development.

Vive l'amitié entre la France et le Bangladesh,
France Bangladesh Bonduto Dirghojibi Hoc!



Jacques-André Costilhes
Ambassador of France to Bangladesh

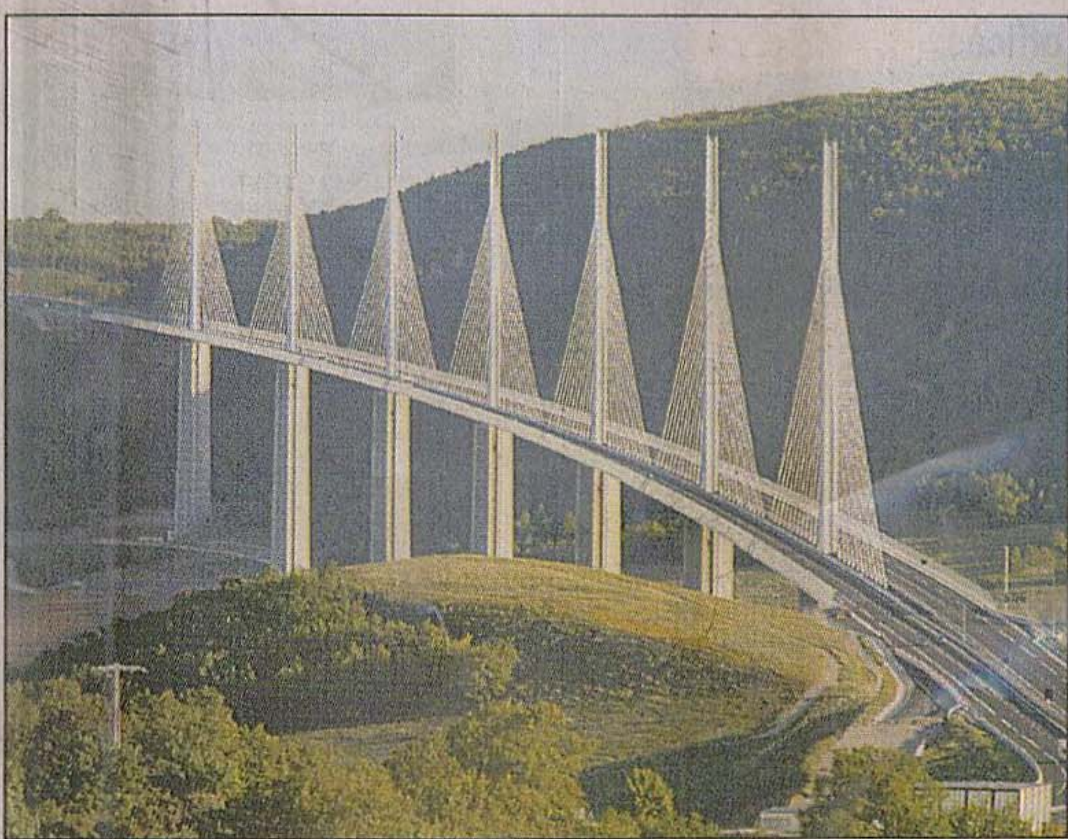
Kornel University of USA, he also said that 9 percent of the children living in the coastal areas of Cox's Bazar are suffering from this disease and the number of the rickets affected people

is increasing day by day.

During a recent trip to the coastal area of Cox's Bazar and the adjacent island of Moheshkhali, it was found that still a large number of

children are suffering from such a deadly disease. According to a rough estimate by SARPV, at least 11 percent of the total population are

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Millau Bridge

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