



Queen's Day

NATIONAL DAY OF THE NETHERLANDS



The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

APRIL 30, 2008



Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands

Small facts and tall figures about the Netherlands

• We have been rated number 1 for the third consecutive time by the Center for Global Development and Foreign Policy magazine (both USA) in the Commitment to Development Index which makes us the best value for money development partner in the world in the eyes of these organisations

• We are one of only five donor countries in the world to comply with the internationally agreed target to spend at least 0.7% of GDP on development assistance (the others are Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Luxembourg)

• We are the 3rd largest exporter of agricultural products in the world (and the 8th largest exporter overall) despite only occupying 0.008 % of the world's surface

• Netherlands was in 1958 one of original 6 founding nations of the European Economic Community, the forerunner of the current European Union



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MESSAGE

It is my pleasure to write a few words on the occasion of our National Day, the day on which Her Majesty Queen Beatrix officially celebrates her birthday. On this day lots of festive events are organized throughout the Netherlands centred around Her Majesty who, with members of the Royal Family, visits different parts of the country each year to attend (and indeed participate) in these festivities. I am very happy to celebrate this festive day in Bangladesh for the first time, with our Bangladeshi friends.

Relations between Bangladesh and the Netherlands have been excellent ever since our early recognition of Bangladesh's independence in 1971. Since then we have been one of Bangladesh' long-standing Development Partners. Looking at the nature and character of both our countries it is only logical that there have been such strong bonds of friendship and mutual trust for so many years. Both Bangladesh and the Netherlands are low-lying green deltas facing a constant battle against floods, and both countries have resilient and strong people who are used to living with water as their greatest friend and biggest enemy at the same time.

Today our development programme of Euro 60 mln (BDT 600 crores) focuses on three sectors: primary education; water management, water supply and sanitation; and health, nutrition and population issues. Together with the Government of Bangladesh and the other development partners we are committed to the harmonisation and alignment of development programmes so that everybody wins by getting better results for the poor. The Millennium Development Goals are our main agenda in Bangladesh. For obvious reasons our longstanding cooperation in the water sector is very special to us. Elsewhere in this Special Supplement we are focusing on the water sector in more detail.

Special attention in our programmes is also given to good governance, to the role and position of women and to private sector development. Our support to promoting the equal participation of women in all spheres of life is a longstanding effort of which we are particularly proud. During the past years we have seen many positive changes in the lives of women in Bangladesh but many challenges also remain.

Commercial relations are developing too but, for our mutual benefit, further development is necessary. The potential of Bangladesh lies in its huge human resources potential, which can produce low-cost and high quality products and services for a global market. And this is not limited to the garment sector only. In the past few months we have been witnessing a remarkable surge in European orders for ships, including substantial orders from the

Netherlands, which few people would have expected even one year ago. The increased awareness that we have witnessed over the past years within the various industrial sectors as regards corporate social responsibility and environmental responsibility is encouraging and should be strengthened further. In my opinion, instead of only stressing low wages, socially and environmentally responsible production will provide Bangladesh with a real and long term niche in the international market.

Like Bangladesh, the Netherlands is eager to play its role on the international stage. In our case, the involvement in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan to bring stability and foster development comes to my mind foremost. Bangladesh's substantial contributions to many UN peacekeeping operations, to stabilise countries and regions, have met with praise and appreciation over the years, and I want to fully associate myself with that. It is very encouraging that the Caretaker Government, now in its second year, has shown great commitment to work towards free and fair elections by the end of this year. We are pleased to be part of this effort through our contribution to the voter registration project which plays a crucial role in preparing for the elections. Finally, let me assure you that the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Dhaka will continue to play our active part to further strengthen the relations and build bridges between our countries.



Bea M. Ten Tusscher
Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh

35 years of cooperation between the Netherlands and Bangladesh

THE cooperation between the Netherlands and Bangladesh dates back to 1973. The Netherlands programme

in Bangladesh is fully aligned with the National Strategy to Accelerate Poverty Reduction. In supporting this strategy, the Netherlands

contributes towards improving access to basic education, to improving health and drinking water and sanitation, better man-



agement of available natural water resources as well as to private sector development, good governance and gender equality.

In this Special Supplement we are highlighting our involvement in the water sector.

Water is crucial for Bangladesh. It determines agriculture, health, safety, economic activities, and culture. Bangladesh is both blessed as well as cursed by water. The mighty rivers feed agricultural lands during the rainy season, but too much water causes floods and destruction. And too little rain means no crops, and then hunger. The devastating floods and famine which ravaged Bangladesh in 1974 changed the history of water management in the country: drastic improvements had to be made in order to prevent such catastrophes from happening again.

The Netherlands and Bangladesh have been fighting together in the water sector since 1975. We do this because our two countries have similar problems, and can learn from each other's solutions. In the early years the cooperation focused on building infrastructure like embankments, bridges, polders, dredging rivers etc. This was needed to reduce flooding risks and enhance agriculture. The struggle proved highly successful and Bangladesh became self-sufficient in food production. However, since the early 90's it was realised that the thousands of kilometres of embankments and all the equipment could not be operated and maintained effectively by the government alone. The people's help was needed. By 2000 this led to a special government regulation making participatory water management the new way to go. Also it was realised that effective water management can only be realised if there are strong government institutions to design and implement policies.

Today, the Bangla-Dutch development cooperation programme for water resources management has three pillars:

1. capacity building of the Bangladeshi authorities (BWDB, WARPO, Ministry of Water Resources) for their new tasks in participatory water management;
2. improvement of the lives of people in coastal zones by protecting newly created land through embankments and social and physical infrastructure;
3. better management of rivers, including combating river erosion.

Besides these, we fund activities on transboundary river management and drinking water and sanitation.

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Heartiest Felicitations

to the Government
And the People of The Netherlands
On the occasion of Queen's Day and
The National Day of The Netherlands

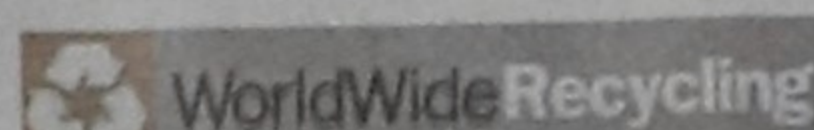
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we sincerely would like to congratulate
the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
on this special occasion.*

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