

# Constitution Day of Denmark



The Daily Star

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## MESSAGE

It is a privilege and honour for me to address the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of the Constitution Day of Denmark. On the 5th of June 1849 King Frederik VII of Denmark approved a democratic constitution with a two-chamber parliament and political parties. All subsequent changes of our constitution have entered into force on the 5th of June.

As Denmark's Ambassador to Bangladesh since September 2006, I am pleased to use the celebration of our Constitution Day as an opportunity to assess the relations between our two countries. Denmark has supported Bangladesh in its development endeavours since its independence in 1971. The long history of development cooperation and now also strong business cooperation between Bangladesh and Denmark is an expression of the strong ties that exist between our two countries.

## Progress in economic growth and reforms

Denmark is pleased to note that the Government of Bangladesh is pursuing good governance reforms. The Anti Corruption Commission and the Election Commission have been reformed. Important steps to separate the judiciary from the executive have been taken. It has been decided to establish a National Human Rights Commission, which we hope will be established soon and in accordance with the Paris principles. Further, and crucially, the Caretaker Government and the Election Commission have committed to holding parliamentary elections this year and an impressive figure of more than 65 million voters have registered. A number of international partners, including Denmark, have supported the process of voter registration. We are proud of the progress so far and we all look forward to the election this year. Finally, may I compliment the Chief Adviser for his expression of commitment to the implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord. Action in implementation of the Accord is indeed required. With reference to previous and consistent EU messages, may I also emphasise the need to balance concern for stability and security with respect for individuals' rights, democratic processes, press freedom and the rule of law and stress the importance of lifting the state of emergency at the earliest possible date. We continue to call on all stakeholders to uphold the rule of law and to ensure that due process of law is observed in trials, in accordance with the international human rights obligations of Bangladesh.

The economic growth in Bangladesh has in recent years increased to more than 6% of GDP p.a. and poverty reduction has reached nearly 2% p.a. These are results that Bangladesh can be proud of and Bangladesh is gaining strength and is

increasingly becoming an interesting partner from a business perspective. The textile sector is of course the most important sector, but a couple of new sectors are emerging as thrust sectors for Bangladesh to focus on. One of these new sectors is the IT-sector where already 16 Danish companies have established themselves with partners here in Bangladesh. Eight more Danish companies visited SoftExpo 2008 and most of them found partners and are planning to establish joint ventures for outsourcing jobs. This is because Denmark with an unemployment rate of less than 3 percent does not have sufficient labour available. Another important sector to watch is the shipbuilding industry, where Danish companies ordered the first ships two years ago. The first ship has been built and more have been ordered, not only by Denmark, but now also by Germany and the Netherlands.

The last year has not been an easy one for Bangladesh. Fuel and food prices have gone up internationally and it is tough for a lot of people in the country. On top of that Bangladesh has experienced two floods and one cyclone during the last year, which caused a lot of damage and suffering. The Danish minister for Development Cooperation, Mrs. Ulla Tørnæs, visited Bangladesh just after the cyclone and brought more assistance for water supply, agricultural production and rebuilding of roads into the cyclone affected areas.

## Development

The Danish strategy for development cooperation with Bangladesh (2005-2009) involves Danish grant assistance of 1200 crore taka. The main areas of support are agriculture (crops, aquaculture, livestock, and rural roads), sanitation and drinking water supply, human rights, democratisation and good governance.

Ever since its inception, the Danish development assistance to the agricultural

sector has made a significant contribution to increasing agricultural and fisheries production and income, improving food security, thus reducing the vulnerability of millions of poor households. Support to the water and sanitation sector has ensured access to safe water and improved sanitation for millions of people in the rural areas and a number of municipalities. Tens of thousands of marginalized women have obtained jobs and small personal savings through the Danish assistance to the infrastructure sector.

Promotion of human rights, democratisation and good governance is a central element of Danish development assistance to Bangladesh. The human rights and good governance activities have contributed to the improvements in the judicial system, a freer press, to the combat of violence against women and to the promotion of their rights as well as to the rights of children and indigenous peoples. Further, civil society institutions have been strengthened.

In all programmes supported by Denmark special attention is given to the alignment of Danish development assistance with the national policies, systems and procedures. The Embassy of Denmark also continuously explores opportunities for strengthening donor harmonisation in order to ensure maximum efficiency and impact of the combined development assistance. One such initiative is to work towards a Joint Cooperation Strategy in support to the Government's upcoming Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The Public Accounts Committee of the Danish Parliament visited Bangladesh in February this year and concluded that the focus and effectiveness of Danish development assistance to Bangladesh is satisfactory.

## Business-to-Business Programme

Since the end of 1999 Danida has supported a very successful private sector instrument



The Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Mrs. Ulla Tørnæs, visiting women's cooperatives, who are constructing rural roads in Patuakhali.

in Bangladesh the B2B (business-to-business) Programme - targeting private sector development. The B2B facilitates long-term commercially viable business collaborations between companies in Bangladesh and in Denmark. By using business linkages as an instrument for economic and social development, the B2B programme seeks to improve living conditions for the people in Bangladesh.

Ever since the inception of the programme in Bangladesh, B2B has supported more than 57 long-term projects in different sectors. The local business partners are aided by ideas and innovations brought in by their Danish counterparts. In

most instances these partnerships have become pioneers in their own area of business. Over the 8 years period since the start of the programme more than 260 crore taka has been committed in the form of grants for these private sector business operations.

I am hopeful that the warm relations between Denmark and Bangladesh will continue and become even stronger in the coming years.

**Einar Hebogaard Jensen**  
Ambassador of Denmark to Bangladesh

## Supporting fight against corruption

DANIDA launched an Action Plan in 2004, and adopted a zero tolerance policy against corruption and bribery. In Bangladesh, Denmark remains committed to support fighting corruption. It also cooperates with civil society organizations activities in combating corruption.

For a number of years Danida has been supporting anti-corruption measures and efforts to improve governance more generally. In Bangladesh, Denmark remains committed to support fighting corruption in its development assistance. In addition to specific interventions, Danida also cooperate with civil society organizations activities in combating

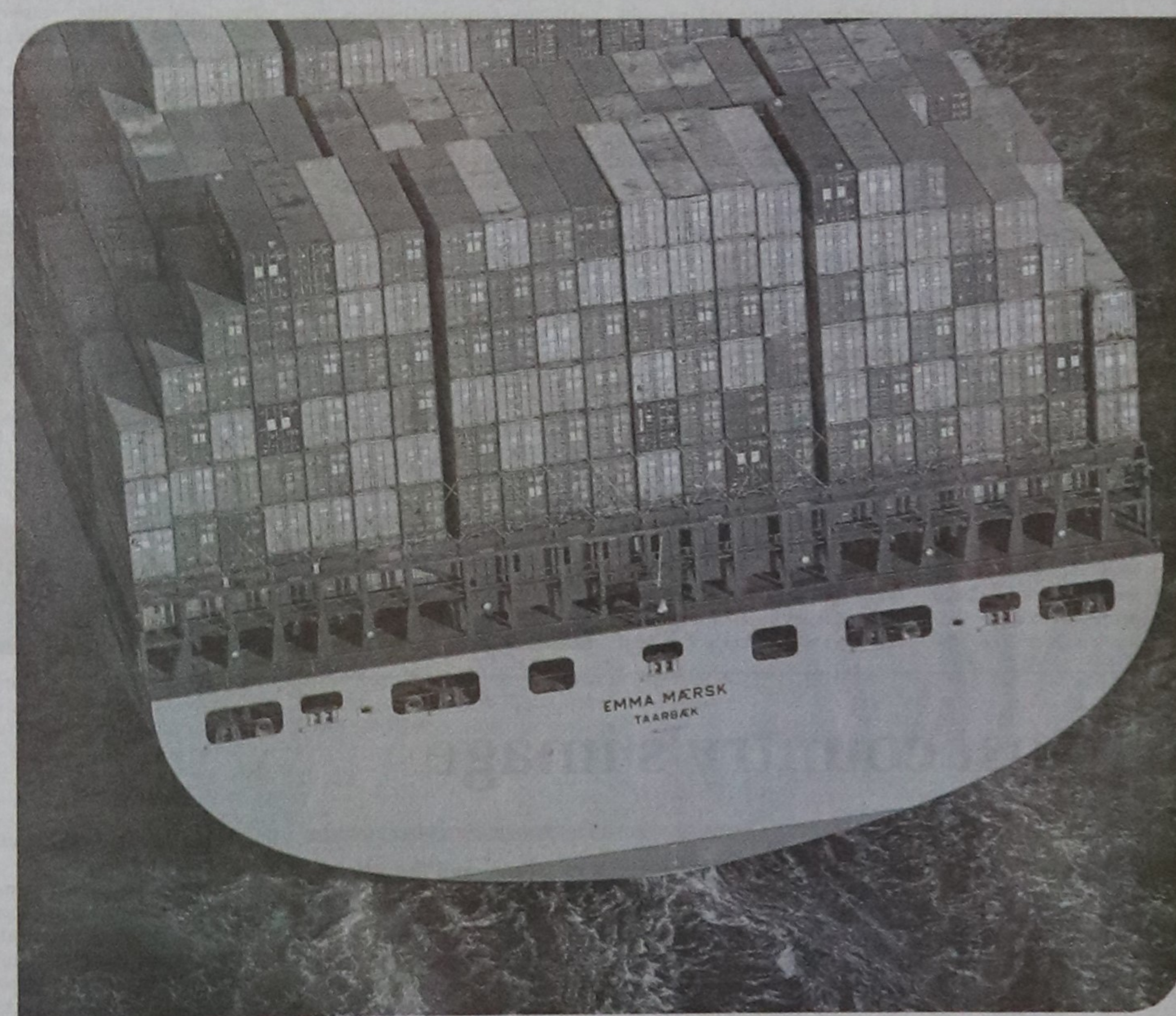
corruption. Danida supported the Anti Corruption Advocacy Campaign (ACAC) that was initiated by UNDP in 2006. ACAC contributed to create a more open discussion on corruption and integrity, disseminating information on what individual, groups and organizations can do to curb corruption. Also,

ACAC helped in advancing the collective understanding of negative impacts of corruption and the positive impacts of integrity through various activities.

Through pooled funding arrangement with other partners, Danida has been supporting the Bangladesh Chapter of Transparency International (TIB) for implementation of Making Waves project. The project seeks to increase demand for transparency in public, non-profit and private sector transactions. TIB has been able to show a number of results through its activities. For example, TIB is now recognized actor to make anti-corruption a part of the public discourse and central to the public policy agenda. Also, it has been directly involved in key institutional and policy changes, the most notably of which are: their work to reform the Anti-Corruption Commission; ongoing work to reform the electoral process with the Election Commission; exposing major corruption in Chittagong Port; and the Caretaker Government's ratification of the UN Convention on Anti Corruption.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2007 Bangladesh's position is 162 and it scored only 2 while Denmark has edged up to share the top score of 9.4 with Finland and New Zealand. It indicates that many things are yet to be done in Bangladesh. There is a need to put in place an effective plan of action to mainstream anticorruption measures across the system of governance. Also, policies need to be enforced that will prevent corruption from occurring. In this regard, a National Integrity Strategy (NIS) could be very useful. It can show the way forward in taking the fight against corruption beyond law enforcement with the goal of mainstreaming anticorruption efforts across the institutions that are most at risk of corruption, as well as providing guidance for those that can act against corruption.

Thus, under the Human Rights and Good Governance Program, Denmark has been supporting initiatives to strengthen the role and reach of the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) and formulation of a NIS under a programme led by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The NIS is expected to constitute a broad national consensus on how to deal with the corruption and issues of poor governance. Also, it is expected that the programme will enhance ACC's



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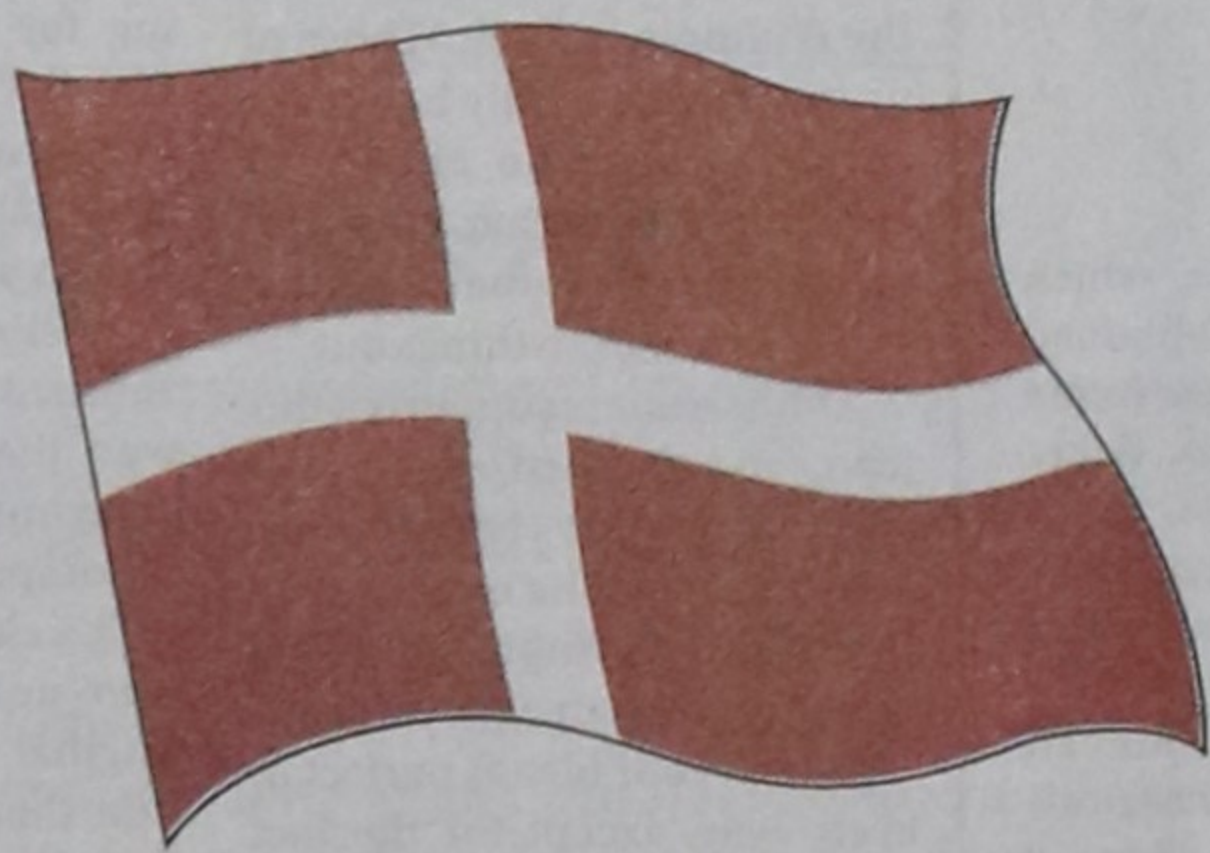
### CREATING OPPORTUNITIES IN GLOBAL COMMERCE

Maersk Bangladesh Ltd congratulates the Government and the people of Denmark on their Constitution Day on June 5.

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## Best wishes to the people of Denmark



## on the occasion of the Danish Constitution Day

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 13