



Queen's Day

NATIONAL DAY OF THE NETHERLANDS



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Her Majesty Queen Beatrix



Pioneers in international business

Mention the Netherlands also known as Holland and many people will think of clogs and windmills. The Dutch do not mind, but if truth be told, the Netherlands is traditionally a country of commerce and transport. As the article on the Dutch East India Company in this supplement describes, the first trade relations with Bengal date back to the 17th century. Dhaka still has several places which remind us of this commercial drift of the Dutch.

Transshipment country par excellence

The 17th century has long passed, but the Netherlands' leading position as a transshipment country is still alive and well. To give you an idea of just how large the Dutch logistics sector is, consider the following. The earth is home to circa 6.4 billion people, making the

Dutch population of 16 million seem minuscule by comparison. This number of Dutch citizens is less than 0.3 percent of the world's population, and yet the Netherlands is still the world's sixth largest exporting country. Such a small country cannot produce all the goods that it exports on its own. In simple terms this means that countless foreign companies opt to distribute their goods via the Netherlands, most importantly via Rotterdam Port, Europe's largest port as well as via Schiphol Airport, the most modern and the third largest cargo airport in Europe. When it comes to importing, the Netherlands is the world's eighth largest importing country.

Why foreign companies invest in the Netherlands

There are many reasons why

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Small facts and tall figures about the Netherlands

- The Netherlands is one quarter the size of Bangladesh. Approximately 18% of the Netherlands consists of water.
- We are one of the most densely populated countries in the world with some 480 people per sq. km (but Bangladesh has approximately 1100 people per square kilometre).
- The lowest point in the Netherlands is 6.7 meters below mean sea level, in fact one quarter of the Netherlands lies below sea level.
- The highest point in the Netherlands is mount Vaals ('the Vaalserberg'). With a height of 323 meter above sea level it makes the Netherlands, just as Bangladesh, a flat country, very suitable for riding bicycles.
- Because of this, nearly every Dutch person has one bicycle (and many have more than one) and we have approximately 15 000 km of dedicated cyclepaths.
- Despite having many bikes, the Netherlands is the most car abundant country in the world with 196.48 cars per square kilometre (in comparison, Bangladesh has on average 0.97 cars per square kilometre).
- Almost 20% of Dutch citizens are born abroad or have one or both parents that are born abroad.
- We have one of the highest number of people who have a computer at home

(82%) and 73% of the people have internet (mostly high speed broadband internet) and approximately 5% of Dutch citizens have their own website.

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Schiphol Airport -- 4.5 meters below sea level!

MESSAGE

I AM very happy to address the government and the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of our Queen's Day, April 30, when Her Majesty Queen Beatrix officially celebrates her birthday. In the Netherlands festive events are organised throughout the country, but also at our diplomatic missions all over the world. Receptions and special events are being organised. In Dhaka we will this year celebrate our national day with a special theme: 400 years of relations between Dhaka and the Netherlands. We will take you back in time and delve into our shared history in Dhaka.

The official celebration of Queen's Day started in 1885 with Queen Beatrix's grandmother Wilhelmina in 1885. This day was introduced as a day of national unity or togetherness. Nowadays, Queen's Day intends to embrace the same principle but the celebrations have a different outlook. Now, the nation turns fully orange on this day: you see the colour orange everywhere in the form of banners, people wearing orange coloured clothing, hats and other accessories. The colour orange refers to the name of the Royal family, the house of Orange-Nassau. Typical activities that are organized are children's games such as individual musical performances and concerts in parks. Above all you will see free markets everywhere. It is only on this day that people are allowed to set up stalls or blankets in parks, on sidewalks and even in the middle of the road. Items people sell are mostly second hand goods at negotiable prices. Many children sell their toys they played with when they were younger, or they sell old clothes. It is here that our well known qualities as a trading nation are on full display!

Trade has been defining our Dutch history. It was trade that first brought Dutch people to Dhaka. Back in the 17th century Dutch merchants of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) settled down in Dhaka to trade spices, the famous muslin and jute. One can trace several spots in Dhaka that reminds us of our common past: such as Mitford hospital and the area which now comprises the PM's Office.

Since that time we remained close friends on opposite sides of the globe. The Netherlands was one of the first nations to recognise the independence of Bangladesh in 1972. Trade is still an important part of our

relationship. We also started working actively together for the development of your country through various projects and programmes. The focus in our activities is on the water sector, basic education and health. Good governance and gender get special attention in these programmes. In 2008, we invested 57 million Euros in the development of Bangladesh (650 Crore Taka).

Nowadays trade is organised differently, but we still market many of your products and a number of important companies like Philips and Unilever are represented in Bangladesh. We cherish and promote this economic relationship. The Embassy is an active intermediary between the private sector in the Netherlands and Bangladesh and the Dutch government offers a number of support programmes to stimulate the private sector in Bangladesh, such as our Private Sector Investment Programme for joint ventures and our famous PUM programme for technical advisory services. Socially and environmentally responsible production will provide Bangladesh with a real and long term niche in the international market and there are plenty of opportunities for investment. Our Dutch Development Bank (FMO) has a portfolio of no less than 140 million Euros in Bangladesh. The use of CNG-engines in public transport and the ban on plastic bags is a good example.

In Bangladesh human capital is your main asset, so education is essential. That is why the Netherlands has been supporting this sector already since the early nineties. This year, the Netherlands Embassy will be spending almost EUR 20 million. Demand for basic education is still increasing and substantial investments are needed to respond to this in terms of building more and better schools and stimulating improvement of quality in education and teachers. Many children still drop out of school prematurely and others do not achieve the minimum competencies at the end of grade 5.

Our cooperation in the water sector started already during the 1970's. At that time the focus was on construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure such as embankments, sluices and regulators in order to enhance agricultural production and reduce flood risks. Soon it was realised that management, operation

and maintenance of the thousands of kilometres of dikes and other infrastructure could not be done by the government alone. Therefore, the previous Awami League government adopted a new people oriented approach to water management where people choose their own water management committees to look after maintenance and operation. Through participatory water management crop yields can go up by 30 percent. The Netherlands currently has a direct stake in the water sector of over USD 500 million.

The health sector in Bangladesh has demonstrated significant successes over the past three decades, in particular in reducing total fertility rate and decreasing infant and child mortality rates. Significant challenges remain, including persistent high rates of maternal mortality, malnutrition and limited access to health services for women and girls. A particular challenge is violence against women, especially domestic violence, which counts for at least 14% of maternal deaths. The Netherlands Embassy supports efforts for improving reproductive health and rights of women and adolescents.

The Netherlands remain strongly committed to assisting Bangladesh in becoming a middle income country. We believe that the strength and resilience of the Bangladeshi people will be the key to reaching that target. With good governance and respect for human rights the full potential of your beautiful country can be unlocked. 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 with Bangladesh.



Bea M. ten Tusscher
Ambassador of the Netherlands to Bangladesh

PHILIPS



Best wishes to the people of the Netherlands on their
Queen's day & the National day

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the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on this special occasion*



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