



Birthday of Her Majesty QUEEN ELIZABETH II



UK IN BANGLADESH: A Wider Engagement



High Commissioner's Message

WITH A NEW government, elected free and fair, Bangladesh is now set to move ahead with new hopes and Britain is proud to be a partner in that aspiration.

These are turbulent times and the global economic downturn presents a huge challenge. But as we saw at the London Summit last month, when countries stand united, any obstacle, no matter how monumental, can be overcome. It is exactly in that spirit of unity that we celebrate the Queen's Birthday Party this year.

I am delighted that we have taken the already close relations between our countries to a new level in so many areas over the last year. Helping Bangladesh hold a transparent and accountable election by aiding in the preparation of the voter list, committing £75 million to help Bangladesh adapt to climate change and holding a joint naval exercise with a view to helping Bangladesh guard her borders better and tackle potential threats from counter terrorism have been some of the highlights of the past twelve months.



High Commissioner: Stephen Evans

We have introduced a fair and transparent visa application system, provided anti fraud equipment to counter illegal immigration, worked to spread English as a language, and helped the poor lead a better life.

The relationship has also been consolidated by several high level visits from Britain to Bangladesh – a reflection of the importance Britain attaches to Bangladesh and our eagerness to sustain it. And as ever, people to people links have provided the bedrock of our relations.

I am proud to say that even in these times of constraint and financial hardship, the UK will remain a steadfast friend of Bangladesh, believing avidly that it is during the harsh times that a friendship is strengthened even further. The UK government's development programme for the next year will be worth £125 million and we hope that over the next five years this figure will rise.

The British High Commission, DFID, the British Council and all other UK interests will be working with Bangladesh for a brighter future under a properly functioning democratic system and will look forward to our growing partnership.

Development Initiatives

Nearly a billion people, or one person in every six, live in extreme poverty across the globe. Ten million children die each year before their fifth birthday, most of them from preventable diseases, and more than 113 million children in developing countries do not go to school. In a world of growing wealth, such high levels of human suffering and wasted potential are not only morally wrong, but also against the UK's interests. To counter this, the UK government, through its Department for International Development (DFID), spends nearly £7 billion a year in aid and is the fourth largest donor in the world.

The UK has been helping Bangladesh tackle poverty since its independence in 1971 and is the largest grant donor in the country. We are committed to working with the Government and the people of Bangladesh to secure a more prosperous future. Our current portfolio of projects and programmes is worth almost £1 billion. In consultation with government ministries, civil society, the private sector and other major national and international actors DFID has

developed a new country plan that will:

- **Strengthen Government**, making it more effective and accountable
- **Tackle climate change**, with physical infrastructure and increased adaptability
- **Provide education, skills and jobs**
- **Lift people out of extreme poverty**, and reduce malnutrition
- **Give women access to quality maternity health care**
- **Co-ordinate activities with the international community** through the Joint Co-operation Strategy to create specialisation and avoid redundancy or duplication.

DFID Bangladesh has a team of 75 Bangladeshi and UK-based staff in Dhaka, possessing the required skills, expertise and commitment to tackle these issues competently and with confidence.

For more information about the UK Government's development assistance to Bangladesh, please see our website: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/bangladesh.asp>



Counter Terrorism

The UK recognises the need to play a role in making a world where extremism and militancy are tackled effectively. Here in Bangladesh, the British government is actively involved in harnessing the culturally rooted moderate values and blending it smoothly with the tenets of Islam. Avidly believing Islam to be a religion of peace and harmony, the British government understands the importance of open dialogue involving the young of today to send out a clear message against extremism of all sorts – be it in action, thought or belief. Through Amar Bangladesh, a youth oriented and participated TV

discussion programme, the ideas of the present day young, both from Bangladesh and the UK diaspora, were put forward as a united voice in support of moderate values, secular beliefs and a tolerant outlook. Through Access to Justice programme, disadvantaged segments of society were sensitised, women in the rural areas were made aware of their rights as human beings and religious figures were carefully integrated with the objective of making issues like women empowerment, development of non-extremist views an all inclusive drive. Bangladesh experienced frenetic

urbanisation in the last two decades and though this has been generally beneficial for the country, a downside of this phenomenon has also seen a deep divide develop between sections of society with possibilities of misconceptions. Through Ordinary People, Extraordinary World, the British government reaches across to 60 million people in Bangladesh and projects their ways of interpreting the evolving faces of life. The underlying objective once again is to ensure that people from all sections of society get the chance to voice their respective views.

Education and Culture

The British Council opened its East Pakistan regional office in Dhaka in 1953, which then became our Bangladesh office in 1972. We now have offices in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

At the heart of our work in Bangladesh, and in the 109 countries in which we work around the world, are cultural relations:

- Cultural relations are powerful: they promote co-existence, they build international trust and understanding, they generate opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential and they develop the co-operation that contributes to a stable world.
- Cultural relations work over the long term, protecting both diversity and individual identity and bringing the people of Bangladesh and the UK closer together.

We believe that cultural relations can address the great global issues of our time and we work with our Bangladeshi friends and partners in what we see as the three priority global challenges:

- building intercultural dialogue and positive social change
- creating opportunities for people to participate in the creative and

- knowledge economy
- and tackling the threat to us all presented by climate change.

A long-term and successful response to the difficult and seemingly intractable global issues that are challenging people everywhere will require more than government-to-government action, more than international agreements, more than politics: it must include bringing people together to share ideas, skills and knowledge and to experience one another's cultures. We seek to ensure that people-to-people contacts, links and relationships are at the heart of everything that we do.

So, for example, our programmes of links between schools, colleges and universities here and in the UK, while they undoubtedly have institutional and systemic elements, are ultimately about relationships between people here and in the UK – pupils, students, teachers, researchers, administrators and so on. Our programmes in culture and the arts are about enabling creative Bangladeshi and British people to work with and learn from each other, whether that is in music, the performing arts or design – it is all about collaboration and co-operation. Two new programmes, *International Climate*

Champions and *Active Citizens*, will also be about building relationships, creating access for young people to networks and civil society to help address the urgent issues facing us all.

Some examples of our activities:

- by mid-2010 we shall be managing links between over 250 schools (involving many thousands of students) and over 25 universities in both Bangladesh and the UK
- by the end of 2011, in partnership with the Ministries of Youth & Sport, Education, Primary & Mass Education, Women's & Children's Affairs, and with UNICEF, our *International Inspiration* programme will have enabled 1,000,000 Bangladeshi children to engage in new and inclusive physical education and sport
- every year we enable over 50,000 Bangladeshis take UK examinations and over 8,000 participate in our general and corporate English courses

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