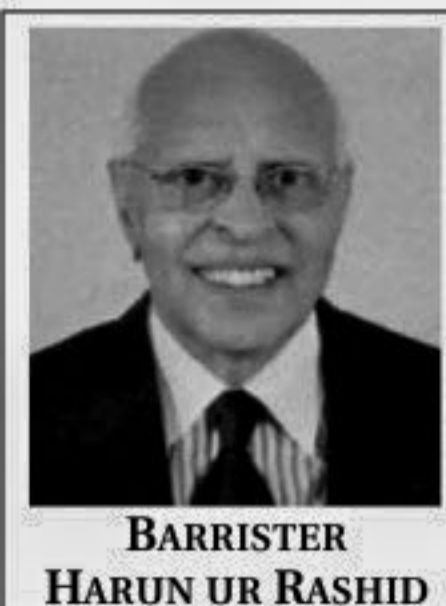


BOTTOM LINE

21st Anniversary of Germany's re-unification



MANY call it a miracle, Germany's peaceful revolution in 1989 and reunification of East and West Germany less than a year later, which was celebrated on October 3rd by German Ambassador

Holger Michael in Dhaka as the "Day of German Unity."

The country was reunified after more than 40 years of post-Second World War division between the communist East Germany (German Democratic Republic) and the democratic West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany) through the bold initiative of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany.

"I'm very impressed with how the people in Germany's new states mastered the considerable challenges after 1989," German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, who helped negotiate the original Unification Treaty, told Deutsche Welle. "I'm not disappointed at all."

In Geneva, two ambassadors represented two Germanys at the UN. Suddenly on October 3, 1990, before my eyes, the GDR ambassador lost his job and the embassy building of GDR in Geneva became the property of Federal Republic of Germany.

It is reported that some 1.6 million people have relocated from east to west since 1990, most in search of better job opportunities. The current German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel hails from Eastern Germany, although many tend to forget that fact.

Huge strides have been made in the past twenty one years in Eastern Germany. Just about every eastern German city and town has been thoroughly renovated. It's not uncommon to see unneeded housing units

being torn down in eastern cities. Autobahns and telephone networks have been upgraded, historic cities like Dresden and Leipzig restored to their former glory, new leisure facilities built.

Living standards in the former East Germany have improved thanks to huge transfers from the West -- an estimated \$1.8 trillion (£1.14trillion; •1.3 trillion). An astonishing 50% of the •80 billion (\$103 billion) in annual developmental subsidies transferred from west to east is eaten up by social benefits and welfare payments.

Old national paradigms are coming under ever increasing challenges, so the future of the Germany is likely to be influenced just as much by factors from abroad as from within its own borders.

Immigration is crucial in offsetting population decline, as both western and eastern Germans are having fewer and fewer children. According to a report, in the next 30 years the labour force in Germany will shrink from 41 million to 21 million. Foreigners account for roughly 8% of Germany's population, and with the removal of the East-West political divide, German society became much more multi-cultural, with large communities from Eastern Europe joining the substantial Turkish minority that had established itself in Germany.



IMAGE SOURCE/ GETTY IMAGES

By most standards united Germany, the EU's biggest nation, is a success story, an economic powerhouse with much to be proud of -- high export rates, low unemployment and growing political self-confidence.

In 2010, President Christian Wulff of Germany spoke of a contemporary division between Germans and the nation's Turkish and Arab Muslim community. "Christianity belongs in Germany. Judaism belongs in Germany. And by now, Islam also belongs in Germany ... the duty conferred by Germany's 20 years of unity was to value diversity, close rifts in our society ... to create real solidarity."

Dr. Merkel, who has presided over successive coalition governments since 2005, is currently beset by constraints that could

sweep away her hold on power next year. Her pivotal position is prone to extraordinary fissures. Her party lost seven state elections and the historical defeat for her party in March, in a stronghold in southwestern state, Baden-Württemberg, after a half century in power was extraordinary and her junior coalition partner, the Free Democratic Party was eliminated from Berlin on September 18th.

Although the German Parliament approved the financial stability package for Eurozone crisis on September 29th, Merkel has declined to link the parliamentary vote to a confidence motion -- something she fears would be perceived as a sign of political weakness.

A few words about relations Bangladesh and Germany need to be said. After establishment of diplomatic relations on February 4, 1972, the relations between the two countries began to grow steadily both in depth and dimension. Since 1978, all German funds provided as part of government level cooperation have been in the form of non-repayable grants.

Bangladesh is a priority partner country of German organisations such as GTZ, GLZ, DEG, KfW, KAS and Goethe Institute. Their activities concentrate on socio-economic areas and renewable energies in the coun-

try. It is reported that GTZ is providing funds and assistance for up to 380,000 solar home systems and 60,000 domestic biogas plants in remote areas until 2012.

Goethe Institute in Dhaka offers a broad variety of cultural events including contemporary arts, theatre performances, and exhibitions of German and Bangladeshi artists. The Goethe Institute in recent times introduced an innovative programme, called "Schools: Partners for the Future," in Bangladesh. The first two schools from Bangladesh have been included in the programme.

In trade with Germany, Bangladesh has for years recorded a large surplus. In 2010 the total volume stood at \$4 billion with \$2.7 billion surplus for Bangladesh. Germany is the second largest export market of Bangladesh after the US. It imports 11% of total textiles and garment export and 15% of total export of Bangladesh. Bangladesh shipbuilders see a bright future in manufacturing ships for Germany. Bangladesh imports from Germany mainly comprise machinery, chemical and electrical goods, and medicines. Bangladesh-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry is very active to promote trade and business in both countries. The commerce minister of Bangladesh visited Germany in September. The relations will get a further boost by the scheduled visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sometime this month.

Finally, by most standards united Germany, the EU's biggest nation, is a success story, an economic powerhouse with much to be proud of -- high export rates, low unemployment and growing political self-confidence. Germany's foreign policy has extended its influence in the world, and it is a member of the UN Security Council.

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WORLD TEACHERS' DAY-2011

Teachers for gender equality

QUAZI FARUQUE AHMED

TODAY is World Teachers' Day. The theme this year is: "Teachers for Gender Equality," which is linked with the Unesco's "Priority Gender Equality Action Plan," Global Campaign for Education's priority to "Gender Equality in Education" and the survey by Education International on the status of women in teachers' unions, education and society.

Of the 774 million adults in the world who cannot read, two-thirds are women. According to Unesco, gender equality between women and men exists when both genders are able to share equally in the distribution of power and knowledge and have equal opportunities, rights and obligations. Women's empowerment is about women taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) -- the coalition of Teachers' Unions, Child Rights Activists, Civil Society Movements, NGOs established in 1999 -- working in more than 100 countries, acknowledges education as a human right and gives priority to "Gender Equality in Education" in conformity with the 2008 GCE Assembly resolution. It reiterates that governments should recruit and retain teachers, especially female teachers. It calls upon governments to ensure that all teachers receive pre and in-service training of good quality and update curricula according to the challenges of the contemporary world, technology, materials and new models of teaching.

The findings of the survey among member organisations conducted by the Brussels based Education International (E.I.) in 2009 and 2010 mention that there is a big gap between the stated commitments or policy goals and implementation. Despite mechanisms for gender equality in education unions, women are underrepresented in the union leadership. Despite gender equality in school curricula, gender stereotypes determine subject choice and teaching materials. Despite laws for gender equality in the labour market, women face discrimination in recruitment, promotion and pay. Despite equal access to politics, women are underrepresented in the political leadership. Despite the existence of laws, women are still not effectively protected against male violence.

October 5 is a day of celebration of the world teaching community, in view of the adoption by Unesco of the recommendations concerning the status of teachers on that date in Paris in 1966, which were later approved by ILO. But the 1966 recommendations did not cover the teachers and education personnel in higher education specifically. Due to this, a special session of the Committee of Experts was held in Paris from September 15 to 18, 1997, which adopted the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel as well. From then,

UNESCO-ILO "recommendation" means both the stipulations of 1966 and of 1997.

Four of its salient features are: (i) Since education is a service of fundamental importance it should be recognised as a responsibility of the state; (ii) Teachers' organisation should be recognised as a force which can contribute greatly to educational advance and which, therefore, should be associated with the determination of education policy; (iii) Since education is an essential factor in economic growth, educational planning should form an integral part of total economic and social planning undertaken to improve living conditions, (iv)



HELLE BROJ/ GETTY IMAGES

The theme of this year's World Teachers' Day is in line with the poem 'Naari' (Female) of the National Poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam: "Whatever is eternally useful and creative on earth has been achieved half by the female, half by the male."

Teachers' salaries should: (a) reflect the importance to society of the teaching function and hence the importance of teachers as well as the responsibilities of all kinds which fall upon them from the time of their entry into the service; (b) compare favourably with salaries paid in other occupations requiring similar or equivalent qualifications; (c) provide teachers with the means to ensure a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families as well as to invest in further education or in the pursuit of cultural activities thus enhancing their professional qualification.

National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE), the united platform of eleven associations and unions of half a million teachers and education

employees in about 30 thousand educational institutions in Bangladesh, has drawn up a 5-day programme for this year. It includes: (1) paying respect to the elderly and retired teachers who contributed to education as classroom teachers, head teachers and text book writers in administrative districts; (2) teachers' exchange of views with guardians to improve standard of students' learning and learning process; (3) presentation of proposals on reform of management of educational institutions; (4) bringing an end to physical punishment and psychological pressure by teachers on students for their academic performance in educational institutions; (5) ensuring a vital role by teachers to stop sexual harassment of girl students in and around the institutions; (6) rally of female teachers and education staff for maternity leave and congenial facilities in schools and colleges; (7) meeting of teachers' organisations and non-government organisations that work in the field of education; (8) organising World Teachers' Day programme on a national basis with teachers' representatives from primary to university level, non-government organisations and women's organisations.

During the programmes teachers and education employees will raise their voice in favour of: (1) unhindered congenial atmosphere in teaching in the class room; (2) provision of up-to-date quality text and reference books; (3) teachers' pre-service and in-service training and adequate allocation for that; (4) end of partisan influence in the management of educational institutions; (5) separate Public Service Commission for recruitment of teachers; (6) adequate representation of teachers, including women, in the management of institutions; (7) regular promotion, full festival bonus, medical allowance and house rent; (8) full pension; (9) reintroduction of time scale for teachers and introduction of service conditions for non-teaching staff; (10) introduction of separate pay scale for teachers of all tiers from primary to university level as per decision of the present government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina; (11) implementation of the UNESCO-ILO "Recommendation" of 1966 and 1997 concerning the status of teachers; (12) implementation of the Education Policy 2010, passed in the National Parliament of Bangladesh.

The theme of this year's World Teachers' Day is in line with the poem 'Naari' (Female) of the National Poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam: "Whatever is eternally useful and creative on earth has been achieved half by the female, half by the male." Teachers in Bangladesh will echo this in the struggle against deprivation and disparity and for equality in all spheres of society including education, irrespective of gender, race and religion.

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Road maintenance

MISBAH UDDIN KHAN

ROAD maintenance is a continuous process in order to keep a road in good condition. Generally, Routine Maintenance (RM) and Periodic Maintenance (PM) are prescribed for this purpose. RM consists of pothole patching, crack sealing, edge repair and drainage maintenance, whereas, PM covers resealing, Double Bituminous Surface Dressing (DBST), carpeting and overlay.

Several studies have shown that roads deteriorate earlier than expected if no maintenance is done. Many paved (bituminous) roads have become gravel (non bituminous) roads due to lack of maintenance in Sub-Saharan Africa. The condition of roads and drainage systems in our country, especially major corridor roads (N1, N3, etc.), is similar in some places, because of poor maintenance.

There are many reasons for this situation. However, one of the main issues is insignificant funds for road maintenance. The Roads and Highway Department (RHD) has been developing Annual Needs Report to manage its road assets effectively and scientifically. The well-known Highway Development and Management (HDM-4) model is being used

The government may introduce Road User Charges (RUC) and overloading and road damage fees to get adequate road maintenance fund

to derive maintenance demand where the current road condition and traffic data are used as input to the model. The current Annual Needs Report suggested Tk.87 crore, Tk.1,486 crore and Tk.1,826 crore for the first year (2010-11) for RM, PM and backlog removal, respectively. However, the allocated amount is too little and cannot help in improving the road network.

Therefore, there should be an adequate and timely budget, as a small percentage cannot solve the problem. Rather, unmaintained roads will deteriorate more, which give rise to demand for more maintenance in future. About Tk.3,400 crore is necessary in the first year to improve the overall situation and keep the road network in good condition. Economic analysis shows that overall transport cost is optimum when roads are good. Hence, it is a must to keep the road network in good condition by allocating adequate budget in the initial years. The positive thing is that less money is needed for maintenance when a road network is kept in good condition.

Based on the timely, available and adequate funds, RHD may plan to complete the procurement process by November to start the works immediately.

Routine and drainage maintenance should be conducted all through the year, especially potholes have to be patched immediately. RHD may consider an integrated plan to improve pavement sub-surface and surface drains in the bazaar areas. Axle load control through weighbridges is urgently needed, and will extend pavement life. As pavement modulus (layer strength) decreases and roads become weak during moisture intrusion (rainy season), overloaded vehicles have to be stopped from plying over the waterlogged pavements.

Finally, the government may introduce Road User Charges (RUC) and overloading and road damage fees to get adequate road maintenance fund in the future. It is believed that the current poor performance will be tremendously improved if adequate and timely funds are ensured.

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