



National Day of Spain



The Daily Star

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Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia of Spain

MESSAGE

I would like to thank "The Daily Star" newspaper for giving me this opportunity to convey this short message in the name of my government. This October the 12th we commemorate the day of "Hispanidad" a concept that alludes to the Spanish culture in its wider sense, a language and a set of feelings and perceptions that came into being with the fusion of Spain and the new world of the time, America.

Because it was precisely on a 12th of October, in 1492, that Christopher Columbus discovered America, the "West Indies". He was not looking for the new continent; he was looking for a fastest passage to the Eastern Indies. Since then, Spain established a strong and fraternal link with Latin America that lasts to our days.

But this concept of "Hispanidad" is not a fixed and immutable one. It is a dynamic idea. Through its embassies, cultural institutions, civil society and private firms, Spain tries to share its culture and moral values with other countries and peoples beyond our traditional sphere of presence and influence.

Our relations with Bangladesh are relatively recent, as correspond to such a young country. Although we established diplomatic relations already in 1972, we did not open our embassy in Dhaka until 2008. And there are already significant links among us, although these should be fortified and enlarged in the coming years.

Perhaps the field in which the dynamism of the Bangladeshi people is more manifest is the economic and commercial one. Bangladesh has been growing at a 6 or 7% every year for a long time now,

in good part due to its capacity to expand its garment industries. Spain has a longstanding trade deficit with Bangladesh. This is of course not a negative issue for us, as it translates the openness of Bangladesh to the investment of our textile and garment companies, which are consequently able to compete in the global market and export to Spain and many other countries. Furthermore, this ability to compete our firms has preserved many jobs in Spain in this period of economic crisis.

Which is our common economic challenge for the future? The textile and garment industry will continue to grow in Bangladesh and the Spanish firms will surely continue to come and invest in this country. But the Bangladeshi economy will need more diversification and technological upgrading to maintain and even increase its growth. And the Spanish companies have made a substantial contribution to the modernisation of Latin America in sectors as key as banking, telecommunications, civil engineering or transport infrastructure. This part of Asia and, more precisely, big and dynamic countries as Bangladesh will be the next frontline for our companies. I think that there is a strong potentiality for stronger and richer economic relations among our two countries.

But not everything of our relations is about trade and investment. Culture is perhaps even more important to Bangladesh and Spain, as culture and language form the main basis of both nationalities. Bengali and Spanish are both among the most spoken languages in the world. In this light, our chal-

lenge is to increase the cultural relations between our populations, cultural industries and academic institutions. This year a strong cultural partnership has been launched. The Spanish textile firm, Inditex, has decided to fund a section of Spanish studies within the Institute of Modern Languages of Dhaka University. Two public universities in Spain, La Coruña and Santiago de Compostela, have concluded an agreement with the Dhaka University and assigned four professors for the above purpose. This unique form of public-private cooperation for cultural activities should constitute an example for other cultural activities of Spain in Bangladesh. Our firms obtain many benefits from the creativity and hard work of the Bangladeshi people. Some of these benefits must revert to the creation of "cultural wealth" in our two countries.

I would not like to finish these words without a reference to two other very fundamental aspects of our relations. Our development cooperation is very active in Bangladesh. We work through NGOs as Cives Mundi, Plan International, AIDA and DORP. Most of the projects are devoted to strengthening women's rights and their participation in the social and economic life, and to improve the nutrition of children in poor areas. And in these fields we work also with international agencies and organisations, as the GIZ, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and FIDA. Our cooperation has been increasing in the recent years, in spite of a sustained effort to reduce our public budget deficit. This is the best demonstration of our commit-

ment with the future of Bangladesh and of our solidarity with its people.

And, of course, we cannot but recognise the contribution of the Bangladeshi migrants to the Spanish economy. There are around 12,500 Bangladeshi citizens in Spain. They constitute a group of well-integrated persons that carry with them the seriousness of their work and the entrepreneurial spirit that characterises the people of Bangladesh. Spain recognises and values their effort because our country was for a long time also a country of migrants and, thus, we know well the impact of these diaspora communities to the economic and social modernisation of a country.

Culture, investment and trade, international cooperation and migration are the mainstays of our present relations and, at the same time, the seeds for a future expansion that our two governments should promote.



Luis Tejada
Ambassador of Spain to Bangladesh

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Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)



The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) was created in November 1988 as an implementing agency of the Spanish Development Cooperation policies attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MAEC).

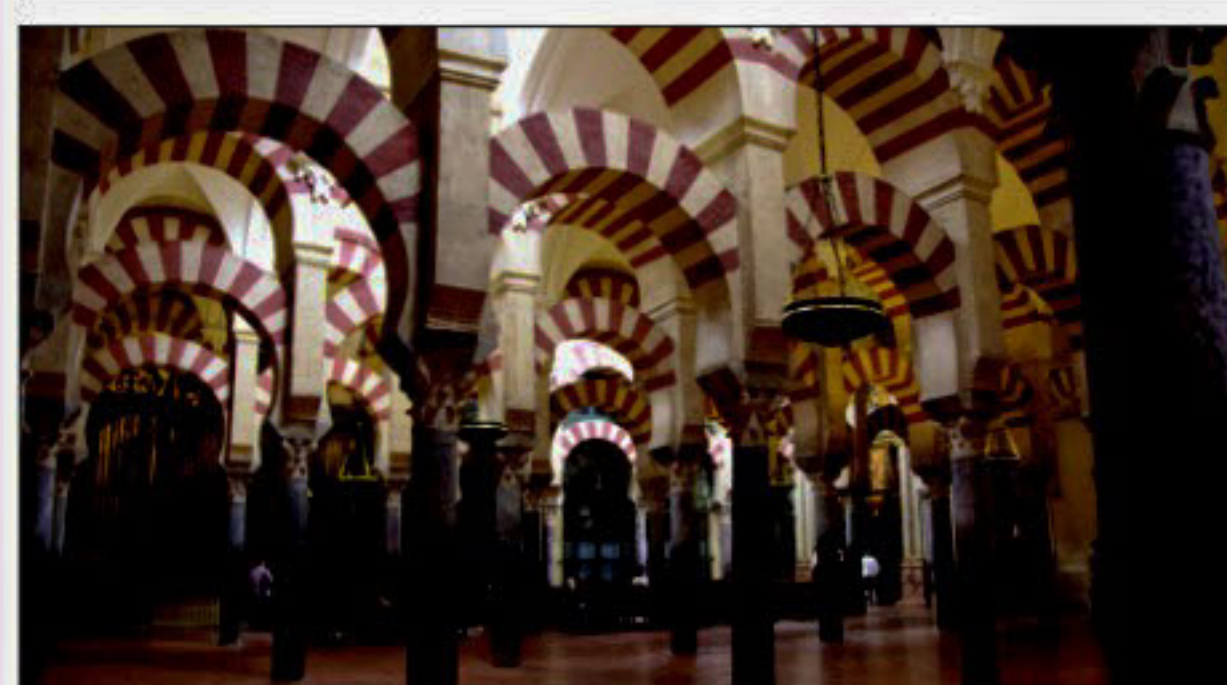
AECID is responsible for the elaboration, execution and management of the cooperation programs and projects, either directly, through its own resources, or collaborating with other national or international organizations and NGOs. In order to carry out these tasks, AECID has developed an extensive structure abroad, consisting of 36 Technical Offices for Cooperation, 12 Cultural Centers and 3 Training Centers situated mostly in South America, the Mediterranean area and the Middle East, but also in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asian and Eastern Europe countries.

Most of the Spanish bilateral cooperation in Bangladesh has been articulated through grants to international and local NGOs, such as Cives Mundi, AIDA, Plan International or DORP. Most of their projects are devoted to strengthening women's rights and participation in social and economic life, but also to promote women access to education, health and nutrition. On the other hand, an agreement between AECID, the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs of Bangladesh, has also permitted the implementation of the project "Promotion of legal and social empowerment of women", which aims to contribute to the improvement of the legal situation and living conditions of those who are victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, AECID is financing two multilateral programmes through the Spanish Fund UNDP-MDG, a "Joint Programme to Address

Violence against Women in Bangladesh" and "Protecting and Promoting Food Security and Nutrition for Families and Children in Bangladesh".

Finally, AECID has participated in multilateral programs of humanitarian aid and against the consequences of natural disas-

ters, in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, the French NGO AcF and the World Food Programme (WFP).



Interior of the great mosque of Cordoba.

Warmest Felicitations to the Government and the Friendly People of Spain on their National Day



GARMA CB



Fiesta Nacional de España

The National Day of Spain commemorates the anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas & the beginning of the period of European settlement in the New World.

Each destination we reach in life brings us to the doorway of a new one. We rejoice this discovery with Spain.

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