



National Day of Spain



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Their Majesties King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia of Spain

Spanish cooperation in Bangladesh

SPAIN is especially proud of its contribution to the development of a large number of countries all over the world through its policy of development cooperation. For this purpose, AECID, the implementing agency for the Spanish Development Cooperation, was created in 1988. This effort illustrates the long standing commitment of Spanish citizens with the welfare and the social progress of less affluent people in other countries. In relation to Bangladesh, our development cooperation is focused on gender and women empowerment. This gender perspective encompasses a large number of initiatives that seek the social and economic progress of the country through the improvement of the situation of women.

In order to fulfill this goal, the Spanish development cooperation in Bangladesh has been acting through an important number of programmes and projects, both from a bilateral and from a multilateral approach, but all of them with a common denominator, the gender perspective. Our bilateral cooperation has been developed mainly through the participation of international NGOs, which are cooperating with a large number

of local NGOs, in a fruitful relationship. Their projects seek the full participation of women in all aspects of life in Bangladesh, with an especial emphasis in promoting the access of women to education, health and nutrition. On the other hand, our cooperation has as well an important multilateral dimension, which has been mainly channeled through United Nations (the Spanish Fund UNDP-MDG) in two relevant programs, "Joint Program to Address Violence against Women in Bangladesh" and "Protecting and Promoting Food Security and Nutrition for Families and Children in Bangladesh". In addition to this, Spain has also granted an important loan channeled through IFAD, the "Haor Infrastructure and Livelihood Improvement Project (HILIP)", which constitutes an excellent example of a fruitful cooperation between both countries offering new opportunities to less affluent people in rural areas. This project will improve the life conditions of a large number of people in the Haor basin, one of the most vulnerable areas of Bangladesh. The Spanish Embassy is following and supporting all these projects with great interest, maintaining a close relationship with all the actors involved.

One of the most important challenges in development cooperation is the sustainability of the projects and programs and their ownership by the beneficiaries. In this direction, essential is the support of local authorities and governmental agencies so that all the efforts that have been made may have a real and permanent impact on people's life. This is the commitment of the Spanish development cooperation in Bangladesh, the materialization of the social and economic progress of the Bangladeshi people, fulfilled by themselves and their representatives. In this direction, Spain is proud of the results achieved through its policies of development cooperation in Bangladesh. Being a country with great potential for growth and possessing a very dynamic society, Bangladesh has proven itself to be a country prepared to attain its main goals of social and economic development, even though there are still important challenges to overcome. Supporting this effort, Spain, along with other development partners, will continue to cooperate with Bangladesh and help its people to reach its aim of becoming a middle income country by 2020.

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

THE strengthening of links between Spain and Bangladesh has firmly continued in 2012. A sample of events, all in this month of October, give us idea of this reinforcement: the signature of a contract in Dhaka between the Spanish Isolux and the American General Electric for a power plant in Shiddhirganj, the opening of the Goya exhibition last October 9th, the first Spanish gastronomic week in the Westin, the inauguration by Inditex of a Laboratory for testing quality in BGMEA on October the 10th.

A few days ago Isolux, a Spanish multinational company already well established in South Asia, signed a contract with General Electric in Dhaka. Isolux will use GE equipment for its power station in Shiddhirganj. In the last twelve months, two Spanish companies, Isolux and TSK, have been awarded contracts for the assembly of power plants for 1,000 MW. Their success is attracting other Spanish companies to Bangladesh.

This recent landing of our multinationals in the electric sector is very good news for the Embassy, especially given that our presence in the garment industry is already a well-consolidated fact. Inditex, perhaps our most successful multinational, is the best example of it. Inditex draws around 20% of its entire garments from Bangladesh, and doing so, facilitates the employment to more than 200,000 workers in the apparel industry. But Inditex is not only about business; they practice also a very active cultural and social policy. Inditex and the Spanish Embassy have just organised an exhibition of Goya engravings, currently on display in the Bengal Gallery. The firm has also put into motion a Chair of Spanish in the Dhaka University, with five professors from the Spanish university of Santiago, and, after six months operating, they have more than 200 students. The Secretary General of Inditex has this week inaugurated a laboratory for quality standards donated by them to BGMEA, a relevant step to increase the value added of Bangladesh garments, and so, the prestige and income of the country. In some months, they will start, through a Spanish NGO, some projects directly addressed to the more destitute in the north of Bangladesh.

This bet for Bangladesh is not just the merit of the biggest and most renowned multinationals. There are also medium Spanish manufacturers, as Ragadi and Yu Kom, which are as good in business as generous in their social endeavour and collaboration with the Embassy. In this group, there are also Bangladeshi businessmen very close to Spain. Pies Cuadrados, Euromode and Indesore are firm pillars for the action of the Spanish Embassy.

Their managing directors, Mr. Ashik Elahi Chowdry, M. Monir Hossain and Mr. Tareq Tarequzzaman, are much more than business counterparts. They are real and warm friends, always ready to assist us, actively looking for ways to bring closer our two countries.

Just for example, Indesore is a garment exporter to Spain, but also the representative of our multinational firm Roca, the second biggest in bathroom solutions in the world. Indesore has organised a Spanish Gastronomic week, and invited two Spanish top chefs and a group of Flamenco to come and show their abilities in the Westin Hotel from the 13th to the 20th of October. All this is a demonstration that the bonds between two great nations all thread more through devotion than large sums of money or heavy ceremonies.

Our embassy is small compared to others, and also a new comer, with only four years of experience. We have been relying mainly on the support and generosity of our friends, some of them very influen-



Luis Tejada
Ambassador of Spain to Bangladesh

tial in this country, as the Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University, Prof. Dr. Arefin Siddique, and the famous painter Monirul Islam, the first and sole person who has had the enthusiasm and ability as to be at the same time ambassador of Spain in Bangladesh and of Bangladesh in Spain. Most of the time NGOs, businessmen, artists and intellectuals are the best representatives of a country. Aware of this, the Spanish Embassy, among other initiatives, has established the practice of ceding its Residence to the Spanish Business Community, which, in cooperation with the Spanish NGO AIDA, organises an charity sale of garments for the benefit of several orphanages and education establishments of Bangladesh.

We consider that Bangladesh is a land of opportunities, an emerging economy that soon will be a middle-income country. Only a few countries in the world have been able to keep a pace of growth as Bangladesh, between 6 and 7% for more

than 20 years and those to come. This is the image of Bangladesh that the Embassy transmits to its government and to the Spanish people. But of course, there are also still in Bangladesh a substantial amount of necessities among the poorest. We try to explain to the Spanish people that this is a task mainly carried out by the Bangladeshi civil society and government, that the Foreign Assistance is not more than 2% of the GNP of Bangladesh. Few countries, if any, can be proud of having organisations such as Grameen Bank or BRAC. Only very recently, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed could astonish a Spanish public in a lecture that he delivered in one of the 10 best Business Schools of the world for the Financial Times, the Instituto Empresa de Madrid. This, so to call, "business model" of BRAC, is as worth studying as the best ones, but much more resounding, as BRAC is by and large a philanthropic institution and not a multinational firm working for profit. Our embassy is of the view that development cooperation is a two directions way, and that there is also much to learn in Europe from a country as Bangladesh, about the ambition and dynamism of its private and civil society sectors, and about the resilience and hard work ethics of its people.

It is within this context that Spain modestly supports Bangladesh with some development cooperation activities, mainly for women or children. We do it through international organisations, as IFAD, World Food Programme and UNFPA, through Spanish NGOs, as Aida, Cives Mundi, Etea or Pazy Desarrollo, or relying directly on Bangladeshi NGOs as Tarango, Action Aid Bangladesh, Dorp or Plan Bangladesh. I was very impressed when I visited one of the Community Clinics of Plan Bangladesh. I still remember with emotion the young Bangladeshi doctor in charge of a modest laboratory in one of the clinics. She had two university degrees and, instead of a brilliant career in Dhaka or in a foreign country, she had chosen to work and live in her small village in order to help her neighbours.

I would like to end these lines referring to the Bangladeshi community in Spain. This group of about 15,000 Bangladeshis is currently struggling with the economic crisis shoulder to shoulder with the rest of Spanish citizens. They are well considered by the Spanish authorities and population, as, being Bangladeshi, they are industrious and entrepreneurial. Many of them own their business and give testimony of hard work, civility and those family values so appreciated by the Spanish people.

I wish all the leaders, the authorities, people and friends of Bangladesh a "Happy National Day of Spain."



Fiesta Nacional de España

The Celebration of Christopher Columbus's Voyage to America & creating a new history of being the first European in the America continent.

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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