

DAY OF GERMAN UNITY



Message from Ambassador



Today we celebrate the German National Day to commemorate the anniversary of Germany's reunification. 25 years ago, on the 3rd October 1990, my country was finally reunited after hundreds of thousands of protesters demonstrated peacefully for freedom and democracy in East Germany in 1989. Finally we were one single country again, not only unified by a common government and border, but by the collective will and the peaceful spirit of its people. The protesters demanded the establishment of a social-market democracy and the abolition of the Stasi, the notorious East German secret police that spied on its citizens. They longed for an inclusive and participative government, asked for a more open and liberal society and the possibility to leave East Germany on their own terms. What started as a call for freedom, turned into a demand for the reunification of Germany. This claim was summed up by the creed "Wir sind das Volk, Wir sind ein Volk" - "we are the people, we are one people" and eventually led to the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. When I first came to Bangladesh in 1983, nobody would have predicted that Germany would be reunited within a decade. But not only the events in my mother country were breathtaking - in the same period, Bangladesh has made tre-

mendous developments: Addressing health issues, multiplying the energy production, educating its citizens and becoming a buzzing growing economy. Over all these years, Germany has been a close partner of Bangladesh and our mutual cooperation has thrived. Our two countries act jointly in order to find sustainable solutions for global challenges such as poverty reduction, international peacekeeping and tackling the consequences of climate change. It is with great pleasure that I learned of my posting to Dhaka. After more than 30 years I could finally return to Bangladesh to see the impressive changes with my own eyes. I will serve as German Ambassador to further strengthen the cooperation between our two countries - in the field of culture, education, development, business and politics. Despite the numerous positive developments in Bangladesh many things need to be done. With great concern I have witnessed the horrible killing of four liberal bloggers in Bangladesh this year. Secularism is deeply rooted in this country's core values - the assault of bloggers in the past months were not only gruesome crimes, but an attack on the freedom of expression and therefore an aggression against the virtues that make Bangladesh a great country. It is the responsibility of all of us to vocally condemn these attacks and stand up for free speech. This country can only thrive when people are able to freely voice their ideas and opinions - be it in internet blogs, on TV talkshows or in the numerous newspapers. My fellow countrymen associate Bangladesh with the RMG sector. Garment producers are not only an essential part of Bangladesh economy, but also the single biggest contributor to our bilateral trade relation. Germany is the second biggest market for RMG products from Bangladesh. Much has been said about the garments industry. Let me congratulate you on the admira-

ble improvements of the past years: Both safety and ecological standards have benefited from the joint commitment of the government, the RMG producers, trade unions, buyers and the international community. Despite these positive signs there is much to be done: We have to ensure rigorous safety standards, improve ecological standards and guarantee social standards. Trade unions should not only be accepted but rather encouraged - the success of the German business model is also based on the social partnership between workers and entrepreneurs. Looking back 25 years, I am still proud of my fellow countrymen who not only peacefully demanded a reunification of my fatherland, but also contributed with their daily effort and hard work to a prosperous united Germany. For it is not only the strength of the economy or the power of a government that make a country great. It is the individual, the diligent worker, the thorough journalist, the nurturing teacher and the responsible businessman that make our nations successful. It is the openness and variety of our society, the quality of our media and the splendor of our culture that makes us great. As civil servants, as Government, it is your duty to enable each member of the society to exercise the rights that are inherent to his human dignity. Freedom of (non-)religion, freedom of speech and believe, freedom of political commitment and of disagreement with politics and the government are fundamental rights. The East German government which rejected these principles to a large extent did not survive. In this spirit I extend my cordial greetings to the people of Bangladesh as well as to my fellow countrymen residing in this country on the occasion of the German National Day. Dr. Thomas Prinz
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Bangladesh

Assisting Bangladesh on its path towards development

DOZENS of excited young kids circle the Deputy Head of Mission Dr. Ferdinand von Weyhe: They show him the new desks and chairs in their classroom, joyfully running around in the grey concrete building in Hotqulla, a small village in the district of Patukhali. Monir, an eight year old boy, proudly presents his school-books and his basic English skills to Dr. von Weyhe. What sounds like one of the many schools in Bangladesh is actually a cyclone shelter to protect local communities in the south of this country. Situated in a cyclone prone area, the building can not only shelter 1500 persons and 200 cattle, but is also used as a primary school during non-emergency times. The initiative underlines some of the key principles of the German development cooperation with Bangladesh: The building is multi-purposed, was constructed after consultation with the local interest groups and can sustainably be used over the coming decades. Thanks to solar panels on the roof, electricity can be supplied even if the grid is cut off. The cyclone shelters are only one of numerous initiatives and projects that are supported by the German Development Cooperation in Bangladesh. In cooperation with the Bangladeshi Government, Germany has identified three priority areas: Energy, Adaptation to Climate Change and Good Governance.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
Despite numerous improvements in the past years, Bangladesh still experiences power shortages on a regular basis: We all know the uncomfortable feeling of a failing light or AC, but the constant power outages do not only hamper with our well-being, they massively affect the growing industry in Bangladesh. According to estimations of the World Bank, Bangladesh would be able to realize an additional 2% GDP growth with sufficient and steady energy supply. Germany's special contribution to the development of the Bangladeshi energy sector should envisage our own experience with the "Energiewende": Saving energy through new lines and substations, a decentralized energy production, focusing on regenerative energy like wind-, solar- and hydro-power, thus augmenting energy capacity without increasing the carbon footprint. Through solar home systems - small solar panels in rural areas - millions of households finally gained access to electricity. Furthermore, solar irrigation pumps and biogas devices facilitate agriculture and make local communities self-reliant.

Climate Change Adaptation in Urban Areas
Due to its unique geography, Bangladesh is one of the countries that is most threatened by the impacts of global warming. The consequences of climate change can already be felt today: Eroding riverbeds, strong cyclones, heavy rainfall and unprecedented floodings can all be attributed to our changing climate. These weather phenomenon will particularly threaten big urban hubs where people gather in huge numbers and elaborated systems of infrastructure

is extremely vulnerable. German Development Cooperation provides dual-use cyclone shelters in the coastal area and supports the Bangladeshi authorities in sophisticated urban planning, fortifying the infrastructure like roads, ghats and power stations.

Good Governance, Rule of Law & Human Rights
Progress and development are not underpinned by economic advancement alone, but also by good governance. Arbitrary legal and judicial systems, corruption and poorly functioning administration are massive impediments to development. Therefore the German Development Cooperation also supports Bangladesh in tackling issues such as the overpopulation of prisons and the fight against corruption. Moreover, the German Development Cooperation funds a comprehensive programme to support the garments sector in Bangladesh in its effort to improve the safety, social and ecological standards in the industry. By closely cooperating with the government, factory owners, western buyers and worker's representatives, Germany contributes to essential improvements in the garment sector. Germany wants to demonstrate: Our consumers are not only calling for better standards in RMG-sector, but we are also lending a helping hand to the factory owners to improve their standards, thus making them fit for the future in order to win more orders in the global competition. The Development Cooperation with Bangladesh will remain a German priority: In total Germany bilaterally provided more than 2.5 billion Euros since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 to facilitate the development in this country. Through various development organizations such as the GIZ, the German Development Agency, the KfW, the German Development Bank or the BGR, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, as well as numerous NGOs, Germany will continue to closely cooperate with Bangladesh so that many more young pupils like Monir can learn, develop and safely grow up in Bangladesh.



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