



NATIONAL DAY OF FRANCE



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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Franco-Bangladeshi economic relationships keep on growing steadily

ECONOMIC relations between Bangladesh and France are more vibrant than ever. In 2018, our bilateral trade has registered a record EUR 2.94 billion, showing an increase of +11% compared to 2017, and the highest score of the last ten years.

Fueled mainly by the RMG sector and some leather products, which represent 98% of French imports from Bangladesh, the total value of imports increased by 6% in a year to reach EUR 2.6 billion in 2018. France is one of Bangladesh's largest export markets, and its third customer in the European Union, all products considered.

Meanwhile, for the first time in ten years, French exports to Bangladesh surpassed the EUR 300 million mark, amounting to EUR 331.6 million, up 73% compared to 2017. French exports are boosted by electrical machinery and industrial equipment, such as gas turbines & equipment manufactured by General Electric in Belfort, France.

Consequently, our bilateral deficit has registered a threefold increase in the last ten years, rising to a record EUR 2.27 billion last year. To reduce the huge trade deficit we are facing, France is eager to put its world acclaimed know-how and experience at the service of Bangladesh and its people, especially in the sectors where our companies' excellence is proven worldwide. Hence, we follow with a keen interest developments in such sectors as power generation (including renewable energy), rail transportation, water treatment and all environment related issues.

On May 19, 2019, the start of commercial operations of Bangabandhu-1, satellite designed and manufactured by the French company Thales Alenia Space, was a milestone in the high-technology cooperation between Bangladesh and France. It paves the way for further collaboration to enhance the digitalization of Bangladesh economy. France is a "Startup Nation", a home

to vibrant tech hubs and talents and imbued with a strong entrepreneurial culture. This spirit gave birth to a movement entitled "La French Tech" which is, above all, an international project aiming at bringing together a thriving community of multi-national entrepreneurs.

In 2017, France organized a successful and fruitful France-Bangladesh seminar on Blue Economy, in partnership with the Blue Economy Cell (BEC) under the Energy and Mineral Resources Division of the Ministry of Power,

and developed close relationships in the field of oceanography and hydrography.

Since the significant demarcation decision of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in 2014, Bangladesh can benefit from a large exclusive economic zone with natural and mineral resources than could increase the GDP by two percent. To harness the potential of blue economy, Bangladesh will have to rely on progress provided by new technologies as well as on organizing new methods of



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Energy and Mineral Resources. France maintains its collaboration with the Blue Economy Cell and stands ready to mobilize its best companies to help Bangladesh implement its blue economy strategy. Owing the second largest maritime territory in the world, France has developed a comprehensive approach to explore and ensure the sustainable exploitation of this area. With Bangladesh, France has started sharing this experience

governance. Innovation has always been the biggest strength and priority of France.

The individual strength of both France and Bangladesh are to be amply utilized and shared in order to consolidate the mutual economic and social benefits. France and its companies are committed to developing their action and establishing partnerships which would allow Bangladesh to reach its ambitious economic targets.

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

Celebration of the French National Day

230 years ago, the people of Paris stormed the fortress named La Bastille, used as a prison since the 15th century, hoping to seize arms and ammunitions inside, as well as to free innocent men and women imprisoned without trial by the King Louis XVI. In that time, the monarchs had the power to send to jail whoever they wanted without any justification, nor judgment. Mostly, the people that were sent there were deemed to have committed the crime of "lèse majesté" (undermining the authority of the King), many by writing or publishing a text that displeased the King, like the philosopher Voltaire.

The fall of the Bastille had a huge moral impact and undermined further the failing authority of the King. It became the symbol and the starting point of the French Revolution. It was officially celebrated as such for a few years, before the Emperor Napoleon, for his own reasons, stopped it in 1805. It was only 75 years later, under the Third Republic, that the 14th of July became the French National Day. On this date, we celebrate the French revolution and its ideals of Democracy and Human Rights, that France along with its European partners and many other countries, promote and defend all around the world.

We are happy to share this symbolic historical, intellectual and political, legacy with all our friends in the world, so many of whom have taken inspiration from our and their own experience (be it wars, political battles, intellectual constructs...) throughout centuries in order to build and elaborate the shared multilateral thread and institutions, which are binding us and supporting all of us. We are proud that in Bangladesh many persons share a lot of our history and culture and cherish the bonds of friendship between our two countries and two people.

Our relationship with Bangladesh has many aspects: political, economic and cultural. Ever since the Liberation War, in 1971, when the great French intellectual André Malraux called



Marie-Annick Bourdin
Ambassador of France to Bangladesh

for international support to the fight led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the friendship ties between our two countries have grown stronger and more dense. The Honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina,



lasting solution, with the support of the United Nations Secretary General and all UN Agencies, based on the international norms of accountability and justice, and on the right for the Rohingyas who wish to return to Myanmar to do so in dignified, safe and sustainable conditions.

Both leaders further expressed their commitment to continuing our cooperation in combating climate change, to which Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable, in line with our cooperation towards the adoption of the Paris Agreement. They discussed the growing number of projects aiming at a green and inclusive growth financed by the French Agency for Development. They further reviewed our bilateral trade, which is tilting quite heavily in favor of Bangladesh, as your country has become our main

visited France in December 2017 and had very substantial discussions with the President Emmanuel Macron. He expressed our gratitude for the generous hosting and protection granted by the people of Bangladesh to the more than 740,000 Rohingyas who were violently forced to flee their country since August 2017. The President recalled France's determination at mobilizing the Security Council, in response to what he has described since September 2017 as "ethnic cleansing", echoing the then High Commissioner for Human Rights. Despite all difficulties, we continue to promote joint efforts to find a

readymade garments supplier. France is proud to have provided the first satellite of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu 1, launched in May 2018. The two Alliances Françaises in Dhaka and Chittagong promote French language and culture in Bangladesh, as well as your country's culture in France.

There is a lot more that Bangladesh and France, by itself or with its partners of the European Union, can do together for the benefit of our peoples. We will keep looking for new areas of cooperation and ways to strengthen further our relationship.

PHOTO: AFP/CHRISTOPHE ARCHAMSAULT

In Bangladesh, members of Dhaka's low income communities now have easy access to water

WATER scarcity affects more than 40% of people around the world – an alarming figure projected to increase further with rising global temperatures. The members of Dhaka's lower income communities were no strangers to this reality, walking long distances to stand in endless queues for water, at the cost of their families and household income. Today, thanks to the joint efforts of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (DWASA), local NGOs Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK), SPACE and BASA, the French NGO Water and Life, and community leaders – with support from the European Union and the French Development Agency (AFD) – residents of these areas now have water supply connections in their communities.

Under its Asia Investment Facility, the European Union has delegated a grant of 5 million euro to AFD. An agreement signed between AFD and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh seeks to mobilize this grant towards establishing water points within several low income communities in Dhaka city, building the capacity of these communities to operate and maintain the water points, and providing hygiene education to community members. The grant also supports DWASA with the design of a long-term financial plan that will enable the Bangladeshi water authority to optimize its investments in addition to providing training to the team's professionals.

Connections may be of two kinds: a shared water fountain for the entire community, or individual connections for every household. Both models empower residents of the areas by allowing for easy, accessible water points, with no middlemen. With this project, residents of lower income communities not only have access to water, but the costs and risks associated with collecting water are also reduced, making the lives of many women and young girls easier. Till date, approximately 2000

water points have been installed, thus giving access to drinking water supply to more than 150,000 persons and with the population of these areas growing, the number of beneficiaries may increase even further.

Swapna, a 25-year-old, speaks of the struggles she faced: "Think of how difficult it was to carry water from a faraway place back to my home here. The long distance had practically eaten up all my time. And then there were days when we couldn't manage even a single drop of water!" Has there

outcome is a more sustainable one. That is what we see in this case," Fatema proclaims. Today, each member of the community has access to a water point that they manage independently, without relying on any third parties. With the new water supply, residents are saving time and money. "They are involved in more income-generating activities using their spare time," explains Fatema. "They can store the water they require at a convenient time, and use the rest of the day for other work." Economic change also brings social change with it. With



been a difference since? "A great one!" Swapna exclaims. "In the past, we paid good money to water suppliers, but got no receipts or bills to keep. Now we pay as per our consumption, and get a copy of the water bill." Life is definitely more comfortable with the water being supplied to their doorstep too. "The time I save can be invested in more productive activities and spending quality hours with my family," says Swapna.

Also, Fatema Akter, the General Secretary of Nagar Doridra Bosthibasi Unnayan Sangstha, has thanked Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (DWASA) for engaging with the community while implementing the project. "It is good to see that they saw the necessity of involving the locals in the work. If the community is engaged, the

women contributing to the finances of the family, a positive change in the mindsets of their husbands can be observed too, she remarks.

The project has made possible a sustainable and replicable economic model for water supply systems in low income areas. Stakeholders have vowed to keep the initiative intact with an expansion plan. Moreover, DWASA has benefitted by the improved management of its network and the reduction of unbilled water, with its functioning now increasingly professionalized within these informal settlements.

"With this project, we have seen a development model which puts forward a sustainable solution to the water crisis. Countries around the world can come and see how things change when there is a collective and sincere effort made" says Fatema.

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