

THE DAILY STAR report 23 August 2010

Netherlands keen to help in water management

Unb, Dhaka

The Netherlands wants to help Bangladesh in water management as well as attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Netherlands Ambassador to Dhaka Alphons Hennekens said this when he called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday.

Water management has emerged as one of the major challenges for Bangladesh in recent years, as the country is exposed to serious threats from climate change.



The Netherlands Ambassador to Dhaka Alphons Hennekens calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday. Photo: PID

Some studies said the sea level will rise by at least three metres due to global warming within 2050, sending the existing coastal embankments underwater if they are not raised by 4-6 metres.

Hennekens told the prime minister of his government's willingness to assist Bangladesh in the fields of poverty alleviation and primary education.

Besides, he said his government is eager to help develop the shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh.

Hasina emphasised safeguarding the environment and the people from the hazardous aspects of the shipbuilding industry.

She said the Netherlands can be benefited by importing small and medium-sized ships from Bangladesh. She thanked the Netherlands for being a dependable development partner in supporting socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

She lauded Dutch support for Bangladesh as well as the LDCs in general as it is the fifth largest destination for Bangladeshi exports within the European Union.

Hasina also urged Ambassador Hennekens to get his country to import more of Bangladesh's ceramics, pharmaceuticals, leather goods and computer software.

As the envoy hailed the PM for her 'Vision 2021' initiative to turn Bangladesh into a modern, digitalised country, the issue of a previous agreement between Bangladesh and Dutch company 'Tulip Computers' came up for discussion.

During the previous Awami League tenure, Tulip Computers started a project in Bangladesh, coordinated by the Dutch Ministry of Development Aid. The aim was to train 7,700 teachers in IT. Tulip Computers was to provide 11,000 computers and additional hardware, as well as the courses for the teachers.

The Dutch government would pay half the project cost, estimated to be about €10m. But "ridiculously", the next BNP-Jamaat government had stopped the project, solely for the reason that the name of the Dutch company resembled the name of Tulip Siddique, daughter of Sheikh Rehana, the prime minister said.

"However, we have taken steps again to implement the project as we are pledge-bound to create a digital and modern Bangladesh," Hasina said.

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister MA Karim and Prime Minister' s Office Secretary Mollah Waheeduzzaman were present.