



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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London SW1A 2AH

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John Charles,

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French Bicentenary: President Ershad of Bangladesh

President Ershad hopes to meet G7 leaders either collectively or individually, to make sure that Bangladesh flood alleviation is given maximum attention at the Summit. We have declined a formal bilateral meeting, but said there might be an opportunity for a word with the Prime Minister in the margins of a meal or reception.

Ershad has already written twice about flood relief to the Prime Minister (on 16 May and 22 June) and, we suspect, other G7 leaders. In response to the first letter the Prime Minister confirmed, on 9 June, that she was ready to raise the issue in Paris and repeated her earlier offer of London as the venue for a conference towards the end of this year, under World Bank auspices, to establish how a Flood Action Plan might be implemented. There is international recognition of the need to help Bangladesh tackle flooding. The issue is certain to be raised in Paris, probably by the French, and to feature in the communique.

We have provided separately a draft reply to Ershad's second letter, reaffirming the points set out in the Prime Minister's letter of 9 June. Ershad's reaction to the offer of a conference was grateful in tone but a little unclear: he implied that the final decision should be left to potential participants.

If she does see President Ershad, the Prime Minister could:

- remind him of her offer to take the subject up with G7 Leaders at the Summit; and
- press the President again to say more clearly whether his government intends to accept our offer of a London conference. (There is no suggestion Ershad is considering a different venue.)

We doubt there will be time for other substantial topics to be raised (we have none to propose). Bangladesh already receives our second largest bilateral aid programme: this increased from £26m (1987-88) to some £50m (1988-89). We expect to achieve a similar level of expenditure in the

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current financial year.

I am copying this letter to Alex Allan (HMT) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours,
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