

GUIDELINES FOR WHO FELLOWS VISITING BANGLADESH

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 when it seceded from Pakistan after the war of independence. Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign state on 16 December 1971.

Bangladesh is the eight most populous country in the world and fifth in Asia with about 115 million people, 85% of whom live in rural areas. The population of the capital city, Dhaka is about 9 million. Islam is the predominant religion and is embraced by about 85% of the population. The other religious groups are Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

The area of Bangladesh is 143,998 square kilometers, most of which is flat deltaic plains formed by the Ganges (Padma) and Brahmaputra (Jamuna) rivers except some low hills in the north and south-east. The country has a sub-tropical monsoon climate and is, therefore, hot and humid for about 8 months, i.e. from March to October, but cool and pleasant from November through February.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

The economy of the country is based on subsistence agriculture. Some 80% of the population are engaged in agricultural activities. Rice cultivation covers about 78% of the cropped area. Other important crops are jute, tea, tobacco, oilseeds, potatoes and pulses.

The industrial sector is small, employing about 3% of the labour force, and is concerned mainly with the processing of agricultural commodities, especially jute. Raw jute, jute products, leather, garment products and tea are the main sources of foreign exchange. Bangladesh produces 80% of the world's raw jute. Remittances of Bangladesh nationals working in Middle-east, South Korea, Malaysia, etc. are also an important source of foreign exchange. Machinery, transport equipment, food, chemicals, medicines, minerals and fuel are the major items that are imported.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Dhaka has direct air connections with many important cities in Asia and Europe. Biman Bangladesh Airlines is the national carrier. Foreign airlines which serve Dhaka are British Airways, Indian Airlines, Pakistan International Airlines, Kuwait Airways, Saudi Airlines, Singapore Airlines and Thai Airways, Emirates Airways, Gulf Air, Dragon Air, Aeroflot, Malaysian Airlines, Druk Air, Oman Air, Qatar Airways.

AIRPORT TAX:

Airport tax @ Tk.300.- is levied on all passengers on international flights and Tk.50.- within the country.

Ships flying the flags of many countries serve the ports of Chittagong and Mongla (Khulna).

VISA REQUIREMENT:

It is advisable for travellers to obtain a valid visa from a Bangladesh Embassy/High Commission/Consulate in their countries.

TRAVEL IN THE COUNTRY:

The country has approximately 3000 kilometers of railways. Although the passenger trains are usually slow and crowded, some routes, such as Dhaka/Chittagong/Dhaka and Dhaka/Sylhet/Dhaka have first class airconditioned carriages. The total road mileage of national highways, both metalled and unmetalled, is approximately 6,500 kilometers. Travel by road can be pleasant, especially in the cool season.

Rivers provide the most important means of transportation for the local population as the country has more navigable waterways than roads for railways.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines provides air services between Dhaka and other principal towns like Chittagong, Cox' Bazar, Ishurdi, Jessore, Saidpur and Rajshahi.

LOCAL TRANSPORT:

Local transport facilities in Dhaka or in other towns are often inadequate. Taxis are not always available. Cycle rickshaws and baby taxis are the most common means of transport but should be considered as essentially unsafe.

MAIL SERVICE:

Delivery of air mail to and from Europe takes about five to ten days while air mail to and from the United States takes about ten days . Mail services are fairly reliable. Personal letters should be addressed as :

C/o. WHO, G.P.O. Box No. 250, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Telegraph and telex services exist throughout the country and overseas telephone, fax, e-mail facilities are satisfactory.

CURRENCY:

In Bangladesh, the monetary unit is 'Taka' which is divided into 100 'paisas'. Bangladesh 'Takas' come in denominations of 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 in banknotes and 'Paisas' 100, 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1 in coins.

The present UN rate of exchange is US\$1.00 = Tk.46.16.

EXCHANGE CONTROL AND BANKING FACILITIES

Foreign currency should be exchanged only through banks and other authorized currency dealers located at hotels. Encashment certificates should be routinely obtained.

HOTEL RATES:

SUNDARBAN HOTEL

1/D, Free School Street, Sonargaon Road, Dhaka-1205.

Tel : PABX 505055-59

Telex: 642928 SUN HT BJ

Single	:	\$ 30.-	<u>ECONOMY:</u>		
Double	:	\$ 35.-			
Deluxe single	:	\$ 40.-	Single	:	\$ 20.-
Deluxe double	:	\$ 48.-	Double	:	\$ 25.-
Deluxe Suite	:	\$ 65.-	Extra Bed	:	\$ 6.-
Extra Bed	:	\$ 10.-			

HOTEL ABAKASH

83-88, Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212

Tel: 607085-9, Telex : 642206 TOUR BJ

Twin bedded/	:	Standard	:	Taka 1065.-
Single Occup.				
Mini Suite	:	Deluxe	:	Taka 1600.-
Suite	:	Junior	:	Taka 2000.-
Extra Bed	:		:	Taka 300.-

HOTEL ZAKARIA INT. (Pvt.) LTD.

35, Gulshan Road, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Tel: PABX – 601172, 608012-13, 608189 – Direct : 608507

Withot Aircondition

Economy Single	:	Taka 500.-
Economy Double	:	Taka 700.-
Economy Triple	:	Taka 900.-

With Aircondition

Single Deluxe	:	Taka 800.-
Double Deluxe	:	Taka 1000.-
Double Deluxe Suite	:	Taka 1200.-

HOTEL AMBALA INN

House No. 39, Road No. 2
Dhanmondi R/A., Dhaka 1205

Tel: PABX : 868901, 869373, 860502, 865714
Fax : 880-2-864490, E-Mail: ambala@bangla.net

Single	:	Taka 1150.-	=	\$ 25.-
Double	:	Taka 1400	=	\$ 30.-
Family Room	:	Taka 1750.-	=	\$ 37.50
Extra Bed	:	Taka 250.-	=	\$ 5.-

AMBROSIA GUEST HOUSE

House No. 17, Road No. 3
Dhanmondi R.A., Dhaka 1205

Tel: 501505. Fax : 880-2-813165

Airconditioned	:	Single	:	\$ 30.-] with breakfast
		Double	:	\$ 35.-]

ICDDR,B GUEST HOUSE

Gulshan, Dhaka.
(for placement of fellows at ICDDR,B only)

Single	:	\$ 40.-] with breakfast
Double (two beds)	:	\$ 50.-]

Lunch/Dinner : \$ 5.00 each.

DHAKA MID TOWN HOTEL LIMITED

Deluxe Room

Single	:	Taka 2000.-
Double	:	Taka 2500.-
Suite	:	Taka 3000.-

Economy Room

Single	:	Taka 1500.-
Double	:	Taka 1800.-
Suite	:	Taka 2500.-

HEALTH

Immunization Requirement:

Two WHO International Sanitary Regulations state that smallpox and cholera vaccinations are no longer required for entry into Bangladesh.

Yellow fever vaccination is needed for travellers entering Bangladesh from Central and South America and Africa.

Additional Immunisation that are recommended but not required:

Typhoid, paratyphoid, polio and BCG for tuberculin test-negative reactors, tetanus and gamma globulin in certain cases. Rabies is common and all street and stray dogs are a potential danger. In case of dog bite, contact a clinic immediately, preferably the UN Clinic at Road 11/A, House No. 50/1, Dhanmondi R/A., Dhaka.

Health Conditions:

Prevalent diseases include diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis, tuberculosis, malaria, tetanus and venereal diseases but these are much more common among the underprivileged. During the hot and humid weather, prickly heat rash and fungus diseases of the skin are common. Careful attention should be paid to prevent measures. Drinking water should always be boiled.

Mosquito netting should be used in houses and anti-malaria preventive tablets should be taken regularly outside Dhaka especially in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sylhet, Comilla and Mymensingh. In Dhaka itself there is no proven transmission of malaria. Vegetables should be soaked with permanganate, iodine water or better still, undiluted vinegar for 10-15 minutes before consumption.

Medical and Dental Facilities:

A large variety of drugs are available locally. Private medical clinics and nursing homes, Government hospitals as well as pathological laboratories with qualified medical staff are available.

FOOD AND CLOTHING:

Beef, pork, mutton (goat meat) as well as chicken, shrimp and fish of good quality are readily obtainable. According to the season, a large variety of fruits and vegetables are available in Bangladesh. Fruits include green coconut, papayas, melons, bananas, mangoes, jackfruit, lychees, oranges and pineapples. Imported fruits like grapes, apples, dates etc. are also available.

Restaurants:

Dhaka and Chittagong have several restaurants which provide meals at reasonable prices. There are many Chinese restaurants in Dhaka and Chittagong. Alcoholic drinks are available only in a few hotels located at Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna.

Clothing:

In most towns men's shirts and trousers or women's clothing (sari, kameej, pajama) are readily available and tailors are usually good. Materials of many kinds are available. Clothes should be made of cotton and light-weight material.

For men, light-weight suits and dress shirts are necessary for cooler weather. Casual wear suffices for both office and social occasions during the hot season.

The fashion among local women is to wear saris; therefore, one feels less conspicuous when well covered. It is advisable to cover the legs and upper arms in public places, especially outside Dhaka (long skirts and slacks are ideal). At home and at private social occasions, light, long and short dresses as well as slacks are acceptable.

There are many shoe shops in all the major cities and shoes are cheap.

HISTORIC SITES:

Bangladesh has many places of historical interest and natural beauty. Among others, the following are notable:

Sonargaon (near Dhaka) with its old buildings belong to the Pre-Moghal era. A 110-kilometer long sea beach at Cox's Bazar; Paharpur and Mainamati, important centres of Buddhist culture; Chittagong sea port with its natural beauty and green hills; Kaptai which is located in the picturesque hill areas with surrounding beauties, its lake and hydro-electric projects. Rangamati in the Chittagong Hill Tracts areas with its rare scenic beauty; Sundarbans, the home of the Royal Bengal Tigers and its fascinating tropical forests; Rajshahi, the seat of the Pala, Kings of Bengal in the eight century A.D. and presently the main centre for sericulture and silk industry; Sylhet with its tea gardens and the mausoleum of Hazrat Shah Jalal, and Mahasthangarh in Bogra, the seat of administration of old rulers with its archaeological finds.

VACATION TRIPS:

Dhaka is located within short flying time to many important cities in Asia – Calcutta (45 minutes), Kathmandu (1 hour), Bangkok (2 hours), Kuala Lumpur (4 hours), Yangon (2 hrs).

PHOTOGRAPHS:

The countryside in Bangladesh is beautiful and ideal for photographers. Colour films are available locally, and can be developed and printed in Dhaka and other towns.

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