



Sundarbans, home of the Royal Bengal Tiger, declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.



Chittagong Hill Tracts, surrounded by the Karnaphuli, Sangu, Matamuhuri and Feni rivers and their tributaries.



বাংলাদেশ  
স্বাধীনতা ও জাতীয় দিবস

# Independence & National Day BANGLADESH

26 March 2008

## BANGLADESH AT A GLANCE

**Official name:** The People's Republic of Bangladesh  
**Area:** 147,570 sq.km.  
**Capital:** Dhaka (population:10 million approx)  
**Population:** 141 million  
**Literacy rate:** +65%  
**Currency:** Taka/TK (US\$1 = TK 68.58)  
**Airports:** Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Sayedpur, Jessore, Cox's Bazaar, Barisal  
**Seaports:** Chittagong and Mongla  
**Official language:** Bangla  
 (English is widely spoken and understood.)  
**National days:** National & Independence Day (26 March), Victory Day (16 December), International Mother Language & Shaheed Dibas (21 February)  
**Popular sports:** Football, cricket, hockey, kabaddi, swimming and chess  
**Principal rivers:** Padma, Maghna, Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Karnaphuli and Modhumati  
**Location:** South Asia, bridging South Asia and Southeast Asia having borders with India and Myanmar  
**People:** Predominantly mixed group – Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and other faiths  
**Form of government:** Parliamentary system of government with a parliament of directly-elected MPs  
**The land:** Fertile alluvial flood plain with subtropical monsoon climate, mangrove forest in the Sundarbans and hill terrain in the North East and South East  
**Climate:** Tropical monsoon climate with six seasons. (Summer, Rainy, Autumn, Late Autumn, Winter & Spring)  
**Culture:** Socio-cultural heritage  
**Arts:** Specimens of ancient terracotta and pottery, modern-day painting and sculpture, engravings  
**Dance and music:** Consisting of three distinct categories: classical, folk and modern  
**Theatre:** Open-air rural opera, Jatra, the root of the modern-day Bangladeshi theatre  
**Principal crops:** Rice, wheat, jute, tobacco, sugarcane, pulses, oilseed, spices, potatoes, tea and vegetables  
**Mineral resources:** Natural gas, coal, limestone, ceramic clay, glass sand, hard rock  
**Export items:** Ready-made garments, raw jute, jute goods, shrimp, fish, finished leather and leather goods, medicines, flowers and vegetables, ceramic ware, handicrafts, newsprint and IT software, etc.  
**Import items:** Raw cotton, textiles and accessories, cotton yarn, petroleum products, capital machinery, automobiles, industrial chemicals and dyes, pharmaceutical raw materials, edible oil, coal, ferrous and nonferrous metals, etc.  
**Major industries:** Jute, sugar, paper, textiles, fertilizer, cement, steel, natural gas, power generation, leather, ship building, telephone, etc.



ADS

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



On the occasion of the great Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to my countrymen living at home and abroad.

The historic Independence and National Day is a glorious day in our national life. On this solemn day, I recall with deep respect and pay my homage to the martyrs of the liberation war who made supreme sacrifices for our Independence in 1971. I pray for the salvation of the immortal souls. I also pay my profound respect and gratitude to the valiant freedom fighters, organisers of the liberation war and people from all walks of life who rendered their dedicated efforts and extended enthusiastic support that expedited the achievement of our long-cherished Independence. The supreme sacrifices and unmatched valour of the valiant freedom fighters will be ever remembered in the history of our country's independence. On this day, I also recall with deep respect the national leaders, who played significant roles in awakening the sense of nationalism and independence through their prolonged movement and inspiration.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned Independence was to build a happy, prosperous and self-reliant Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, our untiring efforts have been advancing in that direction. With the span of time, we have achieved significant progress in the fields of education, agriculture, industry, communications, rural infrastructure, health care services, empowerment of women, etc. Our achievements are significant not only in national life but also in the international arena. In UN Peacekeeping Missions, the members of our Armed Forces and Bangladesh Police have been acclaimed by the world community due to their professional excellence. The expatriate Bangladeshis are also making significant contributions to our national economy. Despite attaining these developments, we still have a long way to go to fully achieving the cherished goals of Independence.

On this great Independence and National Day, I urge the Bangladeshi citizens, living at home and abroad, to work unitedly with continued efforts aimed at expediting overall economic self-reliance and democratic advancement. On this day, I wish a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. May the Almighty Allah be with us.

Allah Hafez, Bangladesh Zindabad.

**Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed**  
President  
The People's Republic of Bangladesh



Ahsan Manzil – a magnificent palace of the Nawabs of Dhaka, on the bank of the Buriganga River.

## Bangladesh-Thailand bilateral relations

### POLITICAL

The Bangladesh-Thailand relationship boasts of strong political and cultural bonds. Diplomatic ties were established on 5 October 1972. Thailand opened its embassy in Dhaka in 1974 and Bangladesh set up its mission in Bangkok in 1975.

There have been many exchanges of visits between the two friendly countries. The highest-ranking visits from Bangladesh were the visit by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in 1979, President Hussain Mohammad Ershad in 1985, 1988 and 1990, Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmad in 1990 and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in December 2002 and 2004.

The highest-ranking Thai dignitaries to visit Bangladesh were Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond in 1983, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn in 1992 and Prime Minister Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra in July and December 2002 and January 2004.

With the 'Look-East' foreign policy initiative of Bangladesh, government to government and people to people relationships grew from strength to strength since the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Bangladesh and Thailand.

### TRADE AND COMMERCE

Although the trade volume between Bangladesh and Thailand has steadily increased over the years, the trade balance continued to remain in favour of Thailand. But sustained growth of the Bangladesh economy and foreign

investment in sectors like manufacturing, energy, agriculture and communication has created new avenues for Bangladeshi exporters to explore the competitive Thai markets. The Thai government has given duty concessions to 229 Bangladeshi products. Bangladesh has so far signed six MOU/Agreements with Thailand to promote bilateral trade between the two countries.

Bangladesh's export items to Thailand include, among others, finished jute products, knitwear, ceramic ware, light engineering products, leather products, acrylic yarn, fertilizer, shrimp, shark fin and fish maws, frozen foods & dry fish. Imports from Thailand include, among others, vegetable products, fresh fruits, processed food, mineral products, textile articles, oil, paper, iron & steel articles, rubber, plastic products, cement, polymers, woven fabrics, synthetic yarn, refrigerators, sugar, chemical products, machinery and fish.

The private sectors of the two countries are also working together to enhance bilateral trade for the benefit of both economies. The two nations have signed an agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments and an MOU on Accounts Trade Agreements in 2002 and formed Joint Chambers of Commerce on 9 July, 2002. Bangladesh declared Thailand a partner country at the Dhaka and Chittagong international trade fairs.

### Trade between Bangladesh and Thailand during the last five years

million (USD)

FY	Exports	Imports	Trade Balance
2002-2003	25.58	177.88	-152.30
2003-2004	22.79	239.26	-216.47
2004-2005	35.65	338.00	-302.35
2005-2006	53.63	396.00	-342.37
2006-2007	22.53	367.00	-344.47

Continued on P.4

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF ADVISER



The glorious Independence and National Day is an auspicious occasion in the history of our nation. On this joyous occasion, I convey my heartfelt felicitations to all my fellow citizens and Bangladeshis living abroad.

On this great day, I pay deep respect to the martyrs of the Liberation War for their supreme sacrifices. I solemnly remember all the national leaders, organisers, freedom fighters, people who lost their loved ones and freedom-loving people of all strata for their supreme sacrifice and extraordinary contributions. We express our gratitude to friendly countries for their support and cooperation in the war of independence.

The glorious liberation is our greatest national achievement. For this achievement to be meaningful, sustainable and effective, it is very important to bring the fruits of independence to all citizens. It is equally important to establish social justice and good governance and to improve the living conditions of the people. Establishing a modern, progressive and exploitation-free democratic country is the demand of the day. To achieve this, we should play due roles from our respective positions with dedication, sincerity and honesty, imbued with the spirit of our liberation war and patriotism.

It is my firm conviction that the nation will succeed in reaching the goal of establishing a knowledge-based and just society free from corruption, malgovernance and poverty with the combined effort and active cooperation of all people. It is the fervent expectation of the people that a benevolent Government and a meaningful democratic system will be established through free, fair, impartial and acceptable national elections. To fulfill this aspiration, I urge all citizens irrespective of their affiliation to any group and opinion to make united and committed efforts.

### Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed

Chief Adviser

The People's Republic of Bangladesh



The historic Shait (sixty) Gumbad Mosque, Bagerhat.



The historic Paharpur Monastery, the largest Buddhist monastery in the southern Himalayas.



Buddhist pagoda at Rangamati.



Kantiji Temple constructed with bricks and terracotta.



Nagari (Christain Church) at Kaliganj, Gazipur.

## INVESTMENT

Bangladesh has very high potential to become an investment destination for Thai investors, especially in the textiles, agro-processing, leather, energy and tourism sectors. Thai investors can reap benefits by utilising the low infrastructure costs, cheap labour and natural gas of Bangladesh. Thai investment in Bangladesh is gradually increasing. Total sector-wise Thai investment in Bangladesh, as registered with the Board of Investment up to June 2007, amounted to US\$62 million. The Thai investors are mainly interested in the agro-processing, food & allied, textile, tannery & rubber, chemical, engineering, energy and service industries.

Bangladesh welcomes foreign direct investment from Thailand as well as from other countries in all areas of its economy, with the exception of only five industrial sectors:

- Arms, ammunitions and other defence equipment and machinery
- Production of nuclear energy
- Forest plantation and mechanised extraction within the bounds of reserved forests
- Security printing (currency notes) and minting
- Air transportation and railways, which are reserved for the public sector.
- Agriculture

Foreign investors are encouraged to make 100% direct investment or establish joint venture projects with local partners or with the public sector in the following categories:

- Export-oriented industries
- Industries in the Export Processing Zones
- High technology import-substitute products

- Undertakings in which more diversified use of indigenous natural resources is possible.
- Basic industries based mainly on local raw materials
- Labour intensive/technology intensive/capital intensive industries
- Relocation of high technology related industries

## ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The Joint Commission on Cooperation Agreement signed on 29 January 1982 between Thailand and Bangladesh and BIMSTEC are the main basis of economic cooperation between the two countries. Under the umbrella of the Joint Commission on Cooperation Agreement, both countries are endeavouring to promote bilateral economic and technical cooperation in the following areas:

- Agriculture
- Fisheries
- Science and technology (an agreement is pending)
- Tourism development
- Private sector and joint investment (an agreement on promotion and protection of investment and capital is pending)
- Maritime and civil aviation
- Study tours and training

The Bangladesh finance minister offered in August 2006 to hold The 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Joint Commission is scheduled to be held in Dhaka on mutually agreed date.



On the occasion of the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Independence and National Day, I extend my heartfelt felicitations to all our countrymen, home and abroad. On this auspicious day, the entire nation pays

tribute to the valiant freedom fighters and to those countless martyrs who laid down their lives for a free and independent Bangladesh.

The Government of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is relentlessly working to realise the dreams of the freedom fighters through reforming institutions to ensure free and fair elections, rule of law, good governance, sustainable democracy and economic emancipation.

The central focus of Bangladesh's foreign policy is to maintain friendly relations with all countries, advance the country's interests, project her image and rich culture abroad and help fulfill the aspiration of her people. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad are committed to carrying out these foreign policy objectives. Bangladesh plays an active role in regional and multilateral diplomacy with particular emphasis on peace-keeping under UN auspices, the interests of Least Developed Countries, regional cooperation and issues related to development, environment and human rights. Bangladeshi peacekeepers have earned respect and acclamation by the international community.

I deeply appreciate the role of Bangladeshi expatriates living abroad for their immense contribution to different spheres of national development. Their most notable contribution is foreign exchange remittance. Bangladeshi expatriates are our goodwill ambassadors and we immensely value their support to the Caretaker Government and contributions to projecting the image of Bangladesh abroad.

I wish all Bangladeshis peace, prosperity and happiness.

**Dr. Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury**  
Adviser for Foreign Affairs  
The People's Republic of Bangladesh

## Bangladesh – making progress in pharmaceutical industries

With an annual turnover of about US\$500 million, Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry is a unique success story. In a land of 140 million people with frequent natural disasters, poverty and many other negatives, the pharmaceutical industry has grown from strength to strength since the country's independence in 1971.

The industry is now making available quality medicines to millions at affordable prices which were previously beyond their reach. Among the world's 49 Least Developed Countries (LDC) Bangladesh is the only one that is near self-sufficient in pharmaceuticals. Thanks to its pulsating private sector that efficiently utilises all the available resources from government science initiatives, the sector has become one of the most successful in Bangladesh.

The country's pharmaceutical industry now caters to 96% of its internal needs for pharmaceuticals. The remaining 4% comprises insulin, vaccines, high-end anti-cancer drugs and others, the production of which is very capital-intensive and therefore not economically feasible for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is basically a branded generic market. The industry's major competency lies in formulation. In total, over 230 pharmaceutical companies have operations in Bangladesh at present. Out of these, about 200 have their own manufacturing facilities, of which five are multinationals. The country is also active in API (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients) with 21 companies now locally manufacturing 41 APIs.

The industry's inception dates back to the 1950s when a few multinationals and local entrepreneurs started manufacturing facilities in the then East Pakistan. By 1982, many top-ranking multinationals had established manufacturing facilities. Prominent among them were Pfizer, Glaxo, Fisons, Squibb, Hoechst, ICI, May & Baker and Organon.

The year 1982 brought a substantial change in the Bangladesh pharmaceutical scenario. During June of that year, Drug (Control) Ordinance 1982 was promulgated against a backdrop of rising costs of medicines and emphasis by manufacturers on producing low-tech products with negligible or doubtful need. The ordinance sought to bring down the prices of "essential drugs", discontinue production of pharmaceuticals of doubtful or negligible utility and encourage local production of pharmaceuticals. After about 21 years, today the major objectives of the ordinance have been largely fulfilled.

Major achievements of the Bangladesh pharmaceutical industry so far include:

**a. Affordability of medicines to a substantial portion of the population:** Major epidemics in Bangladesh are malaria, dengue, cholera and typhoid. Morbidity and mortality from these scourges has been

reduced substantially over the years. Increased affordability and availability of medicines has contributed towards this achievement. Bangladesh now has an average life expectancy of 61 years, which is at the top end in South Asia.

**b. Near self sufficiency in pharmaceutical manufacturing:** Bangladesh is the only LDC which can boast a local pharmaceutical industry, which caters to 96% of the country's needs. Over the years, the role of imports has diminished substantially and now stands at about 4%, covering mainly insulin, vaccines and anti-cancer drugs.

**c. Strong footing of the local industry and local entrepreneurs:** In 1982, there were about 10 multinationals representing about 80% of the domestic market. The situation has now reversed. Local companies now cater to about 80% of the market and the rest is filled by multinationals. Local companies continued their expansions and upgrading of their facilities to international level.

**d. Exports of pharmaceuticals:** After catering to the country's needs, pharmaceuticals from Bangladesh are now being exported to 52 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe.

**e. Quality assurance:** All the major companies comply with WHO GMP guidelines and Bangladesh's ability to face competition from developing countries like India, China, Brazil and Turkey in its export markets is due to its strict quality compliance. A few of the top-level companies are going beyond WHO GMP. With the aim of getting into highly-regulated markets like the US and the EU, they are putting up manufacturing facilities of US FDA and UK MHRA standards. A pioneer among them is Square Pharmaceuticals, the industry leader. Its state-of-the-art and International GMP Standard pharmaceutical manufacturing facility went into commercial operation in 2002.

The pharmaceutical industry's progress so far is praiseworthy. It has made the country near self-sufficient in pharmaceuticals, the second largest contributor to the state exchequer and a major employer of knowledge-based workers. It has also made pharmaceuticals accessible and affordable to the majority of the population while foraging into export markets with success.

The pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh is a unique example of private sector success in the country. After the laudable role it played in domestic market, it is now poised to play its role in the international arena. With its continued development and experience in manufacturing and marketing, it is sure to repeat its success in the international market as well.

## MESSAGE FROM THE AMBASSADOR



On the occasion of 37<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence and National Day of Bangladesh, I extend warm greetings and good wishes to His Majesty the King, all the members of the Royal family, the Government

and the friendly people of Thailand and to all Bangladeshi citizens living in Thailand.

We remember with respect those valiant freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives in the War of Liberation to achieve an independent and sovereign Bangladesh in 1971.

Today, I wish to take this opportunity to update you on the role of the present Caretaker Government in Bangladesh. The Government has taken all-out measures for holding free, fair and credible general election with emphasis on good governance. In the socio-economic arena, the present Government is continuing the development programmes focusing on poverty alleviation, human resources development and enhanced productivity.

Bangladesh has continued to pursue a forward looking foreign policy based on friendship with all and malice towards none. In the areas of foreign relations, cooperation, peace and progress are our fundamental principles, and these are at the forefront of all multilateral initiatives including the United Nations to enhance global peace, stability and security.

Bangladesh enjoys excellent relationship with Thailand. Special emphasis is put on expanding relations in the areas of trade, investment, energy, infrastructure development, agriculture, tourism, culture and defence interaction. There had been regular exchange of bilateral visits at the different levels. The Thai-Bangladesh Joint Business Council, Bangladesh Thailand Chambers of Commerce and Industry & Thai South Asian Business and the private sectors from both countries are in regular contacts in promoting trade, joint venture investment, technology transfer, and services cooperation between our two countries.

Bangladesh is also working closely with Thailand in the UN and in various multilateral fora. In the region too, both countries are active members of the BIMSTEC, the ACD, ARF the ADPC, etc.

On behalf of all the Bangladeshi citizens living in Thailand, I would like to convey our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Thailand for their warm hospitality, friendship and understanding and for the excellent cooperation extended to the Embassy of Bangladesh in Thailand.

Thank you.

### Mustafa Kamal

Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Kingdom of Thailand

### EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH

727 Sukhumvit 55 (Soi Thonglor)  
Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110, Thailand  
Tel +66 (0) 2185 1340-41  
Fax +66 (0) 2185 1361  
Email: bdoot@samart.co.th  
bdootbkk@asianet.co.th



## Prospects for tourism in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a host of tourist treasures to offer to international tourists – beaches, lakes, rivers, hills, forests, wildlife, way of life, tribal life, archaeological remains including historical monuments, folklore, religious and cultural heritage, handicrafts and much more.

### ECO-TOURISM SPOTS

**Sundarbans:** Bangladesh owns the largest mangrove area on earth; the Sundarbans, home to the majestic Royal Bengal Tiger. Stretching around 6,000 sq.km. across deltaic swamps along the coastal belt of Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat and Pirojpur districts, Sundarbans is also the natural habitat of spotted deer, crocodiles, monkeys, cheethas, pythons, wild boars, hyenas and different species of colourful birds, making it a paradise for the eco-tourist. Hiron Point, Katka and Dublar Char are the main tourist spots where visitors may have glimpses of the wildlife and also the simple life of fishermen, bawails and others in the forest. The Sundarbans is really a place of the mystery of nature. This wildlife sanctuary is declared a World Heritage Site of UNESCO. Among other tourist attractions nearby is Khan Jahan Ali's 60-domed ancient mosque, built in 1459 AD., and his mausoleum. UNESCO has also listed it as a World Heritage Site.

### HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Bangladesh possesses many archaeological relics which remind us of our glorious cultural past. Archaeological excavation at Paharpur has unearthed the remains of a Buddhist monastery which used to be the biggest monastery, south of the Himalayas.

A similar monastery at Mainamati, Comilla, 75 km. southeast of Dhaka, bears testimony to the glorious past of this land. It dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Lately, archaeologists have discovered artefacts at a village in Narsingdi that exhibit traits of the Chalcolithic culture which is around 4,000 years old. The finds are believed to be the earliest signs of settlement in the region. The Chalcolithic Age, also known as the Aeneolithic or Copper Age, is a phase in the development of human culture in which the use of early metal tools appeared alongside stone tools.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

Bangladesh is heir to a rich culture and heritage. The cultural tourism wealth of the country

deserves special mention. The National Museum in Dhaka, the Ethnological Museum in Chittagong, the Folk Art Museum at Sonargaon near Dhaka, the Varendra Research Museum at Rajshahi house our past history and culture.

Bangladeshi cuisine has an ancient lineage. The rich recipes of the country and the many palatable dishes have been loved by tourists and locals at home and abroad through the ages. Some of it has also come to the general people of Bengal through the Mughals, having definite links with Central Asia and Persia. Moreover, the simple, friendly and hospitable people of Bangladesh are our main asset for developing a viable tourism industry in the country.

### TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The World Tourism Organization has prepared a Strategic Master Plan for Tourism for the country with the assistance of the UNDP. This comprehensive tourism plan has identified major potential tourist products and types of tourist facilities to be developed in the country. Recently, the government has taken the initiative to revise and update the Master Plan with the help of international technical assistance.

The government has also decided to set up and develop Special Tourist Zones (STZ) at different potential places across the country, to cater to the needs and demands of foreign tourists. These include Cox's Bazar, Sundarbans and Kuakata. The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) comprising three districts – Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban – will also be developed as a tourist zone.

### RECENT INITIATIVES OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECTOR COOPERATION

The Bangladesh government has taken necessary measures to encourage the private sector to play a positive role in the development and diversification of tourist facilities to promote domestic and international tourism in the country.

In consonance with the declared policy of a free economy in the country and support to private enterprises, the government has adopted a policy of leasing out public sector tourism enterprises to the private sector for operation. Against the background of a free-market economy, the government has decided to hand over some of the commercial units of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, the national tourism organisation, to private investors and work is going on in that direction.