

**WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**



**ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTE**

SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

**ELEVENTH MEETING OF MINISTERS OF HEALTH OF THE
COUNTRIES OF WHO SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION**

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1-3 November 1993

**ADVANCE INFORMATION SHEET
FOR
HONOURABLE MINISTERS**

1. Geography and Climate

Bangladesh is bounded on the west, north and east by India and on the south by the Bay of Bengal. In the extreme south east, there is a common border with Myanmar.

With an area of 143,998 square kilometres or 55,598 square miles, Bangladesh is situated between latitudes 20° 39' and 26° 38' north and longitudes 88° 1' and 92° 41' east. There are low hills in Sylhet District in the north east, and the Chittagong District and Chittagong Hill Tracts in the south east, but most of the country is a flat deltaic plain formed by the Ganges (Padma), Brahmaputra (Jamuna) and Meghna rivers, and their tributaries. The Karnaphuli, on which the main port of Chittagong is located, is also a major river. The hilly regions on the north east and southeast with average elevations of 244 m and 610 m respectively, mark a difference to the general topography of the country. The highest point (1230 m) is located at the southeastern part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Bangladesh has a sub-tropical monsoon climate. Although hot and humid for most of the year, it is cool and pleasant from November to February. The annual rainfall varies from 120 cm in the north-west to 250 cm in the south east and 500 cm in the north east. Most of the rainfall occurs between the months of May and September, when the summer monsoon brings torrential rains. Humidity is high for most of the year except during the cool winter months. The winter temperatures (November to February) in Dhaka range between 13°C and 24°C. Temperature occasionally goes down to less than 5°C in northern areas. The highest temperature occurs in May and early June just before the onset of monsoon proper which rises upto 39°C.

Immediately after the break of the monsoon in mid-June, there is little variation between night and day with temperatures remaining around 30°C and with humidity of 90 per cent. Cyclones, storms, tidal bores and floods are common every year.

2. History

The territory constituting Bangladesh was under the Muslim rule for over five and a half centuries from 1201 to 1757 A.D. Subsequently, it was under the subjugation of the British after the defeat of the last sovereign ruler, Nawab Sirajuddowla, at the Battle of Plassey on the fateful day of June 23, 1757. The British ruled over the entire Indian Sub-continent including this territory for nearly 190 years from 1757 to 1947. During that period, Bangladesh was a part of the British Indian provinces of Bengal and Assam. With the termination of the British rule in August, 1947 the Sub-continent was partitioned into India and Pakistan. Bangladesh was then a part of Pakistan and was known as East Pakistan. It remained so for about 24 years from August 14, 1947 to March 25, 1971. It appeared on the world map as an independent and sovereign state on December 16, 1971 following the victory at the War of Liberation from March 25 to December 16, 1971.

3. Population

The total population of Bangladesh is estimated to be around 110 million of whom some 85 per cent live in the rural areas. The average density is 1625 persons per square kilometre. It is the eighth most populous country in the world. The population of Dhaka, the capital city, is about 7 million and cities of Chittagong and Khulna have populations of about 5.7 million and 2.1 million respectively.

4. Standard Time

Bangladesh is 30 minutes ahead of Indian standard time and 6 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).

5. Travel Formalities

5.1 Airlines

Almost all visitors to Bangladesh arrive by air at the Zia International Airport, which is situated at the outside of Dhaka city, hardly 10-11 kilometers from the centre of the town. Biman Bangladesh Airlines is the National Carrier. Foreign Airlines, which serve Dhaka are Aeroflot, Air India, British Airways, Druk Air, Emirates, Gulf Air, Indian Airlines, Kuwait Airways, Pakistan International Airlines, Saudi Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Thai Airways and Dragon Air.

5.2 Outward/return travel bookings

To avoid last minute rush, it is recommended that travel arrangements be made as soon as possible for the outward journey. Honourable Ministers and their Advisers are requested also to obtain confirmed reservations for return flights before starting the journey.

5.3 Visa

It is advisable to obtain a visa in advance in order to avoid formalities on arrival. For Honourable Ministers and Advisers from countries where there is no Bangladesh Embassy, visas can be obtained at the airport on arrival with a minimum charge, which varies in respect of different countries.

5.4 Vaccination requirements

No health certificate is required. However, a person who has travelled through a yellow fever zone prior to arriving in Bangladesh is required to hold a valid certificate of inoculation against yellow fever.

5.5 Customs rules and regulations

Import of alcohol, drugs, curio items, arms and ammunition, is restricted. Except for a reasonable quantity of clothing and personal belongings, any import-export of other items is subject to payment of customs duties-taxes, and other charges.

5.6 Airport tax

There is an airport tax of Bangladesh Taka 300 payable at the time of departure.

6. Arrival

The Reception Committee appointed by the Government of Bangladesh will make arrangements to meet the Honourable Ministers and their Advisers on their arrival at the Zia International Airport, Dhaka. They are, therefore, requested to notify their ETAs well in advance. The Reception Committee will escort them from the airport to Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Since the Eleventh Meeting of Health Ministers starts on Monday, 1 November 1993 in Dhaka, the Honourable Ministers/Advisers should arrive latest by the evening of 31 October 1993. They are requested to notify their ETAs to the Office of the WHO Representative in Bangladesh at Fax No. 880-2-863247 or Telex No. 642582 UNDP BJ.

7. Place of Meetings

The inaugural session will be held at the International Conference Centre on the morning of 1 November 1993. All other meetings will be held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

8. Transport

Transport will be provided by the Government to all Ministers/Advisers to the venues of all official functions during the period of the meeting. They will also be provided transport at the time of departure from Dhaka.

9. Accommodation

As the meeting is being held at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, all Ministers/Advisers and members of the WHO Secretariat are required to stay there, where a block reservation of rooms has already been made. The Ministers will be treated as Government guests and the cost of their accommodation would be borne by the Government of Bangladesh. In respect of the Adviser, a special hotel tariff of US\$ 105 for a single room inclusive of breakfast has been negotiated.

All rooms are well-furnished with central air-conditioning, private bath and shower, international direct dialing facilities and Star TV; (i) Prime Sports, (ii) MTV, (iii) Star+ and (iv) BBC News and CNN.

It is essential to confirm the hotel requirements for advisers and for Ministers if accompanied by spouses, well in advance, in any case, not later than 15 October 1993. Ministers/Advisers are, therefore, requested to complete the form in Annex 1 and return it to WHO/SEARO, New Delhi (Attention : HFAO) as early as possible, either by mail or through the Offices of the WHO Representatives in their countries.

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel has the following dining and entertainment facilities:

(1)	Bithika Restaurant	Breakfast to dinner (7.00 a.m. - midnight).
(2)	Lobby Cafe	-do-
(3)	Pool Cafe	-do-
(4)	The Vintage Room	-do-
(5)	The Bar	Situated in the Lobby East (9.00 a.m. - 3.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m. - 12.00 midnight)

The usual service timings are:

Breakfast :	07.00 - 10.00 hours
Lunch :	12.30 - 15.00 hours
Dinner :	19.00 - 23.00 hours

The Bithika Restaurant also offers a wide choice of vegetarian dishes.

10. Currency Regulations and Exchange Rates

There are no restrictions on the importation of Foreign Currency. Only Bangladesh currency (Bangladeshi Taka) is allowed to be used in the country. Foreign currencies exchange facility is available at the airport. Foreign currencies can be exchanged in the banks upon submission of relevant documents.

It is advised to keep carefully the bank slips as evidence of legal exchange of foreign currencies. It is also advisable to change only the required amount.

The unit of Bangladesh currency is Taka, divided into 100 paisa. Coins in use are 1, 2, 5, 10, 25, 50 paisa and 1 Taka. The notes are in 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 and 500 Takas denominations.

All foreign visitors are required to settle their hotel bills in foreign currency. Hotel, including the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, are authorized to accept payments in any foreign currency, travellers cheques or credit cards. The most commonly used credit card in the country is the American Express. Hence, Ministers/Advisers are advised to convert their foreign currency into Bangladeshi Takas through banks or authorized money changers and obtain receipts.

The present UN operational exchange rate is 1 US\$ = Bangladeshi Taka 39.50.

11. Electricity Supply

Voltage in Bangladesh is 220/240 AC, 50 cycles. Participants are advised to check the voltage before using their electrical appliances.

12. Clothing

It is recommended to have both light and warm clothing. The dress for the inaugural meetings and Government social functions will be national or lounge suit. Invitation cards for all functions will indicate the attire in which the guests are expected to attend.

13. Medical Facilities

Round the clock medical service will be provided by the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. In addition, facilities for emergency medical care will be available.

14. Places of Interest

Bangladesh has many places of historical interest and natural beauty. In the city of Dhaka, the main places of interest are the Parliament House, designed by the famous American architect Louis I. Kahn, Dhaka University, the country's highest seat of learning, the Curzon Hall, named after Lord Curzon, Suhrawardy Uddyan, a lush green park where oath for the liberation of Bangladesh was taken in March 1971, Baitul Mukarram, National Mosque, a prototype of the Holy Kaaba, Bahadur Shah Park, immortalizing the historical monument erected in memory of the martyrs of the war of 1857 against the British rule, the historic Lalbagh Fort, built in 1678 A.D., by the Mughals, Ashan Manzil and the National Museum.

Outside the city of Dhaka, the National Monument at Savar, Sonargaon (near Dhaka) with its old buildings belongs to the Pre-Mughal era, a 75-mile long sea beach and tourist facilities are available at Cox's Bazar; Paharpur and Mainamati are important centres of Buddhist culture; Chittagong, the sea port with its natural beauty and green hills located in the picturesque hilly areas; Rangamati in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with its rare scenic beauty; Sundarbans, the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger and fascinating mangrove forests; Rajshahi, the seat of Pala Kings of Bengal in the eighth century A.D., and presently the main centre of 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 ruin and archaeological finds are the notable places of interest.

Parjatan Corporation, Dhaka, the National Tourist Organization, operates regular trips to different tourist locations within and outside the city of Dhaka and to the other places of interest of the country such as, Sundarbans (mangrove forests), Cox's Bazar, Rangamati (Hill Tracts), Sylhet (hills and tea growing areas), Bogra, Khulna, Dinajpur (archaeological sites).

15. General

15.1 Religion

The predominant religion is Islam which is the state religion. The Muslims constitute about 85% of the population. Other major religions are Hinduism, Christianity and Buddhism. Mosques are available in all places; however, places of workshops for Hindus, Christians and Buddhists are also available in the country.

15.2 Shopping

Local-made and other foreign goods are easily available on the local market. For exporting curio items, prior approval from the Archaeological Department is essential. Duty free cigarettes, drinks and perfumes can be purchased upon arrival at the duty free shop at the Zia International Airport.

15.3 Social Life

Bangladeshi people are friendly and hospitable, and visitors are most welcome. When entertaining Bangladeshis, it should be remembered that they do not eat pork, bacon or drink alcoholic beverages. In the field of art and music, particularly in poetry and drama, the people of Bangladesh have a rich tradition. Songs and dance form an important part of the festivals marking the beginning of sowing and harvesting, welcoming the new year and the changing of seasons. Folk songs and songs of Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam, are sung even by the inhabitants of the remotest villages. Local art exhibitions and musical soirees are frequently held, mainly at the Dhaka Art Gallery and College of Arts, National Performing Arts Academy (Shilpakala Academy), National Museum and other public auditoriums.

15.4 Language

Bangla, which is the official language of the country, is almost universally spoken and understood. There are, however, many ethnic groups who have their own languages or dialects. The educated people speak and understand English as well.

16. Contacting Address in Dhaka (Bangladesh)

The contacting address at Dhaka is:

The WHO Conference Officer	Phone No. : 861191 & 863391
Health Ministers' Meeting	Telex No. : 642401 SHER BJ
Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka	Fax No. : 880-2-832915

The address of the WHO Representative in Dhaka is:

Dr A.N.A. Abeyesundere	Phone Nos. 862882,
WHO Representative to Bangladesh	864653-55,
P.O. Box No. 250	866097-98
Dhaka 1205	861077 & 501781

Cable Address :

**WORLDHELTH
DHAKA**

Street Address:

House No. 12, Road No. 7	Telex : 642582 UNDP BJ
Dhanmondi Residential Area	Fax No. 880-2-863247
Dhaka 1205	

Working Hours: 08.00 to 16.20 hours
{Lunch : 20 minutes : from 13.00 to 13.20 hours}

Friday and Saturday : Closed

Annex 1

The Regional Director
 World Health Organization
 Indraprastha Estate
 Ring Road, New Delhi - 110 002

Attention: Health For All Officer

From:

Subject: Eleventh Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Countries of the WHO South-East Asia Region, Dhaka, 1-3 November 1993

Sir,

I am due to arrive in Dhaka on October 1993 at hours by flight No.

I am accompanied by (if any).

Please arrange accommodation as indicated below:

Accommodation Required: Single Room Double Room

Dates: From Oct. 1993 To: Nov. 1993

ETD: Flight No. Time: Date:

I confirm that I have already booked by return journey by flight No.
 on November 1993 from Dhaka.

Place: Signature:

Date: Name in Block Letters: