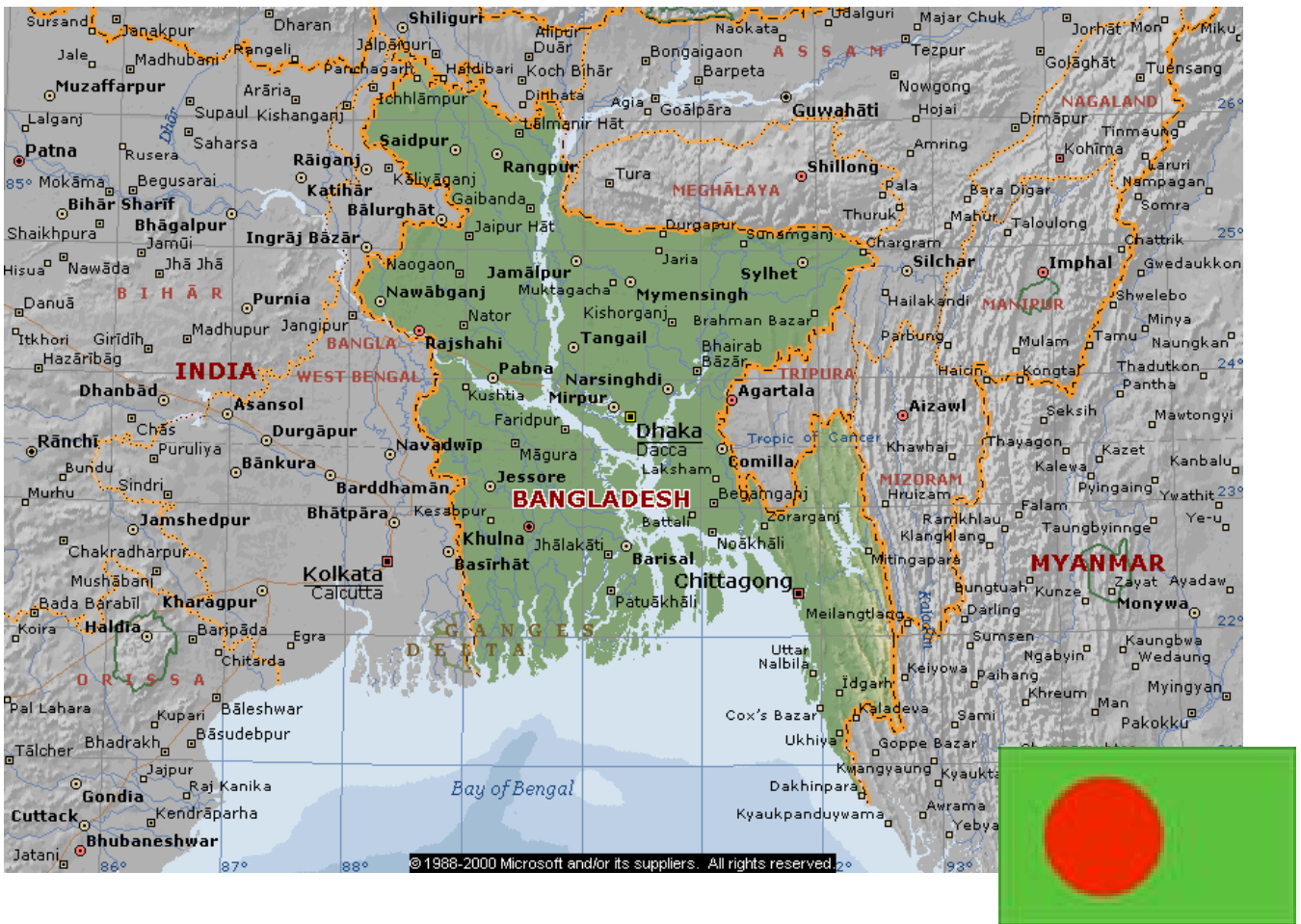


Bangladesh

(People's Republic of Bangladesh)

"Bangla (Bengal) Desh (Country)"



(Information taken from *Hope Has Wings*, *Operation World*, *Microsoft Encarta*, Government sources etc)

Country Information

Geography

144,000 sq km. total:

land: 133,910 sq km

water: 10,090 sq km

Bordered by India [4053 km] and Myanmar [193 km]. Coastline 580 km – Bay of Bengal.

Terrain is mostly flat alluvial plain - low-lying delta and floodplain of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. Hilly in southeast around Chittagong. Highest point is 1230m. Terrain drops 45m from north to south.

Most of the country is situated on deltas of large rivers flowing from the Himalayas: the Ganges unites with the Jamuna (main channel of the Brahmaputra) and later joins the Meghna to eventually empty into the Bay of Bengal

History

The region has been governed by Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim rulers at various times during its history. It became part of the British Empire when Great Britain took control of India in 1858. Bloody conflicts between Hindus and Muslims led to the division of India into two nations in 1947, when India gained independence. Pakistan – consisting of East Pakistan and West Pakistan – was created out of the northeastern and northwestern parts of India. Most of the people in both areas were Muslim.

Many differences, both cultural and economic, divided the people of East and West Pakistan. In 1971 these differences led to civil war and the declaration of East Pakistan as an independent nation on 26 March 1971 (Independence Day) to be known as Bangladesh. With help from India, East Pakistan guerrilla forces overcame West Pakistan forces who surrendered on 16 December 1971 (Victory Day). In 1974 Bangladesh joined the United Nations.

Government

Bangladesh operates as a parliamentary democracy under an elected President who is primarily ceremonial. The government is headed by a senior minister who is known as Prime Minister. Parliament (Jatiya Sangsad) has 300 elected seats plus 30 seats, which are reserved for women. Members serve for 5 years.

Chief of state: President Iajuddin Ahmed (since 6 September 2002); note - the president's duties are normally ceremonial, but the president's role becomes significant at times when Parliament is dissolved and a caretaker government is installed - at presidential direction - to supervise the elections

Head of government: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (since 10 October 2001)

Cabinet: Cabinet selected by the prime minister and appointed by the president

Elections: president elected by National Parliament for a five-year term; election scheduled for 16 September 2002 was not held since Iajuddin Ahmed was the only presidential candidate; he was sworn in on 6 September 2002 (next election to be held by NA 2007); following legislative elections, the leader of the party that wins the most seats is usually appointed prime minister by the president.

Note: At present there are large political changes and the country is governed by a "Care taker Government". They have taken positive steps to ensure fair elections in the coming years and addressed the severe issue of corruption in the country. This means however that it is difficult to give a good comment to at this moment.

Climate

Tropical: mild winter (October- March); hot, humid summer (March – June); humid, warm, rainy monsoon (June – October). Much of the country is routinely flooded during the monsoon season as rivers flood from the north. Floods frequently occur from the south through cyclones in the Bay of Bengal during the same season.

Environmental Issues

Many people are landless and forced to live on and cultivate flood-prone land; water-borne diseases prevalent in surface water; water pollution, especially of fishing areas, results from the use of commercial pesticides; ground water contaminated by naturally-occurring arsenic; intermittent water shortages because of falling water tables in the northern and central parts of the country; soil degradation and erosion; deforestation; severe overpopulation.

Industry

Industries: cotton textiles, jute, garments, tea processing, paper newsprint, cement, chemical fertiliser, light engineering, and sugar

Agricultural products: rice, jute, tea, wheat, sugarcane, potatoes, tobacco, pulses, oilseeds, spices, fruit; beef, milk, poultry

Exports (\$5.9 billion in 2000): garments, jute & jute goods, leather, frozen fish and seafood

Economy Overview

Despite sustained domestic and international efforts to improve economic and demographic prospects, Bangladesh remains one of the world's poorest, most densely populated and least developed nations. Although more than half of GDP is generated through the service sector, nearly two-thirds of Bangladeshis are employed in the agriculture sector, with rice as the single most important product. Major impediments to growth include frequent cyclones and floods, inefficient state-owned enterprises, inadequate port facilities, a rapidly growing labour force that cannot be absorbed by agriculture, delays in exploiting energy resources (natural gas), insufficient power supplies, and slow implementation of economic reforms. Reform is stalled in many instances by political infighting. Even so, the government has made some headway improving the climate for foreign investors and liberalising the capital markets. Progress on other economic reforms has been halting because of opposition from the bureaucracy, public sector unions, and other vested interest groups.

GDP – per capita: \$1700 (2002 est.)

GDP – composition by sector:

agriculture: 35%
industry: 19%
services: 46% (2001 est.)

Population below poverty line: 35.6% (FY95/96 est.)

Labour force: 64.1 million

note: extensive export of labour to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Malaysia; workers' remittances estimated at \$1.71 billion in 1998-99.

Labour force by occupation: Agriculture 63%, services 26%, industry 11% (FY95/96)

Unemployment rate: 40% (includes underemployment) (2002 est.)

Communications

Telephone – landlines: 500,000 (2000)

Telephone – mobiles: 283,000 (2000)

Telephone system:

general assessment: totally inadequate for a modern country

domestic: modernizing; introducing digital systems; trunk systems include VHF and UHF microwave radio relay links, and some fibre-optic cable in cities

international: satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (Indian Ocean); international radiotelephone communications and landline service to neighbouring countries (2000)

Radio broadcast stations: AM 12; FM 12; shortwave 2 (1999)

Television broadcast stations: 15 (1999)

Internet service providers: 10 (2000)

Internet service users: 150,000 (2002)

Railways:

total: 2,706 km

broad gauge: 884 km 1.676-m gauge

narrow gauge: 1,822 km 1.000-m gauge (2002)

Highways:

total: 201,182 km

paved: 19,112 km

unpaved: 182,070 km (1997)

Waterways:

up to 8,046 km depending on season

note: includes 3,058 km main cargo routes

Airports with paved runways:

total: 15

over 3,047 m: 1

2,438 to 3,047 m: 3

1,524 to 2,437 m: 4

914 to 1,523 m: 1

under 914 m: 6 (2002)

Airports with unpaved runways:

total: 3

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1

under 914 m: 2 (2002)

Population

138,448,210 (July 2003 est.) Capital Dhaka – 11 million

Age structure:

0-14 years: 34.1% (male 24,255,300; female 23,007,632)

15-64 years: 62.5% (male 44,261,739; female 42,281,331)

65 years and over: 3.4% (male 2,506,606; female 2,135,602) (2003 est.)

Population growth 2.06% (2003 est.)

Birth rate: 29.9 births/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Death Rate: 8.63 deaths/1,000 population (2003 est.)

Life expectancy:

total population: 61.33 years

male: 61.46 years

female: 61.2 years (2003 est.)

Infant mortality: 66.08 deaths/1,000 live births

Ethnic groups 61

Bengali 96.9%

Other south Asian 2.0%

Tribal 1.1%

Literacy:

definition: age 15 and over can read and write

total population: 43.1%

male: 53.9%

female: 31.8% (2003 est.)

Official language Bangla. English often used.

All languages 35. Literacy 38%

Languages with Scriptures: 13 Bible; 8 New Testament; 3 Portions; 3 work in progress

Religion

Muslim	85.63%
Hindu	12.38%
Christian	0.72%
Buddhist	0.62%
Traditional	0.57%
Other	0.08%

MAF

History

- AUSTRALIA: MAF Australia worked in Bangladesh from 1984-86 in a joint venture with the Bangladesh Flying Club (BFC) through the provision of two instructor pilots. Through the work contribution of MAF Australia, BFC were able to generate healthy income levels and the pilots themselves felt that their contribution had been worthwhile. Unfortunately the arrangement came to a premature end due mainly to operational difficulties.
- EUROPE: Following a severe natural disaster in the coastal area in early 1991, a request came from a high-level official to MAF Sweden for MAF to participate once more in a joint venture with BFC. Following a survey the MAF Europe encouraged MAF Sweden to continue to explore the possibility of offering help to BFC.
- SWEDEN: A co-operative effort between BFC and MAF Sweden began in 1992 with the provision by MAF Sweden of instructor pilots and funds for the refurbishment of the BFC hangar and offices. Pilot training and the support of charter operations continued until the agreement was cancelled by BFC in 1995.

In 1995 MAF Sweden Air Support registered as a foreign NGO. Its current sole project is known as *Gram Bangla Aviation*, which was given a 5-year permit to operate a Turbine Beaver on Amphibious floats amongst other aviation-related activities. The new operation began flight operations on 20th May 1997.

The arrangement with BFC was discontinued.

Objectives of "MAF Sweden Air Support"

The objectives of MAF Sweden AS through *Gram Bangla Aviation* in Bangladesh have been as follows:

- Air Ambulance – MEDEVAC of critically ill patients
- Medical Teams – includes support of medical teams to and from hospitals and 'floating hospitals'
- Transfer of Technology – training of Bangladeshi technicians including Flight Simulator training
- Aerial Survey – particularly following natural disasters
- Air-Bridge for Time-Value – transport of government and other officials to remote locations
- Development of Infrastructure – establishment of fuel stocks, airstrips and 'landing canals' in remote locations

MAF Europe involvement

During the first 5-year period of the *Gram Bangla Aviation* project, there were tremendous difficulties. These included the problem of obtaining permissions for flights as well as the ongoing problems for a small group like MAF Sweden to adequately resource the programme with staff and funds. After 3 years, MAF Sweden submitted a request to the MAF Europe Board to consider absorbing the Bangladesh programme into its operations. Following a survey and various meetings in 2000, the Board agreed to take responsibility for the operation from 1 January 2002.

Before the end of 2001, joint applications to the various government departments resulted in the following:

1. Extension of 400 hours granted by CAAB for engine to allow aircraft to continue operations up to 2002.

2. Flight permission requests reduced from 4 days to 1 day's notice for flights to new water sites and within hours for landings at previously approved locations.
3. The 5-year project extended for a further 5 years.
4. An engine change approved for the Beaver for January 2002 in Singapore.
5. Licensing conversion from FAA to Bangladeshi licences approved.
6. Granting of a site for a temporary hangar for 5 years at the international airport.

Staffing

International Staffing:

- 1x Country Director (Based in Australia)
- 1x Chief Pilot
- 1x Chief Engineer (Based in Australia)

National staffing includes:

- 1x Finance & Office Manager
- 1x Senior Engineer
- 1x Trainee Engineer
- 1x Accounts Officer
- 2x Maintenance Assistants
- 1x Co-pilot
- 1x Ground Handling Officer
- 2x Drivers
- 1x Office Assistant
- 1x Office Secretary and Ops coordinator
- 3x Guards

From MAF's first involvement in Bangladesh there has been a strong element of training and 'technology transfer'. It is an essential element of government policy and forms a major part of their expectation of the *Gram Bangla Aviation* project.

Several Bengali aircraft engineers have already received additional training to qualify for turbine engine ratings and others are building up the necessary supervised experience to qualify for their engineer's licences. A flight simulator (the only one in Bangladesh) operated by MAF has also assisted a number of commercial pilots to gain instrument flight experience as part of their licence requirements. In addition MAF is providing co-pilot experience for pilots seeking to build up their experience in a commercial operation.

Current activities

Since the beginning of 2002 additional input of resources to the project has had a dramatic effect upon the viability of the programme and has enabled the level of support offered by MAF to the people of Bangladesh to increase. In particular, medical evacuations have increased and have reached a higher level of efficiency through the provision of a MAF-operated ambulance based at the airport in Dhaka. Additionally, MAF's support of the medical teams on the "*Jibon Tari*" Impact Foundation floating hospital and the "*Lifebuoy Friendship Hospital*" floating clinic has greatly increased their efficiency. (e.g. Impact report that operations have doubled since the surgeons have been flown directly to the boat thus avoiding lengthy tiring road travel)

In 2005 the programme moved into the new hangar. The Beaver was sold and sent to Canada during the second half of 2005. The new Amphibian C208 became operational in late 2005. During the second part of 2006 the programme is expecting the second pilot family to arrive. This will enable greater efficiency in the flight operation and will also enhance MAF's capacity in the training of co-pilots.

Current flying averages between 20-30hrs/ month. This includes a significant element for government projects; medical-related flights; Medevacs; disaster relief; a small number of flights for organisations working in the area of development. In addition a small percentage of commercial flights are accepted in accordance with our operating permit but these are usually linked with some form of development.

Future Plans

1. Ensure better knowledge about MAF services amongst current and potential clients
2. To continue the co-pilot and engineer training
3. To focus on medical flights