

BANGLADESH

BASIC FACTS

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External Publicity Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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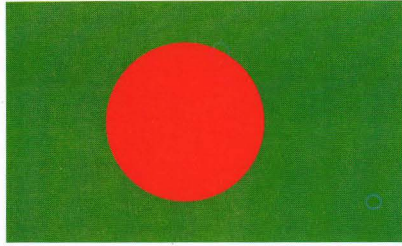
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THE NATIONAL FLAG

the Sun, the Red and the Green

The National Flag is in bottle green and rectangular in size in the proportion of length to width 10:6 bearing a red circle on the body of the green. The red circle has a radius of one-fifth of the length of the flag. Its centre is placed on the intersecting point of the perpendicular drawn from the nine-twentieth part of the length of the flag and the horizontal line drawn through the middle of its width.

The background colour symbolises the greenery of Bangladesh with its vitality and youthfulness while the red disc represents the rising sun of independence after the dark night of a blood-drenched struggle.



জাতীয় সংগীত

আমার সোনার বাংলা, আমি তোমায় ভালবাসি।

চিরদিন তোমার আকাশ, তোমার বাতাস, আমার প্রাণে

ও মা, ফাগুণে তোর আমের বলে হ্রাণে পাগল করে,

মরি হায়, হায় রে.....

ও মা, অঘ্রাণে তোর ভরা ক্ষেতে, আমি কী দেখেছি মধুর

কী শোভা, কী ছায়া গো, কী স্নেহ, কী মায়া গো.....

কী আঁচল বিছায়েছ বটের মূলে, নদীর কূলে কূলে।

মা, তোর মুখের বাণী আমার কানে লাগে সুধার মতো,

মরি হায়, হায় রে.....

মা, তোর বদনখানি মলিন হলে, ও মা আমি নয়ন জলে

National Anthem

My Bengal of gold, I love you

Forever your skies, your air set my heart in tune
as if it were a flute.

In Spring, Oh mother mine, the fragrance from
your mango-groves makes me wild with
Ah, what a thrill!

In Autumn, Oh mother mine,
in the full-blossomed paddy fields,

I have seen spread all over-sweet smiles !
Ah, what a beauty, what shades, what an affection
and what a tenderness !

What a quilt have you spread at the feet of
banyan trees and along the banks of rivers

Oh mother mine, word from your lips are like
Nectar to my ears !
Ah, what a thrill !

If sadness, Oh mother mine, casts a gloom on
My eyes are filled with tears !

1

General Information

Bangladesh is a unitary and sovereign republic known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It emerged as an independent nation on 26 March 1971. The nine-month long war of liberation was declared by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman and culminated in the victory of Bangladeshi forces over the Pakistani occupiers on 16 December 1971. This region was under Muslim rule for five and a half centuries since the thirteenth century, under British rule for two centuries since 1757 A.D., and remained a province of Pakistan between 1947 and 1971. President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed is now the head of state and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia the head of government .

The state language of Bangladesh is Bangla. The national anthem of Bangladesh comprises the first ten lines of the song "Amar Sonar Bangla" by Rabindranath Tagore. The national flag of the Republic consists of a red coloured circle resting on a green rectangular background. The emblem of the Republic is the flower Shapla (Water Lily, Nymphaea Nouchali) resting on water having on each side sheaf of paddy surmounted by three connected leaves of jute with two stars on each side of the leaves.

The Capital of the Republic is Dhaka. The currency is known as Taka (Tk.) divided into 100 Paisa. The citizens of Bangladesh are known as Bangladeshis. Local time is 6 hours ahead of GMT.

*Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka: A Monument
in honour of the Language Martyrs of 1952*



2

Historical Background

Anthropologists agree that Bangladesh has historically been a land of many races. Long before the arrival of the Aryans in the 5th and 6th centuries BC, the Bengalees were already racially mixed and on that count the Aryans described them as sankaras or hybrid people. The ancestors of present-day inhabitants of Bangladesh have therefore emerged from the fusion of such diverse races as the Austric, Dravidian, Mongoloid, Homo-Alpine, Mediterranean Brown, Aryans and so on.

The earliest historical reference to organised political life in the Bangladesh region is usually traced to the writings on Alexander's invasion of India in 326 BC. The Greek and Latin historians suggested that Alexander the Great withdrew from India anticipating a valiant counter-attack from the Gangaridai and Prasioi empires which were located in the Bengal region. Historians maintain that these empires were succeeded by the Maura' (4th to 2nd century BC), the Guptas (4th-5th century AD), the empire of Sasanka (7th century AD), the Pala empire (750-1162 AD) and the Senas (1162-1223 AD).

From the 13th century AD, the Buddhist and Hindu rulers were swamped by the flood of Muslim conquerors and the tide of Islam continued up to the 18th century. Sometimes there were independent rulers in Bengal like those of the Ilyas Shahi and Husain Shahi dynasties, while at other times they ruled on behalf of the imperial seat of Delhi.

From the 15th century, the Europeans-- Portuguese, Dutch, French and British traders-- exerted an economic influence over the region. British political rule over the region began in 1757 when the last Muslim ruler of Bengal Nawab Siraj-ud-daulah was defeated at the Battle of Palashi.



Paharpur Vihar (8th century AD) at Naogaon: The largest Buddhist monastery south of the Himalayas



A partial view of the Lalbagh Fort in old Dhaka: A relic of the Mughal era



Most favourite leader of the nation sleeps here in eternal peace



The National Museum in Dhaka displays the treasures of civilizations

3

The Location

Bangladesh is situated in the eastern part of South Asian sub-continent. It lies between Latitudes 20°34' and 26°38' North, and Longitudes 88°01' and 92°41' East. The country is bordered by India on the east, west and north, and by the Bay of Bengal and a small border strip with Myanmar on the south.

Bangladesh has a land area of about 1,47,570 square Kilometres (56,977 sq. miles). It's alluvial plains provide fertile agricultural lands. The land-mass is deltaic comprising mainly the delta of three mighty rivers - the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, with a network of numerous rivers and canals. Vast green fields are bounded by low hills in the north-east and the south-east with an average elevation of 244 and 610 metres respectively. The highest point is located in the south-eastern extremity of Chittagong Hill Tracts.



The scenic beauty of a countryside

4

Climate

Bangladesh has a tropical monsoon climate. There are basically four seasons in a year—Winter (December-February), Summer (March-May), Monsoon (June-September) and Autumn (October-November). The average temperature across the country usually ranges between 9°C and 29°C in winter months and between 21°C and 34°C during summer months. Annual rainfall varies from 160 cm to 200 cm in the west, 200 cm to 400 cm in the south-east and 250 cm to 400 cm in the north-east.



An indigenous boat called Sampan sailing in the blue coastline



The silvery Kash flowers dot the landscape in autumn



A misty morning in rural Bangladesh with date trees in the background

5

Flora

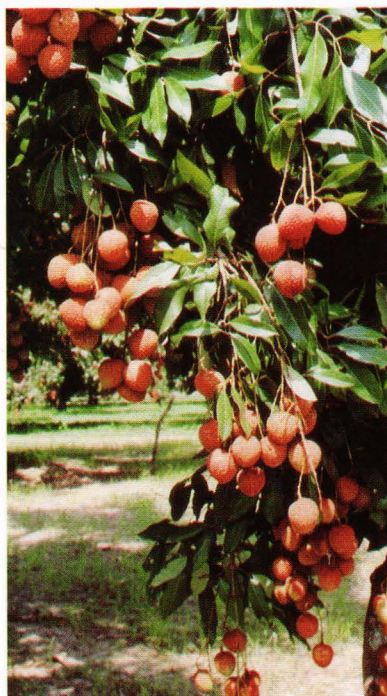
The tropical climate has made the country luxuriant in vegetation. The villages are usually buried in groves of Mango, Banana, Jack-fruit, Coconut, Palm, Bamboo, and other useful trees. Forests cover about 17 percent of the land area. Herbs and shrubs grow everywhere. Most of the hilly regions are covered with forests. The largest forest is the Sundarban, which stretches along the south-western seaboard and provides sanctuary to the famous Royal Bengal Tiger.



The Water Lily (Bengali: Shapla; Botanical name: Nymphaea Nouchali): National flower of Bangladesh



The Jack Fruit: Found abundantly throughout the country



Litchi: A delicious fruit of the summer



The Water Melon



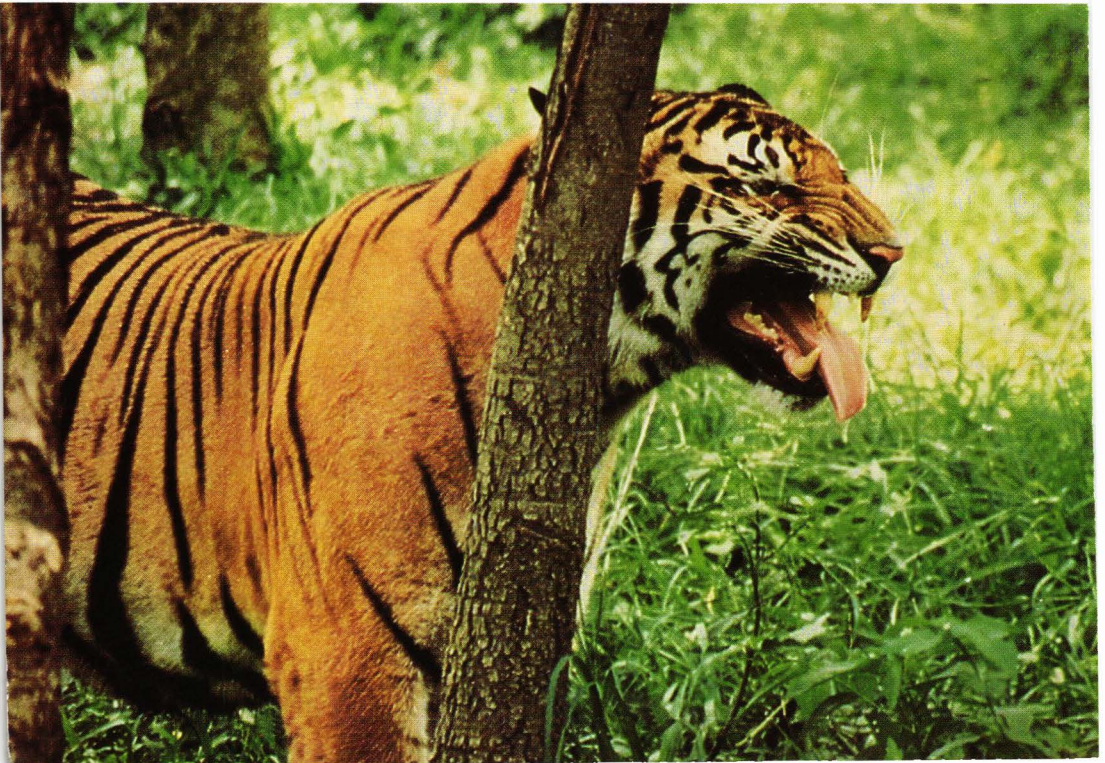
Mango: Sweeter than sugar

6

Fauna

A variety of wild animals are found in the forests. Of the 200 species of mammals, the pride of place goes to the Royal Bengal Tiger found in the Sundarban. Elephants are found in the forests of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Six species of Deer are seen in the Hill Tracts and the Sundarban. Among the bovine animals, Buffalo, Ox and Bison are commonly seen. There are about 150 species of reptiles. Common reptiles include the Sea Turtle, River Tortoise, Mud Turtle, Crocodile, Python, Rat-snake and Cobra. There are hundreds of species of birds, and fresh water fishes are abundant in both quantity and category. Of the 525 recorded species of birds, 350 are resident. The number of species of marine and fresh water fish total around 200.

A Majestic Royal Bengal Tiger





The national bird 'Doel' (Magpie Robin)

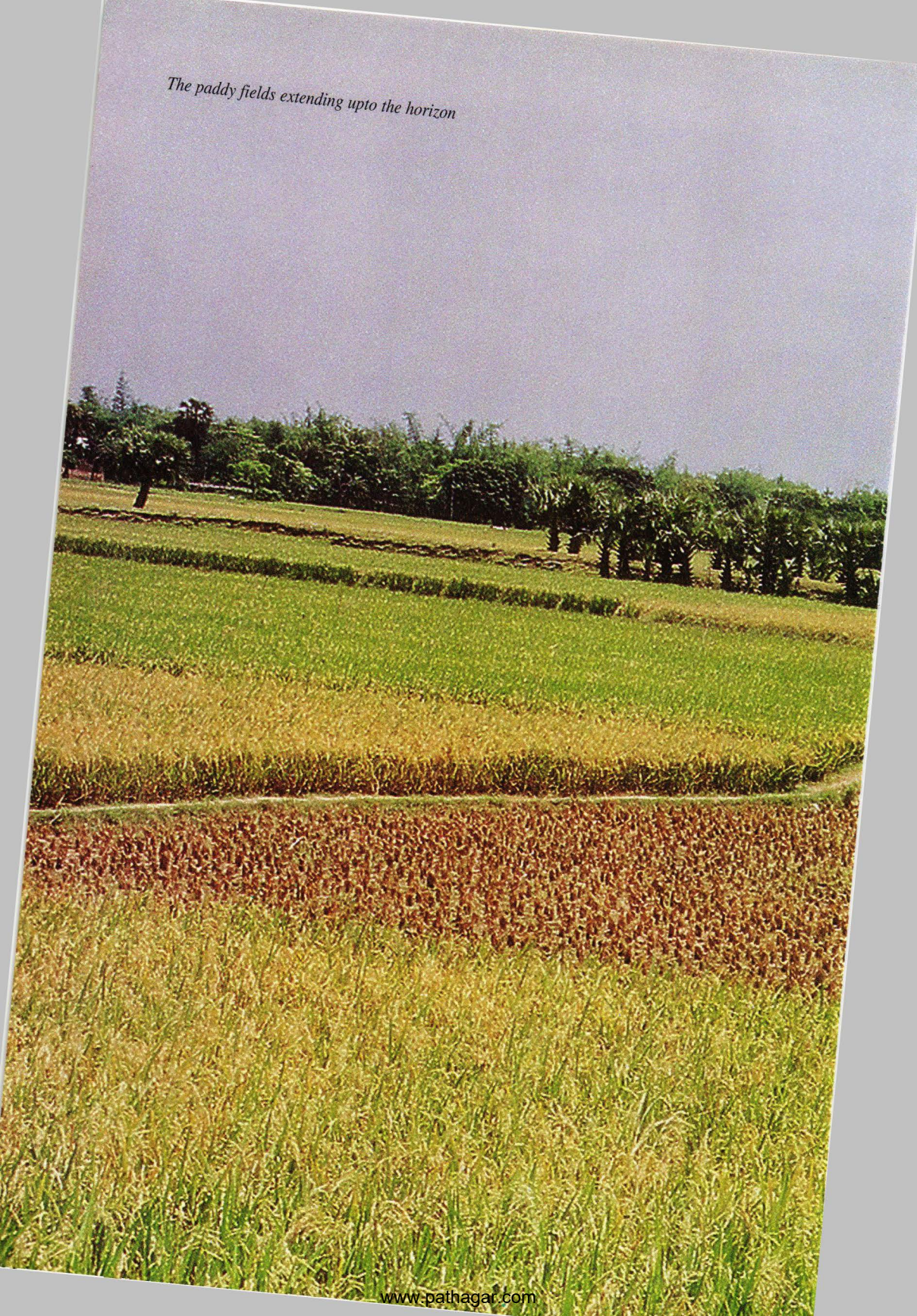


Pheasant: A rare bird found in the hilly areas of Bangladesh



White pelicans swimming in the lake

The paddy fields extending upto the horizon





7

The People

Social life in Bangladesh is marked by varied cultural tradition and communal harmony. The population of the country currently stands at around 133.4 Million. Around 75 percent of the people live in rural areas and 60 percent of the people depend on Agriculture for their livelihood. Rice and fish are common diet. Lungis and vests are the usual attire for men in the rural areas as opposed to shirts and trousers in the urban areas. Sarees are the common dress for womenfolk. There are about 2 million tribal people, the majority of whom live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The tribes have distinct cultures of their own.



Garos dancers at their peaceful natural atmosphere in the northern region of the country



A tribal girl



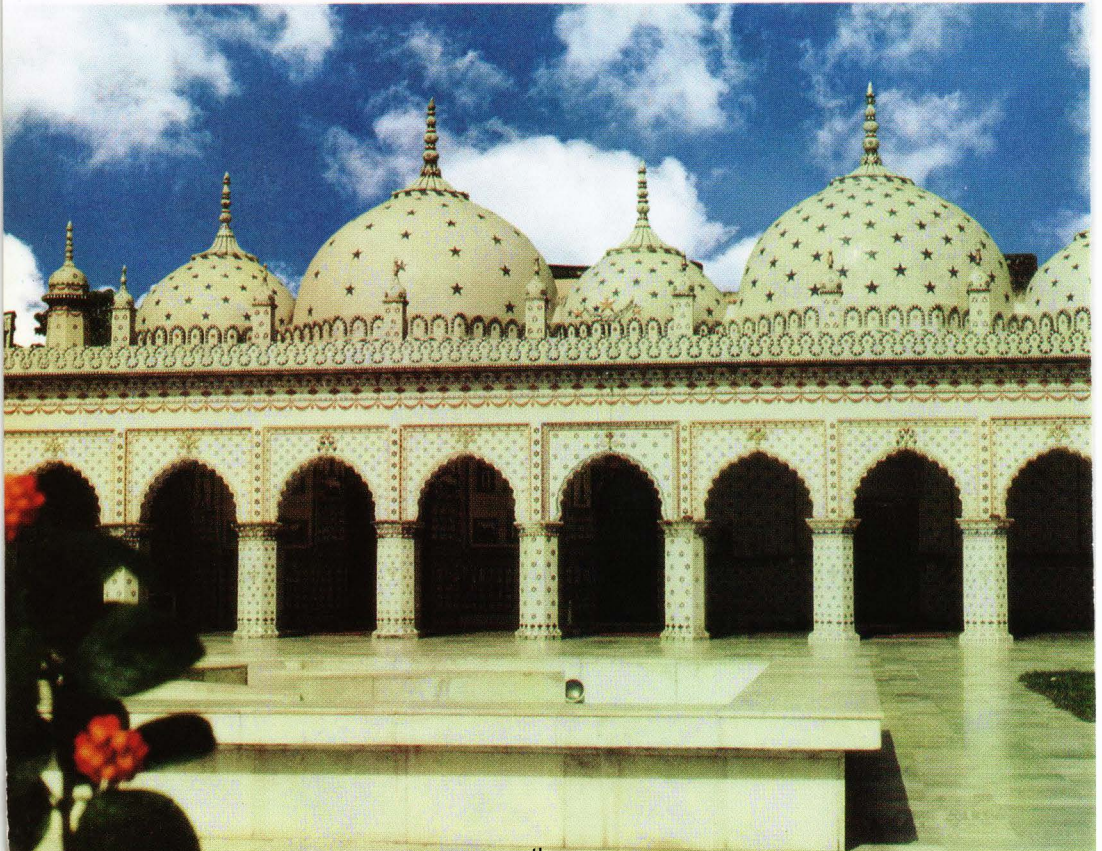
A rural artisan at work

8

Religion

The four major religions in the country are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. The Muslims constitute about 88.3% of the population and the Hindus about 10.5%. The rest comprise mainly of Buddhists, Christians and animists. The Constitution guarantees religious and cultural freedom to all citizens of Bangladesh.

The historic Star Mosque of Dhaka





The historic Chini Mosque at the northern district of Nilphamari Constructed in 1863



Dhakeshwari Mandir: An old Hindu temple of Dhaka



A Buddhist Pagoda in the Chittagong region



Hasnabad Church in Nawabgonj near Dhaka

9

Anniversaries & Festivals

Anniversaries, Fairs and Festivals play a vital part in the social life of ordinary Bangladeshis. The biggest religious festival is Eid-ul-Fitr. Other Muslim festivals include Eid-ul-Azha, Eid-e-Miladunnabi, Muharram and Shab-e-Barat. Widely celebrated festivals of other communities include Durga Puja of the Hindus, Christmas of the Christians and Buddha Purnima of the Buddhists. Among the non-religious anniversaries, Bengali New Year's Day (Pahela Baishakh, on 14 April), Language Martyrs' day (on 21 February, now celebrated world-wide as International Mother Language Day), Independence and National day (26 March), National Revolution and Solidarity Day (7 November), and Victory Day are observed nation-wide.



A dance sequence on the occasion of winter festival



Visitors through the Baishakhi Fair on the occasion of Bangla New Year's Day



Environment-friendly jute handicrafts are in high demand at fairs and festivals

10

Language & Literature

Bangla or Bengali is the official language of Bangladesh. English is widely used in education and business. Arabic is also read, understood and studied by many. Bangla is spoken by more than 200 million people throughout the world.



Curzon Hall of Dhaka University: The building woes its origin to Assam-Bengal legislative assembly during the early years of the 20th century

11

Architecture

Climate, resources and attitude of the ruling class characterised the development of architectural patterns in Bangladesh. Both pre-Muslim temples and monastic architecture followed an indigenous style, though strongly influenced by contemporary foreign patterns. The Mughals brought about a fundamental change by discarding the traditional terracotta art of the region and introduced elements of central dome and tall central entrances. The European style was first observed in the churches of Dhaka and then in other buildings. At the turn of the nineteenth century, a hybrid of Mughal and European styles emerged. Modern architecture in its true form started appearing only in the 1960s.



*Historic Shait Gumbad (sixty-domed) Mosque at Bagerhat in Southern Bangladesh:
A relic from the medieval era*

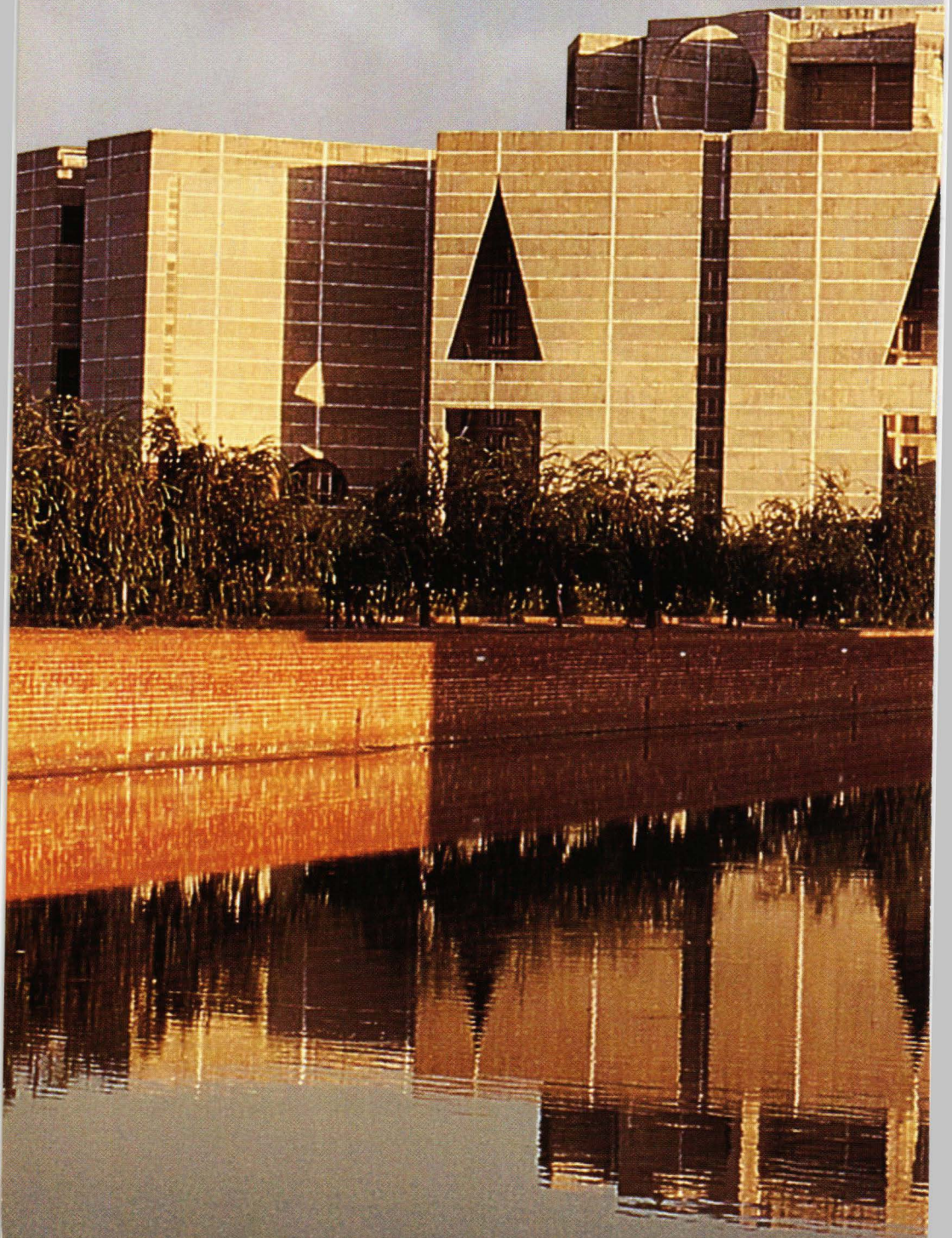


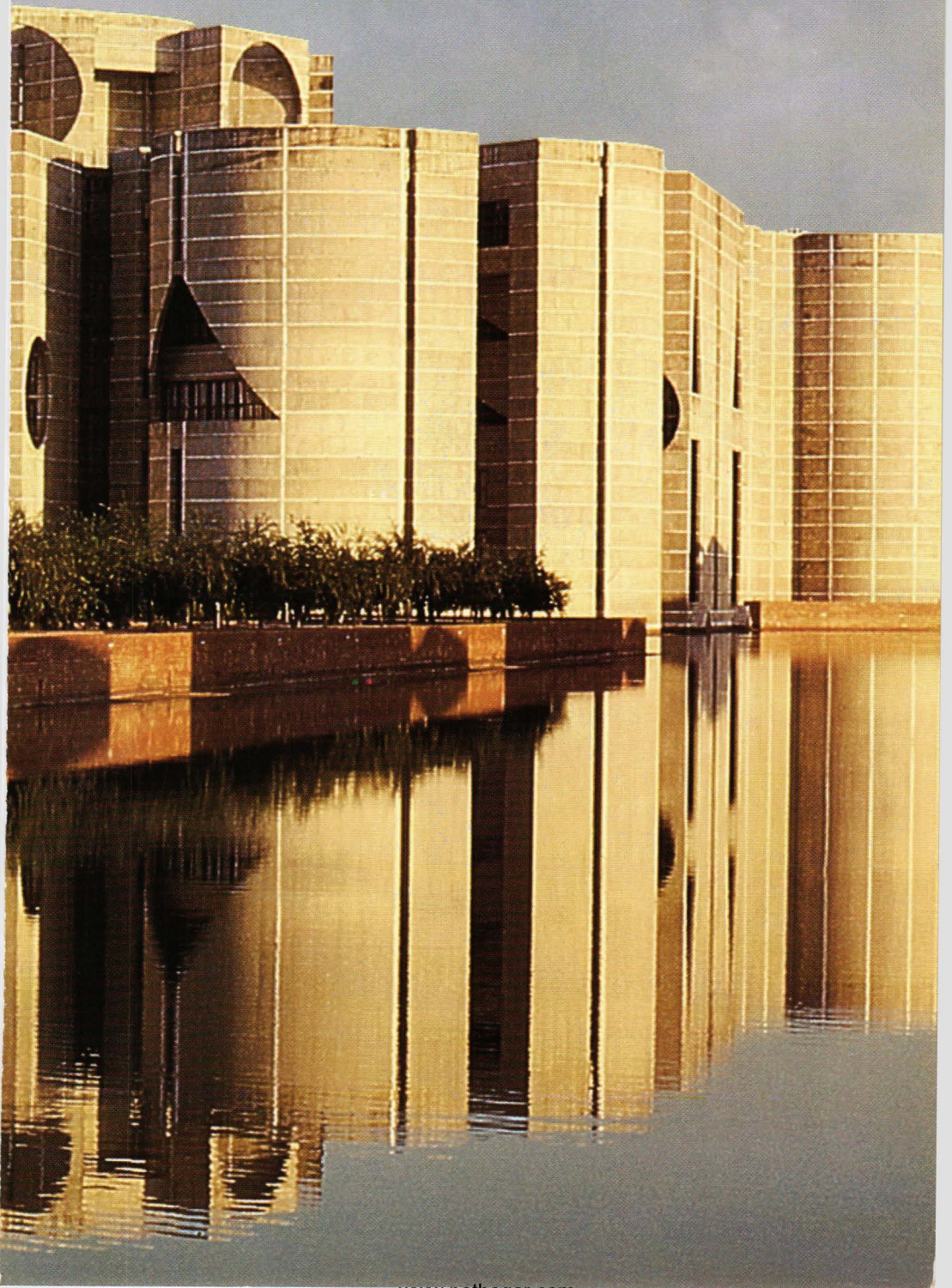
Interior view of the Shait Gumbad Mosque at Bagerhat



Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka

*The Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban (National Parliament Building) of Bangladesh:
One of the rare architectural beauty in the world created by Luis I. Kahn*



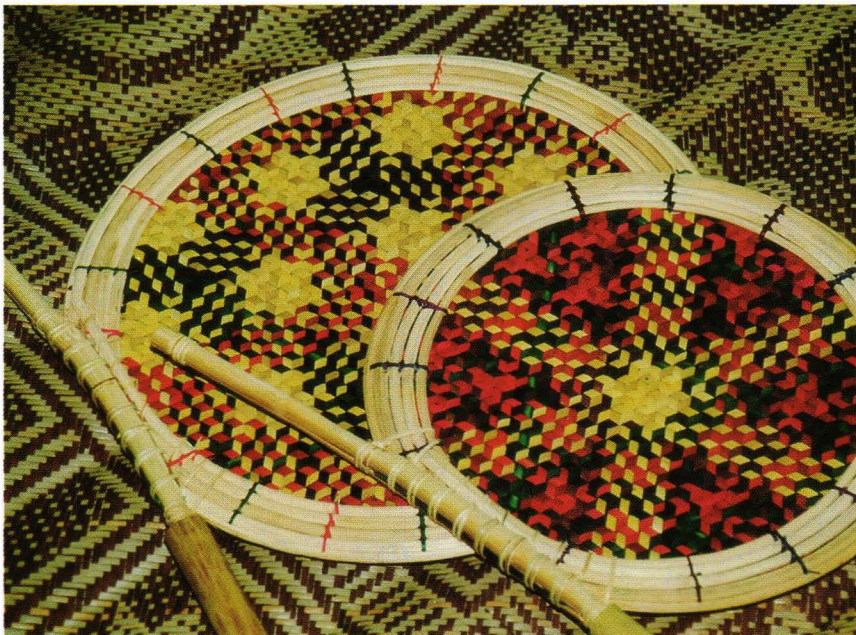


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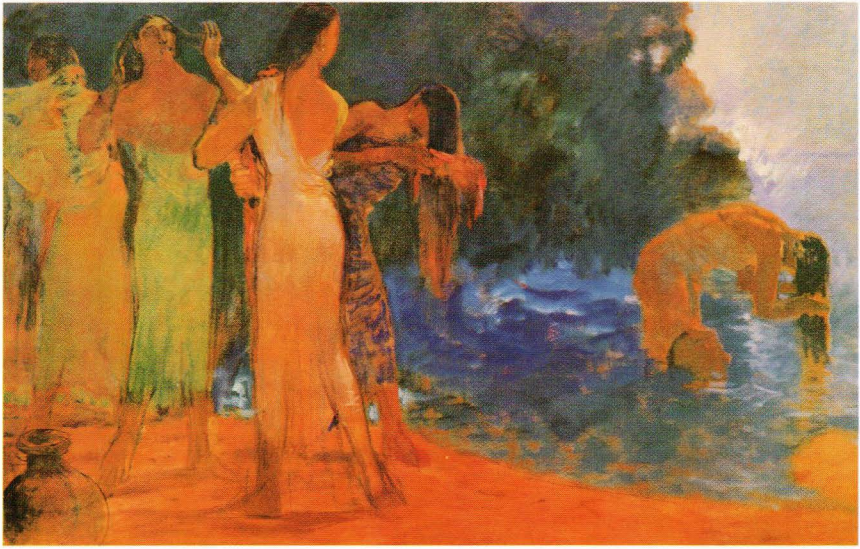
Art

Bangladesh has a rich tradition of Art. Specimens of ancient terracotta and pottery show remarkable artistry. Modern painting was pioneered by artists like Zainul Abedin, Kamrul Hasan, Anwarul Haque, Shafiuddin Ahmed, Shafiqul Amin, Rashid Chowdhury and S.M. Sultan. Zainul Abedin earned worldwide fame through his stunning sketches of the Bengal Famine in 1943.

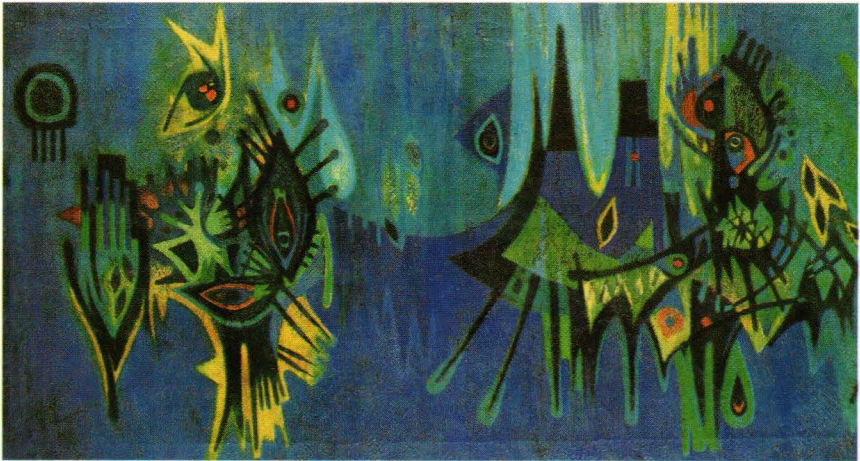
Alongside painting, sculpture, tapestry and engravings have also attracted attention in recent years.



Exquisite designs in embroidery



'Taking bath': A painting by Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin



'The fishing net': A painting by Shafiuddin Ahmed

13

Performing Arts

DANCE

Classical forms of the sub-continent occupy a dominant position in Bangladeshi dance. The folk, tribal and Middle-Eastern traits are also observed. Among the tribal dances, the Monipuri and Santal are popular. Institutions like the Bulbul Academy of Fine Arts and the Shilpakala Academy have helped popularise dance and other forms of Performing Art.

MUSIC

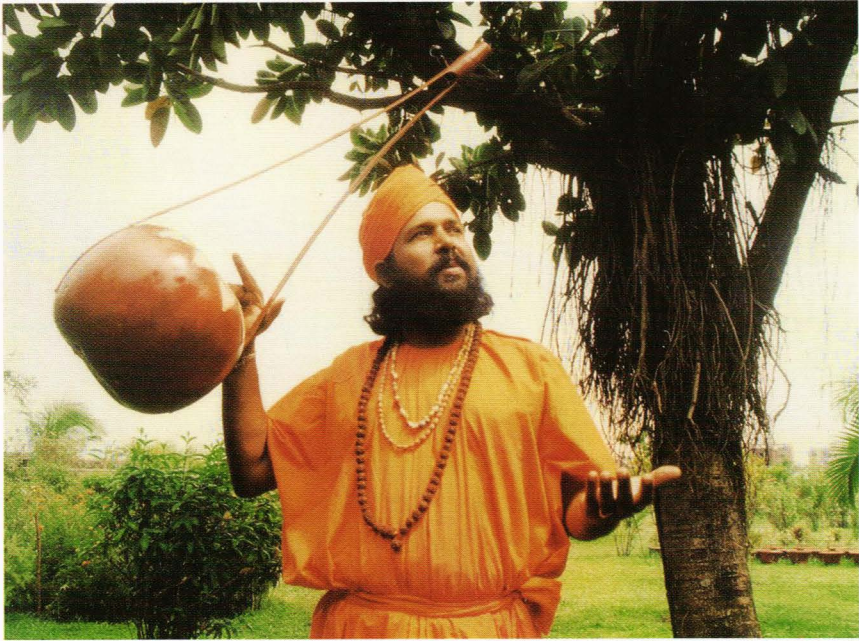
Music in Bangladesh can be divided into three distinct categories - classical, folk and modern. Classical music—both vocal and instrumental, is rooted in the remote past of the sub-continent. Folk music, nurtured through the ages by village-poets and rich in devotional mysticism and love-lore is very popular. The best known forms are Bhatiali, Baul, Marfati, Murshidi and Bhawaiya. Modern Bengali Music has blended Western and Middle-eastern traits with traditional forms. Contemporary music has an inclination towards the West.

DRAMA

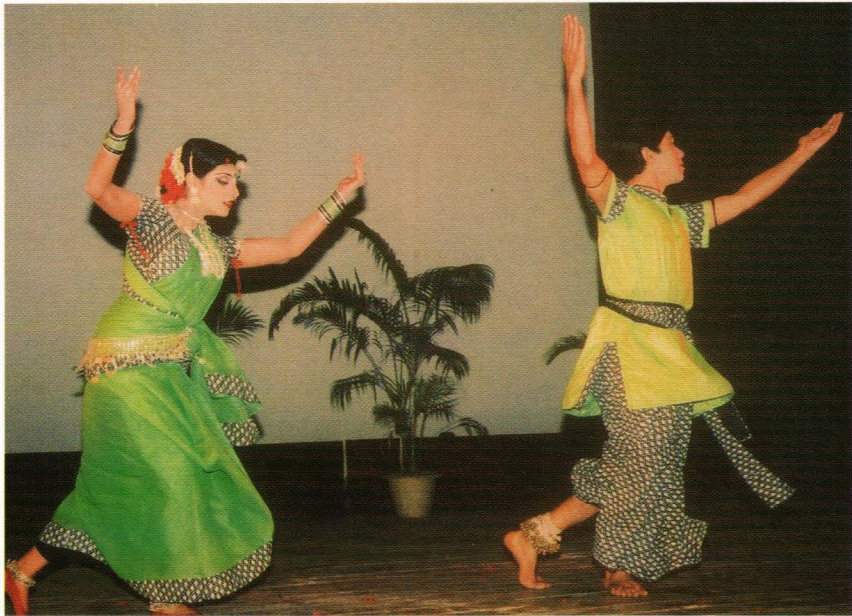
Theatre is an old tradition of Bangladesh. Open air rural opera known as 'Jatra', depicting mythological episodes, love-lore and acts of heroism are still popular in the country. Modern plays are staged mostly in the urban areas. Bangladeshi playwrights have succeeded in developing a distinct character of local plays and a new class of urban audience.

CINEMA

Although cinema had always been a popular form of entertainment, it was not until 1956 that the first full-length feature film could be produced in Bangladesh. At present the industry is capable of producing around 60 feature films per year. The Films of Bangladesh display a pattern similar to those of the other countries of the subcontinent. The themes range from social and historical ones to fantasies and fairy-tales. In recent years, there has been a tendency to experiment with the medium; one of the outcomes has been an abundance of popular short Feature Films.



Baul singer of rural Bangladesh

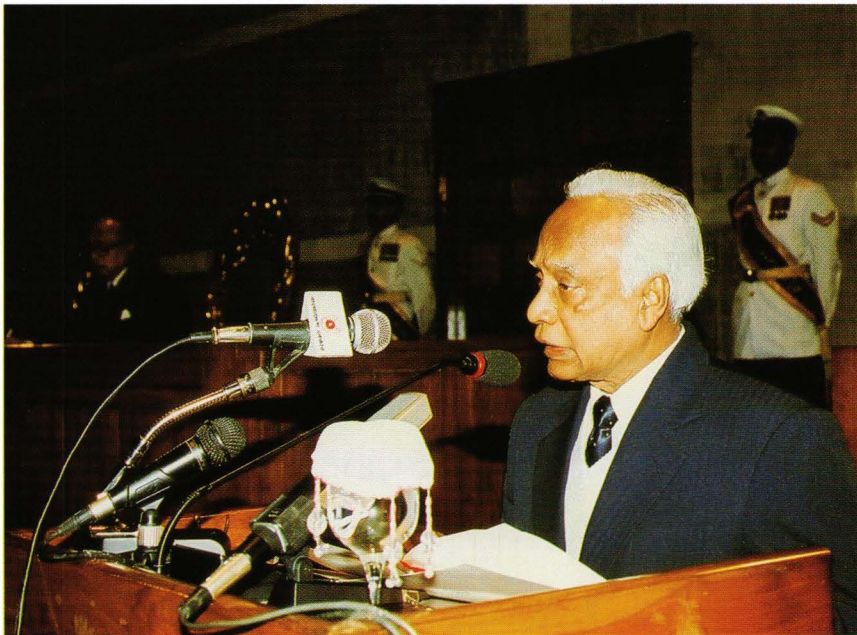


A traditional dance sequence

14

The State Organs

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is a unitary, independent and sovereign republic comprising three basic organs: the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. The President is the Head of State and is elected by the members of parliament. The President acts in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister and the supreme command of the Armed Forces vests with him.



President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed delivering his address to the Jatiya Sangsad

15

The Government

The executive power of the Republic is exercised by or on the advice of the Prime Minister, who commands the support of the majority members of parliament and is appointed by the President. Other ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers are appointed as per wish of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister nominates the cabinet members from among parliament members and up to one tenths of the total from outside the parliament. The cabinet is collectively responsible to the parliament. The government is unitary in structure and parliamentary in form.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia amidst a group of children artists

16

The Parliament

The parliament or Jatiya Sangsad has 300 general and 45 reserved seats for the women. The general members are directly elected. The tenure of the parliament is five years.

The parliament is a sovereign body with a separate secretariat. The Speaker, along with the Deputy Speaker, Whips and panel of chairmen run the sessions of parliament. The parliamentary sessions are summoned by the President within two months of the expiry of a session.



The Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) in session

17

The Judiciary

At the apex of the country's judiciary stands the Supreme Court. It consists of the High Court Division and the Appellate Division. The Supreme Court serves as the guardian of the Constitution and enforces the fundamental rights of the citizens.

There are subordinate courts at district and upazila levels as well as special courts and tribunals such as the administrative tribunal, family courts, labour tribunal, land, commercial, municipal and marine courts, tribunals for checking repression on women and children and for speedy trial of cases related to terrorism.



The Supreme Court of Bangladesh: Highest seat of judiciary

18

Administration

The elected political leaders govern Bangladesh with the aid of a permanent bureaucracy. The ministers remain at the helm of ministries or divisions, which are manned by civil servants recruited by the Public Service Commission.

The country is divided into six administrative divisions (namely Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet), each composed of districts. There are 64 districts, which are in turn divided into upazilas. At present, there are 472 upazilas each divided into unions, mouzas and villages at the lowest tier.



A cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister

19

The Economy

Bangladesh has an agrarian economy with 22.83% of GDP coming from the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector. Major agricultural products are rice, jute, wheat, potato, pulses, tobacco, tea, sugarcane, etc. The country is the largest exporter of jute and jute goods in the world. Readymade Garments occupy the topmost position among the exportable items. Tea, frozen shrimps, fish, leather goods, flowers and vegetables, ceramic-ware and handicrafts are also major exportable commodities.

Bangladesh has undergone a major shift in its economic philosophy and management in recent years. On its birth, it embraced socialism as the economic ideology with a dominant role for the public sector. But since the mid-seventies, the country undertook a major restructuring towards establishing a market economy with emphasis on private sector-led economic growth.

Since its assumption of office in October 2001, the present government has attached top priority to rapid economic growth alongside reduction of grinding poverty in the country through employment generation, human resource development and revitalisation of the rural economy. The government is aware that sustainability of poverty alleviation efforts requires employment generation for the poor alongside targeted programmes for raising their income and savings.

Per capita income in Bangladesh was estimated to be US Dollar 444 during 2003-2004 (1 US \$ = Taka 59.61).



Female workers at work in a readymade garments factory: RMG sector is the highest export-earner for the country



The Chittagong sea-port: Hub of the country's external trade

20

Agriculture

Bangladesh has primarily an agrarian economy. Agriculture (crops, forestry, fisheries and livestock) is still a potent engine of growth. It is the single largest sector in the economy producing about 23.47% of the country's GDP and employing around 60% of the total labour force. The performance of this sector has a major impact on major macroeconomic objectives like employment generation, poverty alleviation, human resources development and food security. Meeting the nation's food requirements remains a key objective of the government and in recent years there has been substantial increase in food-grain production. However, loss of food and cash crops due to flood and other natural calamities is a recurring phenomenon, which disrupts the entire economy.

Agricultural holdings in Bangladesh are generally small. Use of modern machinery through cooperatives is gradually gaining popularity. Rice, Jute, Sugarcane, Potato, Pulse, Wheat, Tea and Tobacco are the principal crops. The crop sub-sector dominates the agriculture sector contributing about 13.43% to the GDP. The contributions of fisheries, livestock and forestry sub-sectors to the GDP are 5.25%, 2.93% and 1.86% respectively.

Bangladesh is the largest producer of Jute. Rice being the staple food, its production is of crucial importance. Rice production stood at 26.7 million tons in 2002-03 fiscal year. Crop diversification program, credit, extension and research, and input distribution policies pursued by the government are yielding positive results.



Smiling children holding aloft golden sheafs of paddy



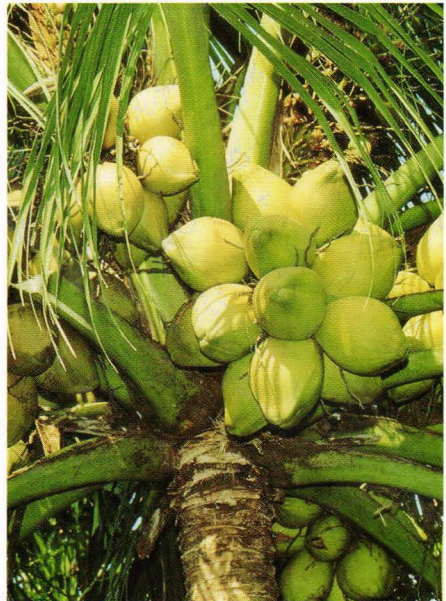
Livestock grazing in an open field



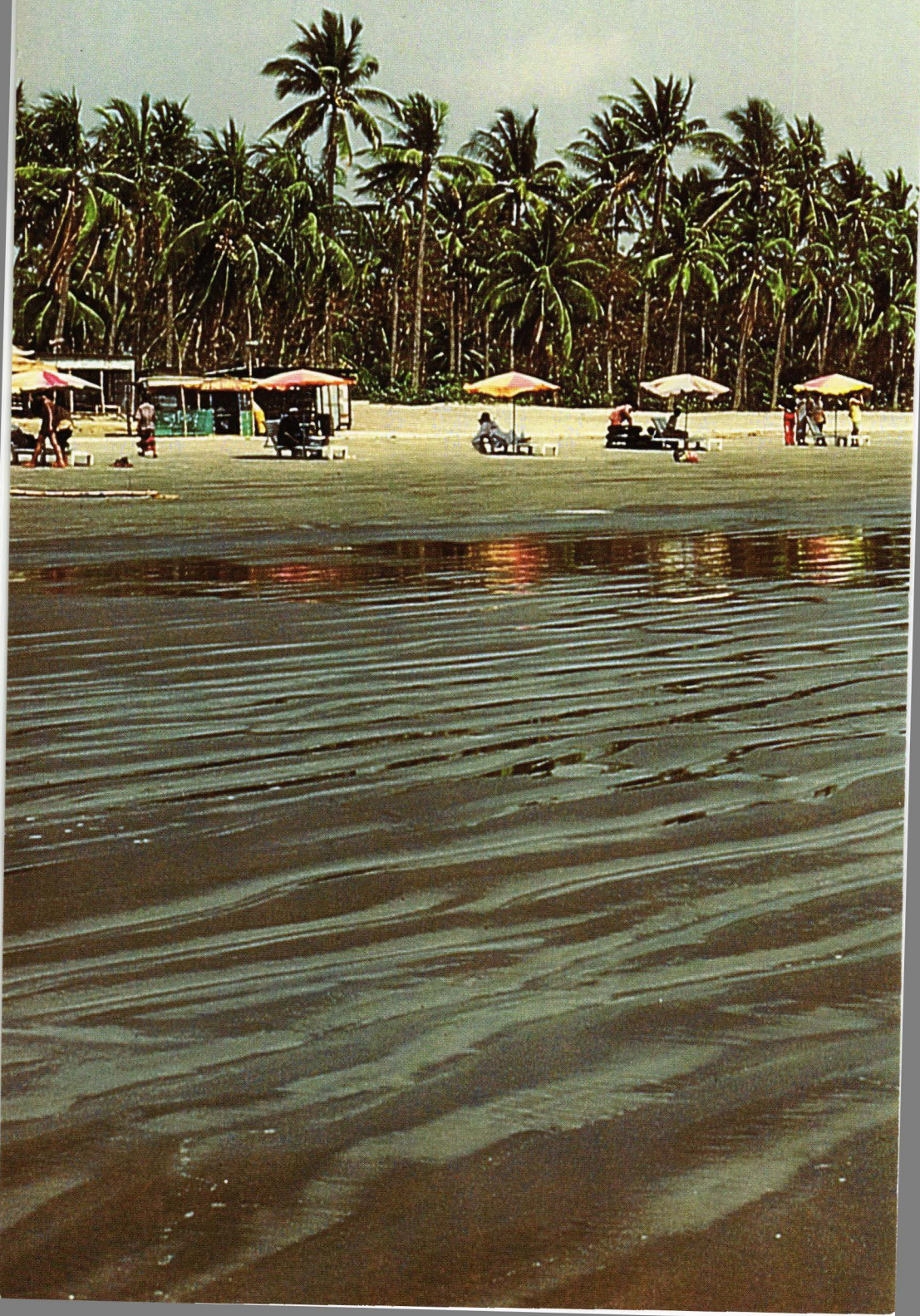
Wheat cultivation is being popular in the country



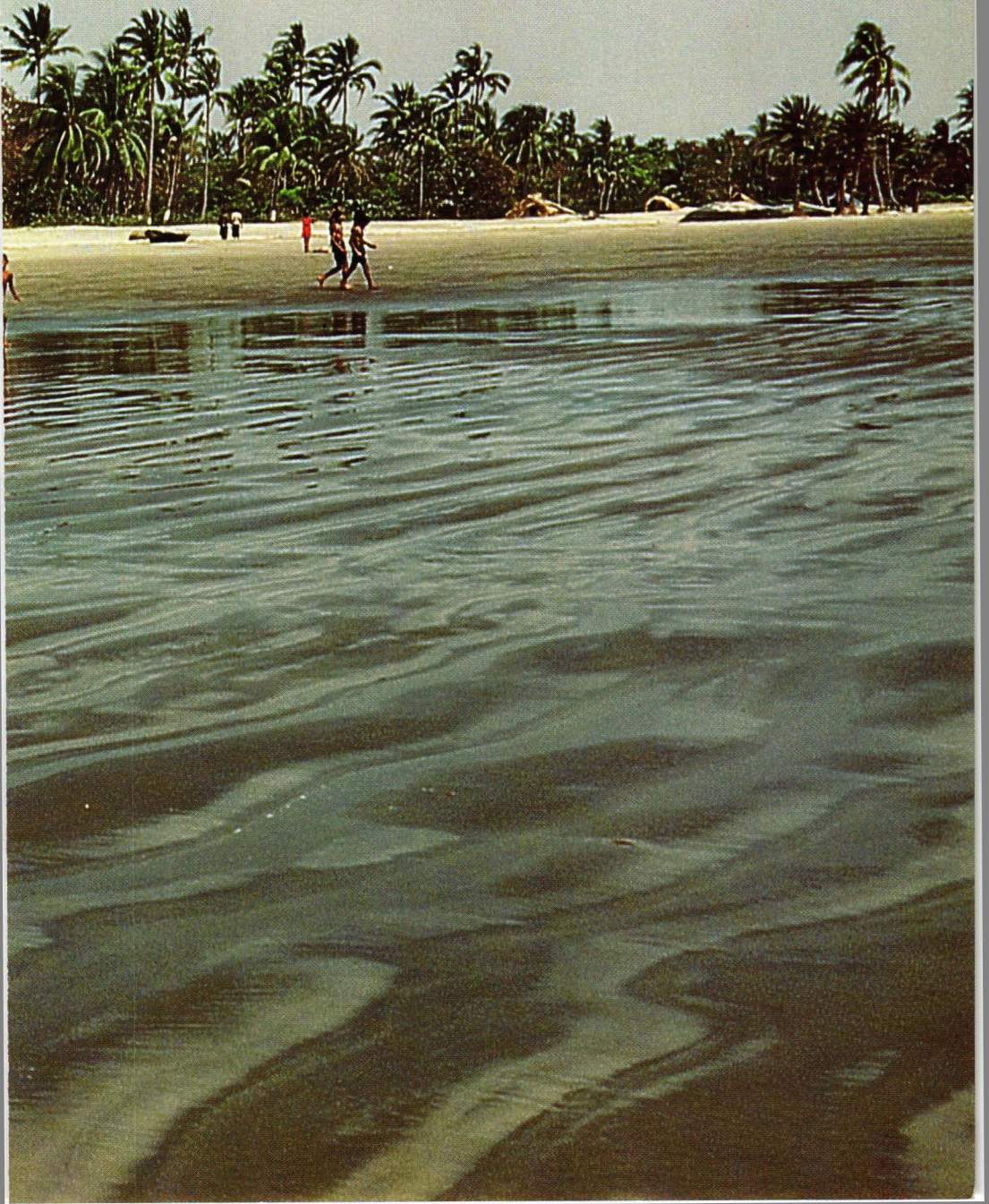
A female cultivator ploughing her land with power tiller



Coconut: A household fruit in rural Bangladesh



*Kuakata—another sea beach in southern Bangladesh after Cox's Bazar,
where both sun rise and sun set can be seen*



21

Commercial Exports and Imports

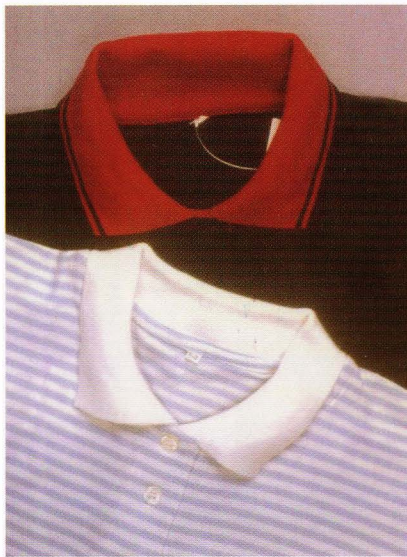
In 1972-73, the export earnings of the country totalled US \$ 348.33 million, of which 90% came from the Jute sector. The other major items were tea and leather. Since then, the country has been widening its export base. The situation has now vastly improved with the addition of non-traditional items like readymade garments, shrimps, fish, knitwear, finished leather, newsprint, chemical fertiliser, handicrafts, naphtha, ceramic products, fresh fruits, flowers and vegetables, etc. As a result, the export earnings are currently estimated to be around US \$ 6.55 billion (2002-03).

The major import items include raw cotton, textile fabrics and accessories, cotton yarn, petroleum products, capital machinery, automobiles including spares and accessories, industrial chemicals and dyes, pharmaceutical raw materials, milk food, edible oil, coal, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, cement, etc. The value of imports (FOB) during 2002-03 has been estimated to be around US \$ 9.9 billion.

In line with the global trend, the government has steadily liberalised its trade regime and significant progress has been achieved in recent years in reducing or eliminating non-tariff restrictions, rationalising tariff rates and raising export incentives.



Bangladesh Brand RMG-mostly exported to Europe and America (up and left below)



Bangladeshi shoes: popular throughout the world



Demand for Bangladeshi flowers are on the rise



An embroidered quilt

22

Communication

The transport sector of Bangladesh consists of a variety of modes. The country being a flat plain, all three modes of surface transport, i.e. road, railway and water are widely used in carrying both passengers and cargo.

More than half of Bangladesh has access to an all-weather hard surface road within 3 miles distance. In 2003, the total length of road under the Roads and Highways Department stood at around 22,360 kilometres. It is estimated that mechanised road transport carry about 70% of the country's total passenger and cargo volume. Its contribution to GDP is 6.95%.

In recent years, construction of a number of important bridges including the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, and the Bangladesh-UK Friendship Bridge over the river Meghna on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway have been completed.

About 32% of the total area of Bangladesh is effectively covered by the railways. State-owned Bangladesh Railway operates a track of 2880 kilometre and provides passenger and cargo services through 500 stations.

Water transport is the only means available in nearly 10% of the total area of Bangladesh. The navigable waterways vary between 8372 kilometre during the monsoon to 5200 kilometre during the dry season.

The entire coast along the Bay of Bengal is 710 kilometre long. There are two major ports in the country. Chittagong, the oldest port, has been an entry-port for at least 1000 years. The Mongla port in Khulna region serves the western part of Bangladesh.

There are now 14 operational airports (3 international, 6 domestic and 5 stall-ports) in Bangladesh. Of these, the airports at Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet serve international routes.

The Civil Aviation Authority is a public sector entity entrusted to construct, maintain and supervise airports and regulate air traffic. The national flag carrier 'Biman' flies to international and domestic destinations.



Railway services are available throughout the country



A view of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge by night



Zia International Airport in Dhaka



Modern double-decker buses ply on the streets of capital Dhaka

23

Education

Highest allocations for education in the national budgets in recent years show that the government has attached topmost priority to human resource development through education. The goal of 'Education for all' is being vigorously pursued in the country.

Compulsory primary education, Free education for girls up to class ten, Stipends for female students, Food for education, Total literacy movement and Nation-wide integrated non-formal education are some of the major programmes being implemented by the government in the education sector.

There are 18 government and 36 non-government universities in the country. The number of government and non-government medical colleges stand at 14 and 11 respectively. There are 3 dental colleges, 4 engineering colleges (institutes of technology), 2409 general colleges, 4 institutes of technology (BIT), 64 vocational training institutes, 22 polytechnic institutes, 1422 higher secondary colleges, 16095 secondary schools, 7276 Madrasah and 78363 primary schools. Besides, there are other institutes for technical and vocational education.



A modern school compound in the capital



Class in progress at a rural school

24

Environment and Forest

The government is determined to protect the environment for the wellbeing and survival of the current and future generations. Much importance has been attached to increasing the forestry resources and ensuring their proper management for environmental conservation and development.

With a growth rate of 4.9%, the contribution of forest resources to GDP and the agriculture sector are 1.86% and 9.73% respectively. Afforestation generates employment and helps maintain environmental balance. The total forest area of the country is 2.5 million Hectare, which is 17% of the total land area of Bangladesh. Out of the total forest lands, trees exist in only 45% area. A national policy has been adopted for conservation of forests and environment. Apart from afforestation, programmes include planting trees on fallow lands, alongside roads and rail lines, on flood protection embankments and coastal belt and in educational institutions.

In recent years, the government has taken some important steps toward protection of the environment, environmentally sound use of natural resources and pollution control.



Rivers and forests are linked to people's livelihood in the southern Bangladesh



Spotted deer of the Sundarban



The guest birds of winter

25

Financial Management

The composition of public expenditure is used as a powerful vehicle by the government to achieve economic and social objectives. The government's aim is to implement a well-prioritised public expenditure programme that is targeted to promote human development, build infrastructure and services, reach the vulnerable groups and foster a dynamic and competitive private sector.

The government is keen to correct and remedy failures and imperfections in the financial markets. The reforms of the financial sector and trade liberalisation are being complemented by an appropriate foreign exchange regime. An active exchange rate policy to maintain the competitiveness of the economy is being followed. Local currency Taka has been made convertible in all current account transactions. Laws have been amended to boost private and foreign investments in the financial sector. A number of foreign banks and financial institutions are active in the country.



A modern shopping complex in the capital city

26

Fisheries and Livestock

The fisheries and livestock sector holds great potential for poverty alleviation, exports and meeting the protein needs of the people. In recent years, the sector has been playing an increasingly important role in the uplift efforts of Bangladesh. It is a labour-intensive and quick-yielding sector which augments growth and alleviates poverty. Around 1.2 million people are directly employed in the fisheries sector alone. Overall, 120 million people depend on this sector, directly or indirectly, for their livelihood.

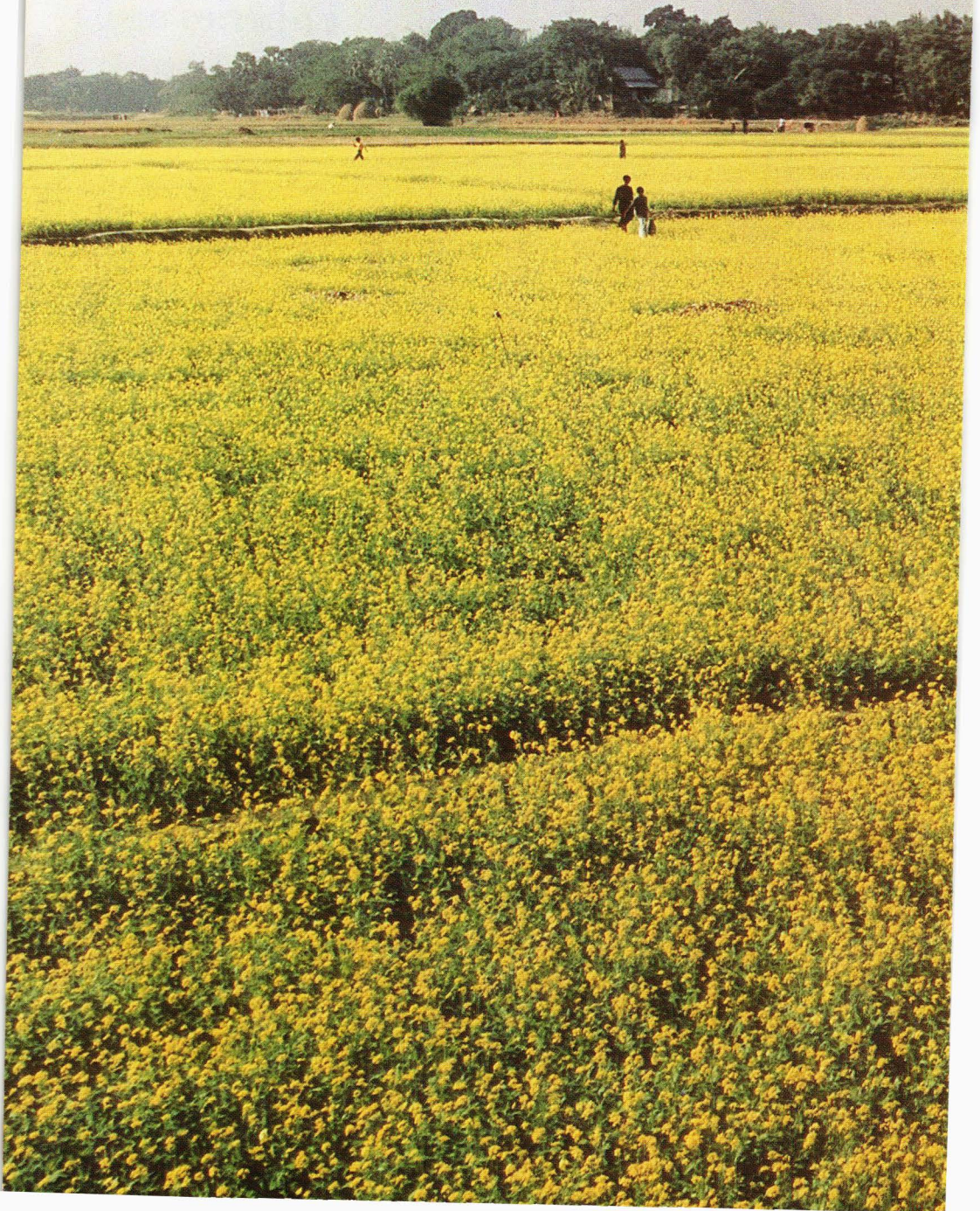
Bangladesh has immense natural potential for developing the fisheries sub-sector. The sub-sector contributes 5.25 % of the GDP and 20% of the agriculture sector.

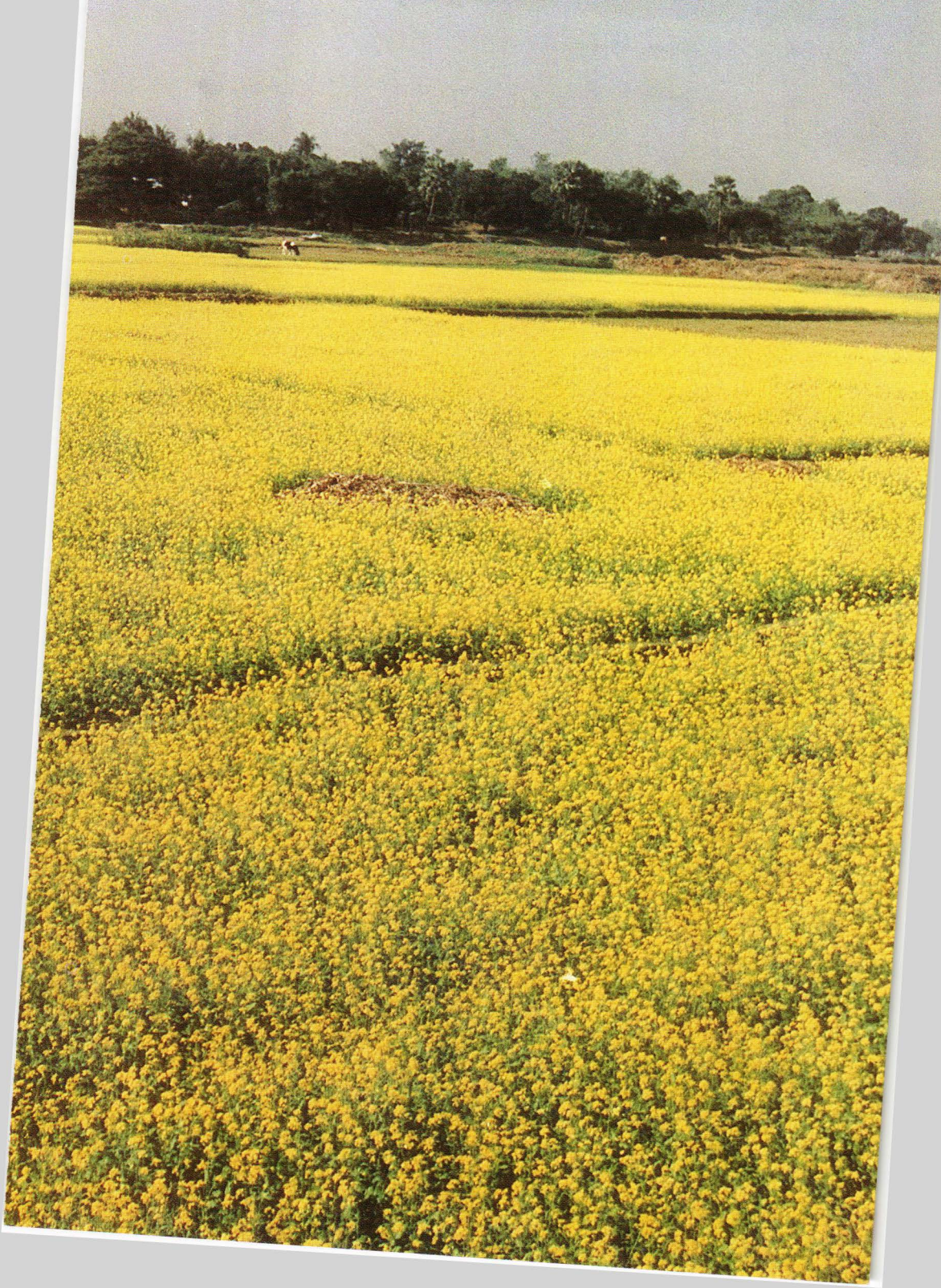
With an annual growth rate of around 3% during the 1990s, the contribution of the livestock sub-sector to GDP and the agriculture sector as a whole is currently 2.93% and 15.1% respectively. It has shown much potential to develop as a commercial sector with employment and income opportunities both in the rural and urban areas. A large number of enterprises - cattle, poultry and dairy farms - have grown in the private sector in recent years.



Poultry farming: A thriving sector

A mustard field in winter: A common sight in rural Bangladesh





27

Foreign Relations

The Bangladesh Constitution embodies the basic principles of her Foreign Policy; it says, the state shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes and respect for international laws and principles as enunciated in the United Nations Charter.

Bangladesh pursues a forward-looking foreign policy based on friendship with all and malice towards none. As an active member of the UN, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Commonwealth and various international organizations. Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh pioneered the formation of SAARC—a regional cooperation organization comprising seven South Asian countries Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh is also a member of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD).

Since assumption of office in October 2001, the present democratic government has been pursuing an active and pragmatic foreign policy geared mainly towards economic ends. The main goal of economic diplomacy is to transform Bangladesh into a rapidly developing country. The strategies being pursued for the purpose include raising export volume, employment generation of Bangladeshi workers in foreign countries and attracting foreign investors to invest in Bangladesh. A recent addition to this strategy is the 'Look East' policy for bolstering economic relations with the countries of East and South-east Asia.

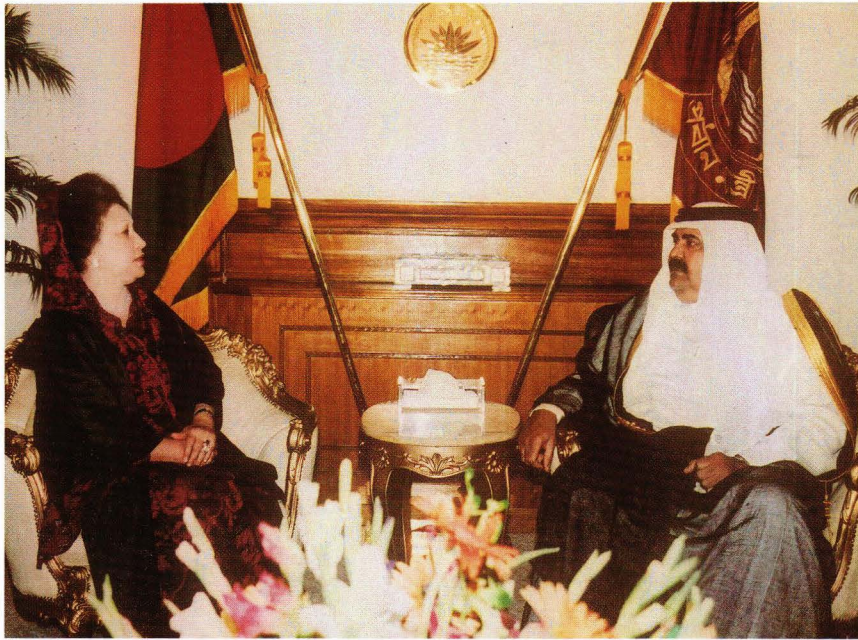
Bangladesh has recently emerged as one of the largest contributors of UN peace-keeping operations world-wide.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao wave to cheering crowd at Zia International Airport



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia holds talks with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong during her visit to Singapore



His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office during his official visit to Dhaka



Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan MP holds talks with US Secretary of Defence Donald H. Rumsfeld during latter's visit to Dhaka

28

Health, Population and Family Welfare

Bangladesh ranks ninth in the world and sixth in Asia in terms of population. The country's population density of around 900 persons per square kilometre is one of the highest in the world. The population currently stands at around 133.4 million with a growth rate of about 1.47%. The government is working tirelessly to upgrade the living standard of the people by meeting their basic needs and is determined to ensure health for all within the shortest possible time.

Considerable progress has been achieved in Bangladesh in the fields of Health and Family Welfare. The Immunisation programme, which has been acclaimed world-wide, now covers 80% of children compared to 55% in 1990-91. Primary Health care facilities have been expanded throughout the country. Infant and maternal mortality rates have come down dramatically. Contraceptive Prevalence Rate has increased to around 54 percent, as a result of which population growth rate is now below 1.5 percent.

The government is actively involved in providing primary health care facilities through Union and Upazila Health Complexes, secondary health care facilities through District level hospitals, and tertiary health care facilities through Medical College Hospitals, Postgraduate Institutes and specialised hospitals at divisional and national levels. The health policy of the government aims to expand healthcare programmes and improve service quality.



The Prime Minister administering polio vaccine to a child on the occasion of National Immunization Day

29

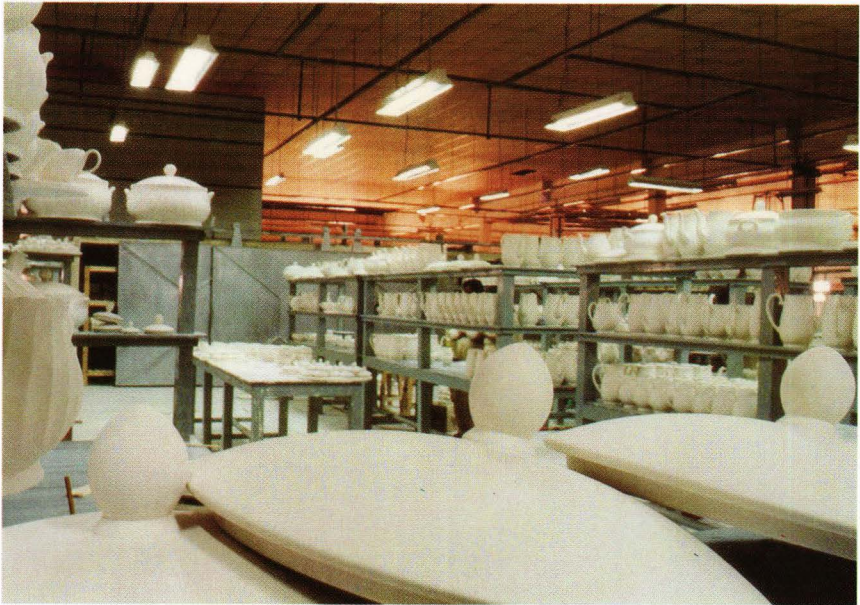
Industry

Bangladesh has a good number of large, medium and small-sized industries in both public and private sectors based on both indigenous and imported raw materials. Among them are jute, cotton, textile, fertiliser, engineering, ship-building, steel, oil-refinery, paper, newsprint, sugar, chemicals, cement and leather. Jute Industry has traditionally played an important role in the national economy. But in recent years, Ready-made Garments industry has replaced Jute as the principal export-earner for the country. Considerable progress has been attained in the past few years in industries such as leather, ceramic, shrimp, fish, pharmaceutical and frozen food.

With the development of infrastructures, supportive policies for trade and investment and comparative advantage of Bangladesh in labour-intensive industries, excellent prospects for investment exist in Bangladesh today. Industrial growth (manufacturing) was recorded at 6.8% during 2002-03. Foreign investors are pouring into the country in greater numbers day by day, especially in the export processing zones having special facilities at Dhaka, Chittagong, Comilla, Mongla, Nilphamari and Ishwardi.



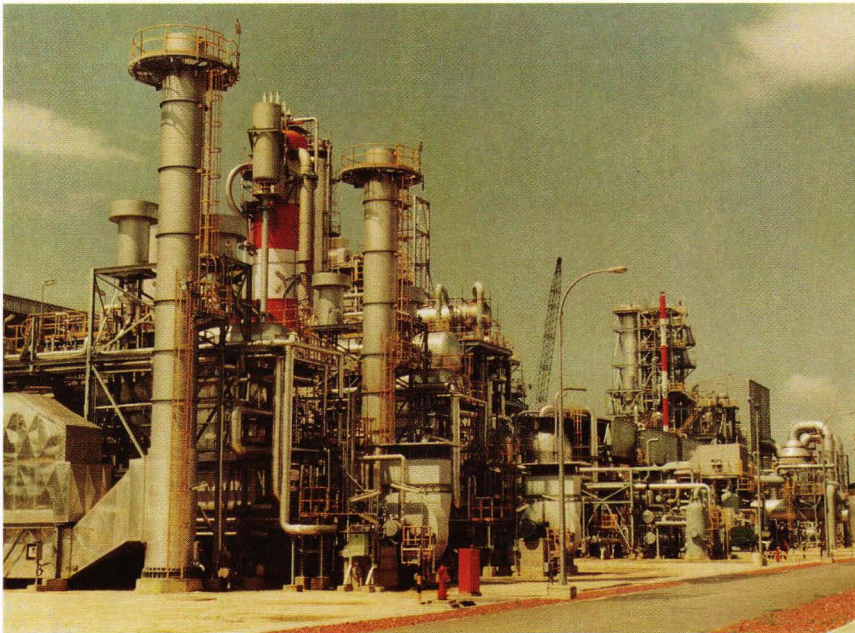
Inside view of a textile spinning mill



The interior of a ceramic factory



Bangladesh exports high quality pharmaceutical products to the world market



Karnaphuli Fertilizer Company (KAFCO): A Japan-Bangladesh joint venture

30

Jute

Bangladesh is the world's largest exporter of jute and jute goods. The jute sector is in third position with respect to foreign exchange earnings for Bangladesh. About 60 percent of demand for jute goods and 90 percent demand for raw jute in the world market is met by Bangladesh. Jute industry is the second largest industrial employer in the country and about 10 percent of the total labour force are engaged in the jute sector. Trading in jute and jute goods is of vital importance as a quarter of the cash income in agriculture depends on jute.



Jute plants produce golden fibre

31

Labour and Employment

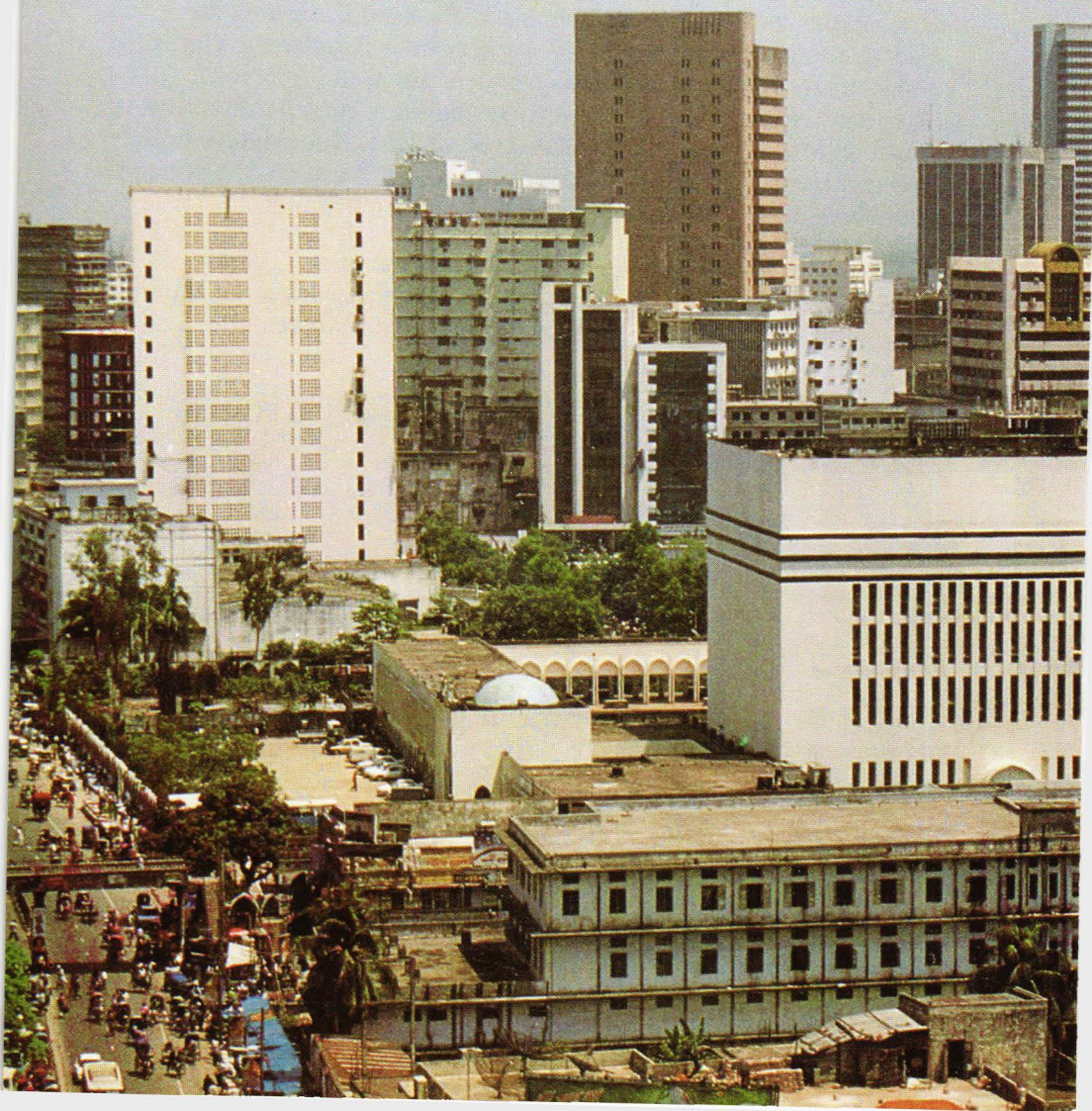
The present government has undertaken various measures to expand the opportunities for domestic and overseas employment. Remittances from Bangladeshis working abroad have marked a steep rise during the recent years due to a massive outflow of workers from Bangladesh. Currently, around three million Bangladeshi workers are working abroad. As an export item, manpower exports now occupy the second position with an annual inflow of about 2.5 billion U.S. Dollars. The Middle Eastern countries along with Malaysia, South Korea and Japan are the principal destinations for Bangladeshi workers.

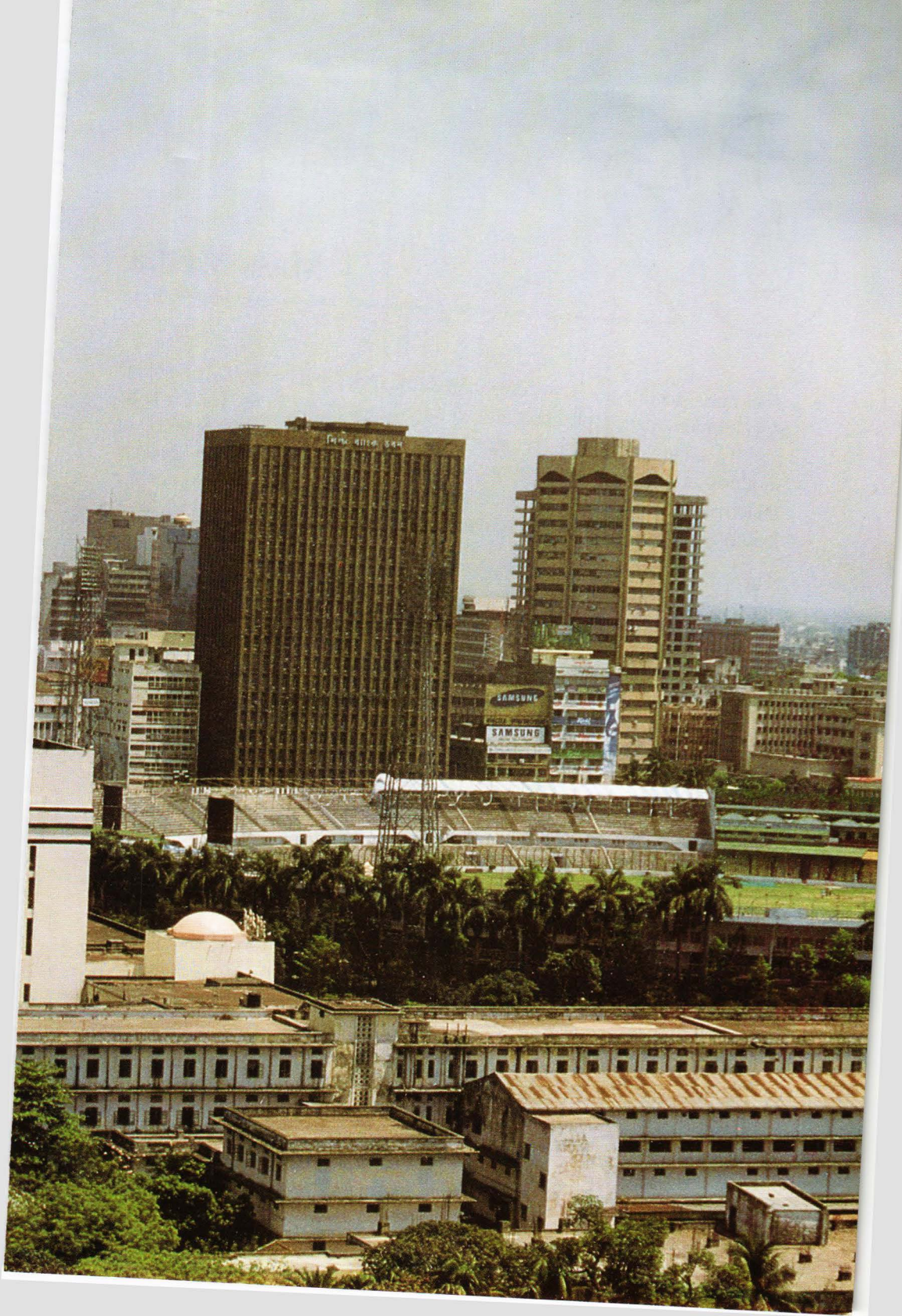
The Labour Policy of the government embodies creation of an environment conducive to improved Labour-Management relations in order to provide higher wages through higher productivity.



Skilled and semi-skilled manpower from Bangladesh has worldwide demand

Megacity Dhaka has been greatly transformed since its inception as an oriental mughal town in the 17th century





32

Mass Media

The mass media are now considered the principal vehicle for social development, peace, progress and welfare of mankind. In the backdrop of a rapidly changing global scenario and revolutionary developments in modern information technology, the Ministry of Information and its attached departments in Bangladesh have streamlined their activities for bridging the gap between the government and the people.

There is no alternative to free flow of information for strengthening the base of democracy and ensuring freedom of speech. With the restoration of democratic order, press in Bangladesh enjoys complete freedom. At present, there are more than one thousand newspapers and periodicals in the country, which is much higher than the corresponding figures of 1990. Total circulation of newspapers and periodicals exceeds 2.5 million. Both Bangla and English language dailies and periodicals are read widely.



State-owned Bangladesh Television (BTV) Complex



A view of Bangladesh Betar (Radio) building in Dhaka

33

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources

Bangladesh is on the verge of stepping into an era of high investment and growth in the power, energy and mineral resources sector. The government is adopting policies and programmes for rapid development and efficient management of the power sector in line with present and future requirements. Reform measures include unbundling of the sector into three areas: generation, transmission and distribution. The government is also considering the framing of 'Renewable Energy Policy' to encourage investment in non-conventional energy sources.

The responsibility of electricity generation, transmission and distribution in the country lies with the Power Development Board (PDB), Rural Electrification Board (REB), and the Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA).

Natural Gas is Bangladesh's most important source of commercial energy. Currently, it meets 74% of the country's commercial energy requirement compared to about 60% in 1990. The current daily production of natural gas in the country is around 1350 million cubic feet, which is an all-time record.



Exploration and extraction of natural gas attracts foreign investors in Bangladesh

34

Rural Development

More than 50% of the country's GDP comes from the rural sector. Development of this sector is thus crucial for national development. The government is attaching top priority to rapid economic growth alongside reduction of grinding poverty in the country through employment generation, human resource development and revitalisation of the rural economy. The agriculture and rural development sectors have been given highest priority by the government in its quest for alleviating poverty among the rural masses.

Major functions of the rural development agencies of the government include employment and income generation, provision of credit and institutional support to rural target groups, vulnerable group development, formation of rural co-operatives, provision of healthcare, sanitation, safe drinking water, education etc.

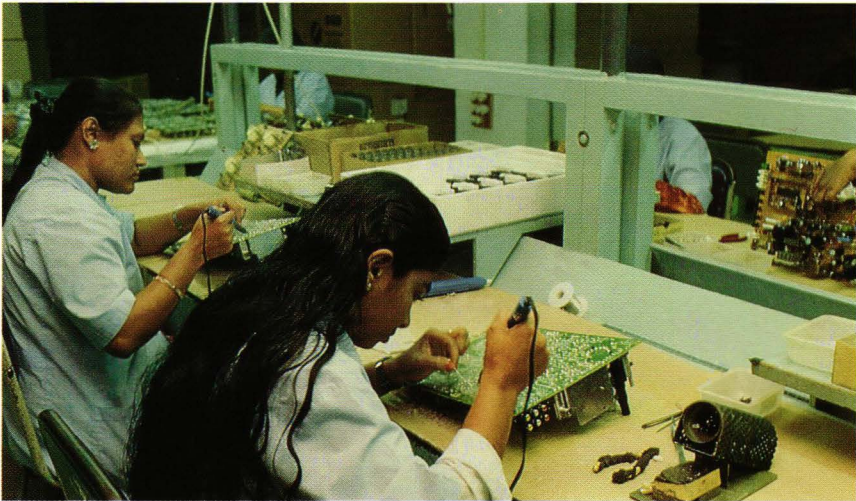
Alongside the public sector, the NGOs also play a key role in rural development efforts. Organizations like the Grameen Bank, BRAC and ASA have earned world-wide acclaim in the field. The government and the NGOs are now running numerous programmes for employment and income generation of the poor. These programmes help enhance their property entitlement as well as social empowerment and also raise their awareness regarding available socio-economic opportunities.

35

Science and Technology

A National Science and Technology Policy has been formulated and adopted by the government. It has laid down the directions for S and T activities and research, institutional and manpower development, dissemination and documentation facilities. The National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) determines S and T policies, reviews the activities of different institutions and provides directions toward S and T research and development.

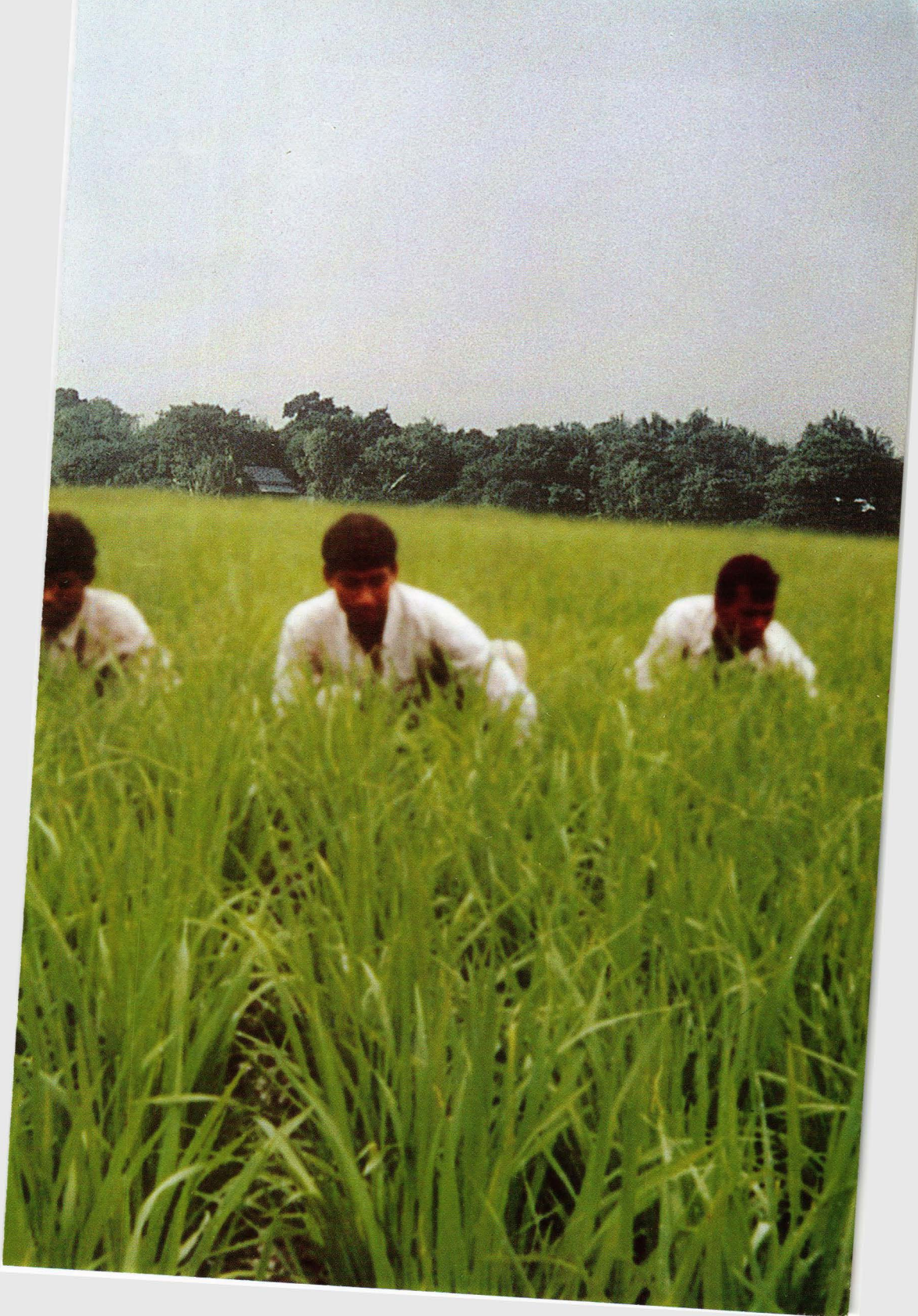
Taking into account the importance of information and communication technology in the global economy, the present government has renamed the Ministry of Science and Technology as the Ministry of Science, Information and Communication Technology. Different programmes such as setting up of an Information Technology Institute, IT Villages and Incubators and Hi-tech Parks are also being taken up.



Female workers at an electronic factory

Common view of people working in agricultural fields in the villages





36

Sports

Football, Cricket, Hockey, Swimming and Rowing, Kabadi, Volleyball, Badminton, Basketball, Lawn Tennis, Table Tennis and Chess are popular games in the country.

A National Sports Policy has already been announced by the government for qualitative improvement of games and sports. The aim of the policy is to foster a sporting culture, facilitate sports practice and create a favourable environment for sports and sportsmen. There are now clear signs of resurgence from past stagnation in the sporting arena. Bangladesh can now boast of two Chess Grandmasters and a place among the Cricket Test-playing nations of the world.



Boat races: Traditional water sports of Bangladesh

37

Tourism

Bangladesh is endowed with enchanting scenic beauty, mighty rivers, sunny beaches, historical relics and colourful tribal life. Facilities of modern Hotels, Motels, Rest houses, Youth Inns and Restaurants as well as modern modes of communication are available at all places of tourist attraction. Some of the better known spots are : Dhaka—the city of mosques, Chittagong—Gateway to the Bay of Bengal, Cox's Bazar—the tourist capital, Rangamati—the heart of the lake district, Kaptai—the lake town, Sylhet—land of two leaves and a bud, Sundarban—home of the Royal Bengal Tiger, Bandarban—the hilly resort, Kuakata—where the sun rises and sets in the sea, Mainamati—seat of lost dynasties, Mahasthangarh—the ancient seat of Buddhist rule, Rajshahi—the silk producing centre, Natore—place of Dighapatiya Palace, Paharpur--- the seat of Buddhist learning, Dinajpur—old ornamental temple town, and Mymensingh—the heart of Bengal's folklore.

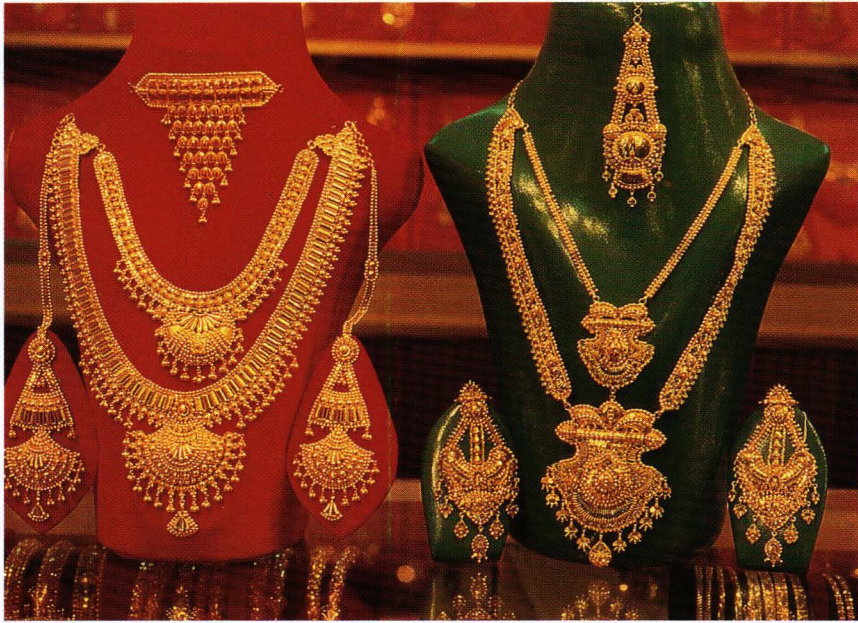
'Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation' (BPC) is an autonomous government organization, which caters to the needs of local and foreign tourists. BPC has tourist facilities at Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Rangpur, Rangamati, Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur, Kuakata, Sylhet and Sundarban and organises package tours, sightseeing trips and excursions. A number of private sector tour operators are also active in the country.



The sandy sea-beach extending from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf: Longest natural beach in the world



The tea-gardens of Sylhet



Exquisitely designed jewellery of Bangladesh



Handicrafts made from sea-shells and corals

38

Women and Children

The government is trying hard to integrate the womenfolk of the country into the mainstream of the development process, which is one of the main strategies for overall socio-economic development. Poverty, malnutrition, hunger, illiteracy, etc. are largely centred around womenfolk, and as such women can act as uniquely suitable agents for elimination of these socio-economic maladies. Attainment of reasonable growth rate, alleviation of poverty through generation of productive employment opportunities and increased self-reliance are inextricably linked with increased participation of women in development efforts.

The main goal of the National Policy for Women's Advancement is to ensure equality of men and women in all spheres of national life, improve the lot of the neglected womenfolk in the country, ensure their security and empowerment, groom them up as educated and skilled workforce, eliminate discriminations and repression on women and girl-child, establish human rights of women, alleviate their poverty and ensure their participation in the socio-economic development process. Strategies have been devised to realize these goals.

A National Action Plan for Children (NAPC) has been adopted by the government for ensuring children's rights and their sound upbringing. The main objective of the NAPC is to guarantee the rights of children to lead a safe and dignified life through ensuring health, nutrition and a safe and hygienic environment. It aims to ensure children's rights to elementary education, improved living standards, proper physical and mental health and participation in cultural pursuits.



Women are finding jobs in all sectors of the economy



Children's education has been given top priority by the government

39

Youth Development



A youth training centre for human resource development

The youths are potentially the most productive force in Bangladesh. They constitute 36% of the total civilian labour force. Recognising the fact that a disciplined and organised, trained and educated youth community can make significant contribution to the development process, the government has taken up various programmes for their socio-economic uplift. The main characteristics of the government's youth policy are to restore the values and confidence of the youth community, imbibe them with patriotism and motivate them for self-employment.

The major programmes of the government for youth development include: rural youth development, skill development training, self-employment programme and community development programme. The youth development programme is being expanded through increased training and credit facilities. The Department of Youth Development currently provides training facilities to over 2,50,000 unemployed youths each year in 50 trades throughout the country. Since 1981 and until June 2004 a total of 2.34 million unemployed youth was trained in various trades and 1.26 million were self-employed.

A T A G L A N C E

Official Name: People's Republic of Bangladesh

Head of the State: President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed

Head of the Government: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia

Geographical location: Bangladesh is situated in the eastern part of the South Asian sub-continent. It lies between Latitudes 20°34' and 26°38' North, and Longitudes 88°01' and 92°41' East. The country is bordered by India on the east, west and north, and by the Bay of Bengal and a small border strip with Myanmar on the south.

Area: 1,47,570 sq km

Administrative units: 6 Divisions, 64 Districts, 472 Upazilas, 4,484 Unions, 59,990 Mouzas.

City Corporations: 6

Municipalities: 292

Capital: Dhaka (population in 2002 - 10 million)

Official language: Bangla

Currency: Taka / Tk. US\$ 1 = Tk 61.50 (May, 2005)

Population: around 133.4 million

Population growth rate (1991-2001): 1.47%

Population density per sq. km: around 900

Sex ratio: 103 males per 100 females.

Fertility rate (per woman, 2000): 2.5

Contraceptive prevalence rate (2000): 54%

Life expectancy at birth (2003): 68.2 years

Infant mortality per 1000 live births (below 1 year, 2004): 65

Adult literacy rate (15+yrs, 2003): 65%

Civilian labour force (1999-2000): 60.3 million

GDP growth rate (2002-03 at 1995-96 constant price): 5.3%

Per capita GDP (2002-2003): US\$ 389

Savings-GDP Ratio (2002-03): 23.74%

Public Expenditure-GDP Ratio (2002-2003): 14%

Revenue-GDP Ratio (2002-2003): 10.34%

Investment-GDP Ratio (2002-03): 23.21%

Population below poverty line (2000, daily intake below 2122 K. Cal.): 44.3%

Population below poverty line (2000, daily intake below 1805 K. Cal.): 20.0%

Main seasons: Winter (November-February), Summer (March-June), Monsoon (July-October).

Monsoon rainfall: 1194 mm to 3454 mm.

Time: GMT+6 hours.

Principal rivers: Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Teesta, Surma and Karnaphuli.

Principal crops and fruits: Rice, wheat, jute, tobacco, sugarcane, pulses, oilseeds, spices, potato, vegetables, banana, mango, coconut and jackfruit.

Principal industries: Readymade garments, jute and cotton, textiles, tea processing, paper, cement, chemical fertilizers, light engineering, sugar, oil refining, steel, ship building, brick manufacturing, house building, carpet making, ceramic-ware, assembling buses & trucks and assembling radio, TV & computers.

Principal mineral resources: Natural gas, coal, limestone, ceramic clay, glass sand, hard rock.

Principal exports: Readymade garments, raw jute, jute goods, tea, shrimp, fish, finished leather and leather goods, flower and vegetables, ceramic-ware, handicrafts and newsprint. Total export receipts: US\$ 6.55 billion (2002-03).

Seaports: Chittagong and Mongla.

International Airports: Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

Domestic Airports: Jessore, Cox's Bazar, Saidpur, Rajshahi, Barisal.

Radio & TV: Transmissions cover the entire country.

Popular sports: Football, Cricket, Hockey, Kabadi, Swimming, Chess.

Sources: Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh Bank, NIPORT.

Captivating beauty of riverine Bangladesh: The sun sets to rise again





Editor

Zahirul Haque

Script

Helal Uddin Ahmed

Supervision & Coordination

Muhammad Mustafa
Sheikh Mohammad Billal Hossain

Cover & Design

Syed Lutful Haque

Photographers

Abdul Malek Babul
Ataf Hossain
A.T.M Monemul Haque
ABM Siddique
Bikash Chandra Dey
Drik Picture Library
Fazlur Rehman Jhinu
Kiron (Map)
Monowar Ahmed
Mohammad Younus
Md. Sufiur Rahman
M. Hossain Parvez
Md. Yousuf Tushar
Dr. Noajesh Ahmed
Nasir Mahmood
Syed Zakir Hossain
Sehab Uddin

Computer Graphics

S M Meer Hossain (Tusher)
Color Campus
32, Purana Paltan, Dhaka

Printed at

Rieko Printing & Packaging
88/A, East Bashaboo, Kadamtola, Dhaka-1214

