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Danish National ID Centre

Birkerød Kongevej 2-4
DK-3460 Birkerød
Denmark

Phone +45 61 98 39 00
Email nidc@nidc.dk
Website www.nidc.dk

Bangladesh: Birth registration and birth certificates

Introduction

This note describes the issuance procedure and appearance of Bangladeshi birth certificates along with the procedure of civil registration in Bangladesh. It also includes an assessment of the credibility of Bangladeshi birth certificates.

The note is based on open source information and interviews conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November 2018.

Background

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is divided into 64 self-governed administrative districts of which each individual district has its own district council. The 64 districts are divided into 460 sub districts, called *upazilas*, which are again divided into 4,488 union councils, called *union parishads*, the lowest administrative level in Bangladesh.¹ Each union parishad has a number of registration offices within their jurisdiction.²

Birth registration in Bangladesh are regulated according to the Births and Deaths Registration Act, which was enacted in 2004 and effectuated in 2006. The implementation of the act made it mandatory to register a birth within 45 days.³ According to the law, birth certificates are required for admission to school, issuance of passports and ID cards etc.⁴

Bangladeshi births have since 2010 been registered directly into the database Birth Registration Information System (BRIS). All physical archives of registrations

¹ United Kingdom: Home Office, 30 September 2012, p. 37.

² Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

³ National Legislative Bodies, 7 December 2004, p. 3.

⁴ National Legislative Bodies, 7 December 2004, p. 6.

from before 2010 are in the process of being transferred into the digital BRIS database.⁵ The transition to a digital database has made it possible to verify birth certificates online.⁶ Today the database also registers deaths and is called Birth and Death Registration Information System (BDRIS).⁷

164 million births were registered in the database as of 11 October 2018.⁸ There is an unknown amount of duplicates registered in the database, creating major challenges for the use of BDRIS. The authorities are currently working on separating the duplicates from the legitimate registrations.⁹

Birth registration in Bangladesh

It is most common for Bangladeshi citizens to go to their local union parishad to register a birth. However, births can also be registered at municipality offices, city corporations, cantonment boards and Bangladeshi missions abroad.¹⁰ Only 37 per cent of Bangladeshi children under the age of five are registered, since it is common for Bangladeshi children not to have their birth registered until entering the school system at the age of six.¹¹ The long-standing practice (pre 2010) of local birth registrations and keeping physical archives presents challenges in regards to verifying personal information in birth certificates that are not yet registered in BDRIS.

Issuance procedure

According to the regulations, a child born in a health facility is supposed to be registered automatically, but in practice, this is not always the case.¹²

Registration within the legal timeframe of 45 days is free of charge.¹³

Approximately 80 percent of Bangladeshi children are not born at a health facility. In these cases, a parent or guardian must seek out the local union parishad of the parents'/guardian's permanent address and inform about the birth. Applications for birth registrations can be submitted online or in person at the local union parishad, where the information is entered into BDRIS. Supporting documentation for a registration of birth can be a medical birth certificate from a doctor or health assistant. Each registration office has one single employee who is authorised to enter information into BDRIS.¹⁴

The consulted sources provide conflicting information on whether or not it is mandatory by law to have a hardcopy of one's birth certificate. According to one

⁵ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

⁶ Lifos, 25 February 2019, p. 5.

⁷ Lifos, 19 December 2023, p. 8.

⁸ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

⁹ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹⁰ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹¹ UNICEF Bangladesh, year of issue N/A.

¹² United Kingdom: Home Office, 31 August 2013, p. 155.

¹³ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹⁴ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

registrar, it is not mandatory to have a hard copy of one's birth certificate,¹⁵ whereas the Birth and Deaths Registrations Act specifies that people must have a physical copy of their birth certificate.¹⁶ When issuing a hard copy of a birth certificate, the information registered in BDRIS is transferred directly on to the birth certificate.¹⁷

When the information for a birth registration is filed directly into BDRIS, the applicant is not required to fill out any paper-based forms and no physical archive is kept.¹⁸ However, during a meeting at a registrar's office, the NIDC was presented with a photocopy of a *Birth Registration Certificate*, a form that is filed out collecting relevant information about the birth, child and parents.

Technical appearance of the birth certificate

The current format of birth certificates have the form number 3 or 3A written in the top right corner. The format has been in use since July 2006 in all registration offices in Bangladesh.¹⁹

A personal identification number called Birth Registration Number (BRN) is assigned to every person upon registration of birth.²⁰ All birth certificates must contain the BRN, which is a unique 17-digit personal identification number of the holder. The BNR conforms to the following template:²¹

X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Year of birth				Area code referring to the district, sub district and registrar of issuance								Randomly generated series of numbers					

Since the birth certificate is issued in Bengali, it is often followed by a translation into English. The translations do not conform to any visual uniformity.²²

Since 2010 there has been a digitalisation process in regards of birth and death certificates. Many paper-based birth certificates are still in circulation even though the person have had their birth digitally registered. The paper-based birth certificates are still valid even though they are not digitally registered in BDRIS.²³

When applying for a digitalised birth certificate and in that process switching from a paper based to a digitalised birth certificate, the applicant gets a new BRN. However, the paper based birth certificate are still valid and the BRN from the paper based version can therefor still occur in the nationality passport of the applicant,

¹⁵ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹⁶ Country of Origin Research and Information (CORI), March 2012, pp. 72-73.

¹⁷ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹⁸ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

¹⁹ OFPRA, June 2015, p. 51.

²⁰ Lifos, 19 December 2023, p. 12.

²¹ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

²² Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

²³ Lifos, 19 December 2023, p. 13.

as well as other documents, even though the document holder have been issued a new BRN number.²⁴

It is possible to verify a birth certificate through the website: [Birth and Death Verification \(bdris.gov.bd\)](http://bdris.gov.bd) by entering the BRN and birth date of the document holder.²⁵

Late registrations and reissuance

A proof of age is required in case of late birth registration, that is, birth registration exceeding the timeframe of 45 days. The Bangladeshi authorities did not specify what documentation is accepted as proof of age at the meeting in Dhaka. However, according to the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, late registration can be finalised without the applicant providing any supporting documentation.²⁶ There is a fee of 25 Taka in connection with late registration. If the late registration exceeds five years, the fee is raised to 50 Taka.²⁷

Error correction

It is possible to apply for an error correction if an error has been made during the registration process. In cases where the error involves the records, an application must be submitted to the registrar along with a correction fee. If the application is satisfactory, the registrar can correct the error in the records and sign the area of correction with his signature and the date of correction.²⁸

However, an obvious clerical error in the birth certificate will be corrected on the spot. When the error involves critical personal information, the holder must provide sufficient proof of identity in order to ascertain that a mistake has been made.²⁹

Credibility of Bangladeshi birth certificates

The lack of a fully established national civil registry in combination with the significant level of corruption in the public sector gives the Bangladeshi birth certificates an overall low credibility.³⁰ It is easy to obtain a genuine certificate containing the personal information that the holder needs. Both fraudulent and genuine documents containing fraudulent information are widely available and Bangladeshi birth certificates are no exception to this.³¹ Duplicates can also be issued genuinely at the registrations office, in case the office runs out of blank forms.³²

²⁴ Lifos, 19 December 2023, p. 13.

²⁵ Birth and Death Verification.

²⁶ Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 22 August 2019, p. 50.

²⁷ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

²⁸ National Legislative Bodies, 7 December 2004, p. 5.

²⁹ Union Parishad Registrar, Dhaka, November 2018.

³⁰ Landinfo, 4 July 2013, p. 3.

³¹ Lifos, 25 February 2019, p. 7; Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 22 August 2019, 50; Landinfo, 4 July 2013, p. 7.

³² Lifos, 25 February 2019, p. 11.

The overall trustworthiness of Bangladeshi birth certificates is challenged by the inability to verify the content. Verification is problematic because of the two following factors: 1) It is common that certificates are issued much later than the legal timeframe of 45 days; 2) BDRIS has not been fully implemented and lacks information about certificates issued before 2010.

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