

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	360
Land:	Bangladesh
Kilde:	UK Home Office
Titel:	Country Information Note – Bangladesh - Documentation
Udgivet:	marts 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	20. maj 2020



Home Office

Country Information Note

Bangladesh: Documentation

Version 2.0

March 2020

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in [the basis of claim](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

Methodology

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Summary

Updated: 17 March 2020

1.1 Types of documentation

- 1.1.1 National Identity Cards (NICs) are issued to Bangladesh citizens aged over 18 upon registration with the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC). To obtain an NIC, applicants must provide their electoral roll serial number, personal data (parents' names, date of birth and residential address), thumbprints, photograph, and signature. Cardholders are not required to update their residential addresses should they change residence. NICs are paper-based laminated cards (see [National Identity Cards \(NICs\)](#)).
- 1.1.2 In October 2016, the BEC announced the introduction of the machine-readable 'smart' NIC, which contains security features in its microchip. Distribution of the new smart cards is ongoing and old NICs remain in circulation at the time of publication (see [National Identity Cards \(NICs\)](#)).
- 1.1.3 Bangladeshi citizens are eligible to apply for a passport if they hold an NIC or birth certificate with a 17-digit birth registration number. Passports are machine readable and applicants must provide fingerprints and photographs to a passport office before lodging an application. A local police officer must verify the applicant's identity (see [Passports](#)).
- 1.1.4 Other common forms of identification include birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates (see [Birth and death certificates](#) and [Marriage and divorce certificates](#)).

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1.2 Police records

- 1.2.1 A First Information Report (FIR) is a record of a crime reported to the police and the basis to initiate an investigation or arrest for a 'cognizable offence' (an offence where the police may arrest a person without warrant, such as murder, theft, grievous hurt) and contains the following:
 - Name of police station
 - Name and address of complainant
 - Name and details of accused (if known)
 - The date, time and location of the incident
 - The true facts of the incident as they occurred
 - Names and descriptions of the persons involved in the incident
 - Witnesses
 - Relevant circumstances after the incident
 - Any previous linkage, history or threat to commit the offence
 - Signature (or thumbprint) of complainant (see [First Information Report \(FIR\)](#)).

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1.3 Verification process

- 1.3.1 See [Annex B](#) regarding the process for verifying documents, submitted in support of applications for leave to remain in the UK, conducted by the British High Commission, Dhaka.

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1.4 Rohingya refugees

- 1.4.1 Some 500,000 Rohingya refugees, verified by UNHCR and over the age of 12, have been issued, in August 2019, with biometric identity cards. These regulate their stay in Bangladesh and indicate Myanmar as their country of origin (see [Rohingya refugees](#) and the [Country Policy and Information Note Burma \[Myanmar\]: Rohingya](#)).

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1.5 Fraud and corruption

- 1.5.1 Whilst biometric features has limited the opportunity for fraud, document fraud is widespread and may include passports (in which fraud is particularly common), birth certificates, bank statements, taxation documents, business documents, school documents and marriage certificates. Corruption is endemic and occurs at all levels of society (see Corruption: [Overview](#), [Prevalence and procurement of fraudulent documents](#) and [Types of fraudulent documents](#)).

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1.6 Caselaw

- 1.6.1 In the caselaw [A v Secretary of State for the Home Department \(Pakistan\) \[2002\] UKIAT 00439 \(19 February 2002\)](#), heard on 20 December 2001, the Immigration Appeal Tribunal held:

‘1. In asylum and human rights cases it is for an individual claimant to show that a document on which he seeks to rely can be relied on.

‘2. The decision maker should consider whether a document is one on which reliance should properly be placed after looking at all the evidence in the round.

‘3. Only very rarely will there be the need to make an allegation of forgery, or evidence strong enough to support it. The allegation should not be made without such evidence. Failure to establish the allegation on the balance of probabilities to the higher civil standard does not show that a document is reliable. The decision maker still needs to apply principles 1 and 2.’ (para 38)

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Country information

Section 2 updated: 14 January 2020

2. Types of identification and issuing authorities

2.1 National Identity Cards (NICs)

2.1.1 The Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) is the government department responsible for issuing national identity cards and for maintaining the national citizen registration database¹. National Identity Cards (NICs) are issued to Bangladesh citizens aged over 18 upon registration with the BEC².

2.1.2 As noted in the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) report on Bangladesh, dated August 2019:

'NICs are valid for 15 years and are required to complete a wide range of transactions, including voting, banking, obtaining a passport, and purchasing property or other assets. To obtain a NIC, applicants must provide their electoral roll serial number, personal particulars (parents' names, date of birth and residential address), thumbprints, photograph, and signature. The BEC crosschecks these details against applicants' electoral roll details. Applicants can provide proof of residence using a range of official documents, including drivers' licences and utility bills. Cardholders are not required to update their residential addresses should they change residence.'³

2.1.3 Advox, a global network of bloggers and online activists promoting freedom of expression, reported in October 2016 on the introduction of a 'smart' national identity card, to replace the existing paper-based laminated card. According to Advox, smart NICs will be valid for 10 years⁴.

2.1.4 According to DFAT:

'The smart NIC is a machine-readable card containing 32 types of basic information about a citizen embedded in its microchip. It contains 25 security features including photographs and electronic chips. The purpose of the smart NIC was to prevent fraud, which was previously endemic. The BEC is currently in the process of distributing smart NICS nationwide. This process remains ongoing, and many older National Identity Cards without security features are reportedly still in use.'⁵

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2.2 Passports

2.2.1 The Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) is responsible for issuing machine readable passports (MRPs)⁶. Passport applications can be

¹ BEC, 'NIDW objectives', n.d., [url](#).

² BEC, 'Enroll and obtaining NID', n.d., [url](#).

³ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh' (para 5.32) 22 August 2019, [url](#).

⁴ Advox, 'Bangladesh Introduces "Smart" National Identity Cards', 7 October 2016, [url](#).

⁵ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh' (para 5.33) 22 August 2019, [url](#).

⁶ DIP, (website), [url](#).

made in the UK at the Bangladesh High Commission, London⁷. There are 3 types of passport – regular (or ‘Ordinary’⁸), diplomatic, and official⁹.

- 2.2.2 According to an article in the Dhaka Tribune, dated 14 May 2018, sources from the DIP stated that current regulations ‘do not allow a number of information updates to passports, including name, age and parents’ name. However, spelling correction for names is allowed.’ The DIP also added that surnames could not be changed even if a woman took her husband’s name after marriage. As regard religious conversion, the DIP said the applicant must make an affidavit to apply for the change of information¹⁰.

- 2.2.3 DFAT noted:

‘Adults applying for a passport must have a valid NIC or birth registration certificate with a 17-digit birth registration number. Applicants must provide biometric data (fingerprints and photographs) to a passport office before lodging their application. A local police officer must verify an individual’s identity. Applicants can obtain a birth registration number by declaring their date of birth in person or via the BRIS [Birth Registration Information System] system.’¹¹

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2.3 Birth and death certificates

- 2.3.1 Lifos, the Swedish Migration Agency’s centre for country of origin information, provided an English summary to its report on fraudulent documents in Bangladesh, dated February 2019, which was based, to a large extent, on information provided by the Swedish Embassy in Dhaka. The summary noted: ‘There is currently no functioning civil registration in Bangladesh and the country lacks a comprehensive national civil registration system. Births, deaths and marriages are registered with different departments within the local authorities.’¹²

- 2.3.2 The US Department of State annual human rights report covering 2018 (USSD HR Report 2018) stated that ‘Individuals are born citizens if their parents were Bangladeshi citizens, if the nationality of the parents is unknown and the child is born in Bangladeshi territory, or if their fathers or grandfathers were born in the territories now part of the country. If a person qualifies for citizenship through ancestry, the father or grandfather must have been a permanent resident of these territories in or after 1971.’¹³

- 2.3.3 DFAT noted:

‘The Births and Deaths Registration Act (2004) makes birth registration compulsory for all babies born in Bangladesh, and registration of births has become increasingly widespread. Parents must register newborn babies within 45 days of birth, and penalties apply for failure to register births within

⁷ Bangladesh High Commission, ‘MRP’, n.d., [url](#).

⁸ Machine Readable Passport Application Form, n.d., [url](#)

⁹ USSD, ‘Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh’ (Passport and other travel documents) n.d., [url](#).

¹⁰ Dhaka Tribune, ‘Is it possible to change passport information?’, 14 May 2018, [url](#).

¹¹ DFAT, ‘Country Information Report Bangladesh’ (para 5.34) 22 August 2019, [url](#).

¹² Lifos, ‘Bangladesh Falska handlingar’ (page 4) 25 February 2019, [url](#).

¹³ USSD, ‘HR Report 2018’ (page 34) 13 March 2019, [url](#).

two years. Bangladeshis require birth certificates to access school enrolment, passports, voter registration, and employment in government or non-government organisations, and to register marriages.¹⁴

- 2.3.4 According to DFAT's understanding, '... not all service providers routinely demand birth certificates as required under the Act. Since 2001, the electronic Birth Registration Information System (BRIS) has recorded all births centrally. DFAT understands that people are still able to apply for birth certificates without any supporting documentation (in cases where people have lost their original birth certificate or have never been in possession of one), and there is a high prevalence of document fraud in relation to birth certificates.'¹⁵
- 2.3.5 The US Department of State's (USSD) Reciprocity Schedule for Bangladesh, undated, noted that birth and death certificates for non-residents of Bangladesh can be issued at the nearest Bangladesh High Commission, Embassy or Consulate, whilst for those in Bangladesh the issuing authority will be the City Corporation, Municipality/Pourashava Office, Union Parishad Office, or Cantonment Board¹⁶.
- 2.3.6 According to the same source, birth and death certificates issued on or after July 2006 have a 17-digit identification number. Those issued before this date do not contain such a number, but 'must be submitted to the concerned registry office for re-issuance with the 17 digit identification number'¹⁷.
- 2.3.7 On 26 November 2019, in correspondence with the Country Policy and Information Team, an official at the British High Commission, Dhaka, cited a [web page](#) which allows verification of whether a Bangladesh birth certificate was issued. However, the BHC official noted:

'In 2016, during the course of their duties, officers based at the British High Commission Dhaka Bangladesh who worked for Immigration Enforcement International, (known at that time as RALON), saw an online application registration office operating in Sylhet in a marketplace, not at the Union Parishad. There was limited monitoring of what was being entered making it very easy to be open to abuse. The office was not security patrolled nor was there any CCTV in operation.

'Given this, it was considered that one should exercise caution when using this online tool and place little reliance on checks conducted via this link. The data is dependent upon the unverified information provided by individuals and the integrity of the person inputting it.'¹⁸

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¹⁴ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh' (para 5.31) 22 August 2019, [url](#).

¹⁵ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh' (para 5.31) 22 August 2019, [url](#).

¹⁶ USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Birth, death, burial certificates) n.d., [url](#).

¹⁷ USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Birth, death, burial certificates) n.d., [url](#).

¹⁸ BHC, 'Correspondence with CPIT', 26 November 2019, [Annex A](#).

2.4 Marriage and divorce certificates

- 2.4.1 The Kazi Office (for Muslim marriage registration¹⁹) in Dhaka, provided examples of marriage (nikahnama) certificates²⁰, a court marriage certificate²¹, and a divorce certificate²². The USSD Reciprocity Schedule noted that marriage certificates for Christians, Hindus and Buddhists were issued by the Church / Temple Priest or Marriage Registrar²³. The same source contains information about the 'Special Seal(s)/Color/Format' of these marriage certificates²⁴.
- 2.4.2 According to the USSD Reciprocity Schedule, 'The Talaknama [divorce certificate for Muslims] must include information about the type of divorce (B Talak – husband initiating the divorce, C Talak – mutual agreement to divorce, or D Talak – wife initiating the divorce), date of initiation of divorce proceedings, and date of divorce registration with the kazi office.'²⁵
- 2.4.3 Depending on the circumstances, Christians may obtain divorce at a Family or High Court and, whilst there is no legal mechanism for divorce in Bangladesh for Hindus or Buddhists, a divorce decree may be obtained from a country where Hindu or Buddhist divorces are recognized, according to the USSD Reciprocity Schedule²⁶. The same source contains information about the 'Special Seal(s)/Color/Format' of these divorce certificates²⁷.

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Section 3 updated: 17 March 2020

3. Police reports

3.1 First Information Report (FIR)

- 3.1.1 A FIR is the legal basis for reporting a 'cognisable offence' – one in which the police may arrest a person without a warrant – which are '... offences that are comparatively grievous in nature and heavy punishments are sanctioned for them. Police can take immediate action like arrest and investigation after having the FIR of those offences, Police do not need a court order to act on such kind of offences. These offences are most of the time non-bailable too. Examples of cognizable offences: Murder, Grievous Hurt, Theft, Dacoity etc.'²⁸ They may be filed by a third person, for example the victim of a crime, or by a police officer who becomes aware of a cognisable offence. FIRs can be filed to the police in person, in writing or by telephone. A FIR should be signed (or thumb impression) by the complainant and contain the following information:

- Name of police station

¹⁹ IRB, 'Bangladesh: The role of the Kazi...', 17 April 2000, [url](#).

²⁰ Kazi Office, 'Marriage certificate', n.d., [url](#).

²¹ Kazi Office, 'Court marriage', n.d., [url](#).

²² Kazi Office, 'Divorce certificate', n.d., [url](#).

²³ USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Marriage, divorce certificates) n.d., [url](#).

²⁴ See USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Marriage, divorce certificates) n.d., [url](#).

²⁵ USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Marriage, divorce certificates) n.d., [url](#).

²⁶ USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Marriage, divorce certificates) n.d., [url](#).

²⁷ See USSD, 'Reciprocity Schedule Bangladesh' (Marriage, divorce certificates) n.d., [url](#).

²⁸ Law Help BD, 'All about First Information Report (FIR)', 23 July 2019, [url](#).

- Name and address of complainant
 - Name and details of accused (if known)
 - The date, time and location of the incident
 - The true facts of the incident as they occurred
 - Names and descriptions of the persons involved in the incident
 - Witnesses
 - Relevant circumstances after the incident
 - Any previous linkage, history or threat to commit the offence
 - Signature or thumb impression of the informant^{29 30}.
- 3.1.2 See [Annex B](#) regarding the process for verifying documents, submitted in support of applications for leave to remain in the UK, conducted by the British High Commission, Dhaka.
- 3.1.3 A person who files a false complaint, or offers wrong or misleading information to the police, may be liable for prosecution^{31 32}.

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Section 4 updated: 14 January 2020

4. Documentation for Rohingya refugees

- 4.1.1 For information on documentation used by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, see the [Country Policy and Information Note Burma \[Myanmar\]: Rohingya](#).
- 4.1.2 In August 2019, a UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson reported that over 500,000 Rohingya refugees over the age of 12 had been issued with a 'biometric, fraud-proof' identity card³³. A UNHCR press briefing noted 'UNHCR's Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) captures biometric data, including fingerprints and iris scans, which secure each refugee's unique identity as well as other important information such as family links' and the cards indicate Myanmar as the country of origin³⁴. According to UNHCR, an estimated 900,000 refugees live in Cox's Bazar. The cards regulate a refugee's stay in Bangladesh and UNHCR stressed they were not citizenship documents for Myanmar³⁵.

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²⁹ Dhaka Tribune, 'Filing a flawless First Information Report', 8 July 2013, [url](#).

³⁰ Law Help BD, 'All about First Information Report (FIR)', 23 July 2019, [url](#).

³¹ Dhaka Tribune, 'Filing a flawless First Information Report', 8 July 2013, [url](#).

³² Law Help BD, 'All about First Information Report (FIR)', 23 July 2019, [url](#).

³³ UN News, 'More than half a million Rohingya in Bangladesh get ID cards', 9 August 2019, [url](#).

³⁴ UNHCR, 'More than half a million Rohingya refugees receive identity ...', 9 August 2019, [url](#).

³⁵ UN News, 'More than half a million Rohingya in Bangladesh get ID cards', 9 August 2019, [url](#).

5. Corruption

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 According to GAN Integrity's Business Anti-Corruption Portal, updated May 2018, citing a range of sources:

'According to all major ranking institutions, Bangladesh routinely finds itself among the most corrupt countries in the world. [...]. Corruption is pervasive at all levels of society [...]. The Code of Criminal Procedure, the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Penal Code, and the Money Laundering Prevention Act criminalize attempted corruption, extortion, active and passive bribery, bribery of foreign public officials, money laundering and using public resources or confidential state information for private gain. Nevertheless, anti-corruption legislation is inadequately enforced. Facilitation payments and gifts are illegal, but common in practice.'³⁶

- 5.1.2 A brief on Bangladesh, dated February 2019, by the U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk (operated by Transparency International in collaboration with the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre based at the Chr. Michelsen Institute) cited a range of sources and noted that 'Corruption is to be found at all levels in almost all areas of government and some private organisations.'³⁷ The brief stated:

'Bangladesh ranks 143 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) with a score of 28/100 (Transparency International 2018) with 0 denoting the highest perception of corruption and 100 the lowest. Bangladesh also scores poorly in a number of governance-related issues, including corruption, according to the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) by the World Bank (2017)...

'The 2017 TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix places Bangladesh in the high-risk category, ranking it 185 out of 200 surveyed countries. This high risk of bribery is confirmed by the National Household Survey 2017 conducted by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), which shows that 66.5% of the surveyed households have been victims of corruption in one or other selected sector of service delivery (including electricity, health and education) or when coming in contact with law enforcement.'³⁸

See also [Action against corruption and fraud](#).

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5.2 Prevalence and procurement of fraudulent documents

- 5.2.1 The Research Directorate of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), in a response dated 20 September 2010, citing various sources, stated that:

'In 7 September 2010 correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh stated that "There is a significant prevalence of fraudulent documents [in Bangladesh] including

³⁶ GAN Integrity, 'Bangladesh Corruption Report', May 2018, [url](#).

³⁷ U4 Helpdesk, 'Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption...', (page 6), 15 February 2019, [url](#).

³⁸ U4 Helpdesk, 'Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption...', (page 4), 15 February 2019, [url](#).

passports, birth certificates, bank statements, taxation documents, business documents, school documents, marriage certificates. If we ask for it, it can be produced.” The Canadian Official added that “[t]here is no difficulty at all for anyone to obtain these documents. Quality varies with prices paid” ...

‘In Bangladesh, those seeking to have false identity documents commonly avail [themselves] of the services of middle persons, or dalal. According to a dalal who was interviewed, an efficient system has developed where applicants pay an additional fee to avoid the hassle of going through the official procedures, particularly for procuring passports. The dalal pays the relevant issuing officer, who in turn pays the special branch of the police for the required verification. Such verification is generally issued regardless of whether the information provided is correct or not...

‘An official at the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh further noted that “...primary source documents are not even required for a Bangladeshi passport as births are not generally recorded at the time of birth. One only needs to make a self declaration as to one's name and date of birth and you get your passport in that name and date of birth...”³⁹

5.2.2 A later response on fraudulent documents by the IRB, published August 2015 and covering the period 2011 to 2015, noted the continued use of fraudulent documents and of unscrupulous middle men who might provide false documentation⁴⁰.

5.2.3 In May 2017, UK Home Office officials undertook a fact-finding mission (FFM) to Bangladesh and met with a range of interlocutors. In its subsequent report, published September 2017, it was noted:

‘The BHC [British High Commission, Dhaka] noted that forged and fraudulently obtained documents were easily obtainable. TI [Transparency International] noted that there were significant incidents of forged documents, particularly in relation to land matters, but it is not a general problem. [...] One [anonymous] source noted that forged or fraudulent police or court documents are not easily obtainable, because of counter-signature processes and the fact that all documents can be checked against a database.’⁴¹

5.2.4 The Lifos report's English summary noted:

‘Bangladesh is ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and corruption is extensive and occurs at all levels of society. The widespread corruption enables extensive production and trade of fraudulent documents. The lack of central civil registries also makes it easier to obtain genuine documents with false information, as the information is often not checked against other (local) registries.

‘Translations of documents from Bangladesh are not always reliable as it is possible to bribe an authorised translator to change or omit information in the translated document.’⁴²

³⁹ IRB, ‘Bangladesh: Reports of fraudulent documents’, 20 September 2010’, [url](#).

⁴⁰ IRB, ‘Bangladesh: Reports of fraudulent documents’, 20 August 2015, [url](#).

⁴¹ Home Office, ‘FFM Bangladesh’, (page 24), September 2017, [url](#).

⁴² Lifos, ‘Bangladesh Falska handlingar’, (page 4), 25 February 2019, [url](#).

5.2.5 DFAT reported:

'The increasing use of biometric data collection has limited opportunities for fraud because of the greater capacity for authorities to check suspicious identity documents. DFAT assesses, however, that the use of fraudulent documents and fraudulently obtained genuine documents remains widespread. This risk is exacerbated given that civil documentation is generally held by local issuing offices in paper-based files without networked systems.

'It is common for Bangladeshis to acquire documents through an agent, or "middleman". This individual will make an application for documents on behalf of the person that has requested them, a process which may be subject to fraud. It is therefore possible that the person seeking the document does not know that their documents are fraudulent. The risk involved with the use of middlemen may be unavoidable, as some sources report that it is not possible to get documents without the use of such an agent.'⁴³

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5.3 Types of fraudulent documents

5.3.1 The DFAT report noted 'While the government introduced machine-readable passports and established a passports database in 2010, DFAT understands that there is still a high prevalence of fraud in relation to passports.'⁴⁴

5.3.2 The same source added:

'Passport fraud is a particularly common type of fraud, given many Bangladeshis travel or are trafficked abroad in order to get work. DFAT is aware of Rohingya obtaining genuine Bangladeshi passports by fraudulent means, such as paying bribes. Once these passports expire they cannot be renewed, which has led to some high profile cases of stateless people abroad unable to return, or being arrested or detained by Bangladeshi authorities upon return. Some Bangladeshis reportedly try to leave on fraudulent passports via India, where the bona fides of the passport are more difficult to check. These travellers may be detected by Indian immigration at inward or outward borders. Bangladeshi immigration officers at the border may lack the skills and expertise to identify fraudulent documents on entry or exit. Attempting to obtain a genuine passport without corruption can be difficult as each step of obtaining documents may require bribes. For example, obtaining a passport might require a police certificate, which could require a bribe. A fraudulent document can be more easily detected than a fraudulently obtained genuine document.'⁴⁵

5.3.3 In September 2019, there were reports of Rohingya refugees obtaining fraudulent Bangladeshi passports and ID cards via Rohingya and Bangladeshi brokers^{46 47}.

⁴³ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh', (paras 5.39-5.40), 22 August 2019, [url](#).

⁴⁴ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh', (para 5.34), 22 August 2019, [url](#).

⁴⁵ DFAT, 'Country Information Report Bangladesh', (para 5.41), 22 August 2019, [url](#).

⁴⁶ Daily Star, 'Rohingya getting fake passports', 9 September 2019, [url](#).

⁴⁷ Anadolu Agency, 'Detentions over giving NID card to Rohingya', 22 September 2019, [url](#).

- 5.3.4 For further information on fraudulent documents used by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and by Bangladeshis posing as Rohingya, see the [Country Policy and Information Note Burma \[Myanmar\]: Rohingya](#).
- 5.3.5 In its 2017 National Household Survey on Corruption in Service Sectors, Transparency International (TI) Bangladesh reported that the Department of Immigration and Passports was deemed the second most corrupt public sector⁴⁸. Most evidence of corruption was in the form of paying bribes to obtain passport services from regional offices⁴⁹. It was also reported that bribes were paid to police officials to verify passports⁵⁰.
- 5.3.6 As reported by DFAT:
- ‘Fraudulent NICs are harder to produce as they contain a plastic chip with biometric information embedded. A genuine, but fraudulently obtained document may contain some correct biometric information. Authorities can also check NICs on a national database, which may provide some protection against fraud.
- ‘Political party documents may be subject to fraud, as they do not contain the security features of other documents. The patronage-based nature of political participation means that an analysis of the person’s political relationships may be more useful in determining their membership of a party. Obtaining such documents fraudulently may be facilitated through patronage networks, in which case it is probable that the bearer is a member of the party.
- ‘Court and police documents may be fraudulently obtained, for example by bribing police for minor offences to be removed from a record. Corruption is widespread in the courts and the police and it is possible that genuine documents are fraudulently obtained as part of this process. Local media often reports on cases where fake court documents are created for personal gain. The court system and police systems are heavily bureaucratic and often paper based, which can limit the ability to detect fake documents. Official documents, including identity, nationality, and court documents, can often be difficult to verify through formal channels. This is for a variety of reasons, including expectations by some officials of facilitation payments, or genuine lack of adequate records and capacity. DFAT assesses that fraudulent court documents, or court documents that are obtained fraudulently, are relatively common in Bangladesh.’⁵¹
- 5.3.7 See [Annex B](#) regarding the process for verifying documents, submitted in support of applications for leave to remain in the UK, conducted by the British High Commission, Dhaka.
- 5.3.8 The Home Office FFM report noted that several sources commented it was hard to fake news, such as posting an arrest warrant or court summons in a paper, in the mainstream media. It would be easier to publish online⁵².

⁴⁸ TI, ‘Corruption in Service Sectors’, (page 13), 30 August 2018, [url](#).

⁴⁹ TI, ‘Corruption in Service Sectors’, (pages 26-27), 30 August 2018, [url](#).

⁵⁰ TI, ‘Corruption in Service Sectors’, (page 25), 30 August 2018, [url](#).

⁵¹ DFAT, ‘Country Information Report Bangladesh’, (paras 5.42-5.44), 22 August 2019, [url](#).

⁵² Home Office, ‘FFM Bangladesh’, (pages 24, 81, 113), September 2017, [url](#).

5.4 Action against corruption and fraud

- 5.4.1 Regarding the introduction of smart ID cards, Advox noted in October 2016: ‘The government has explained that the cards are intended to curb forgery: previously, laminated cards used for voting were relatively easy to copy and forge. The Election Commission says the machine-readable cards include “25 features” designed to prevent forgery. In 2014, law enforcement discovered a set of more than 50,000 fake IDs generated for fraud or other intents in the country. EC Secretary Sirazul Islam also said that “forging the smart NID cards would be almost impossible”.’⁵³
- 5.4.2 As cited in the Home Office FFM report, Transparency International stated that despite robust laws, for example the Anti-Corruption Law 2004 and the National Integrity Strategy 2012, corruption was ‘endemic’⁵⁴.
- 5.4.3 The U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk noted in its brief on Bangladesh ‘Numerous studies have concluded that despite the existence of reasonably sound legal framework, the implementation and enforcement of legislation is largely inadequate, and a culture of noncompliance generally prevails...’⁵⁵

⁵³ Advox, ‘Bangladesh Introduces “Smart” National Identity Cards’, 7 October 2016, [url](#).

⁵⁴ Home Office, ‘FFM Bangladesh’, (page 24), September 2017, [url](#).

⁵⁵ U4 Helpdesk, ‘Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption...’, (page 11), 15 February 2019, [url](#).

Annex A

British High Commission correspondence, 26 November 2019

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Tel: (880) (2)55668700

26 November 2019

To whom it may concern

A web page can be accessed which allows you to verify whether a Bangladesh birth certificate was issued: <http://br.lgd.gov.bd/>.

In 2016, during the course of their duties, officers based at the British High Commission Dhaka Bangladesh who worked for Immigration Enforcement International, (known at that time as RALON), saw an online application registration office operating in Sylhet in a marketplace, not at the Union Parishad. There was limited monitoring of what was being entered making it very easy to be open to abuse. The office was not security patrolled nor was there any CCTV in operation.

Given this, it was considered that one should exercise caution when using this online tool and place little reliance on checks conducted via this link. The data is dependent upon the unverified information provided by individuals and the integrity of the person inputting it.

Corruption in Bangladesh is widely reported on. Whilst an Anti-Corruption Commission was formed in 2004, according to Transparency International, an anti-corruption watchdog, Bangladesh ranks 149/180 in its published Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2018.

[redacted]

Immigration Liaison and Migration Manager

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Annex B

British High Commission correspondence, 17 March 2020

British High Commission
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17 March 2020

To whom it may concern

General Field Trip Verification Process Bangladesh

Field trips to verify documents submitted in support of applications for leave to remain in the UK or in relation to appeals are conducted by trained locally engaged members of staff of the British High Commission. The officers are security cleared before commencing work at the High Commission. They speak both English and the local language. They are trained on conducting field visits which includes ensuring that information about the subject of the visit is not disclosed to the authorities.

When requested and where possible an officer will visit, in person, the court or police station shown on the documents submitted by an applicant/appellant, where the paper records are held. A field trip to a court or police station located in or around Dhaka can be completed within one day. Locations outside of Dhaka will take longer to complete. Some locations are reached by air, in which case the officer may remain in the area for up to one week and conduct several field trips during that time.

Following a field trip the officer completes a document verification report (DVR) to detail the outcome of the verification. In the same way we protect the identity of the subject of a verification we also have a commitment to protect our locally engaged members of staff. Therefore we do not disclose their identity on the verification documents we provide.

Verification of documents at Courts in Bangladesh

A Charge Sheet (CS) is the document submitted by the Bangladesh Police Investigating Officer to the court following an initial investigation after receiving First Information. The CS contains the names of the accused who are sent for trial. Based on the outcome of the Police initial investigation, the individuals listed by the Investigating Officer on the CS may differ to those on the original FIR. The CS is recorded in the General Register (GR) at court under the relevant date and issued a reference number. The CS reference number is recorded in the FIR Register at the police station against the corresponding FIR.

When an officer from the British High Commission visits the court related to the FIR or CS provided by the applicant / appellant they request the clerk/record keeper to check the GR relating to the police station, FIR and CS reference numbers.

Each court maintains a General Register which consists of paper books and each book lists all case numbers for one year. The CS is entered into the register chronologically and given a sequential GR reference number. An example GR reference number is 47(4)/10, the first number is the sequential number, the number in brackets refers to the month and the final number is the year the case was filed at the court.

The officer checks whether the reference number shown on the CS provided is listed in the GR for the relevant year. They also check whether the month on the CS matches in the register. Finally they check whether the subject of the CS matches the details of the accused in the register.

The officer makes a brief note in their notebook of the outcome to enable them to complete a DVR. If permitted by the clerk / record keeper they take a photograph of any relevant pages for inclusion in the DVR. They complete a DVR as soon as possible after the field trip.

Verification of documents at Police Stations in Bangladesh

A First Information Report (FIR) is a report filed by the police following an initial investigation into an incident that was reported by a complainant. The complainant can be a member of the public or a Police Officer or the Court. The FIR is the start of a formal investigation and is sent to the court. After the FIR is filed with the court the police have two options; they can either file a Charge Sheet and pursue prosecution or file a Final Report and request the court to dismiss the case.

All police stations maintain an FIR Register, once the FIR is filed it is entered into the register on the relevant date and issued a reference number. The FIR register is made up of paper books. Each book lists all FIRs registered in one year and is split into months. The FIRs are entered into the register chronologically and given a sequential reference number. FIR reference numbers begin from number one at the start of each new month.

The FIR register consists of details including:-

- the date the First Information Report was completed at the police station;
- the sequential reference number allocated to that FIR during that month;
- the Charge Sheet reference number (if the case proceeded to court).

Officers from the British High Commission will mainly conduct checks at court. On occasion they may visit a police station, if required. When an officer from the British High Commission visits the police station shown on the FIR provided they seek the permission of the Officer in Charge to personally look at the FIR register to confirm whether the FIR submitted is recorded in the register.

The officer checks whether the reference number shown on the FIR submitted is listed in the register for the relevant month and year. They also check whether the dates on the FIR match in the register.

The officer does not divulge the FIR number or subject's name to the Police Officers at the police station. There are multiple FIRs recorded on each page of the register so it is not possible for the Police Officers to note which FIR the officer is looking at and the officer will look at a number of pages.

The officer makes a brief note in their notebook of the outcome to enable them to complete a DVR. They complete a DVR as soon as possible after the field trip.

If the FIR is filed with the court the corresponding Charge Sheet number will be written next to the FIR reference. Any Charge Sheet reference number provided by an applicant / appellant can therefore also be checked in the FIR register at the police station.

Further information about First Information Reports, Charge Sheets and the General Register can be found in Police Regulations Bengal which is listed as a Bangladesh Police Legal Instrument on the official Bangladesh Police website, https://www.police.gov.bd/en/legal_instruments?page=2.

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British High Commission Dhaka

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Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Identification
 - ID cards
 - Passports
 - Birth and death certificates
 - Marriage and divorce certificates
 - Other ID
- Police documents
 - First Information Reports (FIRs)
- Rohingya refugees
- Corruption
 - Forged and fraudulent documents
 - Prevalance / type

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- valid from **17 March 2020**

Changes from last version of this note

Inclusion of [Annex B](#), referring to the process on verifying documents by the British High Commission, Dhaka. Referred to in sections 1.3, 3.1 and 5.3.

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