Bangladesh

Location

Bangladesh is a nation located in Southern Asia. Its' precise coordinates are 20 degree 34' and 26 degree 39' north latitude and 88 degree 00' and 92 degree 41’ east longitude. It borders India on the east, west and north; the Bay of Bengal on the south and Burma to the Southeast. It's close proximity to India and it's history as a former part of Pakistan places it in the center of one of the world's most serious conflicts.

Geography

Bangladesh is composed mostly of flat plains which are made up of alluvial soil but it's hilly in the southeast areas. The Indian Ocean is the lowest point in the country and the highest point is the peak of Keokradong located 1,230 meters above sea level. The entire nation is a little smaller than the State of Ohio, composed of approximately 133,910 square miles of land and 10,090 square miles of water. Major rivers from the Himalayas such as the Ganges, Jamuna and Megha run through Bangladesh and empty into the Bay of Bengal creating many smaller rivers and canals.

Climate

Bangladesh like much of southern Asia is characterized by extremely hot summers from March to June, tropical monsoons from July to October, and a relatively mild winter for the remainder of the year. It has one of the wettest climates in the world with an average rainfall ranging from 7 mm in January to approximately 518 mm in July. This heavy rainfall, in some months along with its close proximity with the Himalayas and the large rivers that emerge from this mountain chain make it one of the most flood prone countries on the planet.

History

Bangladesh emerged as a result of growing tensions over language amidst the eastern and western halves of Pakistan. When Pakistan split away from India, the western half, which predominantly spoke Bengali, made Bengali the nation's official language despite protests from the East. The eastern half, with no land passage to the western side, felt increasingly less represented in the Pakistani government and attempted to form it's own governmental body. Pakistan refused to recognize the Bangladeshi government and attempted to send troops and seize the nation. With help from neighboring India, Bangladesh gained independence and became a separate entity following a nine month struggle on March 26, 1971.

Dates Important

February 21, 1971 is recognized as the Nation's Martyrs Day to recognize the many people who died in the fight for independence
March 26, 1971 is recognized as the official date when it gained independence from West Pakistan
December 16, 1971 commemorates the official creation of the state of Bangladesh and is referred to as Victory Day
Population

The population of Bangladesh is 138,448,210. Considering that this large a population resides in a nation roughly the size of Iowa, it's understandable why Bangladesh has such a high population density and poverty. Bangladesh, like many developing nations, is heavily reliant upon it's agriculture sector as a source of much of it's revenue. All efforts thus far to modernize the nation and increase its economic condition have failed. These efforts are hindered in large part by a very volatile political environment, opposition from government and public organizations, and wide spread government corruption.

Currency

The official currency for Bangladesh is the taka. Paisa is the equivalent of the penny. Thus a hundred paisa make up each taka. Their denominations of bills are 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, and 500 Taka. 1 USD = 58.7500 BDT

Education

One of the main problems with Bangladesh is its low literacy rate of 35%. In addition, a much higher proportion of men (45%) are literate than women (24%) which contributes to the social tendency to view women as having a lesser prominence than men but this trend is slowly changing. The recently formed Universal Primary Education program has contributed to rising literacy rates. The literacy rate in Bangladesh was very low, with significant disparity between female and male literacy rates. However, with the inception of Universal Primary Education program, the literacy rates have been increasing. Now, up to 79% of the population between 6-11 is enrolled in primary school while a mere 17% of this age group is enrolled in secondary school.

Language

As the history of Bangladesh suggests, language plays a very significant role in Bangladesh's culture. In fact, the acceptance of Urdu as the official language of Pakistan despite protests from the region now known as Bangladesh was one of the most significant driving factors behind the nations struggle for independence. The majority of people speak Bengali, an Indo-Aryan language with it's origins deeply rooted in Prakrit, a form of Sanskrit. The language consists of 12 vowels and 52 consonants.

Religion

Bangladesh is predominantly composed of those following the Islamic faith with 88.3% of it's population made up of Muslims, 10.5% Hindus, .6% Buddhist and 0.3% as Christian. The large proportion of Muslims in the region was why Bangladesh emerged as a part of Pakistan separate from India, despite being territorially separate from it. Parkinson's ethnic distribution is even more homogenous with 98.8% of the population being Bengali and the remainder being various tribal origins.

Agriculture

Like most developing nations, Bangladesh is heavily dependent on agriculture with two thirds of Bangladeshis working in the agriculture sector. Rice is by far the largest crops in Southern Asia. Thus understandably, most Bengali dishes are based on rice. The land distribution for Bangladesh is 70% arable land, 5% grass land, and 14%
wooded areas. Its main agriculture products are rice, jute, sugar cane, cattle, fish, timber, tea, wheat, tobacco, livestock, and fish. The livestock includes buffalo, cattle, duck, goat, horses, and poultry. Pollution, erosion, water shortages and contamination are serious problems in Bangladesh that hinder the agriculture industry.

**Trade**

Bangladesh suffers severely from overpopulation and poverty with over 4% of its population below the poverty line which greatly hinders its economic potential. Bangladesh's major trade partners include the United States, Japan, India, Canada, China, Korea, Singapore, and the Western European Union among others. The nation has a human development index of .47 placing it 132 in the world. While agriculture accounts for the vast majority of its product, 16% of its gross domestic product are industrial products such as jute, textiles, sugar, glass, fertilizers, and steel. Mining products such as natural gas, sand, lignite, limestone, and ceramic clay are also exported. Bangladesh nets another 0.2 million from tourism.

**Food**

The factors already mentioned influence tremendously the major food eaten in Bangladesh. Their heavy reliance upon agriculture, especially rice, contributes to many of their foods. In addition the large number of bodies of water that flow through Bangladesh make fishing a major source of their food supply. Many of their foods is thus, understandably, fish-based. Bangladesh's major dishes include prawn curry, makh terkari (fish curry), reshmi kabab, tikya kabab, vindaloo, fish do-peaja, kalia, fish dopeeaja, bhapa ilish patey (fish), fish in mustard oil, and chicken makhani. Bangladesh is also noted for many sweets which are milk-based. These include in Bengali cooking is Rasho-gollah, kalo-jam, shandesh, mishti doi, shemai, and chamcham.

**Landmark**

Bangladesh’s many natural landmarks include the Reng Tlang Mountain with their heights point being 957 m. They have many natural sea level lakes and only one artificial lake, a reservoir called Karnafuli Reservoir. Bangladesh also has a few rivers, the Padma (Ganges), the Jamuna (Brahmaputra), and the Meghna (a river that splits into 4 mouths), the Teesta, the Surma, and the Kamaphuli but has no waterfalls or deserts. Bangladesh also has a few islands in the Ganges' delta.

Swati Varma