SRI LANKA

Location

Sri Lanka is an island located in the Indian Ocean south of the Indian sub-continent. It lies between 5° 55' and 9° 55' north of the equator and between the eastern longitudes of 79° 42' and 81° 52'. The total land area is 65,610 sq. km. and is astonishingly varied. A length of land measuring 445 km. and the breadth of 225 km encompasses beautiful tropical beaches, verdant vegetation, ancient monuments and a thousand delights to please all tastes. One of the relief features of the country is a mountain, which is located south of the center, with its height exceeding 2500 meters and is surrounded by broad plains. There are beautiful beaches surrounding the island with the sea temperature rarely falling below 27 degrees.

Geography

Sri Lanka with a total area of 65,610 square kilometers, land area of 64,740 square kilometers, and a water area of 870 square kilometers is slightly larger than West Virginia. The terrain found here is mostly low, flat to rolling plain and mountains in the south central region. The natural resources of Sri Lanka include many minerals such as limestone, graphite, and mineral sands along with gems, phosphates, clay, and hydropower. There is not a lot of land available in Sri Lanka, but they try to make full use of it. The statistics show they use 14% for arable land, 15% for permanent crops, 7% for permanent pastures, 32% for forests and woodland, and 32% is used for other miscellaneous purposes. This country also faces a lot of natural hazards like cyclones and tornados. Along with the positive aspects in Sri Lanka, they also face a lot of environmental issues. Deforestation, soil erosion, and wildlife are being threatened by
the upcoming urbanization. Mining for minerals is a threat to the beauty of the coastal regions in the country. The industrial wastes and sewage run-off are polluting the freshwater sources. The industries and the traffic contribute to the air pollution in the country.

Climate

Sri Lanka has a tropical climate influenced by the seasonal wind reversal of the Asian monsoon. In the lowlands, temperatures are high with very high heat and humidity. In the coastal areas, there is some relief from the heat with the cool sea breezes. Among the mountainous regions, the temperatures are much cooler due to the high altitude and remain that way most of the year with frost occurring very occasionally. The rainfall occurs all year, with the most abundant in the southwestern coast and the mountain slopes, where rainfall is greatest during the periods of April to June and October to November. The northeastern side is much drier in comparison with very little rain between October and January. The sunshine is present in the country for around six to eight hours per day and in many parts, thunderstorms occur in the afternoons.

History

The Indo – Aryan immigration from India in the 5th century B.C. contributed to the largest ethnic groups in Sri Lanka called the Sinhalese. The second largest ethnic group is the Tamils who immigrated from the Tamil Nadu in India between the 3rd century B.C. and A.D. 1200. These two ethnic groups fought for dominance over the country and the Tamils, primarily Hindus, took possession of the northern section of the country and the Sinhalese, and primarily Buddhists took possession of the southern part of the country. In 1505, the Portuguese took possession of the country. In 1796, the British took over the country and Sri Lanka became an English crown colony in 1802. They developed
coffee, tea, and rubber plantations. On February 4th 1948, after pressure and violence from the nationalist leaders who were basically Tamils and Sinhalese, Sri Lanka became a self-governing country.

**Important Dates**

The Important dates and holidays in Sri Lanka are:

February 4: Independence Day

May 1: May Day

December 25: Christmas day

January 14: Tamil Thai Pongal

April 14: Tamil New Year

There are many other events that occur in Sri Lanka, but their dates change according to the positioning of the moon and according to the Hindu calendar. To name a few more events and holidays, Shivratri is somewhere around the end of February and beginning of March, and Diwali is somewhere around the end of October or the beginning of November. The Muslim festivals, like Eid, are public holidays for everyone.

**Population**

The population of Sri Lanka increases by 1.5% per year with its present population standing at 17,400,000 with 32.5% of the total population under the age of 15. The life expectancy is 72 years in the country. Infant mortality rate stands at 17.6 per 1,000 live births. The capital, Colombo, has the maximum number of people with an estimated population of 615,000 people. The other main towns of the country consist of
Dehiwela - Mount Lavinia, Moratuwa, Jaffna, Kotte, Kandy, and Galle. These small towns have a low population with the highest number in Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia at 196,000.

**Currency**

The currency of Sri Lanka doesn’t stand very strong in the world market. Its currency is the Sri Lanka Rupee in which the exchange rate for one Sri Lanka Rupee = U.S. $0.021.

**Education**

Despite Sri Lanka having a small national income, its educational performance is very good with 92% of the people educated in the country. Out of 104 developing countries, Sri Lanka is rated seventh. All the schools have remained open in spite of 17 years of war between the government and the Tamil Tigers. The basic reason for Sri Lanka having such a good education rate is due to gender equality. The introduction of free education encouraged the families to send their children to school, especially the girls, which brought the education rate to around 90% for females. The rural areas have almost the same percentage of education as the other main towns and cities. There are certain areas where the literacy rate is low as compared to the total country and efforts are being made to improve the rate by establishing schools in those areas.

**Language**

The main language spoken in Sri Lanka is Sinhalese and Tamil. The language, Sinhalese, is a mixture of the Indo-Aryan script which is basically comprised of Hindi
and Bengali. The other languages are comprised of European descent such as German, French, and Russian. English is also spoken in the government and, therefore, it is easy for western people to travel.

**Religion**

The government encourages the people to follow Buddhism, but there is no obligation for the citizen. The constitution states that the people have the right to follow their own religion. The other main religions in the country are Hindu and Muslim. The government also does not act partial with the building of temples and mosques. They give them free right to reserve these institutions as charitable trusts.

**Agriculture**

The main agricultural produce of Sri Lanka is tea, coffee, and coconut. The country faced numerous agricultural crises after independence. They sold their main agricultural produce to other countries and got other food supplies. This did not leave them with much of an option to save money for investments. Sri Lanka also produces rice as its staple crop.

**Trade**

Sri Lanka is known for a variety of specialty products such as tea, coffee, coconut, gems, handicrafts, granite, mineral sands, and porcelain. Sri Lanka has also earned a lot in the past through export of tobacco to the United States.
Food

Food is a specialty in Sri Lanka. All the main dishes prepared consist of gravy, which is said to be very spicy for someone who is not used to many spices. The gravy consists mainly of coconut milk, sliced onions, green chilies, and aromatic spices such as cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon. There are many other fruits, vegetables, meats and seafood also available. Continental, Chinese, and Indian menus are also available in the capital.

Landmarks

The ancient sites include Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, Dambulla, Panduwasnuwara, and Yapahuwa. All these places contain the remains of a once rich civilization. There are vast man-made lakes, large peaks, shrines, temples and monasteries, which speaks highly of the past of this country, Sri Lanka. All this proves Sri Lanka to have a great historic background, which has built a very rich culture in Sri Lanka through the centuries of its existence.

Gaurav Sahni