Yemen

Background

In 1918, North Yemen became independent from the Ottoman Empire. The British controlled the southern territory around the port of Aden. They withdrew in 1967 and the area became known as South Yemen. Finally, in 1990, the North and South united as the Republic of Yemen. The capital of Yemen is Sanaa. Then in 1994, a Civil War broke out.

Location

Yemen lies between 12 and 20 degrees North latitude and 41 and 54 degrees East longitude. Yemen is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the North, Oman to the East, the Arab Sea and Aden Gulf to the South, and the Red Sea to the West. It has an area of 203,850 square miles.

Geography

The country is divided up into five main regions, Mountain, Highland, Coastal, Empty Quarter, and the Yemen Islands. The Mountain region heights vary from 3,280 to 12,336 feet high. The Al-Surat Mountains stretch North to South and West to East, along the coasts. The highest point is Jabal an Nabi Shiayb, which is 12,336 feet high. The highland area is to the East and North of the mountainous heights. The maximum height of this area is 3,280 feet. The Coastal area, which includes the coastal plains, is along the South and West and is more than 1,491 miles long. The width of the coastal plains varies from 19 to 37 miles. Yemen’s Empty Quarter is the desert area that is covered in gravel, sand, and sandy dunes. The Yemen Islands
are islands that are scattered along the coasts of Yemen. There are 120 islands, and most of them are located off the West coast of Yemen in the Red Sea.

**Climate**

There are no major seasonal differences in Yemen. They basically have two long seasons, winter and summer. It is typically hot and humid along the West coast especially. A seasonal monsoon moderates the temperature. In the mountain areas, weather is moderate in the summer and cold in the winter at night and in the early morning. However, once the sun rises, these temperatures increase during the day.

**Population**

In 2002, the population of Yemen was approximately 18,700,000 people. The population growth rate is at 3.4%. They have a life expectancy of about 60 years. The Yemen nationality is Yemenis. The people are predominantly Arab, and the country is also populated by Afro-Arabs, South Asians, and Europeans. When the former North and South were established, most of the residing minority groups departed from Yemen. Unlike the other people of the Arabian Peninsula, who were nomads, Yemenis are mainly sedentary. They live in small villages or towns that are scattered throughout the highlands and coastal region.

**Official Holidays**

Important holidays in Yemen include Id Al-Fitr (Breakfasting feast) celebrated from the 29th of Ramadhan to the 3rd of Shawal, Id Al-Adha (Haj feast) is from the 9th to the 13th of Dhul-Hijah, Hejira New Year, Anniversary of Prophet’s birthday on the 12th of Rabil Awal, Labor Day on May 1st, National Day (Unification Day) on May 22nd, Revolution Anniversary on September
26th, Revolution Day on October 14th, and Evacuation Day on November 30th. The weekend in Yemen is on Thursday and Friday.

Currency

The Yemen Rial consists of 100 fils issued in bank notes and coins. Bank notes are available in denominations of 1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 1. The coins’ denominations are in 10, 5, and 1 Yemen Rial. As of 2003, one United States dollar is equivalent to 177.89 Yemen Rials.

Language

Arabic is the official language of the country, and English is the most widely used second language. In the Mahra area, which is in the extreme eastern part of Yemen, there are several non-Arabic languages spoken.

Religion

The official religion is Islam and it is also the religion of the majority of the population. The religions that are in minority include Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Hindu. The Islamic religion is divided into two groups, the Zaidi sect of the Shi’a in the north and northwest, and the Shafa’I school of Sunni Muslims in the south and southeast.

Economy

In the Arab world, Yemen is considered to be one of the poorest countries. In the mid 1990’s, they had strong economic growth from oil production, however, they are still pledged by periodic declines in oil prices. As of 2002, they have a 30% unemployment rate. Services, construction, industry and commerce account for less than a quarter of their labor force; most
of their labor force is in agriculture and herding. Popular industries include crude oil production and petroleum refining, small-scale production of cotton textiles and leather goods, as well as food processing. In 2000, Yemen had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 14.4 billion. Exports include crude oil, coffee, dried and salted fish. Food, live animals, and machinery and equipment are their imports.

**Government**

Yemen is a Republic with a legal system based on Islamic law, Turkish law, English Common law, and local tribal customary law. They have over twelve active political parties. In February of 2001, Yemen held its first local elections, which aim to decentralize political power and are a key element of the government’s political reform program. They had their first presidential elections in September of 1999, which elected the president to a five-year term.

The Yemen flag is rectangular in shape with its width being one-third of the length. It is divided into three equal rectangles colored red, white, and black from top to bottom.

**Agriculture**

Most of Yemen’s people are employed in agriculture and herding. Seventeen percent of Yemen’s GDP is from agriculture. Some of their products include grain, fruits, vegetables, coffee, cotton, dairy products, poultry, and fish. They also have livestock, which mainly consists of sheep, goats, cattle, and camels.
Landmarks

One of the greatest wonders of Arabia is in Yemen. This is the Marib Dam, which is a technical structure of ancient times. They also have a number of high-rise buildings throughout the cities.

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