

# Bangladesh

## Geography

Location: Southern Asia, bordering the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and India.

Map references: Asia

Area:

total area: 144,000 sq km.

land area: 133,910 sq km.

Land boundaries: total 4,246 km, Burma 193 km, India 4,053 km.

Coastline: 580 km.

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 18 nm.

continental shelf: up to the outer limits of the continental margin.

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm.

territorial sea: 12 nm.

Climate: tropical; cool, dry winter (October to March); hot, humid summer (March to June); cool, rainy monsoon (June to October).

Terrain: mostly flat alluvial plain; hilly in southeast.

Natural resources: natural gas, arable land, timber.

Land use:

arable land: 67%.

permanent crops: 2%.

meadows and pastures: 4%.

forest and woodland: 16%.

other: 11%.

Irrigated land: 27,380 sq km.

Environment:

current issues: many people are landless and forced to live on and cultivate flood-prone land; limited access to potable water; water-borne diseases prevalent; water pollution especially of fishing areas results from the use of commercial pesticides; intermittent water shortages because of falling water tables in the northern and central parts of the country; soil degradation; deforestation; severe overpopulation.

natural hazards: droughts, cyclones; much of the country routinely flooded during the summer monsoon season.

## People

Population: 128,094,948 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 40% (female 25,195,262; male 26,352,299).

15-64 years: 57% (female 34,862,105; male 37,867,705).

65 years and over: 3% (female 1,761,336; male 2,056,241) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.32% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 34.62 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 11.43 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 104.6 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 55.46 years.  
male: 55.69 years.  
female: 55.22 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 4.39 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Bangladeshi(s).  
adjective: Bangladesh.

Ethnic divisions: Bengali 98%, Biharis 250,000, tribals less than 1 million.

Religions: Muslim 83%, Hindu 16%, Buddhist, Christian, other.

Languages: Bangla (official), English.

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1990).  
total population: 35%.  
male: 47%.  
female: 22%.

Labor force: 50.1 million.

by occupation: agriculture 65%, services 21%, industry and mining 14% (1989).

note: extensive export of labor to Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman (1991).

## Government

Names:

conventional long form: People's Republic of Bangladesh.

conventional short form: Bangladesh.

former: East Pakistan.

Type: republic.

Capital: Dhaka.

Administrative divisions: 4 divisions; Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi.

Independence: 16 December 1971 (from Pakistan).

National holiday: Independence Day, 26 March (1971).

Legal system: based on English common law.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.

Flag: green with a large red disk slightly to the hoist side of center; green is the traditional color of Islam.

## Economy

Overview: Despite sustained domestic and international efforts to improve economic and demographic prospects, Bangladesh remains one of the world's poorest, most densely populated, and least developed nations. Its economy is overwhelmingly agricultural, with the cultivation of rice the single most important activity in the economy. Major impediments to growth include frequent cyclones and floods, the inefficiency of state-owned enterprises, a rapidly growing labor force that cannot be absorbed by agriculture, delays in exploiting energy resources (natural gas), and inadequate power supplies. Excellent rice crops and expansion of the export garment industry led to real growth of 4% in 1992 and again in 1993. Policy measures intended to reduce government regulation of private industry, to curb population growth, and to expand employment opportunities have had only partial success given the serious nature of Bangladesh's basic problems.

## Transportation

### Railroads:

total: 2,892 km.

broad gauge: 978 km 1.676-m gauge.

narrow gauge: 1,914 km 1.000-m gauge (1992).

### Highways:

total: 7,240 km.

Inland waterways: 5,150-8,046 km navigable waterways (includes 2,575-3,058 km main cargo routes).

Pipelines: natural gas 1,220 km.

Ports: Barisal, Chandpur, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Dacca, Khulna, Mongla (includes Chalna), Narayanganj.

### Airports:

total: 16

### Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, Air Force.

paramilitary forces: Bangladesh Rifles, Bangladesh Ansars, Armed Police Reserve, Village Defense Parties, National Cadet Corps.