

Bangladesh

Bangladesh (/bæŋglə'dɛʃ, bə:n-/;^[14] Bengali: বাংলাদেশ, pronounced [ˈbaŋla,deʃ] (listen)), officially the **People's Republic of Bangladesh**, is a country in South Asia. It is the eighth-most populous country in the world, with a population exceeding 163 million people in an area of either 148,460 square kilometres (57,320 sq mi) or 147,570 square kilometres (56,980 sq mi),^{[7][15]} making it one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Bangladesh shares land borders with India to the west, north, and east, and Myanmar to the southeast; to the south it has a coastline along the Bay of Bengal. It is narrowly separated from Nepal and Bhutan by the Siliguri Corridor; and from China by 100 km of the Indian state of Sikkim in the north.^[16] Dhaka, the capital and largest city, is the nation's economic, political, and cultural hub. Chittagong, the largest seaport, is the second-largest city. The official language is Bengali, one of the most eastern branches of the Indo-European language family.

Bangladesh forms the sovereign part of the historic and ethnolinguistic region of Bengal, which was divided during the Partition of British India in 1947.^[17] The country has a Bengali Muslim majority. Ancient Bengal was an important cultural center in the Indian subcontinent as the home of the states of Vanga, Pundra, Gangaridai, Gauda, Samatata, and Harikela. The Mauryan, Gupta, Pala, Sena, Chandra and Deva dynasties were the last pre-Islamic rulers of Bengal. The Muslim conquest of Bengal began in 1204 when Bakhtiar Khalji overran northern Bengal and invaded Tibet. Becoming part of the Delhi Sultanate, three city-states emerged in the 14th century with much of eastern Bengal being ruled from Sonargaon. Sufi missionary leaders like Sultan Balkhi, Shah Jalal and Shah Makhdum Rupos helped in spreading Muslim rule. The region was unified into an independent, unitary Bengal Sultanate. Under Mughal rule, eastern Bengal continued to prosper as the melting pot of Muslims in the eastern subcontinent and attracted traders from around the world. Mughal Bengal became increasingly assertive and independent under the Nawabs of Bengal in the 18th century. In 1757, the betrayal of Mir Jafar resulted in the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah to the British East India Company and eventual British

People's Republic of Bangladesh

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ (Bengali)
Gônoprajatontri Bangladesh



Flag



Emblem

Anthem: "Amar Sonar Bangla" (Bengali)
"My Golden Bengal"

▶ 0:00 / 0:00 ⏸ :

March: "Notuner Gaan"
"The Song of Youth"^[1]

National Slogan: "Joy Bangla"
"Victory to Bengal"^{[2][3]}

Official Seal of the Government of Bangladesh



Capital
and largest city

Dhaka
23°45'50"N
90°23'20"E

Official language
and national language

Bengali^[4]

dominance across South Asia. The Bengal Presidency grew into the largest administrative unit in British India. The creation of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1905 set a precedent for the emergence of Bangladesh. In 1940, the first Prime Minister of Bengal supported the Lahore Resolution with the hope of creating a state in eastern South Asia. Prior to the partition of Bengal, the Prime Minister of Bengal proposed a Bengali sovereign state. A referendum and the announcement of the Radcliffe Line established the present-day territorial boundary of Bangladesh.

In 1947, East Bengal became the most populous province in the Dominion of Pakistan. It was renamed as East Pakistan with Dhaka becoming the country's legislative capital. The Bengali Language Movement in 1952; the East Bengali legislative election, 1954; the 1958 Pakistani coup d'état; the Six point movement of 1966; and the 1970 Pakistani general election resulted in the rise of Bengali nationalism and pro-democracy movements in East Pakistan. The refusal of the Pakistani military junta to transfer power to the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led to the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, in which the Mukti Bahini aided by India waged a successful armed revolution. The conflict saw the 1971 Bangladesh genocide and the massacre of pro-independence Bengali civilians, including intellectuals. The new state of Bangladesh became the first constitutionally secular state in South Asia in 1972.^[18] Islam was declared the state religion in 1988.^{[19][20][21]} In 2010, the Bangladesh Supreme Court reaffirmed secular principles in the constitution.^[22]

Bangladesh is a unitary parliamentary constitutional republic based on the Westminster system. Bengalis make up 98% of the total population of Bangladesh,^[4] and the large Muslim population of Bangladesh makes it the third-largest Muslim-majority country. The country consists of eight divisions, 64 districts and 495 subdistricts.^[23] It maintains the third-largest military in South Asia after India and Pakistan; and has been a major contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. A middle power in the Indo-Pacific,^[24] Bangladesh is an emerging economy ranked as the 33rd-largest in the world by nominal GDP, and the 29th-largest by PPP. It hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world due to the Rohingya genocide.^[25] Bangladesh faces many challenges, including the adverse effects of climate change,^[26] poverty, illiteracy,^[27] corruption, authoritarianism and human rights abuses. However, the poverty rate has halved since 2011 and the country is

Ethnic groups (2011 ^[5])	98% <u>Bengalis</u> 2% minorities <u>Chakmas</u> <u>Biharis</u> <u>Marmas</u> <u>Santhals</u> <u>Mros</u> <u>Tanchangyas</u> <u>Bawms</u> <u>Tripuris</u> <u>Khumis</u> <u>Kukis</u> <u>Garos</u> <u>Bisnupriya Manipuris</u>
Religion (2011 ^[6])	90.4% <u>Islam</u> (official) 8.5% <u>Hinduism</u> 0.6% <u>Buddhism</u> 0.4% <u>Christianity</u> 0.1% <u>Others</u>
Demonym(s)	<u>Bangladeshi</u>
Government	<u>Unitary dominant-party parliamentary republic</u>
• <u>President</u>	<u>Abdul Hamid</u>
• <u>Prime Minister</u>	<u>Sheikh Hasina</u>
• <u>House Speaker</u>	<u>Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury</u>
• <u>Chief Justice</u>	<u>Hasan Foez Siddique</u>
Legislature	<u>Jatiya Sangsad</u>
Independence from Pakistan	
• <u>Declared</u>	26 March 1971
• <u>V-Day</u>	16 December 1971
• <u>Current constitution</u>	16 December 1972
Area	
• Total	148,460 ^[7] km ² (57,320 sq mi) (92nd ^[7])
• Water (%)	6.4
• Land area	130,170 sq Km ^[7]
• Water area	18,290 sq km ^[7]
Population	
• 2018 estimate	▲ 161,376,708 ^{[8][9]} (8th)
• 2011 census	149,772,364 ^[10] (8th)
• Density	1,106/km ² (2,864.5/sq mi) (7th)

expected to become a middle income country in this decade.^{[28][29]} Once a historic center of the muslin cloth trade, Bangladesh is now one of the world's largest modern garment exporters.

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<u>GDP (PPP)</u>	2022 estimate
• Total	▲ \$1.11 trillion [11] (30th)
• Per capita	▲ \$6,633 [11] (165th)
<u>GDP (nominal)</u>	2022 estimate
• Total	▲ \$396.5 billion [11] (41th)
• Per capita	▲ \$2,362 [11] (161st)
<u>Gini</u> (2021)	▲ 32.4 ^[12] medium
<u>HDI</u> (2019)	▲ 0.632 ^[13] medium · 133rd
<u>Currency</u>	<u>Taka (ট)</u> (<u>BDT</u>)
<u>Time zone</u>	<u>UTC+6 (BST)</u>
<u>Date format</u>	<u>dd-mm-yyyy (CE)</u>
<u>Driving side</u>	left
<u>Calling code</u>	+880
<u>ISO 3166 code</u>	<u>BD</u>
<u>Internet TLD</u>	.bd .বাংলা

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Etymology

The etymology of *Bangladesh* (Country of Bengal) can be traced to the early 20th century, when Bengali patriotic songs, such as *Namo Namo Namo Bangladesh Momo* by [Kazi Nazrul Islam](#) and *Aaji Bangadesher Hridoy* by [Rabindranath Tagore](#), used the term.^[30] The term *Bangladesh* was often written as two words, *Bangla Desh*, in the past. Starting in the 1950s, Bengali nationalists used the term in political rallies in East Pakistan. The term *Bangla* is a major name for both the [Bengal region](#) and the [Bengali language](#). The origins of the term *Bangla* are unclear, with theories pointing to a [Bronze Age proto-Dravidian tribe](#),^[31] the [Austroasiatic word "Bonga"](#) (Sun god),^[32] and the Iron Age [Vanga Kingdom](#).^[32] The earliest known usage of the term is the [Nesari plate](#) in 805 AD. The term *Vangaladesa* is found in 11th-century South Indian records.^{[33][34]} The term gained official status during the [Sultanate of Bengal](#) in the 14th century.^{[35][36]} Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah proclaimed himself as the first "[Shah of Bangala](#)" in 1342.^[35] The word *Bangla* became the most common name for the region during the Islamic period. The Portuguese referred to the region as *Bengala* in the 16th century.^[37] 16th-century historian Abu'l-Fazl ibn Mubarak mentions in his *Ain-i-Akbari* that the addition of the suffix "*al*" came from the fact that the ancient rajahs of the land raised mounds of earth 10 feet high and 20 in breadth in lowlands at the foot of the hills which were called "*al*".^[38] This is also mentioned in Ghulam Husain Salim's *Riyaz-us-Salatin*.^[39] The Indo-Aryan suffix *Desh* is derived from the Sanskrit word *desha*, which means "land" or "country". Hence, the name *Bangladesh* means "Land of Bengal" or "Country of Bengal".^[34]

History

Ancient Bengal

Stone Age tools found in Bangladesh indicate human habitation for over 20,000 years,^[40] and remnants of Copper Age settlements date back 4,000 years.^[40] Ancient Bengal was settled by [Austroasiatics](#), [Tibeto-Burmans](#), [Dravidians](#) and [Indo-Aryans](#) in consecutive waves of migration.^{[40][41]} Archaeological evidence



7th century buddhist monastery

confirms that by the second millennium BCE, rice-cultivating communities inhabited the region. By the 11th century people lived in systemically aligned housing, buried their dead, and manufactured copper ornaments and black and red pottery.^[42] The Ganges, Brahmaputra and

Meghna rivers were natural arteries for communication and transportation,^[42] and estuaries on the Bay of Bengal permitted maritime trade. The early Iron Age saw the development of metal weaponry, coinage, agriculture and irrigation.^[42] Major urban settlements formed during the late Iron Age, in the mid-first millennium BCE,^[43] when the Northern Black Polished Ware culture developed.^[44] In 1879, Alexander Cunningham identified Mahasthangarh as the capital of the Pundra Kingdom mentioned in the Rigveda.^{[45][46]} The oldest inscription in Bangladesh was found in Mahasthangarh and dates from the 3rd century BCE. It is written in the Brahmi script.^[47]

Greek and Roman records of the ancient Gangaridai Kingdom, which (according to legend) deterred the invasion of Alexander the Great, are linked to the fort city in Wari-Bateshwar.^{[48][49]} The site is also identified with the prosperous trading centre of Souanagoura listed on Ptolemy's world map.^[50] Roman geographers noted a large seaport in southeastern Bengal, corresponding to the present-day Chittagong region.^[51]

Ancient Buddhist and Hindu states which ruled Bangladesh included the Vanga, Samatata and Pundra kingdoms, the Mauryan and Gupta Empires, the Varman dynasty, Shashanka's kingdom, the Khadga and Candra dynasties, the Pala Empire, the Sena dynasty, the Harikela kingdom and the Deva dynasty. These states had well-developed currencies, banking, shipping, architecture, and art, and the ancient universities of Bikrampur and Mainamati hosted scholars and students from other parts of Asia. Xuanzang of China was a noted scholar who resided at the Somapura Mahavihara (the largest monastery in ancient India), and Atisa travelled from Bengal to Tibet to preach Buddhism. The earliest form of the Bengali language emerged during the eighth century.



Vanga Kingdom and erstwhile neighbours in ancient South Asia



The Pala Empire was an imperial power during the Late Classical period on the Indian subcontinent, which originated in the region of Bengal.

Islamic Bengal

The early history of Islam in Bengal is divided into two phases. The first phase is the period of maritime trade with Arabia and Persia between the 8th and 12th centuries. The second phase covers centuries of Muslim dynastic rule after the Islamic conquest of Bengal. The writings of Al-Idrisi, Ibn Hawqal, Al-Masudi, Ibn Khordadbeh and Sulaiman record the maritime links between Arabia, Persia and Bengal.^[52] Muslim trade with Bengal flourished after the fall of the Sasanian Empire and the Arab takeover of Persian trade routes. Much of this trade occurred with southeastern Bengal in areas east of the Meghna River. There is speculation regarding the presence of a Muslim community in Bangladesh as early as 690 CE; this is based on the discovery of one of South Asia's oldest mosques in northern Bangladesh.^{[53][54][52]} Bengal was possibly used as a transit route to China by the earliest Muslims. Abbasid coins have been discovered



The Sixty Dome Mosque is the largest mosque in the UNESCO protected Mosque City of Bagerhat.



Choto Sona Mosque, built during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah



Kusumba Mosque

in the archaeological ruins of Paharpur and Mainamati.^[55] A collection of Sasanian, Umayyad and Abbasid coins are preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum.^[56]

The Muslim conquest of Bengal began with the 1204 Ghurid expeditions led by Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji, who overran the Sena capital in Gauda and led the first Muslim army into Tibet.^[42] The conquest of Bengal was inscribed in gold coins of the Delhi Sultanate. Bengal was ruled by the Sultans of Delhi for a century under the Mamluk, Balban, and Tughluq dynasties. In the 14th century, three city-states emerged in Bengal, including Sonargaon led by Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, Satgaon led by Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah and Lakhnauti led by Alauddin Ali Shah. These city-states were led by former governors who declared independence from Delhi. The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta visited eastern Bengal during the reign of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah. Ibn Battuta also visited the Sufi leader Shah Jalal in Sylhet. Sufis played an important role in spreading Islam in Bengal through both peaceful conversion and militarily overthrowing pre-Islamic rulers. In 1352, Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah united the three city-states into a single, unitary and independent Bengal Sultanate. The new Sultan of Bengal led the first Muslim army into Nepal and forced the Sultan of Delhi to retreat during an invasion. The army of Ilyas Shah reached as far as Varanasi in the northwest, Kathmandu in the north, Kamarupa in the east and Orissa in the south. Ilyas Shah raided many of these areas and returned to Bengal with treasures. During the reign of Sikandar Shah, Delhi recognized Bengal's independence. The Bengal Sultanate established a network of mint towns which acted as provincial capitals where the Sultan's currency was minted.^[57] Bengal became the eastern frontier of the Islamic world, which stretched from Muslim Spain in the west to Bengal in the east. The Bengali language crystallized as an official court language during the Bengal Sultanate, with prominent writers like Nur Qutb Alam, Usman Serajuddin, Alaul Haq, Alaol, Shah Muhammad Sagir, Abdul Hakim and Syed Sultan; and the emergence of Dobhashi to write Muslim epics in Bengali literature.

The Bengal Sultanate was a melting pot of Muslim political, mercantile and military elites. Muslims from other parts of the world migrated to Bengal for military, bureaucratic and household services.^[58] Immigrants included Persians who were lawyers, teachers, clerics, and scholars;^[59] Turks from upper India who were originally recruited in Central Asia; and Abyssinians who came via East Africa and arrived in the Bengali port of Chittagong.^[58] A highly commercialized and monetized economy evolved.

The two most prominent dynasties of the Bengal Sultanate were the Ilyas Shahi and Hussain Shahi dynasties. The reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah saw the opening of diplomatic relations with Ming China. Ghiyasuddin was also a friend of the Persian poet Hafez. The reign of the Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah saw the development of Bengali architecture. During the early 15th-century, the Restoration of Min Saw Mon in Arakan was aided by the army of the Bengal Sultanate. As a result, Arakan became a tributary state of Bengal. Even though Arakan later became independent, Bengali Muslim influence in Arakan persisted for 300 years due to the settlement of Bengali bureaucrats, poets, military personnel, farmers, artisans and sailors. The kings of Arakan fashioned themselves after Bengali Sultans and adopted Muslim titles.^{[60][61]} During the reign of Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah, the Bengal

Sultanate dispatched a naval flotilla and an army of 24,000 soldiers led by Shah Ismail Ghazi to conquer Assam.^[62] Bengali forces penetrated deep into the Brahmaputra Valley. Hussain Shah's forces also conquered Jajnagar in Orissa.^{[63][64]} In Tripura, Bengal helped Ratna Manikya I to assume the throne.^{[65][66][67]} The Jaunpur Sultanate, Pratapgarh Kingdom and the island of Chandradwip also came under Bengali control.^{[68][69][70][71][72]} By 1500, Gaur became the fifth-most populous city in the world with a population of 200,000.^{[73][74]} The river port of Sonargaon was used as a base by the Sultans of Bengal during campaigns against Assam, Tripura and Arakan. The Sultans launched many naval raids from Sonargaon.^[75] João de Barros described the sea port of Chittagong as "the most famous and wealthy city of the Kingdom of Bengal".^[76] Maritime trade linked Bengal with China, Malacca, Sumatra, Brunei, Portuguese India, East Africa, Arabia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Yemen and the Maldives. Bengali ships were among the biggest vessels plying the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. A royal vessel from Bengal accommodated three embassies from Bengal, Brunei and Sumatra while en route to China and was the only vessel capable of transporting three embassies.^[77] Many wealthy Bengali shipowners and merchants lived in Malacca. The Sultans permitted the opening of the Portuguese settlement in Chittagong. The disintegration of the Bengal Sultanate began with the intervention of the Suri Empire. Babur began invading Bengal after creating the Mughal Empire. The Bengal Sultanate collapsed with the overthrow of the Karrani dynasty during the reign of Akbar. However, the Bhati region of eastern Bengal continued to be ruled by aristocrats of the former Bengal Sultanate led by Isa Khan. They formed an independent federation called the Twelve Bhuiyans, with their capital in Sonargaon. They defeated the Mughals in several naval battles. The Bhuiyans ultimately succumbed to the Mughals after Musa Khan was defeated.



Shipbuilding was a major industry in the Bengal Sultanate and later in Mughal Bengal

The Mughal Empire controlled Bengal by the 17th century. During the reign of Emperor Akbar, the Bengali agrarian calendar was reformed to facilitate tax collection. The Mughals established Dhaka as a fort city and commercial metropolis, and it was the capital of Bengal Subah for 75 years.^[78] In 1666, the Mughals expelled the Arakanese from Chittagong. Mughal Bengal attracted foreign traders for its muslin and silk goods, and the Armenians were a notable merchant community. A Portuguese settlement in Chittagong flourished in the southeast, and a Dutch settlement in Rajshahi existed in the north. Bengal accounted for 40% of overall Dutch imports from Asia; including more than 50% of textiles and around 80% of silks.^[79] The Bengal Subah, described as the Paradise of the Nations,^[80] was the empire's wealthiest province, and a major global exporter,^{[79][81][82]} a notable centre of worldwide industries such as muslin, cotton textiles, silk,^[42] and shipbuilding.^[83] Its citizens also enjoyed one of the world's most superior living standards.^{[84][85]}



The Bibi Mariam Cannon (Lady Mary Cannon) was used by the Mughals to defend their bases.

During the 18th century, the Nawabs of Bengal became the region's *de facto* rulers. The ruler's title is popularly known as the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, given that the Bengali Nawab's realm encompassed much of the eastern subcontinent. The Nawabs forged alliances with European colonial companies, making the region relatively prosperous early in the century. Bengal accounted for 50% of the gross domestic product of the empire. The Bengali economy relied on textile manufacturing, shipbuilding,

saltpetre production, craftsmanship, and agricultural produce. Bengal was a major hub for international trade – silk and cotton textiles from Bengal were worn in Europe, Japan, Indonesia, and Central Asia.^{[86][42]} Annual Bengali shipbuilding output was 223,250 tons, compared to an output of 23,061 tons in the nineteen colonies of North America. Bengali shipbuilding proved to be more advanced than European shipbuilding before the Industrial Revolution. The flush deck of Bengali rice ships was later replicated in European shipbuilding to replace the stepped deck design for ship hulls.^{[85][87][88][89][90][91]}

Eastern Bengal was a thriving melting pot with strong trade and cultural networks. It was a relatively prosperous part of the subcontinent and the center of the Muslim population in the eastern subcontinent.^{[87][92]} The Muslims of eastern Bengal included people of diverse origins from different parts of the world.^[93]

The Bengali Muslim population was a product of conversion and religious evolution,^[42] and their pre-Islamic beliefs included elements of Buddhism and Hinduism. The construction of mosques, Islamic academies (madrasas) and Sufi monasteries (khanqahs) facilitated conversion, and Islamic cosmology played a significant role in developing Bengali Muslim society. Scholars have theorised that Bengalis were attracted to Islam by its egalitarian social order, which contrasted with the Hindu caste system.^[94] By the 15th century, Muslim poets were widely writing in the Bengali language. Syncretic cults, such as the Baul movement, emerged on the fringes of Bengali Muslim society. The Persianate culture was significant in Bengal, where cities like Sonargaon became the easternmost centres of Persian influence.^{[95][96]}



Lalbagh Fort was the residence of the Mughal viceroy Shaista Khan.

The Mughals had aided France during the Seven Years' War to avoid losing the Bengal region to the British. However, in the Battle of Plassey the British East India Company registered a decisive victory over the Nawab of Bengal and his French^[97] allies on 22 June 1757, under the leadership of Robert Clive. The battle followed the order of Siraj-ud-Daulah, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, to the English to stop the extension of their fortification. Robert Clive bribed Mir Jafar, the commander-in-chief of the Nawab's army, and also promised him to make him Nawab of Bengal, which helped him to defeat Siraj-ud-Daulah and capture Calcutta.^[98] The battle consolidated the company's presence in Bengal, which later expanded to cover much of India over the next hundred years. Although they had lost control of Bengal Subah, Shah Alam II was involved in the Bengal War which ended once more in their defeat at the Battle of Buxar.^[99]

Colonial period

Two decades after Vasco Da Gama's landing in Calicut, the Bengal Sultanate permitted the Portuguese settlement in Chittagong to be established in 1528. It became the first European colonial enclave in Bengal. The Bengal Sultanate lost control of Chittagong in 1531 after Arakan declared independence and the established Kingdom of Mrauk U.

Portuguese ships from Goa and Malacca began frequenting the port city in the 16th century. The cartaz system was introduced and required all ships in the area to purchase naval trading licenses from the Portuguese settlement. Slave trade and piracy flourished. The nearby island of Sandwip was conquered in 1602. In 1615, the Portuguese Navy defeated a joint Dutch East India Company and Arakanese fleet near the coast of Chittagong.

The Bengal Sultan after 1534 allowed the Portuguese to create several settlements at Chitagoong, Satgaon,^[100] Hughli, Bandel, and Dhaka. In 1535, the Portuguese allied with the Bengal sultan and held the Teliagarhi pass 280 kilometres (170 mi) from Patna helping to avoid the invasion by the Mughals. By

then several of the products came from Patna and the Portuguese send in traders, establishing a factory there since 1580.^[101]

By the time the Portuguese assured military help against Sher Shah, the Mughals already had started to conquer the Sultanate of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud.^[102]

Bengal was the wealthiest region in the Indian subcontinent, and its proto-industrial economy showed signs of driving an Industrial revolution.^[103]

The region has been described as the "Paradise of Nations",^[104] and its inhabitants's living standards and real wages were among the highest in the world.^[105] It alone accounted for 40% of Dutch imports outside the European continent.^{[79][87]} The eastern part of Bengal was globally prominent in industries such as textile manufacturing and shipbuilding,^[106] and it was a major exporter of silk and cotton textiles, steel, saltpeter, and agricultural and industrial produce in the world.^[87] In 1666, the Mughal government of Bengal led by viceroy Shaista Khan moved to retake Chittagong from Portuguese and Arakanese control. The Anglo-Mughal War was witnessed in 1686.^{[107][108]}



Portuguese envoys (top left) at the imperial court of emperor Akbar. The Portuguese settlement in Chittagong flourished until the Mughals expelled the Portuguese in 1666.

After the 1757 Battle of Plassey, Bengal was the first region of the Indian subcontinent conquered by the British East India Company. The company formed the Presidency of Fort William, which administered the region until 1858. A notable aspect of Company rule was the Permanent Settlement, which established the feudal zamindari system; in addition, Company policies led to the deindustrialisation of Bengal's textile industry.^[109] The capital amassed by the East India Company in Bengal was invested in the emerging Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, in industries such as textile manufacturing.^{[110][111]} Economic mismanagement, alongside drought and a smallpox epidemic, directly led to the Great Bengal famine of 1770, which is estimated to have caused the deaths of between 1 million and 10 million people.^{[112][113][114][115]} Several rebellions broke out during the early 19th century (including one led by Titumir), as Company rule had displaced the Muslim ruling class from power. A conservative Islamic cleric, Haji Shariatullah, sought to overthrow the British by propagating Islamic revivalism.^[116] Several towns in Bangladesh participated in the Indian Rebellion of 1857^[117] and pledged allegiance to the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who was later exiled to neighbouring Burma.



Lord Clive meeting with Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey, which led to the overthrow of the last independent Nawab of Bengal

The challenge posed to company rule by the failed Indian Mutiny led to the creation of the British Indian Empire as a crown colony. The British established several schools, colleges, and a university in Bangladesh. Syed Ahmed Khan and Ram Mohan Roy promoted modern and liberal education in the subcontinent, inspiring the Aligarh movement^[118] and the Bengal Renaissance.^[119] During the late 19th

century, novelists, social reformers and feminists emerged from Muslim Bengali society. Electricity and municipal water systems were introduced in the 1890s; cinemas opened in many towns during the early 20th century. East Bengal's plantation economy was important to the British Empire, particularly its jute and tea. The British established tax-free river ports, such as the Port of Narayanganj, and large seaports like the Port of Chittagong.

Bengal had the highest gross domestic product in British India.^[120] Bengal was one of the first regions in Asia to have a railway. The first railway in what is now Bangladesh began operating in 1862.^[121] In comparison, Japan saw its first railway in 1872. The main railway companies in the region were the Eastern Bengal Railway and Assam Bengal Railway. Railways competed with waterborne transport to become one of the main mediums of transport.^[122]

Supported by the Muslim aristocracy, the British government created the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1905; the new province received increased investment in education, transport, and industry.^[123] However, the first partition of Bengal created an uproar in Calcutta and the Indian National Congress. In response to growing Hindu nationalism, the All India Muslim League was formed in Dhaka during the 1906 All India Muhammadan Educational Conference. The British government reorganised the provinces in 1912, reuniting East and West Bengal and making Assam a second province.

The Raj was slow to allow self-rule in the colonial subcontinent. It established the Bengal Legislative Council in 1862, and the council's native Bengali representation increased during the early 20th century. The Bengal Provincial Muslim League was formed in 1913 to advocate civil rights for Bengali Muslims within a constitutional framework. During the 1920s, the league was divided into factions supporting the Khilafat movement and favouring co-operation with the British to achieve self-rule. Segments of the Bengali elite supported Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's secularist forces.^[124] In 1929, the All Bengal Tenants Association was formed in the Bengal Legislative Council to counter the influence of the Hindu landed gentry, and the Indian Independence and Pakistan Movements strengthened during the early 20th century. After the Morley-Minto Reforms and the diarchy era in the legislatures of British India, the British government promised limited provincial autonomy in 1935. The Bengal Legislative Assembly, British India's largest legislature, was established in 1937.

Although it won most seats in 1937, the Bengal Congress boycotted the legislature. A. K. Fazlul Huq of the Krishak Praja Party was elected as the first Prime Minister of Bengal. In 1940 Huq supported the Lahore Resolution, which envisaged independent states in the subcontinent's northwestern and eastern Muslim-majority regions. The first Huq ministry, a coalition with the Bengal Provincial Muslim League, lasted until 1941; it was followed by a Huq coalition with the Hindu Mahasabha which lasted until 1943. Huq was succeeded by Khawaja Nazimuddin, who grappled with the effects of the Burma Campaign, the Bengal famine of 1943, which killed up to 3 million people,^[125] and the Quit India movement. In 1946, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League won the provincial election, taking 113 of the 250-seat assembly (the largest Muslim League mandate in British India). H. S. Suhrawardy, who made a final futile effort for a United Bengal in 1946, was the last premier of Bengal.



Founding conference of the All India Muslim League in Dhaka, 1906

Partition of Bengal (1947)

On 3 June 1947, the Mountbatten Plan outlined the partition of British India. On 20 June, the Bengal Legislative Assembly met to decide on the partition of Bengal. At the preliminary joint meeting, it was decided (120 votes to 90) that if the province remained united, it should join the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. At a separate meeting of legislators from West Bengal, it was decided (58 votes to 21) that the province should be partitioned and West Bengal should join the Constituent Assembly of India. At another meeting of legislators from East Bengal, it was decided (106 votes to 35) that the province should not be partitioned and (107 votes to 34) that East Bengal should join the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan if Bengal was partitioned.^[126] On 6 July, the Sylhet region of Assam voted in a referendum to join East Bengal. Cyril Radcliffe was tasked with drawing the borders of Pakistan and India, and the Radcliffe Line established the borders of present-day Bangladesh. The Radcliffe Line awarded two-thirds of Bengal as the eastern wing of Pakistan, although the medieval and early modern Bengali capitals of Gaur, Pandua and Murshidabad fell on the Indian side close to the border with Pakistan.

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British Bengal's last premier H. S. Suhrawardy speaking about partition

Union with Pakistan



The Dominion of Pakistan in 1947, with East Bengal its eastern part

The Dominion of Pakistan was created on 14 August 1947. East Bengal, with Dhaka as its capital, was the most populous province of the 1947 Pakistani federation (led by Governor General Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who promised freedom of religion and secular democracy in the new state).^{[127][128]}



Women students of Dhaka University marching in defiance of the Section 144 prohibition on assembly during the Bengali Language Movement in early 1953

minister with Frederick Chalmers Bourne its governor. The All Pakistan Awami Muslim League was formed in 1949. In 1950, the East Bengal Legislative Assembly enacted land reform, abolishing the Permanent Settlement and the zamindari system.^[129] The 1952 Bengali Language Movement was the first sign of friction between the country's geographically separated wings. The Awami Muslim League was renamed the more-secular Awami League in 1953.^[130] The first constituent assembly was dissolved in 1954; this was challenged by its East Bengali speaker, Maulvi Tamizuddin Khan. The United Front coalition swept aside the Muslim League in a landslide victory in the 1954 East Bengali legislative election. The following year, East Bengal was renamed East Pakistan as part of the One Unit program, and the province became a vital part of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (left) and Munier Chowdhury (centre) visiting Matiul Islam (right), an East Bengali student at Harvard during the late 1950s

Pakistan adopted its first constitution in 1956. Three Bengalis were its Prime Minister until 1957: Nazimuddin, Mohammad Ali of Bogra and Suhrawardy. None of the three completed their terms, and resigned from office. The Pakistan Army imposed military rule in 1958, and Ayub Khan was the country's strongman for 11 years. Political repression increased after the coup. Khan introduced a new constitution in

1962, replacing Pakistan's parliamentary system with a presidential and gubernatorial system (based on electoral college selection) known as Basic Democracy. In 1962 Dhaka became the seat of the National Assembly of Pakistan, a move seen as appeasing increased Bengali nationalism.^[131] The Pakistani government built the controversial Kaptai Dam, displacing the Chakma people from their indigenous homeland in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.^[132] During the 1965 presidential election, Fatima Jinnah lost to Ayub Khan despite support from the Combined Opposition alliance (which included the Awami League).^[133] The Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 blocked cross-border transport links with neighbouring India in what is described as a second partition.^[134] In 1966, Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced a six-point movement for a federal parliamentary democracy.

According to senior World Bank officials, Pakistan practised extensive economic discrimination against East Pakistan: greater government spending on West Pakistan, financial transfers from East to West Pakistan, the use of East Pakistan's foreign-exchange surpluses to finance West Pakistani imports, and refusal by the central government to release funds allocated to East Pakistan because the previous spending had been under budget;^[135] though East Pakistan generated 70 percent of Pakistan's export revenue with its jute and tea.^[136] Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested for treason in the Agartala Conspiracy Case and was released during the 1969 uprising in East Pakistan which resulted in Ayub Khan's resignation. General Yahya Khan assumed power, reintroducing martial law.

Ethnic and linguistic discrimination was common in Pakistan's civil and military services, in which Bengalis were under-represented. Fifteen percent of Pakistani central-government offices were occupied by East Pakistanis, who formed 10 percent of the military.^[137] Cultural discrimination also prevailed, making East Pakistan forge a distinct political identity.^[138] Pakistan banned Bengali literature and music in state media, including the works of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore.^[139] A cyclone devastated the coast of East Pakistan in 1970, killing an estimated 500,000 people,^[140] and the central government was criticised for its poor response.^[141] After the December 1970 elections, calls for the independence of East Bengal became louder; the Bengali-nationalist Awami League won 167 of 169 East Pakistani seats in the National Assembly. The League claimed the right to form a government and develop a new constitution but was strongly opposed by the Pakistani military and the Pakistan Peoples Party (led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto).

War of Independence

The Bengali population was angered when Prime Minister-elect Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was prevented from taking the office.^[142] Civil disobedience erupted across East Pakistan, with calls for independence.^[143] Mujib addressed a pro-independence rally of nearly 2 million people in Dacca (as Dhaka used to be spelled in English) on 7 March 1971, where he said, "This time the struggle is for our freedom. This time the struggle is for our independence."^[144] The flag of Bangladesh was raised for the first time on 23 March, Pakistan's Republic Day.^[145] Later, on 25 March late evening, the Pakistani military junta led by Yahya Khan launched a sustained military assault on East Pakistan under the code name of Operation Searchlight.^{[146][147]} The Pakistan Army arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and flew him to Karachi.^{[148][149][150]} However, before his arrest Mujib proclaimed the Independence of Bangladesh at midnight on 26 March which led the Bangladesh Liberation War to break out within hours.^{[151][152]} The Pakistan Army and its local supporters continued to massacre Bengalis, in particular students, intellectuals, political figures, and Hindus in the 1971 Bangladesh genocide. The Mukti Bahini, a guerrilla resistance force, also violated human rights during the conflict.^[153] During the war, an estimated 0.3 to 3.0 million people were killed and several million people took shelter in neighbouring India.^[154]

Global public opinion turned against Pakistan as news of the atrocities spread;^[155] the Bangladesh movement was supported by prominent political and cultural figures in the West, including Ted Kennedy, George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Victoria Ocampo and André Malraux.^{[156][157][158]} The Concert

for Bangladesh was held at Madison Square Garden in New York City to raise funds for Bangladeshi refugees. The first major benefit concert in history, it was organised by Harrison and Indian Bengali sitarist Ravi Shankar.^[159]

During the Bangladesh Liberation War, Bengali nationalists declared independence and formed the Mukti Bahini (the Bangladeshi National Liberation Army). The Provisional Government of Bangladesh was established on 17 April 1971, converting the 469

elected members of the Pakistani national assembly and East Pakistani provincial assembly into the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh. The provisional government issued a proclamation that became the country's interim constitution and declared "equality, human dignity, and social justice" as its fundamental principles. Due to Mujib's detention, Syed Nazrul Islam took over the role of Acting President, while Tajuddin Ahmad was named Bangladesh's first Prime Minister. The Mukti Bahini and other Bengali guerrilla forces formed the Bangladesh Forces, which became the military wing of the provisional government. Led by General M. A. G. Osmani and eleven sector commanders, the forces held the countryside during the war. They conducted wide-ranging guerrilla operations against Pakistani forces. As a result, almost the entire country except for the capital Dacca was liberated by Bangladesh Forces by late November.

This led the Pakistan Army to attack neighbouring India's western front on 2 December 1971. India retaliated in both the western and eastern fronts. With a joint ground advance by Bangladeshi and Indian forces, coupled with air strikes by both India and the small Bangladeshi air contingent, the capital Dacca was liberated from Pakistani occupation in mid-December. During the last phase of the war, both the Soviet Union and the United States dispatched naval forces to the Bay of Bengal in a Cold War standoff. The nine month long war ended with the surrender of Pakistani armed forces to the Bangladesh-India Allied Forces on 16 December 1971.^{[160][161]} Under international pressure, Pakistan released Rahman from imprisonment on 8 January 1972 and he was flown by the British Royal Air Force to a million-strong homecoming in Dacca.^{[162][163]} Remaining Indian troops were withdrawn by 12 March 1972, three months after the war ended.^[164]

The cause of Bangladeshi self-determination was recognised around the world. By August 1972, the new state was recognised by 86 countries.^[155] Pakistan recognised Bangladesh in 1974 after pressure from most of the Muslim countries.^[165]

People's Republic of Bangladesh

First parliamentary era

The constituent assembly adopted the constitution of Bangladesh on 4 November 1972, establishing a secular, multiparty parliamentary democracy. The new constitution included references to socialism, and Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman nationalised major industries in 1972.^[166] A major reconstruction and rehabilitation program was launched. The Awami League won the country's first general election in 1973, securing a large majority in the "Jatiyo Sangshad", the national parliament. Bangladesh joined the Commonwealth of Nations, the UN, the OIC and the Non-Aligned Movement, and Rahman strengthened ties with India. Amid growing agitation by the opposition National Awami Party and Jashod, he became



Museum of Independence, Dhaka

increasingly authoritarian. Rahman amended the constitution, giving himself more emergency powers (including the suspension of fundamental rights). The Bangladesh famine of 1974 also worsened the political situation.^[167]



Sheikh Mujib casting his ballot during a general election. He was given the popular title of Bangabandhu (Friend of Bengal) and is regarded as Bangladesh's founding leader.

Presidential era (1975–1991)

In January 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman introduced one-party socialist rule under BAKSAL. Rahman banned all newspapers except four state-owned publications and amended the constitution to increase his power. He was assassinated during a coup on 15 August 1975. Martial law was declared, and the presidency passed to the usurper Khondaker Mostaq Ahmad for four months. Ahmad is widely regarded as a traitor by Bangladeshis.^[168] Tajuddin Ahmad, the nation's first prime minister, and four other independence leaders were assassinated on 4 November 1975. Chief Justice Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem was installed as president by the military on 6 November 1975. Bangladesh was governed by a military junta led by the Chief Martial Law Administrator for three years. In 1977, the army chief Ziaur Rahman became president. Rahman reinstated multiparty politics, privatised industries and newspapers, established BEPZA and held the country's second general election in 1979. A semi-presidential system evolved, with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) governing until 1982. Rahman was assassinated in 1981 and was succeeded by Vice-president Abdus Sattar. Sattar received 65.5 per cent of the vote in the 1981 presidential election.^[169]



Ziaur Rahman with members of the Dutch royal family in 1978

After a year in office, Sattar was overthrown in the 1982 Bangladesh coup d'état. Chief Justice A. F. M. Ahsanuddin Chowdhury was installed as president, but army chief Hussain Muhammad Ershad became the country's *de facto* leader and assumed the presidency in 1983. Ershad lifted martial law in 1986. He governed with four successive prime ministers (Ataur Rahman Khan, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Moudud Ahmed and Kazi Zafar Ahmed) and a parliament dominated by his Jatiyo Party. General elections were held in 1986 and 1988, although the opposition BNP and Awami League boycotted the latter. Ershad pursued administrative decentralisation, dividing the country into 64 districts, and pushed Parliament to make Islam the state religion in 1988.^[170] A 1990 mass uprising forced him to resign, and Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed led the country's first caretaker government as part of the transition to parliamentary rule.^[169]

Parliamentary era (1991–present)

After the 1991 general election, the twelfth amendment to the constitution restored the parliamentary republic and Begum Khaleda Zia became Bangladesh's first female prime minister. Zia, a former first lady, led a BNP government from 1990 to 1996. In 1991, her finance minister, Saifur Rahman, began a major program to liberalise the Bangladeshi economy.^[167]

In February 1996, a general election was held, which was boycotted by all opposition parties giving a 300 (of 300) seat victory for BNP. This election was deemed illegitimate, so a system of a caretaker government was introduced to oversee the transfer of power and a new election was held in June 1996, overseen by Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, the first Chief Adviser of Bangladesh. The Awami League won the seventh general election, marking its leader Sheikh Hasina's first term as Prime Minister. Hasina's first term

was highlighted by the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and a Ganges water-sharing treaty with India. The second caretaker government, led by Chief Adviser Justice Latifur Rahman, oversaw the 2001 Bangladeshi general election which returned Begum Zia and the BNP to power.

The second Zia administration saw improved economic growth, but political turmoil gripped the country between 2004 and 2006. A radical Islamist militant group, the JMB, carried out a series of terror attacks. The evidence of staging these attacks by these extremist groups have been found in the investigation. Hundreds of suspected members were detained in numerous security operations in 2006, including the two chiefs of the JMB, Shaykh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, who was executed with other top leaders in March 2007, bringing the militant group to an end.^[171]

In 2006, at the end of the term of the BNP administration, there was widespread political unrest related to the handover of power to a caretaker government. As such, the Bangladeshi military urged President Iajuddin Ahmed to impose a state of emergency and a caretaker government, led by technocrat Fakhruddin Ahmed, was installed.^[167] Emergency rule lasted for two years, during which time investigations into members of both Awami League and BNP were conducted, including their leaders Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia.^{[172][173]} In 2008, the ninth general election saw a return to power for Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League led Grand Alliance in a landslide victory. In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled martial law illegal and affirmed secular principles in the constitution. The following year, the Awami League abolished the caretaker government system.

Citing the lack of caretaker government, the 2014 general election was boycotted by the BNP and other opposition parties, giving the Awami League a decisive victory. The election was controversial with reports of violence and an alleged crackdown on the opposition in the run-up to the election, and 153 seats (of 300) went uncontested in the election. Despite the controversy, Hasina went on to form a government that saw her return for a third term as Prime Minister. Due to strong domestic demand, Bangladesh emerged as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.^[174] However, human rights abuses increased under the Hasina administration, particularly enforced disappearances. Between 2016 and 2017, an estimated 1 million Rohingya refugees took shelter in southeastern Bangladesh amid a military crackdown in neighbouring Rakhine State, Myanmar.

In 2018, the country saw major movements for government quota reforms and road-safety. The 2018 Bangladeshi general election was marred by allegations of widespread vote rigging.^[175] The Awami League won 259 out of 300 seats and the main opposition alliance Jatiya Oikya Front secured only 8 seats, with Sheikh Hasina becoming the longest-serving prime minister in Bangladeshi history.^[176] Pro-democracy leader Dr. Kamal Hossain called for an annulment of the election result and for a new election to be held in a free and fair manner.^[177] The election was also observed by European Union observers.^[178]



Muhammad Yunus (center)
celebrating the Nobel Peace Prize in
2006 with his family in Oslo, Norway

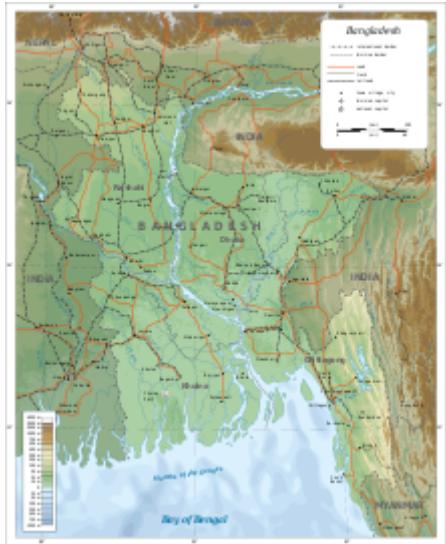


Rohingya refugees entering
Bangladesh from Myanmar

Geography

Bangladesh is a small, lush country in [South Asia](#), located on the [Bay of Bengal](#). It is surrounded almost entirely by neighbouring [India](#)—and shares a small border with [Myanmar](#) to its southeast, though it lies very close to [Nepal](#), [Bhutan](#), and [China](#). The country is divided into three regions. Most of the country is dominated by the fertile [Ganges Delta](#), the largest river delta in the world.^[179] The northwest and central parts of the country are formed by the [Madhupur](#) and the [Barind](#) plateaus. The northeast and southeast are home to [evergreen](#) hill ranges.

The Ganges delta is formed by the confluence of the Ganges (local name [Padma](#) or [Pôdda](#)), [Brahmaputra](#) ([Jamuna](#) or [Jomuna](#)), and [Meghna](#) rivers and their respective tributaries. The Ganges unites with the Jamuna (main channel of the Brahmaputra) and later joins the Meghna, finally flowing into the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh is called the "Land of Rivers";^[180] as it is home to over 57 [trans-boundary rivers](#). However, this resolves water issues politically complicated, in most cases, as the country is a lower [riparian](#) state to India.^[181]



Physical map of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is predominantly rich fertile flat land. Most of it is less than 12 m (39 ft) above sea level, and it is estimated that about 10% of its land would be flooded if the sea level were to rise by 1 m (3.3 ft).^[182] 17% of the country is covered by forests and 12% is covered by hill systems. The country's [haor](#) wetlands are of significance to global environmental science.

With an elevation of 1,064 m (3,491 ft), [Saka Haphong](#) (also known as Mowdok Mual) near the border with [Myanmar](#), is claimed to be the highest peak of Bangladesh.^[183] However, it is not yet widely recognised as the highest point of the country, and most sources give the honor to [Keokradong](#).^[184]

Administrative geography

Bangladesh is divided into eight administrative divisions,^{[185][184][186]} each named after their respective divisional headquarters: [Barisal](#) (officially [Barishal](#)^[187]), [Chittagong](#) (officially [Chattogram](#)^[187]), [Dhaka](#), [Khulna](#), [Mymensingh](#), [Rajshahi](#), [Rangpur](#), and [Sylhet](#).

Divisions are subdivided into districts (*zila*). There are 64 districts in Bangladesh, each further subdivided into *upazila* (subdistricts) or *thana*. The area within each police station, except for those in metropolitan areas, is divided into several [unions](#), with each union consisting of multiple villages. In the metropolitan areas, police stations are divided into wards, further divided into *mahallas*.

There are no elected officials at the divisional or district levels, and the administration is composed only of government officials. Direct elections are held in each union (or ward) for a chairperson and a number of members. In 1997, a parliamentary act was passed to reserve three seats (out of 12) in every union for female candidates.^[188]

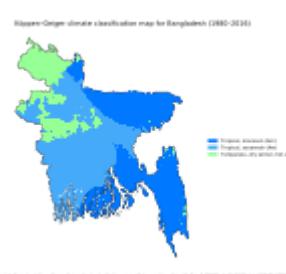


Administrative Divisions of Bangladesh

<u>Division</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>Established</u>	<u>Area (km²)</u> [189]	<u>2021 Population (projected)</u> [190]	<u>Density 2021</u>
Barisal Division	Barisal	1 January 1993	13,225	9,713,000	734
Chittagong Division	Chittagong	1 January 1829	33,909	34,747,000	1,025
Dhaka Division	Dhaka	1 January 1829	20,594	42,607,000	2,069
Khulna Division	Khulna	1 October 1960	22,284	18,217,000	817
Mymensingh Division	Mymensingh	14 September 2015	10,584	13,457,000	1,271
Rajshahi Division	Rajshahi	1 January 1829	18,153	21,607,000	1,190
Rangpur Division	Rangpur	25 January 2010	16,185	18,868,000	1,166
Sylhet Division	Sylhet	1 August 1995	12,635	12,463,000	986

Climate

Straddling the Tropic of Cancer, Bangladesh's climate is tropical, with a mild winter from October to March and a hot, humid summer from March to June. The country has never recorded an air temperature below 0 °C (32 °F), with a record low of 1.1 °C (34.0 °F) in the northwest city of Dinajpur on 3 February 1905.^[192] A warm and humid



Köppen-Geiger climate classification map for Bangladesh^[191]



Flooding after the 1991 Bangladesh cyclone, which killed around 140,000 people

monsoon season lasts from June to October and supplies most of the country's rainfall.

Natural calamities, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores occur almost every year,^[193] combined with the effects of deforestation, soil degradation and erosion. The cyclones of 1970 and 1991 were particularly devastating, the latter killing some 140,000 people.^[194]

In September 1998, Bangladesh saw the most severe flooding in modern world history. As the Brahmaputra, the Ganges and Meghna spilt over and swallowed 300,000 houses, 9,700 km (6,000 mi) of road and 2,700 km (1,700 mi) of embankment, 1,000 people were killed and 30 million more were made homeless; 135,000 cattle were killed; 50 km² (19 sq mi) of land were destroyed; and 11,000 km (6,800 mi) of roads were damaged or destroyed. Effectively, two-thirds of the country was underwater. The severity of the flooding was attributed to unusually high monsoon rains, the shedding of equally unusually large amounts of melt water from the Himalayas, and the widespread cutting down of trees (that would have intercepted rain water) for firewood or animal husbandry.^[195] As a result of various international and national level initiatives in disaster risk reduction, human toll and economic damage from floods and cyclones have come down over the years.^[196] A similar country wide flood in 2007, which left five million people displaced, had a death toll around 500.^[197]

Bangladesh is recognised to be one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.^{[198][199]} Over the course of a century, 508 cyclones have affected the Bay of Bengal region, 17 percent of which are believed to have caused landfall in Bangladesh.^[200] Natural hazards that come from increased rainfall, rising sea levels, and tropical cyclones are expected to increase as the climate changes, each seriously affecting agriculture, water and food security, human health, and shelter.^[201] It is estimated that by 2050, a 3 feet rise in sea levels will inundate some 20 percent of the land and displace more than 30 million people.^[202] To address the sea level rise threat in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 has been launched.^{[203][204]}

Biodiversity

Bangladesh ratified the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity on 3 May 1994.^[205] As of 2014, the country was set to revise its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.^[205]



A Bengal tiger, the national animal, in the Sundarbans

Bangladesh is located in the Indomalayan realm, and lies within four terrestrial ecoregions: Lower Gangetic Plains moist deciduous forests, Mizoram-Manipur-Kachin rain forests, Sundarbans freshwater swamp forests, and Sundarbans mangroves.^[206] Its ecology includes a long sea coastline, numerous rivers and tributaries, lakes, wetlands, evergreen forests, semi evergreen forests, hill forests, moist deciduous forests, freshwater swamp forests and flat land with tall grass. The Bangladesh Plain is famous for its fertile alluvial soil which supports extensive cultivation. The country is dominated by lush vegetation, with villages often buried in groves of mango, jackfruit, bamboo, betel nut, coconut and date palm.^[207] The country has up to 6000 species of plant life, including 5000 flowering plants.^[208] Water bodies and wetland systems provide a habitat for many aquatic plants. Water lilies and lotuses grow vividly during the monsoon season. The country has 50 wildlife sanctuaries.

Bangladesh is home to much of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, covering an area of 6,000 km² in the southwest littoral region. It is divided into three protected sanctuaries—the South, East and West zones. The forest is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The northeastern Sylhet region is home to haor wetlands, a unique ecosystem. It also includes tropical and subtropical coniferous forests, a freshwater

swamp forest, and mixed deciduous forests. The southeastern Chittagong region covers evergreen and semi-evergreen hilly jungles. Central Bangladesh includes the plainland Sal forest running along with the districts of Gazipur, Tangail and Mymensingh. St. Martin's Island is the only coral reef in the country.

Bangladesh has an abundance of wildlife in its forests, marshes, woodlands and hills.^[207] The vast majority of animals dwell within a habitat of 150,000 km².^[209] The Bengal tiger, clouded leopard, saltwater crocodile, black panther and fishing cat are among the chief predators in the Sundarbans.^[210] Northern and eastern Bangladesh is home to the Asian elephant, hoolock gibbon, Asian black bear and oriental pied hornbill.^[211]

The Chital deer are widely seen in southwestern woodlands. Other animals include the black giant squirrel, capped langur, Bengal fox, sambar deer, jungle cat, king cobra, wild boar, mongooses, pangolins, pythons and water monitors. Bangladesh has one of the largest populations of Irrawaddy dolphins and Ganges dolphins. A 2009 census found 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins inhabiting the littoral rivers of Bangladesh.^[212] The country has numerous species of amphibians (53), reptiles (139), marine reptiles (19) and marine mammals (5). It also has 628 species of birds.^[213]

Several animals became extinct in Bangladesh during the last century, including the one-horned and two-horned rhinoceros and common peafowl. The human population is concentrated in urban areas, limiting deforestation to a certain extent. Rapid urban growth has threatened natural habitats. Although many areas are protected under law, some Bangladeshi wildlife is threatened by this growth. Furthermore, access to biocapacity in Bangladesh is low. In 2016, Bangladesh had 0.4 global hectares^[214] of biocapacity per person within its territory, or about one fourth of the world average. In contrast, in 2016, they used 0.84 global hectares of biocapacity – their ecological footprint of consumption. As a result, Bangladesh is running a biocapacity deficit.^[214]

The Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act was enacted in 1995. The government has designated several regions as Ecologically Critical Areas, including wetlands, forests, and rivers. The Sundarbans tiger project and the Bangladesh Bear Project are among the key initiatives to strengthen conservation.^[211]

Politics and government

Bangladesh is a de jure representative democracy under its constitution, with a Westminster-style unitary parliamentary republic that has universal suffrage. The head of government is the Prime Minister, who is invited to form a government every five years. The President invites the leader of the largest party in parliament to become Prime Minister of the world's fifth-largest democracy.^[215] Bangladesh experienced a two party system between 1990 and 2014, when the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) alternated in power. During this period, elections were managed by a neutral caretaker government. But the caretaker government was abolished by the Awami League government in 2011. The BNP boycotted the next election in 2014, arguing that it would not be fair without a caretaker government. The BNP-led Jatiya Oikya Front participated in the 2018 election. The election saw many allegations of irregularities.



Bangabhaban, the official residence of the President of Bangladesh, was built in 1905 during the British Raj for use by the Viceroy of India and the Governor of Bengal.

One of the key aspects of Bangladeshi politics is the "spirit of the liberation war", which refers to the ideals of the liberation movement during the Bangladesh Liberation War.^[216] The Proclamation of Independence enunciated the values of "equality, human dignity and social justice". In 1972, the constitution included a

bill of rights and declared "nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularity" as the principles of government policy. Socialism was later de-emphasised and neglected by successive governments. Bangladesh has a market-based economy. To many Bangladeshis, especially in the younger generation, the spirit of the liberation war is a vision for a society based on civil liberties, human rights, the rule of law and good governance.^[217]

Executive branch

The Government of Bangladesh is overseen by a cabinet headed by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The tenure of a parliamentary government is five years. The Bangladesh Civil Service assists the cabinet in running the government. Recruitment for the civil service is based on a public examination. In theory, the civil service should be a meritocracy. But a disputed quota system coupled with politicisation and preference for seniority have allegedly affected the civil service's meritocracy.^[218] The President of Bangladesh is the ceremonial head of state^[219] whose powers include signing bills passed by parliament into law. The President is elected by the parliament and has a five-year term. Under the constitution, the president acts on the prime minister's advice. The President is the Supreme Commander of the Bangladesh Armed Forces and the chancellor of all universities.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during bilateral talks with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office in Dhaka

Legislative branch

The Jatiya Sangshad (National Parliament) is the unicameral parliament. It has 350 Members of Parliament (MPs), including 300 MPs elected on the first past the post system and 50 MPs appointed to reserved seats for women's empowerment. Article 70 of the Constitution of Bangladesh forbids MPs from voting against their party. However, several laws proposed independently by MPs have been transformed into legislation, including the anti-torture law.^[220] The parliament is presided over by the Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, who is second in line to the president as per the constitution. There is also a Deputy Speaker. When a president is incapable of performing duties (i.e. due to illness), the Speaker steps in as Acting President and the Deputy Speaker becomes Acting Speaker. A recurring proposal suggests that the Deputy Speaker should be an opposition member.^[221]



The National Parliament of Bangladesh

Legal system

The Supreme Court of Bangladesh is the highest court of the land, followed by the High Court and Appellate Divisions. The head of the judiciary is the Chief Justice of Bangladesh, who sits on the Supreme Court. The courts have wide latitude in judicial review, and judicial precedent is supported by Article 111 of the constitution. The judiciary includes district and metropolitan courts divided into civil and criminal courts. Due to a shortage of judges, the judiciary has a large backlog. The Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission is responsible for judicial appointments, salaries, and discipline.

Bangladesh's legal system is based on common law and its principal source of laws are acts of Parliament.^[222] The Bangladesh Code includes a list of all laws in force in the country. The code began in 1836, and most of its listed laws were crafted under the British Raj by the Bengal Legislative Council, the Bengal Legislative Assembly, the Eastern Bengal and Assam Legislative Council, the Imperial Legislative Council and the Parliament of the United Kingdom. One example is the 1860 Penal Code. From 1947 to 1971, laws were enacted by Pakistan's national assembly and the East Pakistani legislature. The Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh was the country's provisional parliament until 1973 when the first elected Jatiyo Sangshad (National Parliament) was sworn in. Although most of Bangladesh's laws were compiled in English, after a 1987 government directive, laws are now primarily written in Bengali. While most Bangladeshi law is secular, marriage, divorce, and inheritance are governed by Islamic, Hindu and Christian family law. Legal developments often influence the judiciary in the Commonwealth of Nations, such as the doctrine of legitimate expectation. The constitution includes a list of fundamental rights inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and was drafted by leading lawyer Kamal Hossain.^[223] In the 1970s, judges invalidated detentions under the Special Powers Act, 1974 through cases such as Aruna Sen v. Government of Bangladesh and Abdul Latif Mirza v. Government of Bangladesh. In 2008, the Supreme Court paved the way for citizenship for the Stranded Pakistanis, who were an estimated 300,000 stateless people.^[224] Despite being a non-signatory of the UN Refugee Convention, Bangladesh has taken in Rohingya refugees since 1978 and the country is now home to a million refugees. Bangladesh is an active member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) since 1972. It has ratified 33 ILO conventions, including the seven fundamental ILO conventions.^[225] Bangladesh has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.^{[226][227]} Judicial activism has often upheld human rights.



The Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Military

The Bangladesh Armed Forces have inherited the institutional framework of the British military and the British Indian Army.^[228] It was formed in 1971 from the military regiments of East Pakistan. In 2018, the active personnel strength of the Bangladesh Army was around 157,500,^[229] excluding the Air Force and the Navy (24,000).^[230] In addition to traditional defence roles, the military has supported civil authorities in disaster relief and provided internal security during periods of political unrest. For many years, Bangladesh has been the world's largest contributor to UN peacekeeping forces. In February 2015, the country had deployments in Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Golan Heights, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and South Sudan.^[231] The military budget of Bangladesh accounts for 1.3% of GDP, amounting to US\$4.3 billion in 2021.^{[232][233]}



Map of Bangladesh UN Peacekeeping Force deployments

The Bangladesh Navy, one of the largest in the Bay of Bengal, includes a fleet of frigates, submarines, corvettes and other vessels. The Bangladesh Air Force has a small fleet of multi-role combat aircraft, including the MiG-29 and Chengdu-F7. Most of Bangladesh's military equipment comes from China.^[234] Other key military suppliers include Turkey, the United States, South Korea, Russia, Ukraine, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. There has been speculation regarding Bangladesh's relationship with

the Quad. China has warned Bangladesh against joining the Quad.^[235] This warning was criticized by Bangladesh.^[236] Bangladesh continues to hold joint military exercises with members of the Quad and the Royal Navy.^{[237][238][239]}



BNS Ali Haider in the Port of Beirut as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

In January 2021, a tri-service contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces participated in the Delhi Republic Day parade for the first time.^{[240][241]} In December 2021, a tri-service contingent of the Indian Armed Forces participated in the Dhaka Victory Day parade for the first time, along with contingents from Bhutan and Russia and military observer groups from the United States and Mexico.^[242] 2021 marked the 50th anniversary and golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. In recent years, Bangladesh and India have increased joint military exercises, high level visits of military leaders, counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing. Bangladesh is vital to ensuring stability and security in northeast India.^{[243][244]} C130 Hercules aircraft of the Bangladesh Air Force have been involved in relief operations after the 2015 Nepal earthquake and in evacuations for the Maldives during the Covid-19 pandemic.^{[245][246]} The Bangladesh Navy was also dispatched to the Maldives during a water shortage crisis in the capital Male.^[247]

Bangladesh's strategic importance in the eastern subcontinent hinges on its proximity to China, its frontier with Burma, the separation of mainland and northeast India, and its maritime territory in the Bay of Bengal.^[248] In 1972, Bangladesh and India signed a 25-year friendship treaty which expired in 1997 and was not renewed. Article 8 of the treaty stipulated that "In accordance with the ties of friendship existing between the two countries, each of the contracting parties solemnly declare that it shall not enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party. Each of the parties shall refrain from any aggression against the other party and shall not allow the use of its territory for committing any act that may cause military damage to or constitute a threat to the security of the other contracting party".^[249] In the 1980s, Pakistan transferred several Shenyang J-6 aircraft to Bangladesh but these were destroyed during a cyclone.^[250] In 2002, Bangladesh and China signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) which the governments of both countries said will "institutionalize the existing accords in defence sector and also to rationalize the existing piecemeal agreements to enhance cooperation in training, maintenance and in some areas of production".^[251] The United States has pursued negotiations with Bangladesh on a Status of Forces Agreement, an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement and a General Security of Military Information Agreement.^{[252][253][254]} In 2019, Bangladesh ratified the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.^[255]

Foreign relations

The first major intergovernmental organisation joined by Bangladesh was the Commonwealth of Nations in 1972. The country joined the United Nations in 1974 and has been elected twice to the UN Security Council. Ambassador Humayun Rashid Choudhury was elected president of the UN General Assembly in 1986. Bangladesh relies on multilateral diplomacy in the World Trade Organization. It is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping, providing 113,000 personnel to 54 UN missions in the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa and the Caribbean in 2014.^[256]

In addition to membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations, Bangladesh pioneered regional co-operation in South Asia. Bangladesh is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), an organisation designed to strengthen relations and promote economic

and cultural growth among its members. It has hosted several summits, and two Bangladeshi diplomats were the organisation's secretary-general.

Bangladesh joined the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1973. It has hosted the summit of OIC foreign ministers, which addresses issues, conflicts and disputes affecting Muslim-majority countries. Bangladesh is a founding member of the Developing 8 Countries, a bloc of eight Muslim-majority republics.

The neighbouring country of Myanmar (Burma) was one of the first countries to recognise Bangladesh.^[257] Despite common regional interests, Bangladesh-Myanmar relations have been strained by the Rohingya refugee crisis and the isolationist policies of the Myanmar military. In 2012, both countries came to terms at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea over maritime boundaries in the Bay of Bengal.^[258] In 2016 and 2017, relations with Myanmar have strained once again as over 700,000 Rohingya refugees illegally entered Bangladesh fleeing persecution, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and other atrocities in Myanmar. The parliament, government, and civil society of Bangladesh have been at the forefront of international criticism against Myanmar for military operations against the Rohingya, which the United Nations has described as ethnic cleansing.^{[259][260]}

Bangladesh's most politically important bilateral relationship is with neighbouring India. In 2015, major Indian newspapers called Bangladesh a "trusted friend".^[261] Bangladesh and India are South Asia's largest trading partners. The countries are collaborating in regional economic and infrastructure projects, such as a regional motor-vehicle agreement in eastern South Asia and a coastal shipping agreement in the Bay of Bengal. Indo-Bangladesh relations often emphasise a shared cultural heritage, democratic values and a history of support for Bangladeshi independence.

Despite political goodwill, border killings of Bangladeshi civilians and the lack of a comprehensive water-sharing agreement for 54 transboundary rivers are major issues. In 2017, India joined Russia and China in refusing to condemn Myanmar's atrocities against the Rohingya, which contradicted with Bangladesh's demand for recognising Rohingya human rights.^[262] However, the Indian air force delivered aid shipments for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.^[263] The crackdown against cattle smuggling in India has also affected Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi beef and leather industries have seen increased prices due to the Indian BJP government's campaign against the export of beef and cattle skin.^[264]

Pakistan and Bangladesh have a US\$550 million trade relationship,^[265] particularly in Pakistani cotton imports for the Bangladeshi textile industry. Although Bangladeshi and Pakistani businesses have invested in each other, diplomatic relations are strained because of Pakistani denial of the 1971 Bangladesh genocide. The execution of a Jamaat-e-Islami leader in 2013 on committing of war crimes during the liberation war was opposed in Pakistan and led to further strained ties.^[266]

Sino-Bangladesh relations date to the 1950s and are relatively warm, despite the Chinese leadership siding with Pakistan during Bangladesh's war of independence. China and Bangladesh established bilateral relations in 1976, which have significantly strengthened, and the country is considered a cost-effective



First South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting in 1985 in Dhaka (l-r, top row: the presidents of Pakistan and the Maldives, the king of Bhutan, the president of Bangladesh, the prime minister of India, the king of Nepal and the president of Sri Lanka)



U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry meeting Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her residence in Dhaka in April 2021

source of arms for the Bangladeshi military.^[267] Since the 1980s 80 percent of Bangladesh's military equipment has been supplied by China (often with generous credit terms), and China is Bangladesh's largest trading partner. Both countries are part of the BCIM Forum.

Japan is Bangladesh's largest economic-aid provider in the form of loans and the countries have common political goals.^{[268][269]} The United Kingdom has longstanding economic, cultural and military links with Bangladesh. The United States is a major economic and security partner, its largest export market and foreign investor. Seventy-six percent of Bangladeshis viewed the United States favourably in 2014, one of the highest ratings among Asian countries.^{[270][271]} The United States views Bangladesh as a key partner in the Indo-Pacific.^[272] The European Union is Bangladesh's largest regional market, conducting public diplomacy and providing development assistance.

Relations with other countries are generally positive. Shared democratic values ease relations with Western countries and similar economic concerns forge ties to other developing countries. Despite poor working conditions and war affecting overseas Bangladeshi workers, relations with Middle Eastern countries are friendly and bounded by religion and culture. More than a million Bangladeshis are employed in the region. In 2016, the king of Saudi Arabia called Bangladesh "one of the most important Muslim countries".^[273] However, Bangladesh has not established diplomatic relationship with Israel^[274] in support of a sovereign Palestinian state and "an end to Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine".^[275]

Bangladeshi aid agencies work in many developing countries. An example is BRAC in Afghanistan, which benefits 12 million people in that country.^[276] Bangladesh has a record of nuclear nonproliferation as a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT),^[277] and is also a member of Non-Aligned Movement since 1973. It is a state party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Bangladeshi foreign policy is influenced by the principle of "friendship to all and malice to none", first articulated by Bengali statesman H. S. Suhrawardy in 1957.^{[268][278]} Suhrawardy led East and West Pakistan to join the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, CENTO and the Regional Cooperation for Development.

Civil society

Since the colonial period, Bangladesh has had a prominent civil society. There are various special interest groups, including non-governmental organisations, human rights organisations, professional associations, chambers of commerce, employers' associations and trade unions.^[279] The National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh was set up in 2007. Notable human rights organisations and initiatives include the Centre for Law and Mediation, Odhikar, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council and the War Crimes Fact Finding Committee. The world's largest international NGO BRAC is based in Bangladesh. There have been concerns regarding the shrinking space for independent civil society in recent years,^{[280][281]} with commentators labelling the civil society movement dead under the authoritarianism of the Awami League.^[282]

Human rights

Torture is banned by Article 35 (5) of the Constitution of Bangladesh.^[283] Despite this constitutional ban, torture is rampantly used by Bangladesh's security forces. Bangladesh joined the Convention against Torture in 1998; but it enacted its first anti-torture law, the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, in 2013. The first conviction under this law was announced in 2020.^[284] Amnesty International Prisoners of Conscience from Bangladesh have included Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Shahidul Alam.^{[285][286]}

The Digital Security Act of 2018 has greatly reduced freedom of expression in Bangladesh, particularly on the internet. The Digital Security Act has been used to target critics of the government and bureaucracy. Newspaper editorials have been demanding the repeal of the Digital Security Act.^{[287][288][289][290]}

On International Human Rights Day in December 2021, the United States Department of Treasury announced sanctions on commanders of the Rapid Action Battalion for extrajudicial killings, torture and other human rights abuses.^[291] According to Freedom House, "Bangladesh's ruling Awami League (AL) has consolidated political power through sustained harassment of the opposition and those perceived to be allied with it, as well as of critical media and voices in civil society. Corruption is a serious problem, and anticorruption efforts have been weakened by politicized enforcement. Due process guarantees are poorly upheld and security forces carry out a range of human right abuses with near impunity. The threat posed by Islamist extremists has receded since 2016, when the government enacted a harsh crackdown that saw the arrest of some 15,000 people".^[292] Bangladesh is ranked "partly free" in Freedom House's Freedom in the World report,^[293] but its press freedom has deteriorated from "free" to "not free" in recent years due to increasing pressure from the government on the country's diverse, privately owned and once fiercely outspoken media.^[294] According to the British Economist Intelligence Unit, the country has a hybrid regime: the third of four rankings in its Democracy Index.^[295] Bangladesh was the third-most-peaceful South Asian country in the 2015 Global Peace Index.^[296] According to National Human Rights Commission, 70% of alleged human-rights violations are committed by law-enforcement agencies.^[297] Homosexuality is outlawed by section 377 of the criminal code (a legacy of the colonial period), and is punishable by a maximum of life imprisonment.^{[298][299]} However, Bangladesh recognises the third gender and accords limited rights for transgender people.^[300]



The Rapid Action Battalion has been sanctioned by the United States for human rights abuses

According to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, an estimated 1,531,300 people are enslaved in modern-day Bangladesh, or 0.95% of the population.^[301] A number of slaves in Bangladesh are forced to work in the fish and shrimp industries.^{[302][303][304]}

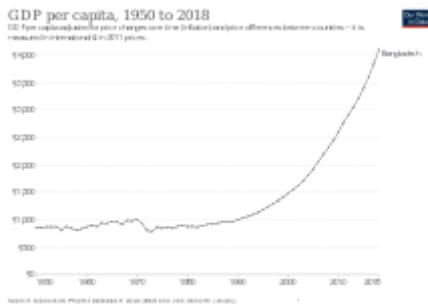
Corruption

Like for many developing countries, institutional corruption is a serious concern for Bangladesh. Bangladesh was ranked 146th among 180 countries on Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index.^[305] According to survey conducted by the Bangladesh chapter of TI, in 2015, bribes made up 3.7 percent of the national budget.^[306] Land administration was the sector with the most bribery in 2015,^[306] followed by education,^[307] police^[308] and water supply.^[309] The Anti Corruption Commission was formed in 2004, and it was active during the 2006–08 Bangladeshi political crisis, indicting many leading politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen for graft.^{[310][311][312]}

Economy

Bangladesh has the world's 33rd largest economy in terms of market exchange rates and 29th largest in terms of purchasing power parity, which ranks second in South Asia after India.^[313] Bangladesh is also one of the world's fastest-growing economies and one of the fastest growing middle-income countries.^[314] The country has a market-based mixed economy. A developing nation, Bangladesh is one of the Next Eleven emerging markets. According to the IMF, its per-capita income was US\$1,906 in 2019, with a GDP

of \$317 billion.^[315] Bangladesh has the second-highest foreign-exchange reserves in South Asia (after India). The Bangladeshi diaspora contributed \$15.31 billion in remittances in 2015.^[316] Bangladesh's largest trading partners are the European Union, the United States, Japan, India, Australia, China and ASEAN. Expat workers in the Middle East and Southeast Asia send back a large chunk of remittances. The economy is driven by strong domestic demand.^[314]



Historical development of GDP per capita

During its first five years of independence, Bangladesh adopted socialist policies. The subsequent military regime and BNP and Jatiya Party governments restored free markets and promoted the country's private sector. In 1991, finance minister Saifur Rahman introduced a programme of economic liberalisation. The Bangladeshi private sector has rapidly expanded, with a number of conglomerates driving the economy. Major industries include textiles, pharmaceuticals, shipbuilding, steel, electronics, energy, construction materials, chemicals, ceramics, food processing, and leather goods. Export-oriented industrialisation has increased with fiscal year 2018–19 exports increasing by 10.1% over the previous year to \$40 billion.^[317] Most export earnings are from the garment-manufacturing industry.



Construction of Padma Bridge, the longest bridge on the Ganges, by China Major Bridge Engineering Co. Ltd. The bridge was designed by AECOM.

However, an insufficient power supply is a significant obstacle to Bangladesh's economic development. According to the World Bank, poor governance, corruption and weak public institutions are also major challenges.^[318] In April 2010, Standard & Poor's gave Bangladesh a BB- long-term credit rating, below India's but above those of Pakistan and Sri Lanka.^[319]



Hotels and office blocks in an upmarket neighborhood of Dhaka

Bangladesh is the seventh-largest natural gas producer in Asia, ahead of neighbouring Myanmar, and 56 percent of the country's electricity is generated by natural gas. Major gas fields are located in the northeastern (particularly Sylhet) and southern (including Barisal and Chittagong) regions. Petrobangla is the national energy company. The American multinational corporation Chevron produces 50 percent of Bangladesh's natural gas.^[320] According to geologists, the Bay of Bengal contains large, untapped gas reserves in Bangladesh's exclusive economic zone.^[321] Bangladesh has substantial coal reserves, with several coal mines operating in the northwest. Jute exports remain significant, although the global jute trade has shrunk considerably since its World War II peak. Bangladesh has one of the world's oldest tea industries and is a major exporter of fish and seafood.

Bangladesh's textile and ready-made garment industries are the country's largest manufacturing sector, with 2017 exports of \$34.1 billion.^[317] Leather-goods manufacturing, particularly footwear, is the second-largest export sector. The pharmaceutical industry meets 97 percent of domestic demand, and exports to many countries.^{[322][323]} Shipbuilding has grown rapidly, with exports to Europe.^[324]

Steel is concentrated in the port city of Chittagong, and the ceramics industry is prominent in international trade. In 2005 Bangladesh was the world's 20th-largest cement producer, an industry dependent on limestone imports from northeast India. Food processing is a major sector, with local brands such as PRAN

increasing their international presence. The electronics industry is growing rapidly with contributions from companies like the Walton Group.^[325] Bangladesh's defense industry includes the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories and the Khulna Shipyard.

The service sector accounts for 51 percent of the country's GDP. Bangladesh ranks with Pakistan as South Asia's second-largest banking sector.^[326] The Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchanges are the country's twin financial markets. Bangladesh's telecommunications industry is one of the world's fastest-growing, with 171.854 million cellphone subscribers in January 2021,^[327] and Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink and TeleTalk respectively are major companies. Tourism is developing, with the beach resort of Cox's Bazar at the centre of the industry. The Sylhet region, home to Bangladesh's tea gardens, also hosts a large number of visitors. The country has three UNESCO World Heritage Sites (the Mosque City, the Buddhist Vihara and the Sundarbans) and five tentative-list sites.^[328]

Following the pioneering work of Akhter Hameed Khan on rural development at Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, several NGOs in Bangladesh including BRAC (the world's largest NGO),^[329] and Grameen Bank, focused on rural development and poverty alleviation in the country. Muhammad Yunus successfully pioneered microfinance as a sustainable tool for poverty alleviation and others followed suit. As of 2015, the country had over 35 million microcredit borrowers.^[330] In recognition of their tangible contribution to poverty alleviation, Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.^[331]

Agriculture

Agriculture is the largest employment sector in Bangladesh, making up 14.2 percent of Bangladesh's GDP in 2017 and employing about 42.7 percent of the workforce.^[332] The performance of this sector has an overwhelming impact on major macroeconomic objectives like employment generation, poverty alleviation, human resources development, food security, and other economic and social forces. A plurality of Bangladeshis earn their living from agriculture. Due to a number of factors, Bangladesh's labour-intensive agriculture has achieved steady increases in food grain production despite the often unfavorable weather conditions.^[333] These include better flood control and irrigation, a generally more efficient use of fertilisers, as well as the establishment of better distribution and rural credit networks.^[333]



Paddy fields dominate the country's farmland. Bangladesh is a top global producer of rice (3rd), potatoes (7th), tropical fruits (6th), jute (2nd), and farmed fish (5th).

Although rice and jute are the primary crops, maize and vegetables are assuming greater importance.^[333] Due to the expansion of irrigation networks, some wheat producers have switched to cultivation of maize which is used mostly as poultry feed.^[333] Tea is grown in the northeast.^[333] Because of Bangladesh's fertile soil and normally ample water supply, rice can be grown and harvested three times a year in many areas.^[333] The country is among the top producers of rice (third), potatoes (seventh), tropical fruits (sixth), jute (second), and farmed fish (fifth).^{[334][335]} With 35.8 million metric tons produced in 2000, rice is Bangladesh's principal crop. In comparison to rice, wheat output in 1999 was 1.9 million tonnes (1,900,000 long tons; 2,100,000 short tons).

Transport

Transport is a major sector of the economy. Aviation has grown rapidly and is dominated by the flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines and other privately owned airlines. Bangladesh has a number of airports including three international and several domestic STOL (short takeoff and landing) airports. The busiest, Shahjalal International Airport connects Dhaka with major destinations.



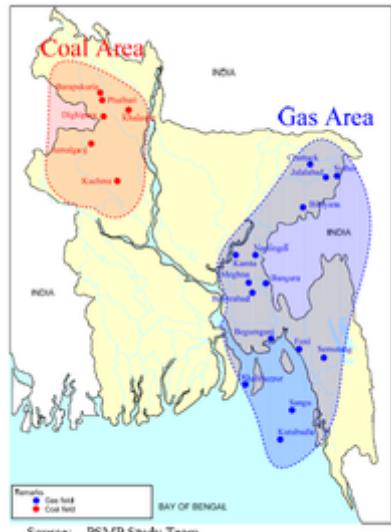
A Boeing 777 of the national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines

Bangladesh has a 2,706-kilometre (1,681-mile) long rail network operated by the state-owned Bangladesh Railway. The total length of the country's road and highway network is nearly 21,000 kilometers (13,000 miles).

With 8,046 kilometres (5,000 miles) of navigable waters, Bangladesh has one of the largest inland waterway networks in the world.^[336] The southeastern port of Chittagong is its busiest seaport, handling over \$60 billion in annual trade (more than 80 percent of the country's export-import commerce).^[337] The second-busiest seaport is Mongla. Bangladesh has three seaports and 22 river ports.^[338]

Energy and infrastructure

Bangladesh had an installed electrical capacity of 20,000 megawatts in 2018, reaching 23,548 MW in 2020.^{[339][340]} About 56 percent of the country's commercial energy is generated by natural gas, followed by oil, hydropower and coal. Bangladesh has planned to import hydropower from Bhutan and Nepal.^[341] A nuclear power plant is under construction with Russian support in the Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant project which will add 2160 MW when fully operational.^[342] The country ranks fifth worldwide in the number of renewable energy green jobs, and solar panels are increasingly used to power urban and off-grid rural areas.^[343]



Coal and natural-gas fields in Bangladesh, 2011

An estimated 98 percent of the country's population had access to improved water sources by 2004^[344] (a high percentage for a low-income country), achieved largely through the construction of hand pumps with support from external donors. However, in 1993 it was discovered that much of Bangladesh's groundwater (the source of drinking water for 97 percent of the rural population and a significant share of the urban population) is naturally contaminated with arsenic.

Another challenge is low cost recovery due to low tariffs and poor economic efficiency, especially in urban areas (where water revenue does not cover operating costs). An estimated 56 percent of the population had access to adequate sanitation facilities in 2010.^[184] Community-led total sanitation, addressing the problem of open defecation in rural areas, is credited with improving public health since its introduction in 2000.^[345]

Science and technology



In 2018, the first payload of SpaceX's Falcon 9 Block 5 rocket was the Bangabandhu-1 satellite built by Thales Alenia Space

The Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, founded in 1973, traces its roots to the East Pakistan Regional Laboratories established in Dhaka (1955), Rajshahi (1965) and Chittagong (1967). Bangladesh's space agency, SPARRSO, was founded in 1983 with assistance from the United States.^[346] The country's first communications satellite, Bangabandhu-1, was launched from the United States in 2018.^[347] The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission operates a TRIGA research reactor at its atomic-energy facility in Savar.^[348] In 2015, Bangladesh was ranked the 26th global IT outsourcing destination.^[349] Bangladesh was ranked 116st in the Global Innovation Index in 2021.^[350]

Tourism

Bangladesh's tourist attractions include historical sites and monuments, resorts, beaches, picnic spots, forests and wildlife of various species. Activities for tourists include angling, water skiing, river cruising, hiking, rowing, yachting, and sea bathing.^{[351][352]}

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported in 2019 that the travel and tourism industry in Bangladesh directly generated 1,180,500 jobs in 2018 or 1.9 percent of the country's total employment.^[353] According to the same report, Bangladesh experiences around 125,000 international tourist arrivals per year.^[353] Domestic spending generated 97.7 percent of direct travel and tourism gross domestic product (GDP) in 2012.^[354] Bangladesh's world ranking in 2012 for travel and tourism's direct contribution to GDP, as a percentage of GDP, was 120 out of 140.^[354]

Demographics

Estimates of the Bangladeshi population vary, but UN data suggests 161,376,708 (162.9 million) in 2017.^{[8][9]} The 2011 census estimated 142.3 million,^[356] much less than 2007–2010 estimates of Bangladesh's population (150–170 million). Bangladesh is the world's eighth-most-populous nation and the most densely-populated large country in the world, ranking 7th in population density even when small countries and city-states are included.^[357]

The country's population-growth rate was among the highest in the world in the 1960s and 1970s, when its population grew from 65 to 110 million. With the promotion of birth control in the 1980s, Bangladesh's growth rate began to slow. Its total fertility rate is now 2.05,^[358] lower than India's (2.58) and Pakistan's (3.07). The population is relatively young, with 34 percent aged 15 or younger and five percent 65 or older. Life expectancy at birth was estimated at 72.49 years in 2016.^[184] According to the World Bank, as of 2016 14.8% of the country lives below the international poverty line on less than \$1.90 per day.^{[359][360]}

Bengalis are 98 percent of the population.^[361] Of Bengalis, Muslims are the majority, followed by Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

The Adivasi population includes the Chakma, Marma, Tanchangya, Tripuri, Kuki, Khiam, Khumi, Murang, Mru, Chak, Lushei, Bawm, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, Santal, Munda and Oraon tribes. The Chittagong Hill Tracts region experienced unrest and an insurgency from 1975 to 1997

Population (millions)		
Year	Pop.	±% p.a.
1971	67.8	—
1980	80.6	+1.94%
1990	105.3	+2.71%
2000	129.6	+2.10%
2010	148.7	+1.38%
2012	161.1	+4.09%

Source: OECD/World Bank^[355]

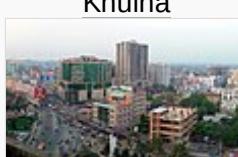
in an autonomy movement by its indigenous people. Although a peace accord was signed in 1997, the region remains militarised.^[362]

Bangladesh is home to a significant Ismaili community.^[363] It hosts many Urdu-speaking immigrants, who migrated there after the partition of India. Stranded Pakistanis were given citizenship by the Supreme Court in 2008.^[364]

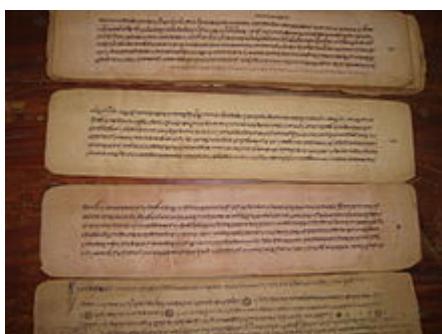
Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh number at around 1 million, making Bangladesh one of the countries with the largest refugee populations in the world.

Urban centres

Dhaka is Bangladesh's capital and largest city and is overseen by two city corporations who manage between them the northern and southern part of the city. There are 12 city corporations which hold mayoral elections: Dhaka South, Dhaka North, Chittagong, Comilla, Khulna, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Barisal, Rangpur, Gazipur and Narayanganj. Mayors are elected for five-year terms. Altogether there are 506 urban centres in Bangladesh among which 43 cities have a population of more than 100,000.^[365]

Largest cities or towns in Bangladesh				
"National Volume-3: Urban Area Report" (http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplicatio n/userfiles/Image/National%20Reports/PopulationHousingCensus2011.pdf) (PDF), <i>Population and Housing Census 2011</i> , Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, pp. 24–25, August 2014				
Rank	Name	Division	Pop.	
1	Dhaka	Dhaka	8,906,039	
2	Chittagong	Chittagong	2,592,439	
3	Khulna	Khulna	664,728	
4	Sylhet	Sylhet	531,663	
5	Rajshahi	Rajshahi	451,425	
6	Bogra	Rajshahi	400,983	
7	Mymensingh	Mymensingh	389,918	
8	Barisal	Barisal	339,308	
9	Rangpur	Rangpur	307,053	
10	Sirajganj	Rajshahi	297,230	

Language



The Charyapada scrolls are the oldest surviving text of the Bengali language. The photograph was taken at the Rajshahi College Library.

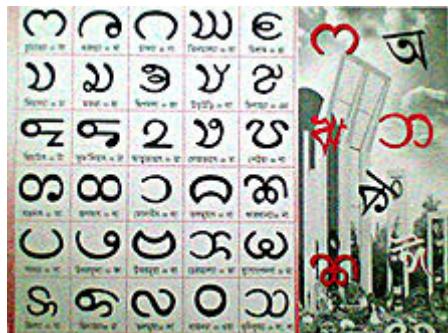
The predominant language of Bangladesh is Bengali (also known as Bangla). Bengali is one of the easternmost branches of the Indo-European language family. It is a part of the Eastern Indo-Aryan languages, which developed between the 10th and 13th centuries. Bengali is written using the Bengali script. In ancient Bengal, Sanskrit was the language of written communication, especially by priests. During the Islamic period, Bengali replaced Sanskrit as the vernacular language. The Sultans of Bengal promoted the production of Bengali literature instead of Sanskrit. Bengali also received Persian and Arabic loanwords during the Sultanate of Bengal. Under British rule, Bengali was significantly modernised by Europeans. Modern Standard Bengali emerged as the lingua franca of the region. Hindu scholars employed a heavily

Sanskritised version of Bengali during the [Bengali Renaissance](#). Muslim writers such as [Kazi Nazrul Islam](#) gave attention to the Persian and Arabic vocabulary of the language.

Today, the Bengali language standard is prescribed by the [Bangla Academy](#) in Bangladesh. More than 98 percent of people in Bangladesh speak Bengali as their native language.^{[366][367]} Bengali is described as a [dialect continuum](#) where there are various [dialects](#) spoken throughout the country. Currently there is a [diglossia](#) in which much of the population are able to understand or speak Standard Colloquial Bengali and in their regional dialect, such as [Chittagonian](#) or [Sylheti](#), which some linguists consider as separate languages.^[368] The [Bengali Language Implementation Act, 1987](#) made it mandatory to use Bengali in all government affairs in Bangladesh.^[369] Although laws were historically written in English, they were not translated into Bengali until the act. All subsequent acts, ordinances and laws have been promulgated in Bengali since 1987.^[370] English is often used in the verdicts delivered by the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, and is also used in higher education.

The [Chakma language](#) is another native Eastern Indo-Aryan language of Bangladesh. It is written using the [Chakma script](#). The unique aspect of the language is that it is used by the Chakma people, who are a population with similarities to the people of East Asia, rather than the Indian subcontinent. The Chakma language is endangered due to its decreasing use in schools and institutions.

Other tribal languages include [Garo](#), [Meitei](#), [Kokborok](#) and [Rakhine](#). Among the [Austroasiatic languages](#), the [Santali language](#) is spoken by the Santali tribe. Many of these languages are written in the Bengali script, while some usage of the Latin script is also used.



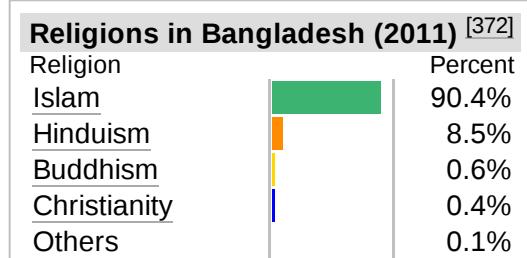
Chakma alphabets are indigenous to the Chittagong Hill Tracts

[Urdu](#) has a significant heritage in Bangladesh, in particular [Old Dhaka](#). The language was introduced to Bengal in the 17th-century. Traders and migrants from North India often spoke the language in Bengal, as did sections of the Bengali upper class. Urdu poets lived in many parts of Bangladesh. The use of Urdu became controversial during the [Bengali Language Movement](#) when the people of East Bengal resisted attempts to impose Urdu as the main official language. In modern Bangladesh, the Urdu-speaking community is restricted to the country's [Bihari](#) community (formerly Stranded Pakistanis); and some sections of the [Old Dhakaiya](#) population.^[371]

Religion

The constitution grants [freedom of religion](#) and officially makes Bangladesh a [secular state](#), while establishing Islam as the "state religion of the Republic" by Article (2A) of the Constitution of Bangladesh.^{[373][374][375]} Islam is followed by 90 percent of the population.^[376] Most Bangladeshis are [Bengali Muslims](#), who form the largest Muslim ethnoreligious group in South Asia and the second largest in the world after the Arabs. There is also a minority of non-Bengali Muslims.

The vast majority of Bangladeshi Muslims are [Sunni](#), followed by minorities of [Shia](#) and [Ahmadiya](#). About four percent are [non-denominational Muslims](#).^[377] Bangladesh has the fourth-largest Muslim population in the world, and is the third-largest Muslim-majority country (after Indonesia and Pakistan).^[378] [Sufism](#) has an extensive heritage in the region.^[379] Liberal Bengali Islam sometimes clashes with orthodox movements. The largest gathering of Muslims in Bangladesh is the apolitical [Bishwa Ijtema](#), held annually by the orthodox [Tablighi Jamaat](#). The Ijtema is the second-largest Muslim congregation in the world, after



the Hajj. The Islamic Foundation is an autonomous government agency responsible for some religious matters under state guidance, including monitoring of sighting of the moon in accordance with the lunar Islamic calendar in order to set festival dates; as well as the charitable tradition of zakat. Public holidays include the Islamic observances of Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-al-Adha, the Prophet's Birthday, Ashura and Shab-e-Barat.



Eid prayers for Muslims at Barashalghar, Debidwar, Comilla

peoples). At the same time, coastal Chittagong is home to many Bengali Buddhists. Although Mahayana Buddhism was historically prevalent in the region, Bangladeshi Buddhists today adhere to the Theravada school. Buddha's Birthday is a public holiday. The chief Buddhist priests are based at a monastery in Chittagong.

Christianity is the fourth-largest religion, at 0.4 per cent.^[380] Roman Catholicism is the largest denomination among Bangladeshi Christians. Bengali Christians are spread across the country. At the same time, there are many Christians among minority ethnic groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (southeastern Bangladesh) and within the Garo tribe of Mymensingh (north-central Bangladesh). The country also has Protestant, Baptist, and Oriental Orthodox churches. Christmas is a public holiday.

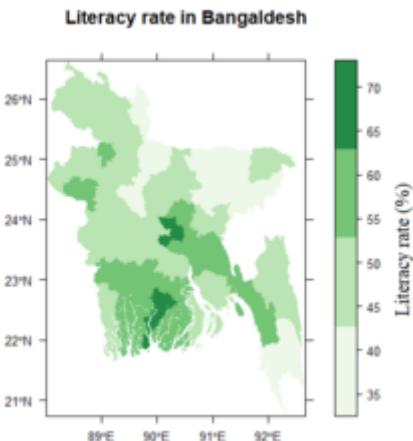
The Constitution of Bangladesh declares Islam the state religion but bans religion-based politics. It proclaims equal recognition of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and people of all faiths.^[381] In 1972, Bangladesh was South Asia's first constitutionally-secular country.^[382] Article 12 of the constitution continues to call for secularism, the elimination of interfaith tensions and prohibits the abuse of religion for political purposes and any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practising a particular religion.^[383] Article 41 of the constitution subjects religious freedom to public order, law and morality; it gives every citizen the right to profess, practise or propagate any religion; every religious community or denomination the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions; and states that no person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or worship if that instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own.^[384]



Bangladeshis celebrating Pahela Baishakh as a mark of the beginning of Bengali new year

Education

Bangladesh has a heavily flawed education system;^{[385][386]} with a low literacy rate of 74.7% percent as of 2019: 77.4% for males and 71.9% for females.^{[387][388]} The country's educational system is three-tiered and heavily subsidised, with the government operating many schools at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels and subsidising many private schools. In the tertiary education sector, the Bangladeshi government funds over 45 state universities^[389] through the [University Grants Commission](#). Despite, the government does not grant free education, and education is not declared a fundamental right in the constitution.^[390]



Literacy rates in Bangladesh districts

The education system is divided into five levels: primary (first to fifth grade), junior secondary (sixth to eighth grade), secondary (ninth and tenth grade), higher secondary (11th and 12th grade), and tertiary.^[391] Five years of secondary education (including junior secondary) ends with a [Secondary School Certificate \(SSC\)](#) examination. Since 2009, the Primary Education Closing (PEC) examination has also been introduced. Students who pass the PEC examination proceed to secondary or matriculation training, culminating in the SSC examination.^[391]

Students who pass the PEC examination proceed to three years of junior secondary education, culminating in the [Junior School Certificate \(JSC\)](#) examination. Students who pass this examination proceed to two years of secondary education, culminating in the [SSC](#) examination. Students who pass this examination proceed to two years of higher secondary education, culminating in the [Higher Secondary School Certificate \(HSC\)](#) examination.^[391]



Faculty of Sciences at the [University of Dhaka](#); The [Curzon Hall](#)

Universities in Bangladesh are of three general types: public (government-owned and subsidised), private (privately owned universities) and international (operated and funded by international organisations). They are accredited by and affiliated with the [University Grants Commission \(UGC\)](#), created by Presidential Order 10 in 1973.^[392] The country has 47 public,^[389] 105 private^[393] and two international [universities](#); [Bangladesh National University](#) has the largest enrollment, and the [University of Dhaka](#) (established in 1921) is the oldest. [University of Chittagong](#) (established in 1966) is the largest University (Campus: Rural, 2,100 acres (8.5 km²)).

Medical education is provided by 29 government and private [medical colleges](#). All medical colleges are affiliated with the [Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](#).

Health

Healthcare facilities in Bangladesh are considered less than adequate, although they have improved as poverty levels have decreased significantly. Findings from a recent study in [Chakaria](#) (a rural [upazila](#) under Cox's Bazar District) revealed that the "village doctors", practicing allopathic medicine without formal training, were reported to have provided 65% of the healthcare sought for illness episodes occurring within 14 days prior to the survey. Formally-trained providers made up only four percent of the total health workforce. The Future Health Systems survey indicated significant deficiencies in the treatment practices of village doctors, with widespread harmful and inappropriate drug prescribing.^[394] Receiving health care from informal providers is encouraged.^[395]

A 2007 study of 1,000 households in rural Bangladesh found that direct payments to formal and informal healthcare providers and indirect costs (loss of earnings because of illness) associated with illness were deterrents to accessing healthcare from qualified providers.^[394] A community survey of 6,183 individuals in rural Bangladesh found a gender difference in treatment-seeking behaviour, with women less likely to seek treatment than to men.^[396] The use of skilled birth attendant (SBA) services, however, rose from 2005 to 2007 among women from all socioeconomic quintiles except the highest.^[397] A health watch, a pilot community-empowerment tool, was successfully developed and implemented in south-eastern Bangladesh to improve the uptake and monitoring of public-health services.^[398]



A Bangladeshi nurse in Kutupalong Refugee Camp

Bangladesh's poor health conditions are attributed to the lack of healthcare provision by the government. According to a 2010 World Bank report, 2009 healthcare spending was 3.35 percent of the country's GDP.^[399] Government spending on healthcare that year was 7.9 percent of the total budget; out-of-pocket expenditures totalled 96.5 percent.^[399] According to the government sources, the number of hospital beds is 8 per 10,000 population (as of 2015).^[400]

Malnutrition has been a persistent problem in Bangladesh, with the World Bank ranking the country first in the number of malnourished children worldwide.^{[401][402]} More than 54% of preschool-age children are stunted, 56% are underweight and more than 17% are wasted.^[403] More than 45 percent of rural families and 76 percent of urban families were below the acceptable caloric-intake level.^[404]

Culture

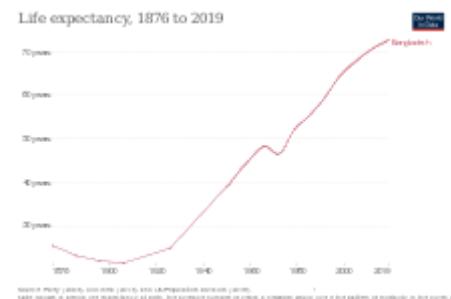
Visual arts



A preserved cloth of historic Bengali fine muslin, which is now extinct

culture.

The recorded history of art in Bangladesh can be traced to the 3rd century BCE, when terracotta sculptures were made in the region. In classical antiquity, a notable sculptural Hindu, Jain and Buddhist art developed in the Pala Empire and the Sena dynasty. Islamic art has evolved since the 14th century. The architecture of the Bengal Sultanate saw a distinct style of domed mosques with complex niche pillars that had no minarets. Mughal Bengal's most celebrated artistic tradition was the weaving of Jamdani motifs on fine muslin, which is now classified by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage. Jamdani motifs were similar to Iranian textile art (buta motifs) and Western textile art (paisley). The Jamdani weavers in Dhaka received imperial patronage.^{[87][405]} Ivory and brass were also widely used in Mughal art. Pottery is widely used in Bengali



Historical development of life expectancy in Bangladesh

The modern art movement in Bangladesh took shape during the 1950s, particularly with the pioneering works of Zainul Abedin. East Bengal developed its own modernist painting and sculpture traditions, which were distinct from the art movements in West Bengal. The Art Institute Dhaka has been an important centre for visual art in the region. Its annual Bengali New Year parade was enlisted as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2016.

Modern Bangladesh has produced many of South Asia's leading painters, including SM Sultan, Mohammad Kibria, Shahabuddin Ahmed, Kanak Chanpa Chakma, Kafil Ahmed, Saifuddin Ahmed, Qayyum Chowdhury, Rashid Choudhury, Quamrul Hassan, Rafiqun Nabi and Syed Jahangir, among others. Noverta Ahmed and Nitun Kundu were the country's pioneers of modernist sculpture.

In recent times, photography as a medium of art has become popular. Biennial Chobi Mela is considered the largest photography festival in Asia.^[406]

Literature

The oldest evidence of writing in Bangladesh is the Mahasthan Brahmi Inscription, which dates back to the 3rd century BCE.^[407] In the Gupta Empire, Sanskrit literature thrived in the region. Bengali developed from Sanskrit and Magadhi Prakrit in the 8th to 10th century. Bengali literature is a millennium-old tradition; the Charyapadas are the earliest examples of Bengali poetry. Sufi spiritualism inspired many Bengali Muslim writers. During the Bengal Sultanate, medieval Bengali writers were influenced by Arabic and Persian works. The Chandidas are the notable lyric poets from the early Medieval Age. Syed Alaol was the bard of middle Bengali literature. The Bengal Renaissance shaped modern Bengali literature, including novels, short stories and science fiction. Rabindranath Tagore was the first non-European laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature and is described as the Bengali Shakespeare.^[408] Kazi Nazrul Islam was a revolutionary poet who espoused political rebellion against colonialism and fascism. Begum Rokeya is regarded as the pioneer feminist writer of Bangladesh.^[409] Other renaissance icons included Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. The writer Syed Mujtaba Ali is noted for his cosmopolitan Bengali worldview.^[410] Jasimuddin was a renowned pastoral poet. Shamsur Rahman and Al Mahmud are considered two of the greatest Bengali poets to have emerged in the 20th century. Farrukh Ahmad, Sufia Kamal, Syed Ali Ahsan, Ahsan Habib, Abul Hussain, Shahid Qadri, Fazal Shahabuddin, Abu Zafar Obaidullah, Omar Ali, Al Mujahidi, Syed Shamsul Huq, Nirmalendu Goon, Abid Azad, Hasan Hafizur Rahman and Abdul Hye Sikder are important figures of modern Bangladeshi poetry. Ahmed Sofa is regarded as the most important Bangladeshi intellectual in the post-independence era. Humayun Ahmed was a popular writer of modern Bangladeshi magical realism and science fiction. Notable writers of Bangladeshi fictions include Mir Mosharraf Hossain, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Alauddin Al Azad, Shahidul Zahir, Rashid Karim, Mahmudul Haque, Syed Waliullah, Shahidullah Kaiser, Shawkat Osman, Selina Hossain, Shahed Ali, Razia Khan, Anisul Hoque, and Abdul Mannan Syed.



Syed Mujtaba Ali

The annual Ekushey Book Fair and Dhaka Literature Festival, organised by the Bangla Academy, are among the largest literary festivals in South Asia.

Women in Bangladesh

Although as of 2015, several women occupied major political office in Bangladesh. Its women continue to live under a patriarchal social regime where violence is common.^[411] Whereas in India and Pakistan women participate less in the workforce as their education increases, the reverse is the case in Bangladesh.^[411]

Bengal has a long history of feminist activism dating back to the 19th century. Begum Rokeya and Faizunnessa Chowdhurani played an important role in emancipating Bengali Muslim women from purdah, before the country's division, as well as promoting girls' education. Several women were elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in the British Raj. The first women's magazine, Begum, was published in 1948.

In 2008, Bangladeshi female workforce participation stood at 26%.^[412] Women dominate blue collar jobs in the Bangladeshi garment industry. Agriculture, social services, healthcare and education are also major occupations for Bangladeshi women, while their employment in white collar positions has steadily increased.



Muslim feminist Begum Rokeya and her husband in 1898

Architecture

The architectural traditions of Bangladesh have a 2,500-year-old heritage.^[413] Terracotta architecture is a distinct feature of Bengal. Pre-Islamic Bengali architecture reached its pinnacle in the Pala Empire, when the Pala School of Sculptural Art established grand structures such as the Somapura Mahavihara. Islamic architecture began developing under the Bengal Sultanate, when local terracotta styles influenced medieval mosque construction.



The 18th century terracotta Hindu Kantanagar Temple in Dinajpur

The Sixty Dome Mosque was the largest medieval mosque built in Bangladesh and is a fine example of Turkic-Bengali architecture. The Mughal style replaced indigenous architecture when Bengal became a province of the Mughal Empire and influenced urban housing development. The Kantajew Temple and Dhakeshwari Temple are excellent examples of late medieval Hindu temple architecture. Indo-Saracenic Revival architecture, based on Indo-Islamic styles, flourished during the British period. The zamindar gentry in Bangladesh built numerous Indo-Saracenic palaces and country mansions, such as the Ahsan Manzil, Tajhat Palace, Dighapatia Palace, Puthia Rajbari and Natore Rajbari.

Bengali vernacular architecture is noted for pioneering the bungalow. Bangladeshi villages consist of thatched roofed houses made of natural materials like mud, straw, wood and bamboo. In modern times, village bungalows are increasingly made of tin.

Muzharul Islam was the pioneer of Bangladeshi modern architecture. His varied works set the course of modern architectural practice in the country. Islam brought leading global architects, including Louis Kahn, Richard Neutra, Stanley Tigerman, Paul Rudolph, Robert Boughey and Konstantinos Doxiadis, to work in erstwhile East Pakistan. Louis Kahn was chosen to design the National Parliament Complex in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Kahn's monumental designs, combining regional red brick aesthetics, his own concrete and

marble brutalism and the use of lakes to represent Bengali geography, are regarded as one of the masterpieces of the 20th century. In more recent times, award-winning architects like Rafiq Azam have set the course of contemporary architecture by adopting influences from the works of Islam and Kahn.

Performing arts

Theatre in Bangladesh includes various forms with a history dating back to the 4th century CE.^[414] It includes narrative forms, song and dance forms, supra-personae forms, performances with scroll paintings, puppet theatre and processional forms.^[414] The Jatra is the most popular form of Bengali folk theatre. The dance traditions of Bangladesh include indigenous tribal and Bengali dance forms, as well as classical Indian dances, including the Kathak, Odissi and Manipuri dances.



A Baul from Lalon Shah's shrine in Kushtia

The music of Bangladesh features the Baul mystical tradition, listed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage.^[415] Fakir Lalon Shah popularised Baul music in the country in the 18th century and it has since been one of the most popular music genera in the country since then.

Most modern Bauls are devoted to Lalon Shah.^[416] Numerous lyric-based musical traditions, varying from one region to the next, exist, including Gombhira, Bhatiali and Bhawaiya. Folk music is accompanied by a one-stringed instrument known as the ektara. Other instruments include the dotara, dhol, flute, and tabla. Bengali classical music includes Tagore songs and Nazrul Sangeet. Bangladesh has a rich tradition of Indian classical music, which uses instruments like the sitar, tabla, sarod and santoor.^[417] Sabina Yasmin and Runa Laila are considered the leading playback singers in the modern time, while musician Ayub Bachchu is credited with popularising Bengali rock music in Bangladesh.^[418]

Textiles



Embroidery on Nakshi kantha (embroidered quilt), centuries-old Bengali art tradition

The Nakshi Kantha is a centuries-old embroidery tradition for quilts, said to be indigenous to eastern Bengal (i.e. Bangladesh). The sari is the national dress for Bangladeshi women. Mughal Dhaka was renowned for producing the finest Muslin saris, as well as the famed Dhakai and Jamdani, the weaving of which is listed by UNESCO as one of the masterpieces of humanity's intangible cultural heritage.^[419] Bangladesh also produces the Rajshahi silk. The shalwar kameez is also widely worn by Bangladeshi women. In urban areas, some women can be seen in western clothing. The kurta and sherwani are the national dress of Bangladeshi men; the lungi and dhoti are worn by them in informal settings. Aside from ethnic wear, domestically tailored suits and neckties are customarily worn by the country's men in offices, in schools and at social events.

The handloom industry supplies 60–65% of the country's clothing demand.^[420] The Bengali ethnic fashion industry has flourished in the changing environment of the fashion world. The retailer Aarong is one of South Asia's most successful ethnic wear brands. The development of the Bangladesh textile industry, which supplies leading international brands, has promoted the local production and retail of modern Western attire. The country now has a number of expanding local brands like Westecs and Yellow. Bangladesh is the world's second-largest garments exporter. Among Bangladesh's fashion designers, Bibi Russell has received international acclaim for her "Fashion for Development" shows.^[421]

Cuisine

White rice is the staple of Bangladeshi cuisine, along with many vegetables and lentils. Rice preparations also include Bengali biryanis, pulaos, and khichuris. Mustard sauce, ghee, sunflower oil and fruit chutneys are widely used in Bangladeshi cooking. Fish is the main source of protein in Bengali cuisine. The Hilsa is the national fish and immensely popular across Bangladesh. Other kinds of fish eaten include rohu, butterfish, catfish, tilapia and barramundi. Fish eggs are a gourmet delicacy. Seafood holds an important place in Bengali cuisine, especially lobsters, shrimps and dried fish. Meat consumption includes chicken, beef, mutton, venison, duck and squab. In Chittagong, Mezban feasts are a popular tradition featuring the serving of hot beef curry. In Sylhet, the shatkora lemons are used to marinate dishes. In the tribal Hill Tracts, bamboo shoot cooking is prevalent. Bangladesh has a vast spread of desserts, including distinctive sweets like Rôshogolla, Rôshomalai, Chomchom, Mishti Doi and Kalojaam. Pithas are traditional boiled desserts made with rice or fruits. Halwa is served during religious festivities. Naan, paratha, luchi and bakarkhani are the main local breads. Milk tea is offered to guests as a gesture of welcome and is the most common hot beverage in the country. Kebabs are widely popular across Bangladesh, particularly seekh kebabs, chicken tikka and shashlik.



Traditional Bangladeshi Meal:
Mustard seed Ilish Curry, Dhakai Biryani and Pitha

Bangladesh shares its culinary heritage with the neighbouring Indian state of West Bengal. The two regions have several differences, however. In Muslim-majority Bangladesh, meat consumption is greater, whereas vegetarianism is more prevalent in Hindu-majority West Bengal. The Bangladeshi diaspora dominates the South Asian restaurant industry in many Western countries, particularly in the United Kingdom.

Festivals

Pahela Baishakh, the Bengali new year, is the major festival of Bengali culture and sees widespread festivities. Of the major holidays celebrated in Bangladesh, only Pahela Baishakh comes without any pre-existing expectations (specific religious identity, culture of gift-giving, etc.) and has become an occasion for celebrating the simpler, rural roots of the Bengal. Other cultural festivals include Nabonno and Poush Parbon, Bengali harvest festivals.



A Nouka Baich boat race

The Muslim festivals of Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Milad un Nabi, Muharram, Chand Raat, Shab-e-Barat; the Hindu festivals of Durga Puja, Janmashtami and Rath Yatra; the Buddhist festival of Buddha Purnima, which marks the birth of Gautama Buddha, and the Christian festival of Christmas are national holidays in Bangladesh and see the most widespread celebrations in the country. The two Eids are celebrated with a long streak of public holidays and give the city-dwellers opportunity to celebrate the festivals with their families outside the city.

Alongside are national days like the remembrance of 21 February 1952 Language Movement Day (declared as International Mother Language Day by UNESCO in 1999),^[422] Independence Day and Victory Day. On Language Movement Day, people congregate at the Shaheed Minar in Dhaka to remember the national heroes of the Bengali Language Movement. Similar gatherings are observed at the

National Martyrs' Memorial on Independence Day and Victory Day to remember the national heroes of the Bangladesh Liberation War. These occasions are celebrated with public ceremonies, parades, rallies by citizens, political speeches, fairs, concerts, and various other public and private events, celebrating the history and traditions of Bangladesh. TV and radio stations broadcast special programs and patriotic songs. Many schools and colleges organise fairs, festivals, and concerts that draw the participation of citizens from all levels of Bangladeshi society.^[423]

Sports

In rural Bangladesh, several traditional indigenous sports such as Kabaddi, Boli Khela, Lathi Khela and Nouka Baich remain fairly popular. While Kabaddi is the national sport^[424] cricket is the most popular sport in the country followed by football. The national cricket team participated in their first Cricket World Cup in 1999 and the following year was granted Test cricket status. Bangladesh reached the quarter-final of the 2015 Cricket World Cup, the semi-final of the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy and they reached the final of the Asia Cup 3 times – in 2012, 2016 and 2018. In February 2020, the Bangladesh youth national cricket team won the men's Under-19 Cricket World Cup, held in South Africa. This was Bangladesh's first World Cup victory.^{[425][426]}



Bangladesh team on practice session at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium

Women's sports saw significant progress in the 2010s decade in Bangladesh. In 2018, the Bangladesh women's national cricket team won the 2018 Women's Twenty20 Asia Cup defeating India women's national cricket team in the final.^[427]

Football is a popular sport in Bangladesh, alongside cricket,^[428] and is governed by the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF). Football tournaments are regularly organised in and outside Dhaka and football fever grips the nation during every FIFA World Cup. The first instance of a Bangladesh national football team was the emergence of the Shadhin Bangla Football Team during the 1971 liberation war. The Shadhin Bangla football team captain Zakaria Pintoo, was the first person to hoist the Bangladesh flag outside the territorial Bangladesh.^[429] The national team also participated in the 1980 AFC Asian Cup, becoming only the second South Asian team to do so.^[430] Bangladesh women's national football team has also registered some success at regional level, especially the Under-15 and Under-18 teams.^[431]

Bangladesh archers Ety Khatun and Roman Sana won several gold medals winning all the 10 archery events (both individual, and team events) in the 2019 South Asian Games.^[432] The National Sports Council regulates 42 sporting federations.^[433] Athletics, swimming, archery, boxing, volleyball, weight-lifting and wrestling and different forms of martial arts remain popular. Chess is very popular in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has five grandmasters in chess. Among them, Niaz Murshed was the first grandmaster in South Asia.^[434] In 2010, mountain climber Musa Ibrahim became the first Bangladeshi climber to conquer Mount Everest.^[435] He climbed the top of the summit of Mount Everest.^[436] Wasfia Nazreen is the first Bangladeshi climber to climb the Seven Summits, which are the highest mountains of each of the seven continents of the world.^[437]

Bangladesh hosts a number of international tournaments. Bangabandhu Cup is an international football tournament hosted in the country. Bangladesh hosted the South Asian Games several times. In 2011, Bangladesh co-hosted the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 with India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh solely hosted the 2014 ICC World Twenty20 championship. Bangladesh hosted the Asia Cup Cricket Tournament in 2000, 2012, 2014 and 2016.

Media and cinema

The Bangladeshi press is diverse, outspoken and privately owned. Over 200 newspapers are published in the country. Bangladesh Betar is the state-run radio service.^[438] The British Broadcasting Corporation operates the popular BBC Bangla news and current affairs service. Bengali broadcasts from Voice of America are also very popular. Bangladesh Television (BTV) is a state-owned television network. More than 20 privately owned television networks, including several news channels. Freedom of the media remains a major concern due to government attempts at censorship and the harassment of journalists.

The cinema of Bangladesh dates back to 1898 when films began screening at the Crown Theatre in Dhaka. The first bioscope on the subcontinent was established in Dhaka that year. The Dhaka Nawab Family patronised the production of several silent films in the 1920s and 30s. In 1931, the East Bengal Cinematograph Society released the first full-length feature film in Bangladesh, titled the *Last Kiss*. The first feature film in East Pakistan, Mukh O Mukhosh, was released in 1956. During the 1960s, 25–30 films were produced annually in Dhaka. By the 2000s, Bangladesh produced 80–100 films a year. While the Bangladeshi film industry has achieved limited commercial success, the country has produced notable independent filmmakers. Zahir Raihan was a prominent documentary-maker assassinated in 1971. The late Tareque Masud is regarded as one of Bangladesh's outstanding directors for his critically acclaimed films on social issues.^{[439][440]} Masud was honoured by FIPRESCI at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival for his film *The Clay Bird*. Tanvir Mokammel, Mostofa Sarwar Farooki, Humayun Ahmed, Alamgir Kabir, and Chashi Nazrul Islam are some of the prominent directors of Bangladeshi cinema. Bangladesh has a very active film society culture. It started in 1963 in Dhaka. Now around 40 Film Societies are active all over Bangladesh. Federation of Film Societies of Bangladesh is the parent organisation of the film society movement of Bangladesh. Active film societies include the Rainbow Film Society, Children's Film Society, Moviyana Film Society and Dhaka University Film Society.



Anwar Hossain playing Siraj-ud-Daulah, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, in the 1967 film Nawab Sirajuddaulah

Museums and libraries

The Varendra Research Museum is the oldest museum in Bangladesh. It houses important collections from both the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, including the sculptures of the Pal-Sena School of Art and the Indus Valley Civilisation and Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian manuscripts and inscriptions. The Ahsan Manzil, the former residence of the Nawab of Dhaka, is a national museum housing collections from the British Raj. It was the site of the founding conference of the All India Muslim League and hosted many British Viceroys in Dhaka.



Beds of zamindars kept at the Bangladesh National Museum

The Tajhat Palace Museum preserves artefacts of the rich cultural heritage of North Bengal, including Hindu-Buddhist sculptures and Islamic manuscripts. The Mymensingh Museum houses the personal antique collections of Bengali aristocrats in central Bengal. The Ethnological Museum of Chittagong showcases the lifestyle of various tribes in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh National Museum is located in Ramna, Dhaka and has a rich collection of antiquities. The Liberation War Museum documents the Bangladeshi struggle for independence and the 1971 genocide.

In ancient times, manuscripts were written on palm leaves, tree barks, parchment vellum and terracotta plates and preserved at monasteries known as *viharas*. The Hussain Shahi dynasty established royal libraries during the Bengal Sultanate. Libraries were established in each district of Bengal by the zamindar gentry during the Bengal Renaissance in the 19th century. The trend of establishing libraries continued until the beginning of World War II. In 1854, four major public libraries were opened, including the Bogra Woodburn Library, the Rangpur Public Library, the Jessore Institute Public Library and the Barisal Public Library.

The Northbrook Hall Public Library was established in Dhaka in 1882 in honour of Lord Northbrook, the Governor-General. Other libraries established in the British period included the Victoria Public Library, Natore (1901), the Sirajganj Public Library (1882), the Rajshahi Public Library (1884), the Comilla Birchandra Library (1885), the Shah Makhduim Institute Public Library, Rajshahi (1891), the Noakhali Town Hall Public Library (1896), the Prize Memorial Library, Sylhet (1897), the Chittagong Municipality Public Library (1904) and the Varendra Research Library (1910). The Great Bengal Library Association was formed in 1925.^[441] The Central Public Library of Dhaka was established in 1959. The National Library of Bangladesh was established in 1972. The World Literature Centre, founded by Ramon Magsaysay Award winner Abdullah Abu Sayeed, is noted for operating numerous mobile libraries across Bangladesh and was awarded the UNESCO Jon Amos Comenius Medal.

See also

- Index of Bangladesh-related articles
- Outline of Bangladesh

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External links

Government

- [Official website \(<http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd>\)](#)
- [Official Site of Bangladesh Investment Development Authority \(<http://bida.portal.gov.bd/>\)](#)

General information

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-  [Geographic data related to Bangladesh \(<https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/184640>\) at OpenStreetMap](#)
-  [Wikimedia Atlas of Bangladesh](#)
- [Key Development Forecasts for Bangladesh \(\[http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=BD\]\(http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=BD\)\) from International Futures](#)

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