

Bangladesh

2016 Country Review

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Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

BANGLADESH

Formerly East Pakistan, Bangladesh came into being only in 1971 when the two parts of Pakistan split after a bitter civil war. The new country became a parliamentary democracy under the 1972 constitution. Since independence, Bangladesh has experienced many political crises, including two leader assassinations and several coups. With a population of about 161 million, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated and poorest countries in the world. Landlocked by India on three sides, the country's predominantly agricultural economy is vulnerable to natural disasters such as flooding and cyclones.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Asia
Population:	168957744
Climate:	Tropical; cool, dry winter (October to March); hot, humid summer (March to June); cool, rainy monsoon (June to October).
Languages:	Bangla (official) English
Currency:	1 taka (Tk) = 100 poiska
Holiday:	Independence Day is 26 March (1971), Martyr's Day is 21 February
Area Total:	142615
Area Land:	133910
Coast Line:	580

Bangladesh

Country Map



Asia

Regional Map



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Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Located in the fertile delta of two mighty rivers, Ganga and Brahmaputra, modern-day Bangladesh has been arguably the cradle of humanity for several thousand years. The earliest references to the entire delta region, including the western half, today's West Bengal state in India, are to be found in the early literature of the Indian civilization. Called Vanga (the root word for Bangla) almost 4,000 years ago, the area was settled and had a very high degree of organized and planned civilization.

The area is believed to have been initially under Dravidian occupation, until the arrival of the Aryans in the Indo-Gangetic plains in about 2500 B.C.E. Since then, Vanga has formed an important part of almost all the kingdoms and empires that have come up either in the region or around it.

In the fourth century B.C.E., the area was under the Magadha Kingdom, one of the largest kingdoms in the India of that time. It was during this period that Ashoka the Great, the greatest of Indian emperors, ruled and Vanga formed part of his kingdom as well. However, after Ashoka, Vanga slipped out of the Magadha control and had its own smaller kingdoms for the next 800 years, until the rise of Chandragupta Vikramaditya of the Maurya dynasty in the sixth century C.E. Thus, Vanga continued to be a more or less independent kingdom, save for the times when a larger nationwide empire took roots at Magadha or elsewhere. It had its own share of larger kingdoms, especially during the Pal dynasty in the ninth century and the Sen dynasty in the 13th century.

Due to its location in the eastern corner of India, Vanga always enjoyed relatively peaceful times. It was always the last to fall, be it the Turkish invaders of the 10th century or even coming under the Mughal Empire of the 15th century. However, the Islamic incursions led to the conversion to Islam of most of the population in the eastern areas of Bengal and created a sizable Muslim minority in the western areas of Bengal. Since then, Islam has played a crucial role in the region's history and politics.

Bengal was absorbed into the Mughal Empire in the 16th century, and Dhaka, the seat of a "nawab" (the representative of the emperor), gained some importance as a provincial center. It also emerged as a great industrial center, especially for the muslin. Muslin weaving became an important part of the local economy and Dhaka muslin became renowned the world over.

It was this reputation of Bengal that attracted foreigners as well. In the second half of the 15th century, Portuguese traders and missionaries became the first Europeans to reach Bengal. Representatives of the Dutch, the French and the British East India companies followed. By the end of the 17th century, the British presence on the Indian subcontinent was centered in Calcutta, which was the capital of India under the British colonization until 1911.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the British gradually extended their commercial contacts and administrative control beyond Calcutta to all over Bengal and the adjacent regions as well. By the middle of the 19th century, the British had managed to gain control over almost the entire subcontinent. In 1859, the British Crown replaced the East India Company, extending British dominion from Bengal, which then became a region of India in the east, to the Indus River in the west.

Threatened with a rapidly growing independence movement, the British used their archetypical policy of divide and rule. The British tried to divide the Indian people along the lines of religion, caste and languages in order to weaken the independence movement. And as Bengal was at the head of the independence movement, the British focused their attention on the state. In 1906, under the guise of protecting Hindu and Muslim interests, the British divided Bengal into two states-east for the Muslims and the west for the Hindus. Though within six years, in face of huge popular uprising against the division, the British were forced to cancel their decision and reunite the two parts, the seeds of a divided India had already been laid.

And it was the eastern part of Bengal that was earmarked for Pakistan when the British partitioned India in 1947, at the time of independence. East Bengal was then called East Pakistan and its regional capital at Dhaka, was separated from West Pakistan by over 2,000 km of Indian territory.

However, political instability and economic difficulties have marked Pakistan's history since independence. An important aspect of this instability was the uneasy relation between West Pakistan and East Pakistan. The people in the east believed that they had been colonized once again and this time by West Pakistan. This belief stemmed from the fact the political, military and economic controls rested with West Pakistan, while the eastern part of the newly created country had literally no powers of self-governance.

The only common factor between West and East Pakistan was religion. Otherwise, it was entirely a different country, with different language, culture and ethnic composition. Bengalis strongly resisted attempts to impose Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan. These differences led in 1949 to the creation of Awami League, or AL, by Sheikh Mujibir Rahman, known widely as Mujib. The league was a party designed mainly to promote Bengali interests. Mujib became president of the AL and emerged as leader of the Bengali autonomy movement. However, the

autonomy movement was not tolerated by the West Pakistanis and in 1966, Mujib was arrested for his political activities.

But that only increased Mujib's influence over East Pakistan. And in the 1970 elections for the National Assembly (Pakistani parliament), the AL won all the seats from East Pakistan. This unprecedented sweep forced the West Pakistanis to open negotiations with Mujib on constitutional questions concerning the division of power between the central government and the provinces, as well as the formation of a national government headed by the league.

However, clearly West Pakistan, then ruled by a Gen. Yahya Khan, was not prepared to make any real concessions to the autonomy demand of the East Pakistan, and the talks collapsed soon. On March 1, 1971, the Pakistani President Yahya Khan indefinitely postponed the pending National Assembly session, precipitating massive civil disobedience in East Pakistan. Mujib was arrested again, his party was banned, and most of his aides fled to India, where they organized a provisional government. Mujib also founded Mukti Bahini, an armed group to fight for the independence of East Pakistan. This marked the beginning of the end of a united Pakistan.

On March 26, 1971, following a bloody crackdown by the Pakistan army, the Bengali nationalists declared an independent People's Republic of Bangladesh. As fighting increased between the army and the Mukti Bahini, the flow of refugees from the area began pouring into India, especially the northeastern state of Assam. Within a few weeks, the tide of refugees had turned into a flood and an estimated 10 million Bengalis had already crossed over into India.

India found itself obliged to house the refugees, despite the huge numbers and the strain that it was putting on the Indian economy. However, the flood of refugees continued to mount as the Pakistani army unleashed a reign of terror in the east. This crisis produced new strains in Pakistan's troubled relations with India. The two nations had already fought two wars, though largely over the state of Jammu and Kashmir in northwest India. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made several appeals to Yahya Khan and the Pakistan government to resolve the problem with East Pakistan quickly and through peaceful negotiations in order that India could begin repatriating the millions of refugees back to their homes.

The international community, too, urged Pakistan to initiate dialogue to end the crisis. However, the situation only worsened in the fall of 1971. And in December, India sent in its forces into East Pakistan to liberate it from the grip of the Pakistan army. The battle, which soon spread to the western borders also, was, however, completed within a few days and on Dec. 16, 1971, the Pakistani forces surrendered and Bangladesh, meaning "Bengal nation," was born. The new country became a parliamentary democracy under the 1972 constitution, with Mujib at the head.

The provisional government of the new nation of Bangladesh was formed in Dhaka under President Justice Abu Sayeed Choudhury and Prime Minister Sheik Mujibur Rahman ("Mujib"),

who had been released from Pakistani prison in early 1972.

For more information about the political and governmental aspects of Bangladesh's national situation from 1972 onward, see the "Political Conditions" of this review.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Introduction

Bangladesh, meaning "Bengal nation," came into existence in 1971 following a war that ensued between East Pakistan nationalists and the Pakistani army. The new country, which emerged out of East Pakistan, became a parliamentary democracy under the 1972 constitution. The provisional government of the new nation of Bangladesh was formed in Dhaka under President Justice Abu Sayeed Choudhury and Prime Minister Sheik Mujibur Rahman ("Mujib"), who had been released from Pakistani prison in early 1972.

The 1970s

Mujib came to office with immense personal popularity but had difficulty transforming this popular support into the political strength needed to function as head of government. The new constitution, which came into force in December 1972, created a strong executive prime minister, a largely ceremonial presidency, an independent judiciary, and a unicameral legislature on a modified Westminster model. The 1972 constitution adopted as state policy the Awami League's (AL) four basic principles of nationalism, secularism, socialism and democracy.

The first parliamentary elections held under the 1972 constitution were in March 1973; the AL won a massive majority. No other political party in Bangladesh's early years was able to duplicate or challenge the league's broad-based appeal, membership and organizational strength.

Relying heavily on experienced civil servants and members of the league, the new Bangladesh government focused on relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of the economy and society. Economic conditions remained precarious, however.

In December 1974, Mujib decided that continuing economic deterioration and mounting civil disorder required stronger measures. After proclaiming a state of emergency, Mujib used his parliamentary majority to win a constitutional amendment limiting the powers of the legislative and judicial branches, establishing an executive presidency, and instituting a one-party system, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League, or BAKSAL, which all members of parliament were obliged to join.

Despite some improvement in the economic situation during the first half of 1975, implementation of promised political reforms was slow, and criticism of government policies became increasingly centered on Mujib. On Aug. 15, 1975, mid-level army officers assassinated Mujib and most of his family; his daughter, Sheikh Hasina, happened to be out of the country. A new government, headed by former Mujib associate Khandakar Moshtaque, was formed.

Successive military coup d'etats resulted in the emergence of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ziaur Rahman ("Zia") as strongman. He pledged the army's support to the civilian government headed by President Chief Justice Sayem. Acting at Zia's behest, Sayem dissolved parliament, promising fresh elections in 1977, and instituted martial law.

Functioning behind the scenes of the martial law administration, or MLA, Zia sought to invigorate government policy and administration. While continuing the ban on political parties, he sought to revitalize the demoralized bureaucracy, to begin new economic development programs, and to emphasize family planning. In November 1976, Zia became chief martial law administrator, or CMLA, and assumed the presidency upon Sayem's retirement five months later, promising national elections in 1978.

As president, Zia announced a 19-point program of economic reform and began dismantling the MLA. Keeping his promise to hold elections, Zia won a five-year term in the June 1978 elections, with 76 percent of the vote. In November 1978, his government removed the remaining restrictions on political party activities in time for parliamentary elections in February 1979.

These elections, which were contested by more than 30 parties, marked the culmination of Zia's transformation of Bangladesh's government from the MLA to a democratically elected, constitutional one. The AL and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, or BNP, founded by Zia, emerged as the two major parties. The constitution was again amended to provide for an executive prime minister appointed by the president and responsible to a parliamentary majority.

The 1980s

In May 1981, Zia was assassinated in Chittagong by dissident elements of the military. The attempted coup d'etat never spread beyond that city, and the major conspirators were either taken into custody or killed. In accordance with the constitution, Vice President Justice Abdus Sattar was sworn in as acting president. He declared a new national emergency and called for the election of a new president within six months. Sattar, the BNP's candidate, won that election. President Sattar sought to follow the policies of his predecessor and retained essentially the same cabinet, but the army stepped in once again.

Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad assumed power in a bloodless coup d'etat in March 1982. Like his predecessors, Ershad suspended the constitution and, citing pervasive corruption, ineffectual government and economic mismanagement, declared martial law. The following year, Ershad assumed the presidency, retaining his positions as army chief and CMLA. During most of 1984, Ershad sought the opposition parties' participation in local elections under martial law. The opposition's refusal to participate, however, forced Ershad to abandon these plans.

Ershad sought public support for his regime in a national referendum on his leadership in March 1985. He won by a large margin, although turnout was small. Two months later, Ershad held elections for local council chairmen. Pro-government candidates won a majority of the posts, setting in motion the president's ambitious decentralization program.

Political life was further liberalized in early 1986, and additional political rights, including the right to hold large public rallies, were restored. At the same time, the "Jatiya" (People's) Party, designed as Ershad's political vehicle for the transition from martial law, was established.

Despite a boycott by the BNP, led by President Zia's widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, parliamentary elections were held on schedule in May 1986. The Jatiya Party won a modest majority of the 300 elected National Assembly seats. The participation of the Awami League, led by the late Prime Minister Mujib's daughter, Sheik Hasina Wajed, lent the elections some credibility, despite widespread charges of voting irregularities.

Ershad resigned as army chief of staff and retired from military service in preparation for the presidential elections, scheduled for October 1986. Protesting that martial law was still in effect, both the BNP and the AL refused to put up opposing candidates. Ershad easily outdistanced the remaining candidates, taking 84 percent of the vote. Although Ershad's government claimed a turnout of more than 50 percent, opposition leaders and much of the foreign press estimated a far lower percentage and alleged voting irregularities.

Ershad continued his stated commitment to lift martial law. In November 1986, his government mustered the necessary two-thirds majority in the National Assembly to amend the constitution and

confirm the previous actions of the martial law regime. The president then lifted martial law, and the opposition parties took their elected seats in the National Assembly.

In July 1987, however, after the government hastily pushed through a controversial legislative bill to include military representation on local administrative councils, the opposition walked out of parliament. Passage of the bill helped spark an opposition movement that quickly gathered momentum, uniting Bangladesh's opposition parties for the first time. The government began arresting scores of opposition activists under the country's Special Powers Act of 1974. Despite these arrests, opposition parties continued to organize protest marches and nationwide strikes. After declaring a state of emergency, Ershad dissolved parliament and scheduled fresh elections for March 1988.

All major opposition parties refused government overtures to participate in these polls, maintaining the view that the government was incapable of holding free and fair elections. Despite the opposition boycott, the government proceeded. The ruling Jatiya Party won 251 of the 300 seats. The parliament, while still regarded by the opposition as an illegitimate body, held its sessions as scheduled, and passed a large number of bills, including, in June 1988, a controversial constitutional amendment making Islam Bangladesh's state religion.

1989 through the 1990s

By 1989, the domestic political situation in the country seemed to have quieted. International observers generally considered local council elections to have been less violent and more free and fair than previous elections. Opposition to Ershad's rule began to regain momentum, however, escalating to frequent general strikes, increased campus protests, public rallies and a general disintegration of law and order by the end of 1990.

On Dec. 6, 1990, Ershad offered his resignation. On Feb. 27, 1991, after two months of widespread civil unrest, an interim government oversaw what most observers believed to be the most free and fair elections to date.

The center-right BNP won a plurality of seats and formed a coalition government with the Islamic fundamentalist party Jamaat-I-Islami, with Khaleda Zia, widow of Ziaur Rahman, as prime minister. Only four parties had more than 10 members elected to the 1991 parliament. They were: the BNP, led by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia; the AL, led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed; the Jamaat-I-Islami (JI), led by Golam Azam; and the Jatiyo Party (JP), led by acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Choudhury, while its founder, former President Ershad, served out a prison sentence on corruption charges.

The electorate approved still more changes to the constitution, formally recreating a parliamentary

system and returning governing power to the office of the prime minister, as in Bangladesh's original 1972 constitution. In October 1991, members of parliament elected a new head of state, President Abdur Rahman Biswas.

In March 1994, controversy over a parliamentary by-election, which the opposition claimed the government had rigged, led to an indefinite boycott of parliament by the entire opposition. The opposition also began a program of repeated general strikes to press its demand that Khaleda Zia's government resign and a caretaker government supervise a general election.

Efforts to mediate the dispute, under the auspices of the Commonwealth secretariat, failed. After another attempt at a negotiated settlement failed narrowly in late December 1994, the opposition resigned en masse from parliament. The opposition then continued a campaign of marches, demonstrations and strikes, in an effort to force the government to resign. The opposition, including the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina Wajed, pledged to boycott the national elections scheduled for Feb. 15, 1996.

In February, Khaleda Zia was re-elected by a landslide in voting boycotted and denounced as unfair by the three main opposition parties. In March 1996, following escalating political turmoil, the sitting parliament enacted a constitutional amendment to allow a neutral caretaker government to assume power and conduct new parliamentary elections. Former Chief Justice Mohammed Habibur Rahman was named chief advisor (a position equivalent to prime minister) in the interim government. New parliamentary elections were held in June 1996 and were won by the Awami League; party leader Sheikh Hasina became prime minister.

Sheikh Hasina formed what she called the "Government of National Consensus" in June 1996, which included one minister from the Jatiya Party and another from the "Jatiyo Samajtantric Dal," a very small leftist party. The Jatiya Party never entered into a formal coalition arrangement, and party president H.M. Ershad withdrew his support from the government in September 1997. Only three parties had more than 10 members elected to the 1996 parliament: the Awami League, the BNP, and Jatiya Party. Jatiya Party president, Ershad, was released from prison on bail in January 1997.

Although international and domestic election observers found the June 1996 election free and fair, the BNP protested alleged vote rigging by the Awami League. Ultimately, the party decided to join the new parliament. The BNP soon charged that police and the league activists were engaged in large-scale harassment and jailing of opposition activists.

At the end of 1996, the BNP staged a parliamentary walkout over this and other grievances, but returned in January 1997 under a four-point agreement with the ruling party. The BNP asserted that this agreement had never been implemented, and later staged another walkout in August 1997. Subsequently, the BNP called two nationwide general strikes, and a road and rail blockage,

between August and October 1997. Pitched street battles were fought on several occasions during these months as police, sometimes joined by ruling party activists, enforced a new ban on political rallies on public streets in the capital. The BNP returned to parliament in March 1998.

The conflict between the two parties did not end there. Within a few months a new rivalry broke out over the negotiations between the government and the tribal groups of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, an area in southeast Bangladesh, bordering India, populated by tribal groups that have been fighting for autonomy since the partition of India in 1947. In the early 1970s, soon after the creation of Bangladesh, tensions over autonomy came to head when tribal groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts began guerilla actions against the government. The tribal groups, primarily Chakma Buddhists, had long protested the settlement of their homeland by Bengali workers. Guerilla groups, primarily Jana Sanghati Samiti and Shanti Bahini clashed with government continuously until negotiations for a peace agreement began in the late 1980s.

The first measure to alleviate the situation was to grant partial autonomy to a few districts within the region. Elections followed and local councils were established. However, the rebels rejected anything less than full autonomy, and the violence continued. Thousands of people flooded across the border to India seeking refuge.

Negotiations between the tribal groups and the government resumed in the mid-1990s. A peace agreement was established in 1997, but not all groups were in support of the terms. Members of the Shanti Bahini split with the group in condemnation of the compromise of the struggle for full autonomy. In early 1998, tribal representatives met with the government to discuss the rehabilitation of 200,000 guerillas, local administration and the establishment of a mechanism for the settlement of land disputes. Meanwhile, violence between the tribal groups and Bengali settlers continued.

In December 1998 tribal groups opposing the peace treaty with the government formed the United People's Democratic Front, also known as the UPDF. The UPDF has opposed the peace treaty and has been committed to securing complete autonomy for tribal people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, or CHT, situation also became another point of contention in the ongoing power struggle between the BNP and the Awami League government. The BNP argued that the peace agreement favors the tribal groups over the Bengali settlers. In May, the BNP stormed out of parliament after the ruling party pushed through 4,000 amendments to the CHT administration laws without allowing for debate. BNP members and representatives traveled to the CHT and rallied in protest against the peace treaty. The BNP called a general strike in June 1998 to protest the peace agreement, which they deemed unconstitutional.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts regional council was inaugurated in May 1999. Jotirindra Bodhipriya

Larma, the former rebel leader known as Santu Larma, initially rejected the offer to head the interim council in March due to the peace treaty's restrictions on autonomy. However, prior to its inauguration, Santu Larma agreed to head the official Regional Council of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

In October 1999, tensions over delays in implementation of the peace treaty grew violent. Members of the armed forces killed three tribesmen. Chittagong residents demanded the removal of the army base from the region. The situation in Chittagong Hill Tracts continued to be uncertain following the decision by a part of the tribal rebels to reject the peace offering made by the government. The main opposition party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party of Begum Khaleda Zia, too, accused the government of being too soft on the tribal rebels in the agreement and that the government had failed to protect the interests of the majority Bangladeshis in the agreement. Nonetheless, the government moved ahead with the agreement.

Over the course of 1998 and 1999, the BNP led numerous general strikes and countless protests against the policies of the Awami League government. The actions by the opposition were in response to many different governmental actions, such as the Chittagong peace treaty, power outages and the government's poor response to the flood crisis of 1998. Several strikes and protests were held in call for the government's resignation. The business community has been highly critical of the frequent BNP strikes, which has hindered foreign investment and has had significant impact on local economies.

In early 1999, the opposition parties, including the BNP, the Jatiya Party and the Jamati Islami Party threatened to boycott the local elections if the chief election commissioner was not removed. The election commissioner was seen as favoring the ruling Awami League. This threat came soon after allegations against the AL for vote rigging. Soon thereafter, the opposition held strikes demanding reform of the electoral system and removal of the commissioner. In February the strikes grew violent and Kazi Aref Ahmed, leader of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal Party, was assassinated. Opposition parties also boycotted by-elections for parliament in April.

In August 1999, the government of Bangladesh came under international criticism for its eviction of more than 20,000 people from slums around Dhaka. The government said that it was a move to stem crime. However, many questioned whether making several thousand people homeless would not, in fact, increase crime.

The boycott of the Bangladeshi parliament announced in 1999 by a number of opposition parties, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, continued throughout 2000 and 2001. Having failed to oust the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the parliament, the BNP and its allies launched a massive protest series on the streets of Dhaka and other big cities of the country. A total of 80 strikes - almost always violent - were organized by the BNP and its allies since 1999. However, the opposition's attempts to destabilize the Hasina

government failed to bear fruit. Not only did the opposition fail to oust Hasina, but it was also divided by the end of the year.

2000-2008

In early 2001, Jatiya Party, the party of former president and army chief, H.M. Ershad, broke ranks from the opposition. The party also did not participate in an opposition rally organized in Dhaka in March 2001, aimed at calling for the immediate resignation of Prime Minister Hasina.

A sensational case, that has taken several bizarre turns over the last 25 years, was finally concluded in Bangladesh's courts in November 2000. The high court of Bangladesh sentenced 10 people - mostly members of the country's armed forces - to death for their part in the conspiracy to kill Sheikh Mujibur Rehman "Mujib," the father of Bangladesh. Mujib was killed at his home, along with his entire family - with the exception of two daughters, including Sheikh Hasina - on the night of Aug. 15, 1975, just over three years after the independence of the country.

Mujib's assassination also marked the descent of Bangladeshi democracy, and the country has witnessed two prolonged military dictatorships in its barely 30 years of independence. It was due to the military being in power that the army officers responsible for Mujib's assassination could not be brought to trial for over 21 years. This was made possible by a presidential decree passed barely a month after the assassination. This decree actually sought to provide indemnity to all those involved in the assassination. The military powers also managed to push through this indemnity through the national parliament in 1979, by incorporating this protection in the Bangladeshi Constitution.

The matter was thus treated as closed for over 21 years, until Awami League swept back to power in 1996 - the first time since Mujib's assassination. Soon after her election, Sheikh Hasina - Mujib's daughter - delivered on her electoral promise of ordering a trial into her father's assassination. In November 1996, the national parliament passed a resolution, repealing the presidential indemnity decree and all other laws that prevented a trial being ordered in the assassination. The parliament's resolution was immediately challenged by the accused, who said that by its 1979 resolution, the parliament had forsaken any rights to modify or annul the indemnity decree. The matter went right up to the Supreme Court, which in 1997 upheld the parliament's right to modify the past decrees or laws.

With this legal obstacle gone, the trial finally began in 1998 and in November 1998, the trial court found all the 15 accused guilty and sentenced all of them to death. The ruling was appealed against by the accused in the country's high courts.

In November 2000, the court upheld the death sentence for 10 accused while it acquitted five

others due to lack of evidence. The verdict, which was a split verdict as one of the judges had expressed dissidence, evoked mixed response from the citizens. While most of the country welcomed the verdict, a group of students expressed its resentment that the court's order was not unanimous and that five of the accused had been acquitted. Students went on a rampage as a result, leading to a death and dozens injured in the ensuing battle with the police. Homes of the accused and their relations were also attacked by the dissatisfied students who called for death to all the accused. The matter then went to the country's Supreme Court for a final decision on the issue.

A senior Pakistani diplomat created a stir in Bangladesh in November 2000, when he sought to downplay and even deny the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army in the war of liberation leading to the independence of Bangladesh. In a speech in Dhaka on the 30th anniversary of the war between India and Pakistan that led to the creation of Bangladesh, deputy high commissioner of Pakistan in Dhaka, Irfanur Rahman Raja disputed Bangladesh government claims that the Pakistani military killed three million people during its war against Bangladesh independence. He also denied the allegation that the Pakistani military committed atrocities during the nine-month war. Raja said only 26,000 Bangladeshis were killed in East Pakistan that emerged as independent Bangladesh in 1971.

The controversial remarks by the diplomat evoked the expected response from Bangladeshi people. Hundreds of thousands of protestors took to the streets all over the Bangladesh, protesting against the remarks. The public attitude towards Pakistan soured once again, although the Bangladeshi government maintained that its relations with Pakistan would not be affected by the episode. Despite requests by the Bangladeshi government that the diplomat be recalled, the Pakistani government allowed Raja to continue to attend his office in Dhaka as usual. Finally, in December 2000, the diplomat was declared *persona non grata* by the Bangladeshi government and expelled, a decision that attracted protests from Pakistan. "The decision has been unjustified and not in keeping with the friendly relations," a Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman said in Islamabad soon after the expulsion.

The incident came only weeks after a stand-off between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Pakistan's self-proclaimed chief executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf at the United Nations (U.N.) in September 2000. The two leaders were supposed to have met on the sidelines of the U.N.'s annual conference. However, Musharraf called off the meeting after Hasina sharply criticized the threat posed to democracy by the rise of military regimes in various countries. Musharraf took the speech to be a direct criticism of his government and called off the meeting. Hasina, whose father was assassinated in 1975 by members of the Bangladeshi military, has been a vocal critic of the tendency of the military in her country as well as Pakistan to try to exert influence from behind the scenes.

Violence continued to mar Bangladesh as the country prepared for the general elections. A massive bomb blast in the center of Dhaka on the eve of Bengali New Year in April 2001 led to 10 deaths, once again focusing attention on the fragile situation in the country.

In April 2001, tensions flared up along the Indo-Bangladesh border in the north eastern Indian state of Assam. The border is not clearly demarcated along some parts and this often leads to tensions as border guards from both countries claim territories, often leading to minor clashes at the border. These are highly localized and minor incidents that do not affect the bilateral relationship. Still, in April, the fighting escalated and a total of 19 border guards, 16 of them Indian, were killed in the worst clash ever between the two countries. Bangladesh troops alleged that the Indian border guards were building a road in their territory and that led to the dispute. The Indians on the other hand alleged that the Bangladeshi border forces had intruded into India. The matter had the potential of exploding into a bigger dispute, derailing the improvement in the bilateral relations that had been going on for the previous five years.

Both Bangladeshi and Indian governments reacted with urgency in order keep the tensions low along the border and to ensure that the fighting did not erupt again. The Indian government resisted calls for retribution from hardliners within India, while the Bangladeshi government did well to not let the issue being hijacked by the opposition in view of the forthcoming national elections for parliament. The two sides dispatched senior officials for talks immediately and formed a working group charged with demarcating the border and ending any potential disputes.

In view of the general elections, scheduled to be held before July 2001, the opposition parties changed their strategy on the ground. Instead of protesting against the government's economic and foreign policies, the opposition parties began targeting the elections as the main issue in its protests. The opposition demanded that Prime Minister Hasina should resign as prime minister, allowing the president to nominate a neutral caretaker prime minister under whose supervision the elections would be held.

By the end of March 2001, the opposition had served an ultimatum that if the government did not resign by March 31, the opposition would launch nationwide protests. Hasina agreed to call a general election a few weeks ahead of the schedule, in June, but rejected the opposition demands for an immediate resignation of her government. The government also told President Shahabuddin Ahmed that if the opposition continued to insist on its ultimatum, the government would have no option but to abandon the idea of an early election.

Hasina said that her government was ready for a dialogue with the opposition to settle all issues related to an early general election. Hasina had said that she intended to call the election in June and would hand over power any day after April 17. Hasina said she preferred that her government's resignation, dissolution of parliament and takeover by the caretaker government occur on the same day. She said that settlement of issues like the formation of a caretaker

government, recasting the Election Commission, recovery of illegal arms and changes in the administrative set up, if required, would help smooth transfer of power. Political observers said the opposition was attempting to reap a political dividend from the negative perceptions of an ousted government. Finally, the two sides agreed on a settlement whereby the Hasina government was replaced by a caretaker government on July 15, 2001. The caretaker government's main task was to ensure free and fair elections which were held on Oct. 10, 2001.

In the elections, the Bangladeshi voters maintained their tradition of not returning the government in power. Though pre-election opinion polls were suggesting a close finish between the ruling Awami League and the opposition alliance led by Bangladesh Nationalist Party, or BNP, the final result was a sweeping victory for the opposition alliance that garnered over two-thirds of seats in the Parliament.

Ironically, while Awami League actually improved the number of votes as compared to the last elections in 1996, the party lost nearly 60 percent of its seats. Indeed, the AL won over 40 percent of all the valid votes polled, however, the party could only manage a bare 63 seats in the parliament. The opposition alliance obtained under 47 percent of the votes but 201 seats in the parliament. One of the reasons behind this was the realignment of the opposition. Much ahead of the elections, BNP's leader and former prime minister Khaleda Zia linked her party with various opposition groups in order to ensure that the opposition votes are not split. Thus, Zia ensured that even a slim lead in most parliamentary constituencies was enough to produce a tidal wave in favor of the opposition alliance.

The transition of power in the country was anything but smooth. At first, the Awami League refused to accept the results of the election claiming widespread fraud by BNP and the Election Commission. As the numerous international observers declared the elections to be fair and free, the Awami League had little option but to accept the results. The violence that marred the election campaign continued to rock Bangladesh for several days after the elections. Notably there were several clashes between BNP and AL supporters and sometimes clashes within the members of the winning coalition as well.

The violence took a turn for the worse when sections of the minority Hindu community in the country were attacked, allegedly by the supporters of the BNP and its allies. Violence toward Hindus escalated in the weeks during and following the October election. Though the new government denied that there had been several incidents, the Hindu community, numbering about 10 percent of the 135 million population of the country continued to feel rather insecure in certain areas of the country. By November 2001, thousands of Bengal Hindus were said to have fled to India to escape persecution. The government, however, claimed that the number of Hindus seeking refuge in India was grossly exaggerated. To protest against the violence and the alleged inaction by the government to protect them, the Hindu community in the country decided to observe their biggest festival, the Durga Puja, without any festivities. The community representatives also

appealed to the government and other authorities to take action in order to provide security to the Hindus.

On Nov. 22, 2001, prominent Bangladeshi journalist Shahriar Kabir was arrested on charges of treason upon returning from India, where he was documenting the situation of Bangal Hindu refugees. Human rights groups were outraged by his arrest and protested that Kabir was being held illegally as the constitution of Bangladesh grants the right to free speech and free press. This incident alerted many to the deteriorating press freedoms in Bangladesh. Reporters Sans Frontieres (Reporters Without Borders) alleged that dozens of journalists were harassed since the ruling coalition gained power; though it should be mentioned that the AL was also accused of abusing the press. On the issue of Karbir's arrest, it should be noted that he was released on bail in April 2002.

The situation also threatened to spoil the relations of the new government with India. Promises of swift action by the government prevented a worsening of the situation. Yet, keeping the relations with India on an even footing would continue to be a challenge for the Khaleda Zia government, especially due to the pressure from the hardline members of the BNP; they have always viewed India with a great deal of suspicion and have been very critical of the efforts of the Sheikh Hasina government to improve ties with India.

Soon after taking over, the BNP-led coalition government began to undo a number of steps taken by the outgoing Awami League government. One of the first actions of the new government was to overhaul the top bureaucracy, replacing several senior bureaucrats with 'trusted' elements. Though such reshuffles are normal in several countries, the BNP-led coalition did not stop there. Within days of installation of the government, the coalition began talking of scrapping several laws and withdrawing cases against members or sympathizers of the coalition partners. The new government alleged that these cases were politically motivated and hence needed to be squashed.

The government also decided to scrap two laws--Special Powers Act 1974 and Public Safety Act 2000. Calling them black laws, the BNP had made scrapping them part of its election manifesto. Repealing the laws would be a complex endeavor as thousands of cases filed under the laws were still pending in the country's courts. The government required the introduction of another law to settle these cases. Some legal experts suggested that the government should repeal all repressive articles of the two laws and keep some other clauses like imposition of curfew, restriction on entry into some areas, protection of restricted areas, and fighting destructive organizations for maintaining law and order.

The new government also faced serious challenges on the economic front, especially in the privatization of government-owned companies and balancing the budget. Yet another challenge for the government was the matter of foreign direct investments.

Despite its proven gas reserves, Bangladesh has been rather unsuccessful in attracting foreign

investment, largely due to a lack of clear policy about the exploitation of the gas reserves. The country is divided on whether it should export its gas to the energy deficient India or should it preserve the fuel for its own use later. This and several other issues would need to be resolved if the government was to attract any outside investments. The government was in the process of reviewing energy legislation concerning the Power Sector and Natural Gas Reform Acts. According to the United States Agency for International Development: "These acts will permit establishment of an independent regulatory authority for the power and gas sector, and should provide investors and the various stakeholders with additional confidence in the GOB's [Government of Bangladesh's] willingness to reform. However, should significant reform efforts remain stalled, adjustments to this activity will be necessary."

The government was also faced with the challenge of curtailing endemic corruption. In the fall of 2001, Transparency International rated Bangladesh as the most corrupt country in the world. In its first action regarding this sensitive issue, the new ruling coalition proceeded with the tradition of bringing corruption charges against members of the former government. Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, along with many members of the previous government, was charged with numerous counts of corruption; the accused deny these charges. Transparency International suggested that Bangladesh reform the Anti-Corruption Bureau, which has limited powers, and create an independent body to investigate such charges against politically-influential persons. The government responded positively to the request and in April 2002 formed an independent Anti-Corruption Commission.

In June 2002, then-President Chowdhury resigned when the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) accused him of holding an anti-party line. The situation erupted when Chowdhury failed to pay his respects at the grave of former President Ziaur Rahman on the anniversary of his assassination in an abortive coup d'etat in 1981 (see above for reference about the coup d'etat). Rahman has always been considered to be the founder of the BNP and the oversight was not well-received by fellow party members. In September, Iajuddin Ahmed replaced Chowdhury and was sworn in as the new president. (Note: the presidency -- head of state -- is a largely ceremonial role, however, it is intended to proportion and balance executive power in parliamentary systems. See "Government Structure" and "Government Functions" in this review for further information.)

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government tackled serious environmental issues. In March 2002, polythene bags were banned in Bangladesh. New policies were being developed to encourage the use of natural and recyclable materials. The government was also in the process of developing legislation to reduce air pollution: first, by banning two-stroke engine cars from major cities, such as Dhaka; second, by passing laws that will require industries to be more environmentally friendly. Bangladesh has suffered from terrible pollution and as such, environmental measures were considered to be a positive development.

Also on the domestic front has been the rising rate of crime and problems associated with law and

order. In this regard, in June 2003, the opposition AL urged the Bangladeshi people to participate in a national strike. The collective action was called only hours ahead of the time the new budget was scheduled to be presented before parliament. The government accused the AL of trying to create chaos and disruption during the budget presentation, but the opposition party responded by saying that the ruling BNP was responsible for Bangladesh's rising crime rate.

Regardless of the competing claims, Bangladesh's parliament approved the budget, which largely focused on economic development, poverty alleviation and a reduction of dependence on foreign assistance. The parliament gave its approval after the government agreed to remove specific proposals that would increase tariffs on sugar and salt imports. Plans to increase the import duty on alcohol and taxis with engine sizes in certain ranges were also dropped. As well, income taxes were maintained at a relatively low rate. A portion of the economic development program was to be funded by external aid. In this regard, the World Bank called for economic reforms as a predicate a \$536 million credit line to Bangladesh.

In August 2003, two politicians from the AL were killed within a short period of a week. The incidences were met with outrage and resulted in a spate of chaotic strikes and demonstrations, which were launched to protest the killings. By early 2004, the situation was little improved. The opposition called for continued general strikes for the purpose of compelling the government to step down from power. Indeed, in April 2004, the AL not only called for general strikes but it also vocalized discontent by accusing the government of being corrupt and demanding that early elections be held.

Amid this backdrop, in May 2004, the parliament of Bangladesh amended the constitution so that it could reserve 45 seats for female members of parliament (MPs). In the new design, the MPs would be selected in proportion to each party's level of support or showing in the last election.

By mid-2004, a bomb had exploded in the north-eastern part of the country at a Muslim shrine. Two people were killed while about 50 people were injured -- including the High Commissioner from the United Kingdom. Exacerbating difficult conditions was a period of terrible flooding which left 600 people dead and over 25 million people displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance.

In August 2004, leaders of the main opposition party, the Awami League, were targeted at a rally in Dhaka by multiple bombs. Supporters of the Awami League then rioted in the streets. The capital city has remained at a high level of tension.

The ever-volatile political environment in Bangladesh was shaken in late January 2005, as a grenade attack at a rally killed a prominent member of the opposition Awami League. Former Finance Minister Shah Ams Kibria, and four others were killed when a grenade was thrown just after he had given a speech. In the wake of the assassination, more violence was sparked as the Awami league called a general strike, and clashes broke out. At least 40 people were injured and

another 40 detained by police in Dhaka. Police baton-charged protestors who attacked buses and rickshaws that defied the strike. The Awami League blamed the government for the assassination, but government leaders denied involvement and called for an investigation. Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan announced Bangladesh was seeking help from Interpol, Scotland Yard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in finding the assassins.

The year 2005 was marked by violence. In August 2005, for example, approximately 500 bombs detonated within the space of one hour in almost every one of Bangladesh's 64 districts, and yielding about 100 casualties. Later bombings appeared to have been directed at courts and judges. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, which has demanded the institution of Islamic Shari'ah law in Bangladesh, has been linked with hundreds such attacks across the country.

Two successive general strikes in Bangladesh in April 2006 brought the country to a virtual standstill. The strikes had been called by the opposition Awami League and its allies; they were calling on the government to reform the electoral system before the next election scheduled for early 2007. They complained that those charged with overseeing elections have been supporters of the government, thus bringing into question the notion of fair conduct. As well, they also accused the ruling coalition, led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, of planning to pack the caretaker government with its supporters. The caretaker interim government was scheduled to take over control in October 2006.

The protest strikes led to clashes in the capital city of Dhaka with police wielding batons and firing teargas shells to disperse hundreds of protesters rallying in the capital city. Up to 50 people were injured as a result. Analysts predicted that Bangladesh, a country with a history of political unrest, was to be faced with another phase of political uncertainty.

Attention shifted a month later to a case involving the assassinations of two judges in 2005. On May 29, 2006, a court in Bangladesh's southern town of Jhalakati sentenced two Islamic militant leaders and five other individuals to death in connection with the murder of two judges in November 2005. The two judges died when a bomb was thrown at the car in which they were driving en route to court. Judge Reza Tarik Ahmed, who presided over the case announced the sentence saying, "I pronounce this highest penalty as involvement of the accused has been proved beyond doubt."

The two Islamic leaders -- Siddiqui Islam, also known as Bangla Bhai, and Abdur Rahman -- were members of a prohibited Islamic militant group called Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen. They were arrested in March 2006 for the bombing, which was part of a larger series of attacks across Bangladesh (as noted above). The aforementioned Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, which has demanded the institution of Islamic Shari'ah law in Bangladesh, has been linked with hundreds such attacks across the country.

By June, attention returned to the dissonance between the two main political factions. On June 11, 2006, Bangladesh police and opposition supporters clashed in the capital city of Dhaka. Police used tear gas and batons to keep rock-throwing protestors at bay. The violence was so acute that senior opposition members -- former army chief General Shafiullah and former planning minister Mohiduddin Khan Alamgir -- were critically injured.

The protest action was taken to demand electoral reform as well as the resignation of the government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, which the opposition characterized as corrupt and incompetent. Awami League general secretary, Abdul Jalil, declared the opposition's right to protest saying, "The siege is our democratic right and we are going to implement it." The group was also calling for a 36-hour strike, which was to begin on June 12, 2006.

The Bangladesh National Party administration's term was set to expire in October 2006 and general elections were anticipated in January 2007. But the opposition wanted to ensure free and fair elections and it blamed the government for the inability to move forward with electoral reform.

The leadership battle was ongoing in Bangladesh in October 2006. The country's major political parties argued over who should lead the government on the path toward elections. At issue was the fact that President Iajuddin Ahmed was sworn into office as the interim head of government on October 29 2006, however, he was not backed by the opposition. His selection -- albeit without support from the opposition Awami League -- appeared to be the only constitutional option available to the country. However, there was little hope that the selection of the new interim leader would stave off the deadly riots plaguing the country as a result of the political impasse. The situation was not helped by the Awami League's decision to boycott the swearing in ceremony and its assertion that Ahmed was not a neutral political player. For his part, Ahmed was to be faced with the challenge of remaining loyal to his own governing Bangladesh Nationalist Party, while also trying to address the Awami League's demands for electoral reforms ahead of elections.

Also in October 2006, Bangladesh was in the international spotlight when Muhammad Yunus, together with the Grameen Bank, were awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize. Yunus, an economist, established the Grameen Bank in 1976 and pioneered the concept of microcredit in which small loans are provided to borrowers for the purpose of starting small businesses. The concept has successfully helped millions of mainly impoverished women get out of poverty while achieving sustainable means of providing for themselves. The Grameen Bank's small loan or microcredit program boasts a repayment rate of 97 percent. Nobel committee chairman, Ole Danbolt Mjoes, said that in facilitating the process by which millions of people were able to move out of poverty, Yunus and the Grameen Bank were creating the conditions for sustainable peace. To this end, Mjoes said, "Development such as this is useful in human rights and democracy." For his part, Yunus expressed his appreciation for receiving the renowned prize saying, "As a Bangladeshi, I'm proud that we have given something to the world. Our work has now been

recognized by the whole world."

By early 2007, continuing political antagonism led to mass protests in the streets of the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. The protests were part of a three-day blockade of transportation thoroughfares across the country, which was intended to compel electoral reform. Opposition organizers of the protests and blockade also were calling for the elections -- officially scheduled to take place on Jan, 22, 2007 -- to be postponed until reform could be actualized.

The police used rubber bullets and tear gas to restrain protestors, who threw stones and rocks at them, and also to disperse the crowds gathering in the streets of Dhaka. The situation resulted in scores of injuries and the deployment of thousands of security forces to the capital city, which was brought to a standstill as government facilities and businesses were shut down for security reasons.

The scenario on the streets was said to be evidence of a constitutional crisis of sorts. Nevertheless, Bangladeshi President Iajuddin Ahmed foreclosed the possibility of postponement, saying that the elections would go ahead as scheduled. The caretaker head of government explained that the constitution required that elections be held within a certain timeframe, thus demanding that the January poll go forward as planned.

Meanwhile, the Awami League and its allies in opposition threatened to boycott the elections, saying that without reform, voting would not be free and fair. Indeed, Awami League spokesman Abdul Jalil warned that not only would his group boycott the elections, but they would guarantee further mass action against the government. To this end, he said, "We will not accept farcical elections. We will shut down the country for weeks if the government goes ahead with holding the elections."

On January 11, 2007, with the crisis unresolved and violent street protests ongoing, President Iajuddin Ahmed announced a state of emergency and established a curfew. Hours later, he announced that he was stepping down as interim leader and postponed elections saying that it would be impossible for them to take place as scheduled. Soon thereafter, Fakhrudin Ahmed became the new head of caretaker administration. It was not known at the time if the new leadership at the helm of the caretaker administration would help calm the ongoing state of political tension and conflict plaguing Bangladesh. However, new developments (noted below) suggested that such an end would not easily or quickly be realized.

In April 2007, the Bangladeshi authorities issued charges of extortion against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her alleged activities involving the construction of a power plant. Two days later, Bangladeshi police said they were filing murder charges against Sheikh Hasina, as well as 46 other members of her Awami League. The charges involved allegations that she orchestrated the murders of four individuals aligned with a rival political party during the fall of 2006. Indeed, the murders took place at a time when violent clashes were gripping Dhaka, and as supporters of

political parties took to the streets to protest the composition of the incoming interim "caretaker" government. In September 2007, another charge involving bribery was also levied against the former head of government.

Observers noted that the charges against Sheikh Hasina would not have been advanced without the cooperation of that interim government, which was backed by the military. For her part, Sheikh Hasina responded to the developments saying that the interim government was attempting to intimidate her.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi authorities were moving against another former head of government. At issue was the effective house arrest of former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, which appeared to be associated with corruption charges brought against her son. The charges against Zia were specified as involving her acceptance of bribes.

These actions against the two former head of government were illustrative of the interim government's crime and corruption crackdown on several political figures. There was some speculation that the interim government was trying to force both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia into political exile. As such, the prevailing view was that the government was not so much trying to advance the interests of one politician or political party over the other, but rather, it was attempting to restructure the political landscape.

The country was hit by tragedy when tropical cyclone Sidr slammed into Bangladesh in mid-November 2007 packing winds in excess of 150 miles per hour (240 kilometers per hour) and yielding a huge tidal surge. The devastatingly powerful cyclone killed at least 3,000 people (that number was expected to rise), destroyed or damaged tens of thousands of homes, and completely wiped out the crops and vegetation in a remote part of the country. As such, it was believed to have affected one million people in total.

The government of Bangladesh characterized the effects of Sidr as calamitous. International aid, led by the United Kingdom and the European Union, was being pledged to assist in the difficult road to recovery. Pope Benedict entered the fray, urging "every possible effort to help our brothers who have been so sorely tested." In the meanwhile, however, shelter, food and water were in high demand as rescue crews had a difficult time reaching the more remote area of southern Bangladesh. Criticism began to mount that the authorities did little to inform the locals about the impending cyclone -- many of whom were too poor to own televisions or radios publicizing the incoming track of Sidr, as well as its likely deleterious effects.

In May 2008, the ongoing corruption drive reached new heights when several former cabinet ministers were arrested in connection with the investigation involving former Prime Minister Zia. As well, Motiur Rahman Nizami -- the head of a religious party, Jamaat-e-Islami -- and a former cabinet member under Zia was also held in that corruption probe. By this point, as many as 150

political figures were under investigation for alleged corruption.

In order to widen its efforts the interim government additionally launched a Truth and Accountability Commission aimed at encouraging the citizenry to reveal what might be known about corrupt, fraudulent or illegal deals. People willing to disclose such details would be exempt from criminal prosecution, although they would not be allowed to contest elections for a period of five years.

At the close of May 2008, the interim government was attempting to convene talks in anticipation of elections. At issue was the fact that any politicians, including two former prime ministers (Zia and Hasina from the two main parties) were under arrest. As such, the government was calling on all political groups to reorganize their internal parties and put forth new candidates for positions at stake in the forthcoming elections. The interim government also called on political parties to transform their conduct by instituting more transparency into their processes, hiring independent auditors and crafting codes of conduct. While some of the smaller political parties agreed to participate in these talks, the two main parties declined to join until their leaders were released. The interim government insisted that these political transformations had to be made in order to ensure that the forthcoming elections were credible.

Special Entry --

Parliamentary Election 2008

Summary:

Bangladesh will hold a parliamentary election in the third week of December, 2008 from 9:00am until 11:59pm. The parties in contention will be Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Awami League (AL), Bangladesh Islamic Assembly / Jamaat-E-Islami (JI), National Party / Jatiyo Party (JP) and others.

Note:

The date of the election was postponed from December 18, 2008 to December 29, 2008.

Backgrounder:

Bangladesh will hold a National Parliament election in the third week of December 2008 to elect 300 new members to their governing body. Due to a political crisis in Bangladesh between 2006-2007, this election has been postponed for over a year and this will be the first year that prisoners will be allowed to vote.

The last election was held in October of 2001. The results were: Bangladesh Nationalist Party with 193 seats, Awami League with 62 seats, Bangladesh Islamic Assembly (JI) with 17 seats, and the National Party / Jatiyo Party with 14 seats.

Hasina's Awami League wins election in Bangladesh:

On December 29, 2008, Bangladeshi voters cast ballots to elect a new government, which would replace the two-year rule by the military-backed interim government. The vote ensued in a state of high security with 50,000 soldiers and 600,000 police deployed to guard against election fraud and violence.

The two main parties contesting the election were the Awami League, led by Sheikh Hasina, and the Bangladesh National Party, led by Khaleda Zia. Both party leaders were women who had served respectively as prime minister and who had been jailed by the interim government for corruption. Both Hasina and Zia -- bitter rivals for Bangladesh's leadership -- had been released to contest the election and campaigned similarly on platforms of fighting corruption and terrorism.

With the votes counted, it was clear that Sheikh Hasina would return to power as prime minister after her party won a landslide victory. Her Awami League secured 230 of the parliament's 300 seats in Monday's vote, while only 29 seats went to Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. The Awami League's key ally in the elections Jatiya Party won 27 seats while Bangladesh Nationalist Party's key ally Jamaat-e-Islami won two seats. Another four small parties shared seven seats while four seats were won by independent candidates.

For her part, Zia rejected the election results, issued charges of mass forgery of votes, and said that she had evidence to show how vote rigging had taken place. She said, "Therefore, this election has not reflected the will of the people." But despite this claim the Electoral Commission's official tally of the votes made it clear that Hasina would have more than enough parliamentary seats to form a new government. She was inaugurated into office in the first week of January 2009.

Note: Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the leader of Bangladesh's 1971 struggle for independence against Pakistan, who was assassinated in a military coup four years later. Sheikh Hasina was toppled from office in 2001 and faced serious legal charges. As noted above, she, like her rival Zia, was released to contest the election. While she is likely to become prime minister, given her party's parliamentary dominance, Hasina's political prospects could be dampened by the prevailing charges of murder, extortion and corruption that have not been fully resolved.

Note on Presidency:

Bangladesh's major party Awami League, which won a landslide victory in parliamentary

elections, endorsed its senior presidium member Zillur Rahman as the country's next president. Then, in mid-February 2009, Bangladesh's 300 parliamentary members were set to elect the country's new president. In line with Bangladesh's Constitution, the new president had to be elected within 30 days of a new parliament convening. The first session of Bangladesh's ninth parliament began on January 25, 2009, after the country's parliamentary elections was held at the end of 2008. Given the ruling party's domination in parliament, Zillur Rahman was expected to be elected president by an overwhelming margin. To that end, once it was clear that no other candidate would stand for the election, Bangladesh's Election Commission soon declared Zillur Rahman as the country's 19th President.

Zillur Rahman was then sworn into office on February 12, 2009. In so doing, he replaced Iajuddin Ahmed in the role of head of state. Before taking the oath, Rahman said, "I will try my level best to uphold the image of the country and I will perform my duty showing respect to the dignity of the post."

Recent Developments

February 2009 was marked in Bangladesh by a violent mutiny by officer over insufficient salary payments and poor working conditions. The situation turned bloody in the capital city of Dhaka with clashes erupting between officers and mutineers. Ultimately, it led to two days of violent unrest, manifest in the deaths of at least 100 people and scores of others missing. The situation took an ominous turn days later when Bangladeshi troops discovered a mass grave at the site of the mutiny. The grave was filled with the bodies of 58 officers, who were believed to have been killed by the mutineers. Among the bodies found was that of the chief officer of the guard force. For its part, the government declared a three-day period of official mourning.

Also in February 2010, attention in Bangladesh was on the humanitarian conditions of some 30,000 undocumented Rohingya refugees in the southern part of the country. Humanitarian aid groups, such as Medecins Sans Frontieres, have observed that many of these undocumented refugees have suffered beatings and other abuses by authorities, presumably as part of a violent crackdown and a forced repatriation effort. They have, accordingly, fled to the makeshift Kutupalong camp located close in proximity to a government camp housing 11,000 documented Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar District. That camp has operated under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Medecins Sans Frontieres has warned that the refugees are impoverished and suffering from hunger. The Bangladeshi government has been willing to extend only limited assistance to a group that they view as illegal migrants, and who have often been ensconced in a struggle over jobs and resources with the local population. The stateless Rohingya -- an ethnic and religious minority in Burma (Myanmar) -- fled from that country decades earlier seeking refuge in Bangladesh.

Protests at a garment factory in Bangladesh on December 12, 2010 turned violent and ended in the deaths of three people and injuries to scores more. Factory workers took to the streets in Dhaka and Chittagong to demand better wages at a time of inflation. The protesters vandalized factories and vehicles in Chittagong and then became embroiled in violent clashes with police. Those actions evoked a harsh response from security personnel using tear gas and batons to disperse the crowds. That being said, all three deaths were caused by gunshots. Demonstrations in Dhaka resulted in injuries to dozens of people and attacks on vehicles and buildings.

At the start of January 2012, the Bangladeshi army announced that it successfully has foiled an attempted military coup d'etat, reportedly orchestrated by mid-rank army officers. Army spokesman Brig. Gen. Mohammad Masud Razzak said in an interview with Press Trust of India that two former officers had been arrested while more than a dozen others were under investigation. Razzak said that the two individuals who were arrested had admitted their roles in the plot to overthrow the government. Razzak noted that the coup conspirators would be subject to legal consequences.

2013 Update

On March 20, 2013, President Mohammed Zillur Rahman of Bangladesh died in a Singapore hospital where he was undergoing treatment for an respiratory infection. Rahman, a veteran politician and member of the ruling Awami League, became Bangladesh's 19th president in 2009. His election -- an internal matter in the form of a parliamentary vote -- was not a matter of contestation, given the success of the Awami league in parliamentary elections in 2008. It should be noted that Parliamentary Speaker Abdul Hamid was serving as acting president while Rahman was hospitalized in Singapore. With the nation's attention on the president's death and the period of national mourning, it was to be seen who would succeed Rahman as the new president of Bangladesh.

Earlier, in mid-February 2013, tens of thousands of people in Bangladesh took to the streets across the country to protest the court ruling that issued a life imprisonment sentence to Abdul Kader Mullah, the leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami party. At issue was his alleged war crimes in the 1971 independence war with Pakistan, which left more than three million people dead. Bangladeshi citizens -- particularly young people -- were outraged that Mullah would emerge from the legal process with only a life sentence having committed crimes against humanity; they were demanding that Mullah be subject to the death penalty. The protests went on for days and became more violent, leading to the deaths of several people during clashes with police.

It should be noted that a month before -- in January 2013 -- a former Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Abul Kalam Azad, had been sentenced to death for war crimes during the war with the Pakistan. It was possible that Bangladeshis were upset that Mullah did not receive as harsh a sentence as Azad.

Nevertheless, in the face of the mass uprising, Bangladesh's parliament amended a law on Feb. 17, 2013, that could potentially allow the state to appeal against the life sentence of Mullah. Now, the government would have the option of appealing verdicts at the International Crimes Tribunal, which was established to prosecute Bangladeshis accused of collaborating with Pakistani forces and committing atrocities during the 1971 independence war. As well, the crimes tribunal would now be allowed to prosecute political parties believed to be involved in war crimes, possibly resulting in those organizations being banned from the political scene. This provision could obviously affect the Jamaat-e-Islami party.

It should be noted that the Jamaat-e-Islami party has been allied with the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Khaleda Zia, which has had a long-standing and entirely acrimonious rivalry with the government of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Indeed, the Islamist Jamaat and the BNP have accused Hasina and her Awami Party of carrying out a political vendetta against them. But Hasina has been buoyed by the fact that she has made no secret of her agenda to prosecute war crimes. Indeed, her Awami Party, which won a landslide victory in late 2008, dominated the parliament and was, thus, within its rights to advance the legislative changes.

Partisan politics aside, demonstrators in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka registered their approval for the legislative changes by taking to the streets -- this time with a sense of victory emanating from the crowds rather than outrage.

But by the start of March 2013, the fracas surrounding the state of instability resurfaced again with a new eruption of mass protests. At issue this time was the death sentence for Delwar Hossain Sayedee, another leading Islamist on the basis of war crimes. The court found Sayedee guilty of eight of 20 counts involving mass killings, rape, and other atrocities committed during the war with Pakistan. His conviction was the third such conviction since the start of the year (the other two involved Mullah and Azad, as discussed above).

Partisan politics were again driving the chaos in Bangladesh, but this time from the opposite slate of political players. Khaleda Zia's BNP called for a national dawn-to-dusk "hartal" -- a Bengali term intended to denote a strike of shutdown -- to register discontent over Sayedee's death sentence and the apparent campaign against Islamist leaders and former leaders. The BNP said that the hartal was intended to show outrage over government misrule and oppression. In addition, leaders at mosques across Bangladesh urged worshipers to take to the streets in protest and the people obliged en masse. In the capital of Dhaka, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowds to disperse the demonstrators. In Bogra, around ten people died as a result of violence in the streets, while scores of other individuals died in street violence across the country.

Mid-2013 saw the legal system in Bangladesh take aim at Islamists and an Islamist party linked to war crimes committed during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence with Pakistan. At issue were the verdicts and sentences applied to leading Islamist politicians, as well as the decision to

outlaw the Islamist party at the heart of the matter.

On July 15, 2013, Ghulam Azam -- a Bangladeshi Islamist leader -- was found guilty of war crimes committed during Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence with Pakistan, which left more than three million people dead. The litany of atrocities for which Azam was found guilty included conspiracy, incitement, planning, abetting and failing to prevent murder during the war with Pakistan. For these crimes against humanity, Azam was sentenced to 90 years in jail. The prosecutors sought a death sentence but the judicial panel at the International Crimes Tribunal said that Azam had been spared capital punishment due to his advanced age.

For his part, Ghulam Azam served as the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami -- Bangladesh's main Islamist party -- from 1969 until 2000. He has insisted that the charges against him were manufactured. Moreover, Azam's defense team has argued that the prosecution's case against their client was heavily based on newspaper reports of Azam's speeches rather than a more substantive evidentiary record.

Azam's guilty verdict was one of the latest case in a string of convictions in Bangladesh in which former Jamaat-e-Islami leaders were found guilty and given harsh sentences for war crimes and atrocities committed during the war with the Pakistan.

On July 17, 2013, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, another leading figure in the Jamaat-e-Islami party, was sentenced to death over war crimes committed during the 1971 war of independence with Pakistan. At issue in the case against Mujahid were accusations of mass killings, kidnappings, and torture, for which he was ultimately convicted and sentenced to be executed by a Bangladeshi war crimes tribunal.

Mujahid was a student leader in 1971 and, ironically, one of the war crimes charges against him focused on the fact that he targeted intellectuals in the campaign of terror launched against pro-independence activists. As a supporter of a unified Pakistan, he went into hiding soon after Bangladesh gained its independence, but returned to the spotlight in 1977 when Ziaur Rahman came to power in a military coup. At the political level, he served as the social welfare minister in the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government from 2001-2006. But Mujahid was also known as the leader of a group that assisted the Pakistani army in finding and killing pro-independence supporters, thus the legal case against him. For his part, Mujahid shouted "injustice" in response to the sentencing rendered by the judge.

These court rulings have consistently evoked mass unrest as opponents of Jamaat-e-Islami demanded even harsher sentences for those found guilty, while supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami railed against what they saw as political oppression. After the verdicts and sentencing in these July 2013 cases, protesters took to the streets and became embroiled in clashes with police. In fact, police used rubber bullets to try to disperse angry crowds in the capital of Dhaka. Since the start

of the year as these court cases have entered the public purview, as many as 100 people have died in protests in Bangladesh.

In September 2013, Abdul Kader Mullah -- an Islamist leader -- received the death penalty for war crimes. Going back to February 2013, Abdul Kader Mullah, of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, was convicted and sentenced to life by a special tribunal of war crimes in the 1971 independence war with Pakistan, which left more than three million people dead. At issue was the role of Abdul Kader Mullah in that period of violence, massacres, and bloodshed. The war crimes tribunal found Mullah guilty of five charges including murder, and linked him with several killings, including a massacre in the Mirpur area of Dhaka. For these and other instances of brutality attributed to him, Mullah was referred to as the "koshai" or butcher of Mirpur.

The conviction of Abdul Kader Mullah in February 2013 spurred tens of thousands of people in Bangladesh to take to the streets across the country in protest. Bangladeshi citizens -- particularly young people -- were outraged that Mullah would emerge from the legal process with only a life sentence having committed crimes against humanity; they were demanding that Mullah be subject to the death penalty. The protests went on for days and became more violent, leading to the deaths of several people during clashes with police.

In the face of the mass uprising, as noted above, Bangladesh's parliament amended the law, potentially allowing the state to appeal against the life sentence of Mullah. Now, the government would have the option of appealing verdicts at the International Crimes Tribunal, which was established to prosecute Bangladeshis accused of collaborating with Pakistani forces and committing atrocities during the 1971 independence war. As well, the crimes tribunal would now be allowed to prosecute political parties believed to be involved in war crimes, possibly resulting in those organizations being banned from the political scene. This provision could obviously affect the Jamaat-e-Islami party.

By the start of August 2013, the high court of Bangladesh ruled that the Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami party had broken election rules and its activities would be restricted as a result. At issue was a petition brought before the court alleging that the party's charter was contrary to Bangladesh's constitution. The high court ruled in favor of that petition. Nonetheless, the court also determined that Jamaat-e-Islami could amend its charter to ensure that it was in conformity with the constitution, and then issue a new application for registration, should the party hope to contest forthcoming elections in 2014. As stated by Shahdeen Malik, a lawyer for the Bangladeshi election commission, in an interview with Agence France Presse: "If it amends its charter to bring it in conformity with the constitution and reapplies for registration, it can be re-registered.

In late September 2013, the case against Abdul Kader Mullah had returned to the fore, and it was apparent that his luck had taken a turn for the worse. Not only was his appeal against his jail term for war crimes rejected by Bangladesh's Supreme Court, but in the case brought by the

government demanding a tougher sentence, Mullah was also being sentenced to death instead of life in prison. The change in his fate was facilitated by the legal changes made earlier in the year, as discussed above. Prosecutor Ziad Al Malum said in an interview with Agence France Presse that the decision to upgrade the sentencing for Mullah was decisive with four of five judges sanctioning the move. Now the only legal option left available to Mullah would be to seek a presidential pardon. For their part, Islamists have responded to the ruling against Mullah in anger, with political unrest anticipated in the near future.

In December 2013, Bangladesh was rocked by violent protests in the aftermath of the execution of Islamist leader, Abdul Kader Mullah, who was convicted of atrocities committed during the 1971 war of independence with Pakistan. At issue were claims that Mullah and other members of the extremist Jamaat-e-Islami party collaborated with Pakistani forces against the pro-independence effort in Bangladesh.

A senior leader of the extremist Jamaat-e-Islami party, Mullah was the first person to be executed following a conviction by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT). That conviction spurred violent protests, which have marked the political landscape in Bangladesh for most of 2013. There was a temporary halt to the hanging proceedings of Mullah but he was ultimately put to death in the central jail of Dhaka in mid-December 2013. The execution sparked a new round of protests as both his opponents and his supporters took to the streets, effectively adding to the climate of turbulence in Bangladesh.

Going back to February 2013, the conviction and life sentence of Abdul Kader Mullah spurred tens of thousands of people in Bangladesh to take to the streets across the country in protest. As noted above, in the face of the mass uprising, Bangladesh's parliament amended the law. That change allowed the state to appeal against the life sentence of Mullah -- ultimately ending in his execution in December 2013.

It should be noted that the Jamaat-e-Islami party has been allied with the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Khaleda Zia. The opposition BNP has had a long-standing and entirely acrimonious rivalry with the government of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Indeed, the Islamist Jamaat and the BNP have accused Hasina and her Awami Party of carrying out a political vendetta against them. But Hasina has been buoyed by the fact that she has made no secret of her agenda to prosecute war crimes. Indeed, her Awami Party, which won a landslide victory in late 2008, dominated the parliament and was, thus, within its rights to advance the cause of seeking justice on behalf of the victims of the atrocities committed during the war with Pakistan. That being said, there have been criticisms that the International Crimes Tribunal falls short of international standards in the realm of jurisprudence.

Criticism of the International Crimes Tribunal aside, as discussed here, by December 2013, Abdul Kader Mullah had been executed and Bangladesh was being rocked by violence. Several deaths

and even more injuries were reported, while houses were set on fire, and businesses were looted. In fact, there were reports of "torching rallies" as mass groups of protesters set homes and shops ablaze, presumably in a rage of revenge for the execution of Mullah.

The state of unrest contributed to the political strife already plaguing the country, especially since some opposition parties were now saying they would boycott the upcoming elections set for January 2014, as discussed below. That decision to boycott the polls, augmented by the protests for and against the hanging of Mullah, placed additional pressure on the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the ruling Awami League party.

Elections of 2014

Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh were set to be held on Jan. 5, 2014. At stake was the composition of the unicameral "Jatiya Sangsad" (National Assembly). Members of that 300 seat body are elected by popular vote from single territorial constituencies; members serve five-year terms. In the previous elections held in December 2008, Sheikh Hasina was returned to power as prime minister after her Awami Party won a landslide victory over the Bangladesh National Party, led by Khaleda Zia.

Background:

In late 2013, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League (AL) announced that elections would be held in early 2014. But those plans hit a snag when one of its key allies -- the Jatiya Party -- said it would boycott those elections. The Jatiya Party was the third largest party in parliament after the ruling Awami League and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia.

H.M. Ershad, the chairman of Jatiya Party, said in a news conference that "there exists no proper environment for polls." As such, he declared, "We'll not participate in the upcoming elections."

Already, the opposition-led alliance, which included the BNP and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party, had indicated it would not participate in the forthcoming polls. With the announcement from the Jatiya Party, the legitimacy of the 2014 elections was being called into question. Despite the threats about a boycott, the Bangladesh Election Commission announced that the country's next parliamentary election would be held on Jan. 5, 2014. It was to be seen if there would be a delay to give time for a political resolution to be reached on the formation of the caretaker cabinet to oversee the election.

At issue was the call for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government to do as she had previously done -- resign from office and institute a caretaker administration to oversee the country

and the elections until a new government could be elected. But in late 2013, the prime minister and her government were remaining at their posts -- presumably until election day. This decision raised the ire of many Bangladeshis and political tensions were on the rise.

The political tensions were reflected in street clashes between activists for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling AL and opposition protesters; the violence left several people dead and dozens more injured.

With less than a week to go until election day, Khaleda Zia, the leader of the largest opposition party -- the Bangladesh Nationalist Party -- was placed under house arrest. This move appeared to be linked with the ongoing dispute over the elections. For her part, Zia and her party called for a nationwide 48-hour strike starting the day before the elections, as well as a "complete boycott" of those polls.

The elections:

Violence and bloodshed marred Bangladesh's 2014 parliamentary elections. Opposition activists became embroiled in violent clashes with police during Bangladesh's elections, which were being boycotted by the opposition. Dozens of people died in the week leading up to the voting, while at least 20 people were killed on election day itself on Jan. 5, 2014.

In the northern Rangpur district, protesters tried to take control of a polling station; police responded by opening fire and killing at least two people. In the Nilphamari district, confrontations with security forces likewise led to deaths as police opened fire on protesters. In the opposition stronghold of Bogra, thousands of protesters attacked polling stations and the personnel working at these units with Molotov cocktails. Police had a hardline response. Likewise in the northern area of Parbatipur, police said they were forced to open fire after thousands of protesters attacked them with guns and small bombs. In addition to the fighting, as many as 100 polling stations were burned to the ground.

Given this widespread climate of violence, voter turnout was reported to be low; official estimates registered a dismal 20 percent turnout rate. To no one's surprise, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League (AL) -- which was assured of victory thanks to the opposition boycott -- was able to claim victory. Early estimates suggested that the AL had now secured a two-thirds majority in parliament thanks to the lack of competition in these polls, which could certainly call into question their essential credibility.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wasted no time in claiming victory saying, "The people have cast their votes spontaneously, upheld the value of democracy and dumped terrorism. We will form our government," she told a news conference. For its part, the opposition characterized the vote as a "scandalous farce."

Political Developments in 2015

The year 2015 began with an eruption of violence in Bangladesh, marking an escalation of the ongoing political conflict that has been rocking Bangladesh for some time between the ruling Awami Party of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by Khaleda Zia. Since the 2014 elections that returned Hasina and the Awami Party to power, and which the opposition boycotted, the BNP has been demanding that Hasina resign and that fresh elections be held. But now in 2015, the scene had turned violent with as many as 60 people killed since the start of the year.

On Feb. 6, 2015, opposition activists hurled fire bombs at a bus in the northern district of Gaibandha that was headed for the capital of Dhaka. At least six people, including two children, were burned to death as a result and more than 30 others were injured. In another incident a day later on Feb. 7, 2015, three people died in a similar immolation attack on a truck in the southern district of Barisal. Meanwhile, the opposition has been orchestrating mass strikes, roadblocks and enacting other forms of mass resistance and revolt.

In April 2015, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, an Islamist politician from the Jamaat-e-Islami party was subject to the death sentence and hanged at a prison in the country's capital of Dhaka. Kamaruzzaman had been found guilty of genocide by a domestic war crimes tribunal, the Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), in May 2013. At issue was his role in the slaughter of at least 120 unarmed farmers in a remote northern village during the 1971 war of independence. Kamaruzzaman was the second war crimes suspect in Bangladesh to be executed for atrocities committed during the independence fight.

Going back to December 2013, the Islamist leader, Abdul Kader Mullah, was convicted by Bangladesh's ICT of atrocities committed during the 1971 war of independence with Pakistan and executed. At issue in his case were claims that Mullah and other members of the extremist Jamaat-e-Islami party collaborated with Pakistani forces against the pro-independence effort in Bangladesh. His execution sparked mass protests, which have marked the political landscape in Bangladesh in recent years. There was a temporary halt to the hanging proceedings of Mullah but he was ultimately put to death in the central jail of Dhaka in mid-December 2013.

It should be noted that the Jamaat-e-Islami party has been allied with the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Khaleda Zia. The opposition BNP has had a long-standing and entirely acrimonious rivalry with the government of current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Indeed, the Islamist Jamaat and the BNP have accused Hasina and her Awami Party of carrying out a political vendetta against them. But Hasina has been buoyed by the fact that she has made no secret of her agenda to prosecute war crimes. Indeed, her Awami Party, which won a landslide

victory in late 2008, dominated the parliament and was, thus, within its rights to advance the cause of seeking justice on behalf of the victims of the atrocities committed during the war with Pakistan. That being said, there have been criticisms that the International Crimes Tribunal falls short of international standards in the realm of jurisprudence.

Fast-forward to April 2015 and the opposition leader and former prime minister, Khaleda Zia, was the focus of violence when assailants attacked the car in which she was riding. Witnesses at the scene said that Zia was addressing a rally in the capital of Dhaka when the assailants approached the car transporting Zia and brandished iron rods; as the bullet-proof vehicle departed the scene, gunshots were fired. Zia's bodyguard as well as five other individuals were injured in the attack and had to be hospitalized. In response, Zia's party, the BNP, called for a national strike to protest the attack against its leader and continued to demand that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina step down. On the other side of the equation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has refused to resign and has instead tightened her hold on power by controlling the media and detaining opposition figures. It was apparent that the political conflict between the BNP and the ruling Awami Party was in full force in the spring of 2015.

-- January 2016

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com; research resources listed in Bibliography.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is

based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5

Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4

Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5

Croatia	7
Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9

Fr. Yugoslav Rep. Macedonia	5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9

India	7.5-8
Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5

Laos	4.5
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7

Mexico	6.5
Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7

Pakistan	3.5
Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9

Sao Tome and Principe	5.5
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5

Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8

Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The [Political Risk Index](#) is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)
2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)
3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)
4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)
5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)
6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)

7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)
8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)
9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)
10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Syria](#), [Iraq](#) and [Yemen](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected [Syria](#) where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. [Iraq](#) has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. [Libya](#) has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in [Libya](#) have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. [Yemen](#) continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between [Iran](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#). Conversely, [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, [Zimbabwe](#) continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring [Zimbabwe](#) with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. [Somalia](#) also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in [Kenya](#). On the upside, [Nigeria](#), which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national

security front with its new president at the helm. [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Burkina Faso](#), [Burundi](#) and [Guinea](#) have been downgraded due to political unrest, with [Guinea](#) also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as [Serbia](#), [Croatia](#), and [Hungary](#), due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, [Singapore](#) retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for [Mexico](#), [Guatemala](#), and [Brazil](#). [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the [United States](#) maintains a strong ranking along with [Canada](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the [United States](#) to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

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Updated:

2015

Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The [Political Stability](#) Index is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5

Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6

Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5
Brazil	7
Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8

Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8

Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4
Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr. Yugoslav Rep. Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4

Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4
Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5

Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2
Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8

Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5

New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6

Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9
Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5

Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5

Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)
2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability

3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights
4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance
5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")
6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection
7. level of unchecked crime and corruption
8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security
9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation
10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, [Afghanistan](#), and [Somalia](#) -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both [Afghanistan](#) and [Somalia](#) continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In [Afghanistan](#), while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In [Somalia](#), while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in [Somalia](#), but across the border into [Kenya](#) with devastating results/ Also in this category is [Iraq](#), which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, [Libya](#), and [Yemen](#) have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. [Syria](#) has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of [Libya](#) has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the

country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is [Yemen](#), which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secessionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a [Iran](#) and Sunni [Saudi Arabia](#).

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In [Bahrain](#), the landscape had calmed. In [Egypt](#), the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of [Tunisia](#) -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. [Tunisia](#), [Egypt](#), and [Bahrain](#) have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. [Zimbabwe](#) has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is [Nigeria](#), which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. [Mali](#) was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited [Burkina Faso](#) and [Burundi](#) as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In [Burundi](#), an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In [Burkina Faso](#), the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South [Sudan](#) -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. [Guinea](#) has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola health crisis.

In Europe, [Ukraine](#) was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. [Russia](#) was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. [Serbia](#) and [Albania](#) were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while [Romania](#) was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#) were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. [Greece](#), another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, [Greece](#) was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, [Germany](#), [France](#), [Switzerland](#), the [United Kingdom](#), the [Netherlands](#), and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, [Nepal](#) was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. [Cambodia](#) was very slightly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and China retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in [Pakistan](#) resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, [Haiti](#) retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. [Mexico](#) was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. [Guatemala](#) was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. [Brazil](#) was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. [Argentina](#) was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. [Venezuela](#) was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. [Colombia](#) was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States. Meanwhile, the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Panama](#), and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, [Fiji](#) was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, [Maldives](#) has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

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Updated:

2015

Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	
Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	

Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	
Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	↑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	

Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	↓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	↓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	↓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	

Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	
Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	↓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	

Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	
Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	↓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	↓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	

Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	
Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	↑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	↓

Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	
Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	↑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	↓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	

Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	↓
North Korea	7	7	Not Free	↓
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	↓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	↓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	

Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	
Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	↓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	

Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	
Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	↓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	↓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	

Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	
Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	↓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:

PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.

↑ ↓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.

Available at URL: <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Overview of Human Rights in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy. Political and security conditions have taken a turn for the worse in recent years. To date, the country has seen a spate of bombings, most targeting government institutions, but some civilian locales were hit as well. Bangladesh's human rights record worsened during this period as well. Human rights activists and lawyers, as well as members of the ethnic minority and opposition politicians, were harassed and intimidated. Extra-judicial killings, improper uses of force, and torture became more frequent. Impunity and corruption means that many abuses go largely uninvestigated and therefore unpunished. For another straight year, Bangladesh heads Transparency International's list as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, while it also ranks low on global indices measuring standard of living and human development.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:

See Social Overview of Country Review for full listing of rankings for all countries

Human Poverty Index Rank:

86th out of 103

Gini Index:

31.8

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):

69.4 years

Unemployment Rate:

2.5%

Population living on \$1 a day (%):

36%

Population living on \$2 a day (%):

82.8%

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):

49.8%

Internally Displaced People:

500,000

Note-Some 20,000 refugees are seeking asylum in Bangladesh

Total Crime Rate (%):

N/A

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):

Public: 0.8%

% of GDP Spent on Education:

2.4%

Human Rights Conventions Party to:

- International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (signed but not yet ratified)
- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (signed but not yet ratified)

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

Constitution

The constitution was promulgated in November 1972, and became effective in December 1972. It was suspended following coup of March 1982, and restored in November 1986. Since then, it has been amended many times.

Executive Authority

The president is the head of state, but holds a largely ceremonial post; real executive authority is vested in the prime minister, who is the head of government. The president is elected by the parliament every five years.

The president's powers become critical if the parliament is dissolved and a caretaker government takes over. Under the 13th Amendment, which the parliament passed in March 1996, a caretaker government assumes power temporarily to oversee general elections after dissolution of the parliament. In the caretaker government, the president has control over the Ministry of Defense, the authority to declare a state of emergency, and the power to dismiss the chief advisor and other members of the caretaker government. Once elections have been held and a new government and parliament are in place, the president's powers and position revert to their habitually ceremonial role.

The prime minister, appointed by the president, must be a member of parliament, or MP, who the president believes commands the confidence of the majority of other MPs. Following legislative elections, the president typically appoints the leader of the party that wins the most seats prime minister.

The cabinet is composed of ministers selected by the prime minister and formally appointed by the president. Ninety percent of the ministers must be MPs. The remaining 10 percent may be non-MP experts or "technocrats." According to the constitution, the president can dissolve parliament upon the written request of the prime minister.

Legislative Authority

The legislature is a unicameral National Parliament or Jatiya Sangsad and is constituted as a 300-seat body. The members of parliament are elected by popular vote from single territorial constituencies; members serve five-year terms

Judicial Authority

Bangladesh's judiciary is a civil court system based on the British model; the highest court of appeal is the Appellate Court of the Supreme Court.

Administration

At the local government level, the country is divided into divisions, districts, sub-districts, unions and villages. Local officials are elected at the union level. Members of the civil service run all larger administrative units.

Government Structure

Names:

conventional long form:

People's Republic of Bangladesh

conventional short form:

Bangladesh

local long form:

Gana Prajatantri Banladesh

local short form:

Banladesh

former:

East Pakistan, Bengal, Vanga

Type:

parliamentary democracy

Executive Branch:

Chief of State:

President Abdul Hamid (since April 2013); elected by the National Parliament in 2013 after a period of holding the role of "acting president" in the aftermath of the death of President Rahman. The president is elected by the "Jatiya Sangsad" (National Assembly or parliament) for a five-year term; next election yet to be determined. See "Note" below.

Note on chief of state:

On March 20, 2013, President Mohammed Zillur Rahman of Bangladesh died in a Singapore hospital where he was undergoing treatment for an respiratory infection. Rahman, a veteran politician and member of the ruling Awami League, became Bangladesh's 19th president in 2009. His election -- an internal matter in the form of a parliamentary vote -- was not a matter of contestation, given the success of the Awami league in parliamentary elections in 2008. It should be noted that Parliamentary Speaker Abdul Hamid was serving as acting president while Rahman

was hospitalized in Singapore. With the nation's attention on the president's death and the period of national mourning, it was to be seen who would succeed Rahman as the new president of Bangladesh. To that end, Hamid was elected by the parliament in April 2013.

Head of government:

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (re-elected most recently in 2014 as discussed in "Election Primer" below); the head of government is the head of the party controlling the most seats in parliament.

Note on head of government:

Following 2014 parliamentary elections, Sheikh Hasina was returned to power as prime minister after her Awami Party won victory in a boycotted election. See "Election Primer" below for details.

Cabinet:

Selected by the prime minister; formally appointed by the president

Legislative Branch:

Unicameral "Jatiya Sangsad" (National Assembly):

350 seats including 50 reserved for women; members directly elected in single territorial constituencies by simple majority vote; members serve 5-year term

Primer on 2014 parliamentary elections:

Jan. 5, 2014 --

Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh were set to be held on Jan. 5, 2014. At stake was the composition of the unicameral "Jatiya Sangsad" (National Assembly). Members of that body are elected by popular vote from single territorial constituencies; members serve five-year terms. In the previous elections held in December 2008, Sheikh Hasina was returned to power as prime minister after her Awami Party won a landslide victory over the Bangladesh National Party, led by Khaleda Zia.

Background:

In late 2013, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League (AL) announced that elections would be held in early 2014. But those plans hit a snag when one of its key allies -- the Jatiya Party -- said it would boycott those elections. The Jatiya Party was the third largest party in parliament after the ruling Awami League and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia.

H.M. Ershad, the chairman of Jatiya Party, said in a news conference that "there exists no proper

environment for polls." As such, he declared, "We'll not participate in the upcoming elections."

Already, the opposition-led alliance, which included the BNP and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party, had indicated it would not participate in the forthcoming polls. With the announcement from the Jatiya Party, the legitimacy of the 2014 elections was being called into question. Despite the threats about a boycott, the Bangladesh Election Commission announced that the country's next parliamentary election would be held on Jan. 5, 2014. It was to be seen if there would be a delay to give time for a political resolution to be reached on the formation of the caretaker cabinet to oversee the election.

At issue was the call for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government to do as she had previously done -- resign from office and institute a caretaker administration to oversee the country and the elections until a new government could be elected. But in late 2013, the prime minister and her government were remaining at their posts -- presumably until election day. This decision raised the ire of many Bangladeshis and political tensions were on the rise.

The political tensions were reflected in street clashes between activists for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling AL and opposition protesters; the violence left several people dead and dozens more injured.

With less than a week to go until election day, Khaleda Zia, the leader of the largest opposition party -- the Bangladesh Nationalist Party -- was placed under house arrest. This move appeared to be linked with the ongoing dispute over the elections. For her part, Zia and her party called for a nationwide 48-hour strike starting the day before the elections, as well as a "complete boycott" of those polls.

The elections:

Violence and bloodshed marred Bangladesh's 2014 parliamentary elections. Opposition activists became embroiled in violent clashes with police during Bangladesh's elections, which were being boycotted by the opposition. Dozens of people died in the week leading up to the voting, while at least 20 people were killed on election day itself on Jan. 5, 2014.

In the northern Rangpur district, protesters tried to take control of a polling station; police responded by opening fire and killing at least two people. In the Nilphamari district, confrontations with security forces likewise led to deaths as police opened fire on protesters. In the opposition stronghold of Bogra, thousands of protesters attacked polling stations and the personnel working at these units with Molotov cocktails. Police had a hardline response. Likewise in the northern area of Parbatipur, police said they were forced to open fire after thousands of protesters attacked them with guns and small bombs. In addition to the fighting, as many as 100 polling stations were burned to the ground.

Given this widespread climate of violence, voter turnout was reported to be low; official estimates registered a dismal 20 percent turnout rate. To no one's surprise, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League (AL) -- which was assured of victory thanks to the opposition boycott -- was able to claim victory. Early estimates suggested that the AL had now secured a two-thirds majority in parliament thanks to the lack of competition in these polls, which could certainly call into question their essential credibility.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wasted no time in claiming victory saying, "The people have cast their votes spontaneously, upheld the value of democracy and dumped terrorism. We will form our government," she told a news conference. For its part, the opposition characterized the vote as a "scandalous farce."

Judicial Branch:

Supreme Court; Chief Justices and other judges appointed by the president

Constitution:

Nov. 4, 1972, effective Dec. 16, 1972; suspended following coup of March 1982; restored November 1986; amended many times

Legal System:

Based on English common law

Administrative Divisions:

Seven (7) divisions: Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet

Political Parties and Leaders:

Awami League or AL [Sheikh HASINA]

Bangladesh Nationalist Front or BNF [Abdul Kalam AZADI]

Bangladesh Nationalist Party or BNP [Khaleda ZIA]

Bangladesh Tariqat Federation or BTF [Syed Nozibul Bashar MAIZBHANDARI]

Jatiya Party or JP (Ershad faction) [Hussain Mohammad ERSHAD]

Jatiya Party or JP (Manju faction) [Anwar Hossain MANJU]

Liberal Democratic Party or LDP [Oli AHMED]

National Socialist Party or JSD [KHALEQUZZAMAN]

Workers Party or WP [Rashed Khan MENON]

Suffrage:

18 years of age; universal

Principal Government Officials

Cabinet and Leadership of Bangladesh

Pres.

Abdul HAMID

Prime Min.

Sheikh HASINA

Min. of Agriculture

Matia CHOWDHURY

Min. of Civil Aviation & Tourism

Rashed Khan MENON

Min. of Commerce

Tofail AHMED

Min. of Cultural Affairs

Asaduzzaman NOOR

Min. of Defense

Sheikh HASINA

Min. of Disaster Management & Relief

Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury MAYA

Min. of Education

Nurul Islam NAHID

Min. of Environment & Forest

Anwar Hossain MONJU

Min. of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment

Nurul ISLAM

Min. of Finance

Abu Maal Abdul MUHITH

Min. of Fisheries & Livestock

Sayedul HAQUE

Min. of Food

Qamrul ISLAM

Min. of Foreign Affairs

A. H. Mahmood ALI

Min. of Health & Family Planning

Mohammad NASIM

Min. of Home Affairs

Asaduzzaman Khan KAMAL

Min. of Housing & Public Works

Mosharraf HOSSAIN

Min. of Industries

Amir Hossain AMU

Min. of Information

Hasanul Haq INU

Min. of Information & Communication Technology

Min. of Labor & Employment

Mujibul Haque CHUNNU

Min. of Land

Shamsur Rahman SHARIF

Min. of Law

Anisul HAQUE

Min of Liberation War

AKM Mojammel HAQUE

Min. of Local Govt., Rural Development, & Cooperatives

Khandker Mosharraf HOSSAIN

Min. of Planning

AHM Mostafa KAMAL

Min. of Posts & Telecommunications

Min. of Power, Energy, & Mineral Resources

Sheikh HASINA

Min. of Primary & Mass Education

Mustafizur Rahman FIZAR

Min. of Public Admin.

Syed Ashraful ISLAM

Min. of Railways

Mujibul HUQ

Min. of Religious Affairs

Motiur RAHMAN

Min. of Road Transport & Bridges

Obaidul QUADER
Min. of Rural Development & Cooperatives
Moshiur Rahman RANGA
Min. of Science & Technology
Yeafesh OSMAN
Min. of Shipping
Shahjahan KHAN
Min. of Social Welfare
Syed Mohsin ALI
Min. of Textiles & Jute
Emajuddin PRAMANIK
Min. of Water Resources
Anisul Islam MAHMUD
Governor, Bangladesh Bank
Atiur RAHMAN
Ambassador to the US
Mohammad ZIAUDDIN
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York
Masud Bin MOMEN

- as of 2016

Leader Biography

Leader Biography

Editor's Note:

Head of Government

Hasina's Awami League wins 2014 election in Bangladesh --

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H.M. Ershad, the chairman of Jatiya Party, said in a news conference that "there exists no proper environment for polls." As such, he declared, "We'll not participate in the upcoming elections."

Already, the opposition-led alliance, which included the BNP and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party, had indicated it would not participate in the forthcoming polls. With the announcement from the Jatiya Party, the legitimacy of the 2014 elections was being called into question. Despite the threats about a boycott, the Bangladesh Election Commission announced that the country's next parliamentary election would be held on Jan. 5, 2014. It was to be seen if there would be a delay to give time for a political resolution to be reached on the formation of the caretaker cabinet to oversee the election.

At issue was the call for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government to do as she had previously done -- resign from office and institute a caretaker administration to oversee the country and the elections until a new government could be elected. But in late 2013, the prime minister and her government were remaining at their posts -- presumably until election day. This decision

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Given this widespread climate of violence, voter turnout was reported to be low; official estimates registered a dismal 20 percent turnout rate. To no one's surprise, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's

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Nevertheless, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina wasted no time in claiming victory saying, "The people have cast their votes spontaneously, upheld the value of democracy and dumped terrorism. We will form our government," she told a news conference. For its part, the opposition characterized the vote as a "scandalous farce."

Note:

Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Sheik Mujibur Rahman, the leader of Bangladesh's 1971 struggle for independence against Pakistan, who was assassinated in a military coup four years later. Sheikh Hasina was toppled from office in 2001 and faced serious legal charges. She, like her rival Zia, was ultimately released to contest elections. She became prime minister, given her party's parliamentary dominance in recent times, and the opposition boycott in 2014. Hasina's political prospects could be dampened by the prevailing charges of murder, extortion and corruption that have not been fully resolved.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

Bangladesh pursues a moderate foreign policy that places heavy reliance on multinational diplomacy, especially at the United Nations. Bangladesh was admitted to the United Nations (U.N.) in 1974 and was elected to a Security Council term in 1978. Then Foreign Minister Choudhury served as president of the 41st U.N. General Assembly in 1986. The government has participated in numerous international conferences, especially those dealing with population, food, development and women's issues.

In 1982 and 1983, Bangladesh played a constructive role as chairman of the "Group of 77," an informal association encompassing most of the world's developing nations. In 1983, Bangladesh hosted the foreign ministers meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). It has taken a leading role in the "Group of 48" developing countries.

Since 1975, Bangladesh has sought close relations with other Islamic states and a prominent role among moderate members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The government also pursued the expansion of cooperation among the nations of South Asia. Bangladesh brought the initiative of former President Ziaur Rahman through its earliest, most tentative stages to the formal inauguration of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation at a summit of South Asian leaders in Dhaka in December 1985. Bangladesh served as the chairman of SAARC and participated in a wide range of SAARC regional activities.

In recent years, Bangladesh has played a significant role in international peacekeeping activities. Several thousand Bangladeshi military personnel are deployed overseas on peacekeeping operations. Under U.N. auspices, Bangladeshi troops have been deployed in Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Kuwait and Bosnia. Bangladesh also responded quickly to former United States (U.S.) President Bill Clinton's 1994 request for troops and police to be part of the multinational force in Haiti, providing the largest non-U.S. contingent.

Regional Relations

Relations with India

All but a small portion of Bangladesh's border is with India, which surrounds the country on the west, east and north. India is Bangladesh's most important neighbor. Geographic, cultural, historic and commercial ties are strong, and both countries recognize the importance of good relations. India openly supported Bangladeshi nationalists during the struggle for freedom and both during and after this struggle for independence, India assisted refugees from East Pakistan, intervened militarily to help bring about the independence of Bangladesh, and furnished relief and reconstruction aid.

Bangladesh's relations with India have typically been tied to the person in power. Soon after the

independence, with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in power, the two countries enjoyed extremely warm and friendly relations, with Mujibur reminding his people time and again about the great assistance rendered by India in Bangladesh's struggle for independence. After his assassination in 1975, the relations cooled and entered into a prolonged period of decline.

Indo-Bangladesh relations have not been without strains. Typically, the Indo-Bangla relations imitate the fortunes of the Awami League, also known as the AL. If the AL gains in popularity, the bilateral relations are on a high, but if the party is in wilderness, as it had been for over a decade after the assassination of Mujib, the bilateral relations are at an ebb. There have been a few long standing disputes between the two neighbors. One deals with the improperly delineated international border between the two. The other problems include sharing of water of the several mighty rivers that flow from India into Bangladesh, presence of anti-India militants in Bangladesh and an agreement between Bangladesh and the U.S. on defense cooperation.

Due to large rivers and swampy, deep forests, the international border has never been properly marked and there are several pieces of noncontiguous territories. One such major enclave of Bangladesh inside India was Tinbigha on the eastern border. After nearly 30 years of negotiations, India finally agreed to transfer the adjacent land to Bangladesh, giving it direct access to Tinbigha. Similar disputes over New Moore Island, a newly emerging island in the Bay of Bengal and another enclave on the western border of Bangladesh continue to mar the rather friendly bilateral relations.

Yet another significant dispute is over sharing of river waters. The two countries share 54 transboundary rivers. The two mighty rivers, Ganga and Brahmaputra, which flow from India into Bangladesh, are at the center of this dispute. Though the two countries had signed a Ganga water sharing agreement, it lapsed in 1988 and for nearly eight years, there was no agreement, leading to heightened tensions in bilateral relationship, especially in the summers when the water level in the rivers recede. Bangladesh has also been strongly opposed to some flood control measures taken by India on the rivers in its own territory, saying these barrages and mini-dams lead to flooding downstream in Bangladesh. As of April 2004, after seven years, the countries were negotiating a similar treaty for the Teesta River.

Another major irritant in the bilateral relationship is the large-scale illegal migration from Bangladesh into India. The infiltration that began during the Bangla battle for independence over 30 years ago never really ceased, and to this day several hundred Bangladeshis are believed to cross over into India each day. Their task is made easier by the extremely porous border, with forests, rivers, marshes, rendering it impossible to be policed properly. The Indian government estimates that there are nearly 12 million Bangladeshis residing illegally just in West Bengal state of India, constituting over 15 percent of the population of the state.

Yet another state, Assam that borders Bangladesh on the north is also facing large-scale migration.

Here the migration has been partly due to the struggle by the tribes living in the area. Several hundred thousand Chakmas have fled into Assam to escape from the civil war, putting a great strain on the Assamese economy. Over 20 years ago, Assamese students launched a massive agitation against this migration, which they say has deprived the local youth of jobs and totally upset the local economy due to the burden of millions of migrants. The agitation continued for several years before the federal government agreed to fence the border with Bangladesh, a process that is still continuing. Migration continues unabated, adding to strains in bilateral relations. Meanwhile, Indian separatists in the Bodo region of Assam have also escaped into Bangladesh, often attacking locals in the border regions.

India has also often expressed its displeasure with the ease with which extremist organizations use Bangladesh territory to launch attacks against India. Almost all the insurgency and separatist groups operating in northeast Indian states of Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram use Bangladesh as their base. India has often urged the Bangladesh government to prevent the use of its soil for such activities, but the insurgents continue to flee with ease into Bangladesh after carrying out attacks in India. Violent attacks and killings by extremist separatists in Tripura increased in 2002 and 2003. In late 2002, the Bangladeshi government admitted that militants had been identified in the Tripura area on its border.

On a much more serious note, India has complained that Bangladesh is also allowing the Pakistani intelligence agency, the ISI, to use its territory for anti-India operations. Indian intelligence agencies have long complained that ISI has been arming and training the insurgency groups operating in northeast India. These training camps are located in Bangladesh, the Indian officials complain.

Yet another thorn in the bilateral ties was the proposed defense agreement between the United States and Bangladesh. Called Status of Forces Agreement, or SOFA, the pact would have allowed the U.S. troops to enter Bangladesh "in times of emergency." However, the agreement was being seen as a major threat by India, which believed that it would lead to establishment of a U.S. military base right at its doorstep in Bangladesh.

Relations between the two countries improved significantly since the advent of the Awami League government in 1996.

The two sides sought to increase their commercial ties. Besides signing the river water sharing agreement, India has also increased its annual credit to Bangladesh. India has also agreed to allow tax-free imports of Bangladeshi products on a unilateral basis. Bangladesh on the other hand has agreed to provide transshipment facilities for transportation of goods to northeastern Indian states.

The most important area of economic interdependence between the two countries could come from Bangladesh's natural gas reserves, for which India, with its huge energy deficiency, is the obvious market. The two countries are now working out modalities of sale and transport of gas from Bangladesh into India. Another option for the two is to set up gas-fired power plants in

Bangladesh and export electricity to India. India has already offered collaboration between its National Thermal Power Corporation and the Bangladesh Power Development Board for setting up a power plant. This aspect of the relationship, though very recent, is set to boom in a very short while.

Indo-Bangladesh relations received a major boost in June 1999 when Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Bangladesh on a two-day trip, the first visit by an Indian prime minister to the country for over a decade. The visit was marked by the beginning of a regular Calcutta-Dhaka bus service, allowing people from either side an alternative mode of transport. The two sides have agreed to expand the road and rail links across the border in order to facilitate movement of people and goods across the border. India has requested from Bangladesh permission to use its territory as a transit point for linking northeastern parts of the country with the mainland. India has sought eight points of passage through Bangladesh, both by road and rail, in order to improve flow of goods to the remote parts, which are currently linked by air and by a single road passing through a narrow "chicken-neck" in northern Bengal. The right of passage through Bangladesh will drastically curtail the time of travel between points in the region.

During the visit, Vajpayee and Sheikh Hasina discussed ways to increase economic cooperation. Under one agreement, New Delhi agreed to provide Dhaka a credit of Rs\$2 billion (\$46.5 million), to be disbursed in 2002. Vajpayee also announced that India had accepted, in principle, a request by Bangladesh for duty-free access to select export goods on a nonreciprocal basis. This, Bangladesh hoped, would help in offsetting the current imbalance in trade. While Indian exports to Bangladesh amount to Rs\$25 billion (\$500 million), the Bangladeshi exports to India are only about \$50 million.

The results of the elections in Bangladesh in October 2001 caused as much of surprise within the country as in neighboring India, which always had a rather tenuous relationship with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party of Khaleda Zia. The BNP has viewed India with suspicion and the ties between the two countries threatened to deteriorate especially in view of the reported attacks on the Hindu minority in Bangladesh following the victory of the BNP-led coalition in the elections. Though some right-wing parties in India were quick to criticize the alleged attacks in Bangladesh, the two governments kept their cool and headed off a potential crisis.

With a couple of days of the installation of the Zia government in Dhaka, Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee dispatched his special emissary Brajesh Mishra to Dhaka for a meeting with Zia. In the meeting the two sides agreed to work together to improve bilateral relations. Mishra also extended an invitation from Vajpayee to Zia to visit India as soon as possible. While neither side may be willing to take steps that could lead to a deterioration in bilateral relations, the path ahead is full of pitfalls. The two countries witnessed a rare heightening of tension along the border, especially in the parts that have not been properly demarcated so far. In March 2001, a bout of firing across the border led to nearly 20 deaths and almost caused a crisis in bilateral relations.

However, the two governments moved quickly to diffuse the tension along the border and worked together to resolve the issue.

As the new government settled in, it declared it had two issues that needed to be dealt with as a priority. The first major issue was the Ganges water sharing treaty with India that was signed by the previous government. Khaleda Zia told Mishra that her party was not happy with the arrangement and that the Bangladeshi government would like to revise the treaty. She also expressed concern over the rising trade deficit of Bangladesh. India is Bangladesh's largest trading partner and also one of the largest export markets for Bangladeshi goods. Though the trade balance between the two neighbors has generally been in India's favor, it rose sharply in 2001 to cross the billion dollar mark for the first time. Bangladeshi exporters blame tariff and no-tariff barriers imposed by India for this large deficit and urged the government to raise the issue with India. Another thorny issue which needs to be sorted out by the governments soon is the issue of natural gas exports to India. Though the two sides have been negotiating for several years no agreement has yet been reached. This is partially due to resistance from quarters within Bangladesh which feel that the country should first provide for its own energy needs before exporting it.

Recently, the major issue emerging between Bangladesh and India centered on border issues. The two countries are set to meet in an effort to sort out the increasing incidences of violence, most especially with regard to separatist groups from India fleeing into Bangladesh and the casualties being suffered by Bangladeshi civilians on the border.

Bangladesh and Pakistan

Despite the strained relations of the early 1970s, Bangladesh and Pakistan have been able to build up a rather warm and friendly relationship. The two countries signed an agreement of mutual recognition in 1974, almost two years after the liberation of Bangladesh. This was preceded by an agreement for repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war and several other individuals who were caught on the wrong sides of border in the 1971 conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees also organized a massive airlift, involving nearly 250,000 Pakistanis and Bangladeshis trapped on both sides.

Though the bilateral relations had been established for a long while, they stayed at fairly low key level due to Bangladesh's friendship with India and the Soviet Union, which meant that the country was outside the orbit of the United States and its cold war ally Pakistan. During this period, Bangladesh's military, economic and political relations were dominated by its relationship with the Soviets. However, in the late 1980s with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, the U.S. became increasingly interested in Bangladesh and the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh also began to improve. This was also partly due to the return of democracy in Pakistan after the death of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq in the late 1980s.

A turning point between the bilateral relations was reached in 1989 when Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Dhaka in 1989, the first ever visit to Bangladesh by a Pakistan head of government. The improvement in bilateral relations continued with the visits by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh visiting Pakistan in 1992 and 1995. It was in this period that the two countries also began defense cooperation, with Pakistan supplying some military equipment to Bangladesh.

However significant issues dating from the liberation of Bangladesh still remain to be sorted out. These include the division of assets between the two countries from the pre-liberation era and also the status of over 250,000 non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh who want to go to Pakistan.

Despite the relatively high level of political contacts, the commercial and cultural contacts between the two countries remain at a rather low level.

Other Significant Relations

Bangladesh-United States (U.S.) Relations

For the initial decade after the liberation, Bangladesh rarely figured on the U.S. agenda, largely due to its close ties with India and the Soviet Union. However, the country's strategic importance for the United States has been increasing over the last few years, which sees Bangladesh ideally placed for the U.S. to be able to counter two Asian powers simultaneously-China and India. The strategic importance has been increasing even more as of late, especially due the loss of crucial U.S. bases in the Philippines, which handicaps the U.S. in the Southeast Asian region, where the U.S. is competing with China for a sphere of influence.

The U.S. turned its attention to Bangladesh in the early 1980s, once relations between the Soviets and Bangladesh were beginning to cool off. The relationship developed rather rapidly, with Bangladeshi heads of state visiting the U.S. on seven occasions between 1980 and 1997. The first to visit Washington, D.C. was President Zia ur Rahman in 1980. His initiative was followed by his successor H.M. Ershad in 1983, 1988 and 1990. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina kept the link alive in 1992 by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and in 1996 and 1997. In 1995, former U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Bangladesh.

The post-Cold War strategic considerations have witnessed a renewed interest by the U.S. in the South Asian region, an area that is being accorded an even greater importance since its nuclearization in 1998. The Status of Force Agreement, or SOFA, was proposed by Bill Richardson in early 1998, and was later reiterated during the visit of the U.S. army chief to Bangladesh.

The Americans are seeking unhindered entry of U.S. troops into Bangladesh during times of emergency. The SOFA would also exempt military personnel from visa or passport formalities, besides providing unrestricted entry of equipment and supplies, without being subject to custom formalities.

The SOFA, as proposed by the U.S., also specifies a particular legal code to be applied in case of damage inflicted to the host nation by U.S. military personnel during an exercise. However, the agreement would not have provided similar facilities to Bangladesh defense personnel sent to the U.S. for training and related purposes.

The proposal has generated great concern in Bangladesh. The pro-liberation forces and the left-leaning parties have criticized the agreement as being a sell-out of national sovereignty. However, the fundamentalist groups have supported the proposed agreement, justifying the military cooperation agreement as an essential security shield in the nuclearized sub-continent to pre-empt any Indian designs.

As an active member of SAARC, Bangladesh can not allow the entry of foreign forces "which may have profound and far reaching consequences" and hence the government has decided to put in abeyance any final decision on the agreement until all the regional and domestic aspects have been sorted out.

The U.S. has also sought to improve relations with Bangladesh through financial aid. In total, the United States has provided more than US\$3.4 billion in food and development assistance to Bangladesh. Food aid under Titles I, II and III of PL-480 (congressional "food-for-peace" legislation) has been designed to help Bangladesh meet minimum food requirements, promote food production, and moderate fluctuation in consumer prices. Other U.S. development assistance emphasizes family planning and health, agricultural development and rural employment.

Relations between Bangladesh and the United States were further strengthened by the participation of 2,300 Bangladesh troops in the 1991 Gulf War coalition, and the 1994 multinational force in Haiti, as well as by the assistance of a U.S. Naval task force after a disastrous March 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh. The relief efforts of U.S. troops are credited with having saved as many as 200,000 lives.

Bangladesh became the first major Muslim country to offer support to the United States in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. The Bangladeshi government was quick to offer facilities to the United States, including military bases, for launching the attacks against the terrorists' network. Though there were anti-American protests on the Dhaka streets before the United States-led coalition began strikes on Afghanistan, the Awami League government continued to stand firmly behind the United States. The change in government after the elections did not affect Bangladeshi commitment to the American cause.

Other Important Bilateral Ties

Bilateral ties with Burma (Myanmar) are good, despite occasional border strains and an influx of more than 270,000 Muslim refugees (known as "Rohingya") from the predominantly Buddhist Burma (Myanmar). As a result of bilateral discussions, and with the cooperation and assistance of the UNHCR, most of the "Rohingya" refugees have now returned to Myanmar. As of mid-1998, about 25,000 refugees remained in camps in southern Bangladesh.

The former Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.) supported India's actions during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War and was among the first to recognize Bangladesh. The U.S.S.R. initially contributed considerable relief and rehabilitation aid to the new nation. After Sheikh Mujib was assassinated in 1975 and replaced by military regimes, however, Soviet-Bangladesh relations cooled.

In 1989, the U.S.S.R. ranked 14th among aid donors to Bangladesh. The Soviets focused on the development of electrical power, natural gas and oil, and maintained active cultural relations with Bangladesh. They financed a showcase project, the Ghorasal thermal power station, the largest such station in Bangladesh. Bangladesh began to open diplomatic relations with the newly independent Central Asian states in 1992.

China traditionally has been more important to Bangladesh than the former U.S.S.R., even though China supported Pakistan in 1971. As Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union and India cooled in the mid-1970s, and as Bangladesh and Pakistan became reconciled, China's relations with Bangladesh grew warmer. An exchange of diplomatic missions in February 1976 followed an accord on recognition in late 1975. Since that time, relations have grown stronger, centering on trade, cultural activities, military and civilian aid, and exchanges of high-level visits, beginning in January 1977 with President Zia's trip to Beijing. The largest and most visible symbol of bilateral amity is the Bangladesh-China "Friendship Bridge" completed in 1989 near Dhaka.

Bangladesh has maintained friendly relations with Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, and strongly opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Bangladesh and Nepal recently agreed to facilitate land transit between the two countries.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for list of research sources.

National Security

External Threats

Bangladesh faces no immediate security threats from foreign nations. Likewise, it enjoys generally warm relations with its neighbors, as well as countries outside the region. Originally the eastern wing of Pakistan, Bangladesh fought a war of independence, which it achieved in 1971, with the assistance of India.

Despite the intensity of the conflict, Bangladesh and Pakistan maintain equitable relations today. The division of pre-war assets and the status of approximately 250,000 non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh who seek re-settlement in Pakistan are lingering issues. The perception that India has a tendency to meddle in Bangladesh's internal affairs and continued disagreements over the security of their shared border and minor territorial disputes have precipitated occasional tension between the two nations.

The influx of approximately 270,000 Burmese Muslim refugees in Bangladesh placed a strain on Bangladesh's limited resources. By 2003 all but 20,000 had returned to Burma. To date, there are some 60,000 internally displaced persons because of religious persecution or land conditions in Bangladesh.

Crime

The United States (U.S.) Department of State reports that crime is a growing challenge to public safety in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka and the Chittagong region. In addition to the prevalence of petty crime, kidnappings for ransom also occur. It is also not uncommon for rallies to become violent, or for grenade attacks to be launched at political and other rallies killing some in the crowds. Hard core gang activity is now prevalent as well. Bangladesh is reportedly a transit point for narcotics from other countries.

Insurgencies

In addition to an insurgent movement along its southeastern border, political violence in general is endemic to Bangladesh. In 1986 tension between the indigenous inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region of Bangladesh and settlers from other parts of the country sparked a decades-long guerrilla war between the Shanti Bahini rebel group and Bangladesh's army, killing thousands on both sides. Located in the southeastern corner of Bangladesh, bordering India to the north and Burma to the east, the area is home to a multitude of ethnic groups. Although a peace accord was signed in 1997, hostilities persist. India facilitated the return of refugees displaced by the conflict. Bangladesh's army maintains a strong presence in the region. Its central government has

expressed concern over the increase in the cultivation of illegal drugs there. Kidnapping and extortion are also rampant. The rebels insist that the government has not met its treaty obligations. There are also widespread allegations that soldiers have perpetuated human rights abuses against the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

Outside of the CHT conflict, rampant political violence has plagued Bangladesh since it attained its independence in 1971. The first two leaders of the fledgling nation were assassinated, including the husband of Khaleda Zia, the former prime minister. Controversy and violence have plagued all subsequent transitions in government, as well.

The U.S. Department of State reports that public demonstrations, marches and labor strikes are common forms of political expression in Bangladesh. Demonstrations are in fact a weekly occurrence in Dhaka, generally taking place on Fridays. In recent years, political opposition groups have organized numerous general strikes, called *hartals*, precipitating the virtual shutdown of transportation and commerce, and sometimes attacks on individuals who do not observe them. Clashes between rival political factions during such strikes have resulted in injuries and even fatalities. Opposition groups may be the culprits behind several bombings that took place since 2002 (see section on terrorism below).

Terrorism

The emergence of an indigenous Sunni-based extremist movement, accusations that foreign militant organizations have established a presence there, and a series of recent bombings underscore the threat of terrorism emanating from Bangladesh. In *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002*, the U.S. State Department reports the existence of significant indigenous terrorist organization there, known as Hakrat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami / Bangladesh (HUJI-B). The group's stated purpose is to establish orthodox Islamic rule in Bangladesh. It is believed to have several thousand members and at least six training camps, located throughout the country. HUJI-B has ties to other militant groups in Pakistan, from which it derives some funding. Domestic Madrassas provide another source. HUJI-B allegedly orchestrated the 2000 stabbing of a Bangladeshi journalist for making a documentary that depicted the plight of Hindus in Bangladesh. The group is also suspected in an assassination attempt on Bangladesh's prime minister that occurred that same year.

There are allegations that foreign terrorist organizations have also established a presence in Bangladesh. Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) was created in the 1980s to protect the interests of Burmese Muslims. It developed a more military character in the 1990s and reportedly uses Bangladesh as a staging ground for cross-border attacks in Burma. The United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) is a militant group that seeks the independence of the northeastern Indian state of Assam. The group also reportedly has bases in Bangladesh. Though the government denies it, there have also been allegations that al-Qaida has established a presence in Bangladesh. If there are terrorist groups active here, given its prime location and size, a crisis here could have severe

consequences for its region's stability. This is especially critical if another refugee movement occurs.

The identities of those who perpetuated several bombings in 2002 remain a mystery, as do their motivations. In December bombs exploded at four crowded movie theaters in a town just north of Dhaka, killing and injuring many. A similar attack occurred in September of that same year, when bombs exploded in a movie theater and at a circus in another town outside of Dhaka. No one has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The U.S. Department of State has indicated that there is no evidence to link the attacks to anti-American sentiment. No Americans were killed in the blasts and they took place far from the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy. Likewise, there is little to support that Islamic fundamentalists might have been perpetuated the attacks. The victims were predominately, if not entirely, Muslim. It seems at least possible that the attacks stemmed from the same political discord that has precipitated other acts of violence in Bangladesh.

Note: Since 2002, further attacks have taken place. In August 2003, two politicians from the Awami League were killed within a short period of a week. By mid-2004, a bomb had exploded in the north-eastern part of the country at a Muslim shrine. Two people were killed while about 50 people were injured -- including the High Commissioner from the United Kingdom. In August 2004, leaders of the main opposition party, the Awami League, were targeted at a rally in Dhaka by multiple bombs. In January 2005, a grenade attack at a rally killed a prominent member of the opposition Awami League. The Awami League blamed the government for the assassination, but government leaders denied involvement and called for an investigation. Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan announced Bangladesh was seeking help from Interpol, Scotland Yard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in finding the assassins. Later in 2005, approximately 500 bombs detonated within the space of one hour in almost every one of Bangladesh's 64 districts, and yielding about 100 casualties. Later bombings appeared to have been directed at courts and judges. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, which has demanded the institution of Islamic Shari'ah law in Bangladesh, has been linked with hundreds such attacks across the country.

See "Political Conditions" for details.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Bangladesh Defense Force: Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force

Eligible age to enter service:

16-19 years of age for voluntary military service

Mandatory Service Terms:

No conscription

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 30,486,086

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:

male: 1,606,963

female: 1,689,442

Military Expenditures, percent of GDP:

1.5%

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated and poorest countries in the world. Its predominantly agricultural economy, with over 60 percent of the population employed in the sector, is vulnerable to natural disasters such as flooding and cyclones. Within manufacturing, the textile and garment industry is the most dynamic and fastest growing sector.

In recent years, Bangladesh has made significant progress in improving macroeconomic performance, helped by the IMF PRGF (Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility) program. The economy has been remarkably resilient against frequent natural disasters, as the government has made great efforts to maintain macroeconomic stability and the fiscal position has strengthened with improved revenue performance. On the political front, Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as prime minister in January 2009 following general elections in December 2008. Thus, the political environment settled down with the military-backed caretaker government leaving office after being in control for two years.

In the face of the global economic crisis, Bangladesh's economy held up remarkably well as financial contagion was contained by low levels of financial integration. Growth decelerated only modestly in 2009, reflecting the relatively low overall trade openness as well as the large share of basic textiles and garments in total exports which fared relatively well. In February 2011, angry investors took to the streets in Bangladesh after the country's stock exchange plunged, following a series of collapses that forced halts in trading several times in January. Share prices had nearly doubled in 2010, leading to a stream of new investors to enter the markets, according to Reuters, but have since plummeted after the market regulator and the central bank took steps to calm trading. In recent times, Bangladesh has seen demand for power sharply outstrip supply. This had led to frequent cuts and economic losses estimated at nearly \$1 billion a year. In early January 2011, Bangladeshi company Summit Power SMPL.DH said a joint venture with General Electric had signed financing deals for new power plants that are expected to generate 676 megawatts of electricity. In the spring of 2012, the IMF approved a three-year, US\$987 million arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility. In June 2012, a four-day shutdown at more than 300 Bangladeshi clothes factories ended after workers called off violent protests for a 50 percent wage increase to meet rising food and rent prices. The factories represent about 8 percent of the country's garments manufacturing base, which has seen demand suffer as a result of the global economic downturn and the euro zone crisis. Exports from Bangladesh fell 7.13 percent to \$1.89 billion in April 2012 compared to the previous year, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

April was the second straight month of declining exports. In March 2012, exports fell 7.23 percent to \$1.98 billion. Garment products account for nearly 80 percent of Bangladesh's export earnings, raking in more than \$18 billion in the 2010/2011 financial year.

In late 2012 and 2013, Bangladesh's garment industry garnered negative attention after a Tazreen factory fire in November 2012 killed 112 people and a building collapse in April 2013 killed 1,129 more. By June 2013, the country was in danger of having its trade benefits cut off - or at least reduced - by the United States in what would be considered a largely symbolic reaction to the garment sector tragedies. But some argued that if the goal was to really improve labor conditions that the international community should instead aim to help monitor Bangladeshi factors. U.S. retailers were also being urged to sign an agreement already adopted by European retailers to improve safety in Bangladesh's garment industry. By July 2013, Bangladesh had approved a law to improve worker rights, including the ability to form trade unions. The move was believed to have been in response to pressure from the European Union, which threatened punitive action if Bangladesh did not improve worker safety standards. Still, by September 2013, about 50,000 garment industry workers held a massive protest in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka. They were demanding a boost of more than 1-1/2 times the minimum wage. Nazma Akter, president of the United Garments Workers' Federation, was quoted by Reuters as saying at the protest: "Our backs are against the wall, so we don't have any alternative unless we raise our voice strongly. We will not hesitate to do anything to realize our demand." Indeed, Bangladesh's \$20-billion garment export industry employed about 4 million workers who earned approximately \$38 a month, an estimated 50 percent of what Cambodian factory workers make. They were asking for a raise to about \$103 a month. Factory owners, not surprisingly, were resisting because they argued that Westerners were used to buying inexpensive clothing.

Garment exports, the backbone of Bangladesh's industrial sector and 80 percent of total exports, surpassed \$21 billion in 2013, 18 percent of GDP, and hit a record \$30 billion in June 2014 thanks to stronger garment sales. The sector has remained resilient in recent years amidst the series of factory accidents that killed more than 1,200 workers and crippling strikes that shut down virtually all economic activity. Steady garment export growth combined with remittances from overseas Bangladeshis, which totaled almost \$15 billion and 13 percent of GDP in 2013, remain the largest contributors to Bangladesh's current account surplus and record foreign exchange holdings. In 2013, the government raised the minimum wage for garment workers by 77 percent, or about \$68, and amended the labor law to boost workers' rights.

By July 2014, the country's commerce ministry estimated that Bangladesh's exports in the 2014-15 financial year that started in July were expected to climb 10 percent to \$33.0 billion. Also in July 2014, the U.S. Trade Representative's office said that Bangladesh needed to do more to improve factory conditions and workers' rights before the U.S. would restore trade benefits.

Garment exports surpassed \$18 billion in 2014. Steady garment export growth combined with remittances from overseas Bangladeshis - which totaled \$14 billion and 8 percent of GDP in 2014 -

are the largest contributors to Bangladesh's current account surplus and rising foreign exchange holdings.

In May 2015, Standard & Poor's reaffirmed Bangladesh's BB-/B foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings, saying the stable outlook balanced healthy growth prospects and an improving external profile against fiscal weaknesses and development needs. Then in late June 2015, the Asian Development Bank and the government of Bangladesh signed agreements for \$505 million in loans to further improve the country's railways in an effort to help the national economy and boost subregional trade.

In early July 2015, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) upgraded its rating for Bangladesh, in a move was expected to make it easier for local entrepreneurs and banks to secure credit. The upgrade placed Bangladesh on a higher rating than neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar and Mongolia in the OECD country classification, though still behind India, according to Reuters. It also meant that the OECD now categorized Bangladesh as a new frontier market, rather than a nation that is highly dependent on development aid. Meanwhile in late July 2015, Bangladesh's central bank set up \$500 million in funding for the country's manufacturers in an effort to stimulate economic growth. The money was to be split between two funds, one aimed at manufacturing in general, the second at textiles, including export-oriented ready-made garment factories.

Economic Performance

Bangladesh's economic performance has been strong in recent years with real GDP averaging around 6 percent between 2003 and 2008. Real GDP growth slowed modestly in 2009 before picking back up again from 2010 to 2012.

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 5.7 percent

Inflation was measured at: 7.1 percent

The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -3.3 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: Reuters and International Monetary Fund

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	9,158.29	10,552.04	11,989.23	13,509.20	16,173.77
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	14.832	15.218	13.620	12.678	19.724
Consumption (LCU billions)	6,874.05	7,859.80	8,837.85	9,671.09	11,725.90
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	466.839	531.753	613.385	702.090	851.262
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	2,511.29	2,982.25	3,403.70	3,875.14	4,765.12
Exports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	1,824.52	2,127.46	2,342.44	2,669.21	3,103.97
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	2,518.42	2,949.22	3,208.14	3,408.33	4,272.48

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Population, total (million)	152.862	154.695	156.595	158.217	159.857
Population growth (%)	1.149	1.199	1.228	1.036	1.037
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	59,912.13	68,211.90	76,562.03	85,384.02	101,176.50

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	6,054.63	6,481.76	6,923.23	7,378.61	8,310.65
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	6.303	7.055	6.811	6.578	12.632
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	151.261	162.796	173.174	183.086	194.615
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	8.024	7.626	6.375	5.724	6.297

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	1,277.72	1,500.92	1,751.61	1,880.76	2,143.74
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	26.156	17.468	16.702	7.373	13.982
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	10.362	11.246	11.229	10.862	10.276
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	949.019	1,186.64	1,346.26	1,467.34	1,661.99
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	-328.7060	-314.2810	-405.3520	-413.4200	-481.7460
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	-3.5892	-2.9784	-3.3810	-3.0603	-2.9786

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	5,471.02	6,402.26	7,353.70	8,483.70	10,157.03
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	16.913	17.021	14.861	15.366	19.724
Lending Interest Rate (%)	13.250	13.000	13.000	13.000	15.630
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.468	4.786	4.770	4.745	4.331

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/\$US)	69.868	74.465	74.330	73.490	79.936
Trade Balance NIPA (\$US billions)	-9.9315	-11.0356	-11.6467	-10.0574	-14.6179
Trade Balance % of GDP	-7.5767	-7.7877	-7.2207	-5.4712	-7.2247
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves (\$US billions)	9.175	12.754	18.088	22.320	18.808

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Nominal GDP (\$US billions)	131.079	141.705	161.297	183.824	202.333
Exports (\$US billions)	26.114	28.570	31.514	36.321	38.831
Imports (\$US billions)	36.045	39.606	43.161	46.378	53.448

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (TBPD)	103.654	106.926	109.000	115.000	120.559
Petroleum Production (TBPD)	5.064	4.831	4.183	4.103	4.044
Petroleum Net Exports (TBPD)	-98.5900	-102.0952	-104.8165	-110.8969	-116.5147
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	710.185	777.989	807.301	789.791	891.636
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	710.877	780.523	808.960	821.613	898.817
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	0.6927	2.534	1.659	31.822	7.181
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	2,010.62	2,204.62	2,333.07	2,429.75	2,540.89
Coal Production	973.136	1,038.46	1,066.82	1,040.85	1,022.68

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
(1000s st)					
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	-1037.4800	-1166.1585	-1266.2478	-1388.9015	-1518.2043
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	1.744	1.877	1.747	1.348	1.280
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.0658	0.0658	0.1019	0.1363	0.1499

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.2213	0.2283	0.2327	0.2456	0.2574
Petroleum Production (Quads)	0.0108	0.0104	0.0090	0.0090	0.0069
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	-0.2105	-0.2179	-0.2238	-0.2366	-0.2505
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.7244	0.7935	0.8234	0.8056	0.9095
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	0.7244	0.7935	0.8234	0.8501	0.7847
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0445	-0.1248
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0402	0.0441	0.0467	0.0486	0.0508
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0198	0.0220	0.0224	0.0208	0.0184
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	-0.0204	-0.0220	-0.0242	-0.0278	-0.0324
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0174	0.0188	0.0175	0.0135	0.0128
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0007	0.0007	0.0010	0.0014	0.0015

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum-WTI (\$/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub (\$/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian (\$/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	4.945	5.101	5.200	5.486	5.751
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	11.522	12.622	13.098	12.814	14.466
Coal Based (mm mt C)	1.152	1.263	1.337	1.392	1.456
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	17.619	18.986	19.635	19.692	21.673

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	1,547.55	1,485.07	1,931.40	1,908.99	1,940.78
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	1,016.40	1,293.77	1,478.95	1,548.33	1,443.05
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-531.1464	-191.2986	-452.4473	-360.6572	-497.7275
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	166.608	332.633	509.025	793.123	782.327
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	65.969	64.027	64.606	68.868	63.824
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-100.6386	-268.6063	-444.4192	-724.2555	-718.5035
Rice Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (1000 metric tons)	50,633.89	50,497.00	51,500.00	52,231.00	51,786.59
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	50,661.14	50,496.18	51,477.42	52,210.47	50,369.78
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	27.256	-0.8229	-22.5794	-20.5318	-1416.8111
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	6.000	11.000	16.000	32.708	33.956
Coffee Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	-6.0000	-11.0000	-16.0000	-32.7082	-33.9564
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	4,084.40	3,085.20	4,631.96	4,736.81	4,384.18
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	969.926	1,000.63	1,253.03	1,306.59	1,153.93
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-3114.4734	-2084.5759	-3378.9217	-3430.2189	-3230.2577

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Corn Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary (\$/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary (\$/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	1,621.40	1,621.40	1,621.40	1,621.40	1,621.40
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	-1621.3978	-1621.3978	-1621.3978	-1621.3978	-1621.3978
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	10,164.13	10,164.13	10,164.13	10,164.13	10,164.13
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-10164.1322	-10164.1322	-10164.1322	-10164.1322	-10164.1322
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	3,106.66	3,106.66	3,106.66	3,106.66	3,106.66
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	-3106.6582	-3106.6582	-3106.6582	-3106.6582	-3106.6582
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	224.711	224.711	224.711	224.711	224.711
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	-224.7110	-224.7110	-224.7110	-224.7110	-224.7110
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	66.223	66.223	66.223	66.223	66.223
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	-66.2234	-66.2234	-66.2234	-66.2234	-66.2234
Gold Consumption (kg)	566.748	584.364	603.568	644.053	630.757
Gold Production (kg)	284.088	292.919	302.545	322.838	311.568
Gold Exports (kg)	-282.6596	-291.4456	-301.0233	-321.2147	-319.1890

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Silver Consumption (mt)	308.400	308.400	308.400	308.400	308.400
Silver Production (mt)	1,533.53	1,609.08	1,635.09	1,692.11	1,555.09
Silver Exports (mt)	1,225.13	1,300.68	1,326.69	1,383.71	1,246.69

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Copper (\$/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc (\$/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin (\$/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead (\$/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel (\$/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold (\$/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver (\$/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

The economy has seen economic growth since 1996, despite inefficient state-owned enterprises, delays in exploiting natural gas resources, insufficient power supplies, and slow implementation of economic reforms. Bangladesh remains a poor, overpopulated, and inefficiently-governed nation. Although more than half of GDP is generated through the service sector, nearly two-thirds of Bangladeshis are employed in the agriculture sector, with rice as the single-most-important product. Garment exports and remittances from Bangladeshis working overseas, mainly in the Middle East and East Asia, fuel economic growth.

Foreign Investment Assessment

Rampant corruption, a formidable bureaucracy, a lack of infrastructure, and extreme poverty are a few of the significant obstacles that foreign investors face in Bangladesh.

Industries

Cotton textiles, jute, garments, tea processing, paper newsprint, cement, chemical fertilizer, light engineering, sugar

Import Commodities

Machinery and equipment, chemicals, iron and steel, textiles, foodstuffs, petroleum products, cement

Import Partners

India 15.4%, China 11.3%, Singapore 10.8%, Japan 5.9%, Hong Kong 4.5%

Export Commodities

Garments, jute and jute goods, leather, frozen fish and seafood

Export Partners

US 23.9%, Germany 13.6%, UK 9.7%, France 5.9%

Ports and Harbors

Chittagong, Dhaka, Mongla Port, Narayanganj

Telephone System

Totally inadequate for a modern country; Country Code: 880

Internet Users

243,000 in recent years; on the increase

Labor Force

64.02 million; agriculture 63%, industry 11%, services 26% (FY95/96)

Judicial System

Bangladesh's legal system is theoretically based on English common law. In practice, the rule of law is weak in Bangladesh and contracts are not generally enforceable.

Corruption Perception Ranking

As reported by Transparency International, from least to most corrupt, Bangladesh is rated as one

of the most corrupt countries according to this ranking index. See the full listing elsewhere in this Country Review with Bangladesh's specific ranking.

Cultural Considerations

Acceptable behavior and etiquette are strictly defined by gender in Bengali society. Visitors should be prepared to respect Bengali customs in this regard. Traditional Muslims and Hindus will not shake hands with persons of the opposite sex. A Bengali man will not generally introduce his wife to an associate, and a Bengali Muslim male may even become offended if a visiting man asks questions about his wife or daughter. Likewise, a traditional Bengali Muslim or Hindu woman will not say the name of her husband, referring to him as "son of so-and so" or "father of so-and-so." Flirting is offensive in Bangladeshi society.

Country Website (s)

www.bangladeshgov.bd

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5
Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4

Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3

Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6

Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5
France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5

Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5
Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5
India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5

Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9
Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3

Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9
Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5

Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8
Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6

Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5
Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4

Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4
Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8

Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5
United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3

Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Iceland](#), [Switzerland](#) and [Austria](#). However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as [Spain](#), [Portugal](#), [Ireland](#), and [Italy](#), suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and [Latvia](#) have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern [Ukraine](#) fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring [Russia](#).

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in [Japan](#) in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both [India](#) and [China](#) retain their rankings; [India](#) holds a slightly higher ranking than [China](#) due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for [Mali](#) and [Nigeria](#) versus the [Central African Republic](#), [Burkina Faso](#), and [Burundi](#). [Mali](#) was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in [Nigeria](#) generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the [Central African Republic](#) was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of [Burundi](#) and [Burkina Faso](#) to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eyebrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in [Libya](#) and [Algeria](#) have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. [Syria](#) incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. [Iraq](#) saw a similar downgrade as a result of

the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. [Yemen](#), likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, [Egypt](#) and [Tunisia](#) saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Somalia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) maintaining their low ratings.

The [United States](#) continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of [Mexico](#), there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In [Argentina](#), a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to [Cuba](#) due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the United States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0
8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4
11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3

17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1
27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9
27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7

35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9
43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8
46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6

52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1
61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3
65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4

71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4
79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3
83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8

89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8
97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2
99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1

106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0

120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2
130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7
130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7

143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6
146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d'Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4
154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6

158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9
168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9
168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8

179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of [Serbia](#), is not listed above. No calculation is available for [Kosovo](#) at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, [China](#) claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a [United States](#) domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL:

<http://www.transparency.org>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010
Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2

Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0
France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1
Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3

Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8
Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5
Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1

Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2
India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9
Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16

Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1
Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5
Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5

Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3
Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9
Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4

Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12
Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12
Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13

Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9
Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a
Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2

Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The [United States](#) falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by [Sweden](#) and [Singapore](#) in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of [China](#) continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- [Germany](#) moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- [Switzerland](#) tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: <http://www.weforum.org>

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

Corporate tax

The standard corporate tax rate for industrial companies whose shares are publicly traded is 35 percent and the rate of those whose shares are not publicly traded is 40 percent.

Capital gains

There is a capital gains tax of five percent that applies in certain cases.

Indirect tax

There is a value added tax (VAT), which applies to some transactions at a rate of 15 percent.

Stock Market

Among the world's smallest share markets, the privately owned Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange list 208 companies. On an average day, shares of around 130 companies are traded. Trading was dormant until 1993. There was a large surge in the stock market in the summer and fall of 1996, but the market crashed late in the year and has yet to fully recover. Bangladesh's stock market capitalization at the end of the 1990s listed 211 companies. Foreign portfolio investment, never more than \$200 million, has virtually disappeared. Daily trading often surpasses \$500,000. However, overall share market growth is severely limited by the small

number of available shares of the active issues.

The BDG's Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was formed in 1993 to regulate the DSE and protect investors. New restrictions on the involvement of foreign investors in the Bangladesh capital market have been met with negative feedback. The new guidelines stipulate that 10 percent of primary issues are reserved for non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB). Major foreign investors have protested these measures. Foreign investors point out that this measure exacerbates the Bangladesh market's greatest drawback: the difficulty of buying or selling in volume over a reasonably short period.

The SEC and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh have just begun the task of rigorously enforcing reporting and audit requirements and bringing those requirements up to international standards. The country's single credit rating agency, Credit Rating Information and Services (FAX: 880-2-835214), provides credit rating information to international standards.

For more information on the Dhaka Stock Exchange, see URL: <http://www.dsebd.org/>.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Cultural Legacy and Contemporary Scenario

The ancient territory of Bengal, the eastern part of which is now Bangladesh, has a rich historical and cultural past, combining Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Mongol/Mughul, Persian, Turkic and West European cultures. At present, however, extreme poverty, high birth and mortality rates, disease and natural disasters, and a generally poor quality of life characterize Bangladesh.

Cultural Demography

In total, the population of Bangladesh totals approximately 147 million. Residents of Bangladesh, about 98 percent of whom are ethnic Bengali and speak Bangla, are called Bangladeshis. Urdu-speaking, non-Bengali Muslims of Indian origin and various tribal groups, mostly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, comprise the remainder. English is spoken in urban areas and among the educated.

Religion

Most Bangladeshis (about 88 percent) are Muslims, but Hindus constitute a sizable (11 percent) minority. There are also a small number of Buddhists, Christians and animists. Buddhism and Hinduism predate Islam as the major religions practiced in the region of Bengal. Nevertheless, Islam is, perhaps, the most significant socio-cultural factor in Bangladeshi society, influencing almost every aspect of life.

Literacy Rate

In terms of literacy, there is an average literacy rate of 48 percent, according to recent estimates. Specifically, close to 41.4 percent of the female population and 54 percent of the male population, age 15 and over, can read and write.

Life Expectancy

The population of Bangladesh has a life expectancy of approximately 69.4 years of age for both males and females, according to recent estimates. As well, Bangladesh has an infant mortality rate of 52.54 deaths/1,000 live births.

Health and Welfare

In terms of health and welfare, 2.4 percent of GDP in this country is spent on education expenditures; 3.4 percent of GDP is spent on health expenditures. Generally, access to water in this country is good in urban areas and more problematic in certain rural areas. Access to sanitation is poor in certain areas.

Effects of the Environmental Factors on Standard of Living

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It seems that even nature has conspired against Bangladesh. Not only has the country suffered due to colonial exploitation and currently faces huge problems relating to unemployment, health, education and poverty, but it is also on the receiving end of the nature with regular cyclones and floods that affect millions of Bangladeshis each year, causing damage worth billions of dollars. The low lying areas of Bangladesh are also severely threatened by the Bay of Bengal, whose waters have been rising threateningly over the last few years due, some speculate, to global warming.

Health Challenges

As if all this were not enough, Bangladeshis are also having to fight another, perhaps much more serious problem-slow poisoning. The groundwater in large parts of Bangladesh has a very high dosage of naturally occurring arsenic. A recent study by the World Health Organization pointed out that up to 77 million of the 125 million Bangladeshis are at severe risk of being poisoned by drinking water. A WHO study has predicted a big increase over the coming years in the number of cases of disease caused by arsenic. These ranged from skin lesions to cancers of the bladder, kidney, lung and skin to cardiovascular problems. The WHO has urged the government to curtail the use of groundwater, which is mostly drawn from deep wells, and develop new sources of water like collecting fresh rainwater in each monsoon.

Human Development

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One notable indicator used to measure a country's quality of life is the Human Development Index

(HDI), which is compiled annually since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a ranking of 169 countries, the HDI placed Bangladesh in the low human development category, at 129th place.

Note: Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com . See Bibliography for list of research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The [Human Development Index](#) (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh

3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen
7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Suriname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti

19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia
24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali

34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	123. Solomon Islands	165. Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's [Human Development Index](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/) available at URL: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67

7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33
12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67

25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33
30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33

43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33
48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33

61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220
66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33

79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210
82	China	210
83	Cuba	210
84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200

97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33
102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67

115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33
120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67

133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170
138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160

151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67
156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140

169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120
174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), [Switzerland](#), [Austria](#) resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Moldova](#), [Belarus](#) and [Ukraine](#) ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, [Zimbabwe](#) and [Burundi](#) found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. [Japan](#) was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as [Brunei](#) and [Malaysia](#) were in the top tier, while [Pakistan](#) was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bag with Saudi Arabians reporting healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? *Psychtalk* 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the [United States](#) will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1
2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4
5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9

17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3
20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5
23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5

35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9
38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2
41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1

53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8
56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6
59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9

71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5
74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2
77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4

89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5
92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1
95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0

107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3
110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4
113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1

125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2
128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8
131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8

143	Zimbabwe	16.6
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Source: This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).

Methodology: The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

Status of Women

Overview

The Constitution of Bangladesh posits equality of women with men. In reality, however, women are not always treated the same way as men (for cultural and religious reasons), and they are often subject to gender-based violence and do not always enjoy the same access to opportunities as men in the educational and professional spheres of society.

The legal status of Muslim women in Bangladesh is defined by the principles of Shari'ah doctrine, through the Muslim Personal Law. Issues such as marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship of children and inheritance are covered under this legislation, which is religiously-driven. A more generalized secular law covers areas such as the penal, civil and criminal procedure codes as they relate to women in the country.

Women, with the help of a quota, have been able to make significant strides in Bangladesh's political arena. Despite the lack of financial resources and access to leadership positions in the country's two biggest political parties, there has been a growing trend towards women's participation in all areas of the political process. In the past decade, two female prime ministers have led the government. However, at the ministerial level, women's representation has never risen above three percent.

Despite gains at the political level, women remain in a subordinate position in society. While female enrollment in schools has increased, illiteracy persists. Illiteracy, along with unequal educational

opportunities, prohibits women from learning of their rights. While the growth of the garment industry in the region has allowed more women to get jobs, women still fill only a small percentage of the wage earning jobs in the nation.

Violence against women in Bangladesh is widespread. A report issued by the United Nations found that at least 47 percent of adult women reported physical abuse by their significant other. Other violent actions against women include vigilantism, acid attacks, and rape. Although these abuses are prohibited under law, convictions rarely take place. There is also extensive trafficking of women for forced prostitution.

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:

105th out of 140

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:

79th out of 80

Female Population:

74.4 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:

69.4 years

Total Fertility Rate:

3.0

Maternal Mortality Ratio (2000):

380

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:

710-2,500

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):

48%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:

19

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):

54%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:

41.4%

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

54%

Female-Headed Households (%):

9%

Economically Active Females (%):

66.5%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):

81%

Female Estimated Earned Income:

\$1,245

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):

Lower or Single House: 2.0%

Upper House or Senate: N/A

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:

1972

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:

1972

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom

supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4

Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1
New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13

United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46
Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14

Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38
Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36

Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77
Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63

Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65
Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82

Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48
Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97

Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a
Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119

Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120
Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as [Iceland](#), [Norway](#), [Finland](#), and [Sweden](#) have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, [France](#) has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the [United States](#) has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. [Canada](#) has continued to remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. [Lesotho](#) and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite [Lesotho](#) still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The [Philippines](#) and [Sri Lanka](#) were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The [Philippines](#) has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the [United Arab Emirates](#) held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

<http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende>

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Bangladesh is a country known for its diverse population and is considered a melting pot of races. This is reflected in the society's literature, dance, clothing, music, art, architecture and theater. Three major religions are practiced in the country - Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam - and all three influence the culture.

Literature

Bangladesh is known for a rich literary history with evidence of literature stemming back from 1,000 years ago. The earliest literary text in Bangla is the eighth century Charyapada. Chandi Das, Daulat Kazi and Alaol are poets who were famous during the medieval period. Literature from that time period was either religious or adapted from other languages. By the 19th century, Bangla literature had matured and was becoming more modern. Poets Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam were famous during this time. Kazi Nazrul Islam, Michael Madhusudan Datta, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Mir Mosharraf Hossain and Kazi Ahdul Wadud were considered to be pioneers of modern Bengali literature. Bangladesh also has a long tradition in folk literature, evidenced by Maimansingha Gitika, Thakurmar Jhuli or stories related to Gopal Bhar.

Music

Bangladesh's traditional music is similar to what is found on the Indian subcontinent and usually falls into one of three categories: folk, modern and classical. When it comes to classical music, both vocal and instrumental are popular. Ustad Ayet Ali Khan and Ustad Alauddin are two artists known globally for their classical instrumentation. These days, more modern pop songs and bands are growing in popularity but mainly in areas in Dhaka City. Folk music is quite popular in Bangladesh with popular artists being Lalan Shah, Hasan Raja and Romesh Shill. Modern music is gaining in popularity and has western influence. Traditionally, Bangladesh music is lyrics-based with little instruments involved. The Baul tradition is a unique heritage of Bangla folk music. There are several other musical traditions in Bangladesh, which vary from one region to the other and include Gombhira and Bhatiali. You will often find Bangalees performing tribal dances.

Musical Instruments

The country boasts a number of original instruments including Banshi (bamboo flute), Dhole (wooden drums), Ektara (a single stringed instrument), Dotara (a four-stringed instrument), and Mandira (a pair of metal bawls used as rhythm instrument). In modern times, western instruments such as a guitar, drums, saxophone and synthesizers are being used in addition to these original instruments. Folk music is often accompanied by the ektara.

Painting

Modern painting was pioneered by a number of artists including Zainul Abedin, Kamrul Hassan, Anwarul Haque, Shafiuddin Ahmed and S. M. Sultan. Zainul Abedin got global acclaim for his drawings depicting the famine of 1943 in Bangladesh. Other famous artists of Bangladesh include Abdur Razzak, Qayyum Chowdhury, Murtaza Baseer, Aminul Islam, Debdas Chakraborty, Kazi Abdul Baset, Syed Jahangir, and Mohammad Kibria

Drama

Theater is a big part of the culture of Bangladesh. More than a dozen theater groups in Dhaka perform plays by local playwrights as well as others written by famous writers from other parts of the world, particularly Europe. In Dhaka, plays are regularly held on the area of Baily Road is known as 'Natak Para'. Cultural shows are also held at the Public Library Auditorium and Museum Auditorium.

Jatra (Folk Drama) is an important aspect of Bangalee culture. It depicts mythological episodes of love and tragedy. Plays depicting legendary tales of heroism are popular, especially in rural areas. Jatra is not as popular today as it once was as more western influence penetrates the country's culture.

Clothing

Typically, Bangladeshi women wear sarees. Women often wear Benis, or twisted buns. Men tend to wear panjabis and the lungi, a kind of long skirt. A common hairstyle is Beni (twisted bun) that Bangalee women are fond of panjabis, fatuas and pajamas.

Food

Food in Bangladesh is similar to Indian and Middle Eastern cuisine but with its own unique characteristics. Rice and curry are popular. Bangladeshis also enjoy making sweetmeats from milk products such as Rôshogolla, Chômchôm and Kalojam.

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. There are very rigid roles placed upon women and men, which affect every aspect of everyday life in Bangladesh. Visitors must respect these roles and never put a Bangladeshi in a position where he or she uncomfortable.
2. Traditional Muslims and Hindus will not shake hands with persons of the opposite sex.
3. Do not be surprised if a man does not introduce his wife to you. When in this situation, do not attempt to introduce yourself to the wife. A Muslim man may become offended if a visiting man asks questions about his wife or daughter.
4. Flirting is offensive in Bangladeshi society. A man should not to flirt with woman, as this could become a source of shame for her and could affect her in a way an individual from a Western society would not understand. Always be modest and respectful to the opposite sex.
5. Traditional Muslim and Hindu women will not say the name of their husband. They will instead refer to him as "son of so-and so" or "father of so-and-so."
6. In business meetings, one should expect some time devoted to conversation on non-business subjects. Goodwill and social rapport must be established between the parties involved. The business discussion should begin once the tea is served.
7. Never show the bottom of your foot or shoe; the bottom of the foot is considered unclean and Muslims find it offensive to look at.
8. Remove shoes before entering a house or Mosque.
9. The left hand is considered unclean. Never eat with your left hand. Never give or take anything with your left hand.
10. Dress in Bangladesh conforms to strictures of modesty. Both Muslims and Hindus in Bangladeshi society tend to be culturally conservative and as such, regardless of stylistic choices, the most important consideration regarding appropriate clothing should be the matter of modesty. Women should take care to cover the length of their legs and their upper arms, while men have a bit more freedom about their clothing choices. Covering one's head when one is visiting religious areas is also important.

Travel Information

Please Note: This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources that a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precautions:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy,

travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.

7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.

8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.

9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.

10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.

11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.

12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male or female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.

13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.

14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.

15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

- Medical facilities in Bangladesh are very poor. Make sure your insurance covers both medical treatment, including medical evacuation to your home country, and unexpected losses/expenses.
- Check your embassy, consulate, or appropriate government institution related to travel before traveling.
- Passport holders must hold a valid visa for entry to Bangladesh. Although this can be obtained on arrival, visitors can encounter problems and are advised to obtain a visa before traveling. Visitors should check with the Bangladeshi High Commission before traveling to be certain that they have been issued with the correct visa.
- Extensions to your visa can be obtained from the Department of Immigration & Passports. Failure to do so could result in a hefty fine.
- Ensure that you have enough funds for your stay and return flight. Bank transfers can take time. Major credit cards are accepted in many restaurants in Dhaka and by well-established travel agencies. Acceptance of credit cards cannot be guaranteed in more remote areas.
- Keep all your personal belongings, particularly your passport and money, in a safe place at all times. Pickpockets and bag snatchers are commonplace in Bangladesh.
- Always respect local laws and customs. Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country. Dress appropriately in public. If in doubt, take local advice.
- Malarial and dengue fever mosquitoes are found in Bangladesh and you should seek medical advice before traveling. Many foreigners fall victim to the heat and to diarrhea and similar illnesses caused by eating and drinking contaminated food and drink. Only eat recently prepared food which has been thoroughly cooked, and drink plenty of bottled water, or bottled drinks, to prevent dehydration.
- Leave a photocopy of your passport and your travel itinerary with a relative or friend in your home country.
- Enter next of kin details into the back of your passport.
- Never carry drugs. There are several penalties in Bangladesh for drug offenses.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth

Office.

Sources: *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

Bangladeshi business executives are usually very courteous, and try to make their foreign guests feel at ease. Business visitors should be aware that in Bangladesh, men and women do not usually shake hands with each other, and may avoid doing so with a visitor of the opposite sex. Foreign visitors often find that hosting meals for their Bangladeshi agents or business contacts helps to smooth business negotiations. Visitors may also be invited to share meals as guests of their Bangladeshi hosts.

Sources: *United States Department of State Commercial Guides*

For more general information on etiquette in Bangladesh see our Cultural Etiquette page.

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom
<http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Visa Information from the Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html>

Passport Information from the Government of Australia

<https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx>

Passport Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro

<http://www.visapro.com>

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General>

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/>

Travel Tips from Government of Australia

<http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html>

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist>

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html <http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broc>

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information

<http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

<http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm>

World Weather Forecasts

<http://www.intellicast.com/>

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

<http://www.worldweather.org/>

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock

<http://www.timeanddate.com/>

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

International Airport Codes

<http://www.world-airport-codes.com/>

International Dialing Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm>

<http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/>

International Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm>

International Mobile Phone Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm>

International Internet Café Search Engine

<http://cybercaptive.com/>

Global Internet Roaming

<http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm>

World Electric Power Guide

<http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm>

<http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm>

World Television Standards and Codes

<http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm>

International Currency Exchange Rates

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World

<http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html>

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator

<http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/>

<http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html>

International Chambers of Commerce

<http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html>

World Tourism Websites

<http://123world.com/tourism/>

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.usembassy.gov/>

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/>

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/>

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html>

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions

<http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx>

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World

<http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm>

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia

<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/>

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll>

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/>

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926>

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide

<http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng>

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html>

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety

<http://www.faasafety.gov/>

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)

<http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html>

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information

<http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp>

Information on Human Rights

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/>

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola

Liberia - Ebola

Nepal - Earthquake zone

Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio

Somalia - Polio

Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone

Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease

Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles

Brazil - Dengue Fever

Brazil - Malaria

Brazil - Zika

China - H7N9 Avian flu

Cuba - Cholera

Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu

Ethiopia - Measles

Germany - Measles

Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)

Kyrgyzstan - Measles

Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Health Information for Travelers to Bangladesh

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Malaria risk in this region exists in some urban and many rural areas, depending on elevation. For specific locations, see Malaria Information for Travelers to the Indian Subcontinent (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/indianrg.htm>).> Most travelers to the Indian Subcontinent at risk for malaria should take mefloquine to prevent malaria.

A certificate of yellow fever vaccination may be required for entry into certain of these countries if you are coming from countries in tropical South America or sub-Saharan Africa. (There is no risk for yellow fever in the Indian Subcontinent.) For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm>).>

Dengue, filariasis, Japanese encephalitis, leishmaniasis, and plague are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

If you visit the Himalayan Mountains, ascend gradually to allow time for your body to adjust to the high altitude, which can cause insomnia, headaches, nausea, and altitude sickness. In addition, use sunblock rated at least 15 SPF, because the risk of sunburn is greater at high altitudes.

Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid travel at night if possible and always use seat belts.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Japanese encephalitis, only if you plan to visit rural areas for 4 weeks or more, except under special circumstances, such as a known outbreak of Japanese encephalitis.
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid vaccination is particularly important because of the presence of *S. typhi* strains resistant to multiple antibiotics in this region.
- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles, and a one-time dose of polio for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12 years who did not receive the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
- If you are going to visit areas where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
- Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don't drink beverages with ice.
- Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page at URL <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm>)
- Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
- Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. Travelers who are not in air-conditioned or well-screened housing should purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin. (Bed nets can be purchased in camping or military supply stores.)
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for more detailed information about water filters.
- Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:

If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.

If you become ill after travel-even as long as a year after your trip-tell your doctor the areas you have visited.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself against diseases that occur in the Indian Subcontinent, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects

Dengue, Japanese encephalitis, Malaria

Carried in Food or Water

Cholera, *Escherichia coli*, diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact

Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm>) section and the Health Topics A-Z (<http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm>).

Note:

Bangladesh is located in the Indian subcontinent health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinat.htm>

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview

High population density has contributed to a host of environmental problems in Bangladesh. Primarily, industrial pollution, a consequence of rapid urban development, presents an acute challenge. Further, Bangladesh has been unable to deal with such challenges because of the high degree of destruction expended upon the infrastructure in times of civil strife.

In this way, the political and socio-economic aspects of Bangladeshi life have incurred a direct effect on the region's eco-system. Specifically, the relationship between the people and the environment is a matter of human pressures stressing the natural environment, and hindering the resource sustainability in the long term.

Current Issues

- air pollution from metallurgical plants
- limited sites for urban waste disposal
- clean water shortages
- deforestation
- destruction of wetlands and inland fisheries
- marine pollution from various industries
- soil depletion
- inland salinity intrusion
- loss of bio-diversity and wildlife

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc)

33.4

Country Rank (GHG output)

42nd

Natural Hazards

- frequent and destructive earthquakes
- monsoon rainfall and cyclones, which result in massive flooding

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Bangladesh is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- Ministry of the Environment and Forests
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives
- Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources
- Ministry of Water Resources

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

N/A

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Air-Pollution
- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Environmental Modification
- Hazardous Wastes

- Law of the Sea
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Wetlands

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2001

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	Country
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia

5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany
8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy
12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland

23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand
26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt
30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria

41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland
44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel
48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya

59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland
62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh
66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia

77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon
80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia
84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar

95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia
98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova
102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia

113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon
116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay
120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea

131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland
134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas
138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso

149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize
152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda
156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau

167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi
170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands
174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati

Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See
Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia
Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd

Cook Islands are ranked 184th

Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike, are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further

compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a

marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental

problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a

prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks,

contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies—a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use

of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are

California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation, nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil

fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the [United States](#), the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will

likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the [United States](#). It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater

insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for

proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and

moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western [United States](#), current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots. Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.
- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.

- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionuclides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionuclides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remediative approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment. Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded

and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the [United States](#), how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in [China](#), elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "[Biodiversity Assessment](#)"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The [United Kingdom](#) identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the interrelationship between agrobiodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

[<http://www.unep.net/>](http://www.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

[<http://climatechange.unep.net/>](http://climatechange.unep.net/)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

[<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>](http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm)

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

[<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>](http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm)

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

[<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>](http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm)

World Resources Institute.

[<http://www.wri.org/>](http://www.wri.org/)

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

[<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>](http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html)

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

<http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/>

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.
2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discussions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing

emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, [Japan](#) in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990 levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the [United States](#) (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and [Japan](#), are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries - - with the obvious exceptions of [India](#) and [China](#) -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and [Japan](#), are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, [Germany](#), in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, [Morocco](#), to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a

political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as [Russia](#), [Japan](#) and [Canada](#) agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome

burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto, Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and [United States](#) President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in [Mexico](#) City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as [South Africa](#), had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. [Bangladesh](#) identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The [United Kingdom](#), [Australia](#), [Mexico](#) and [Norway](#) also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But [Australia](#) went

even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as [China](#) and [India](#). Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of emerging economies like [China](#) and [India](#), with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, [China](#) -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, [China](#) had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, [China](#) was now accusing the [United States](#) and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the [United States](#) -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with [Japan](#) for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, [China](#) demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on [India](#) -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in

[India](#), who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in [India](#) was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and [India](#) were joined by [Brazil](#) and [South Africa](#) in the crafting of a draft document calling for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in [Denmark](#) would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts everyone on the planet."

Likewise, [Tuvalu](#) demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. [Tuvalu](#) also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from [Kiribati](#) joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of [Kiribati](#) could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as [Tuvalu](#) and [Kiribati](#) in the Pacific, and the [Maldives](#) in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant [Saudi Arabia](#) was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the [United States](#) demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. [United States](#) President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the [United States](#) Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the [United States](#)

Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, [United States](#) Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the [United States](#) was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US\$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of [Sweden](#) -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by [China](#) and [India](#), appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the

boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, [United States](#) President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the [United States](#) and [China](#). At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The [United States](#) argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for \$100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in [Qatar](#) extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of [Nauru](#), a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: “We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us.”

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with [United States](#) President Barack Obama's request for \$60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the [United States](#) and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around \$10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as [Kiribati](#) and [Tuvalu](#), are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including [Fiji](#), [Kiribati](#), [Samoa](#) and [Tonga](#), and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in [Qatar](#) (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: <http://aosis.org/>

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP)

in Paris, [France](#), ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The [United States](#) leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have."

Former [United States](#) Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental

advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accomplishments enshrined in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- \$100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, [Denmark](#), in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as [China](#) and [India](#), objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the \$100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around \$44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the \$100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the [United States](#), which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, [China](#) and [India](#) were not held to the same standards as the [United States](#) and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in sea level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of [Tuvalu](#) issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future ... is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of [Tuvalu](#). No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find consensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its

responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the [United States](#) and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as [Russia](#), [China](#) and [India](#), there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), [Fiji](#), and the [Marshall Islands](#), called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of [Kiribati](#), "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen." Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as [Kiribati](#). Stone explained, "For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion," Stone explained. "So it's not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it's also about the day that there's just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island." Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, "If you look ahead 50 years, a country like [Kiribati](#) could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere."

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the [United States](#). He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: "We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to

survival.” Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, “Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era.”

Debrum of the [Marshall Islands](#) espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, “Climate change won’t stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer.”

Editor's Entry on [Environmental Policy](#):

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including [Kiribati](#), [Tuvalu](#), the [Marshall Islands](#), [Fiji](#), among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and climate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being uninhabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in [France](#), with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human

beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1979

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1992

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage 1971 (1971 Fund Convention), Brussels, 1971

Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Co-operation (OPRC), London, 1990

International Convention Relation to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties (Intervention Convention), Brussels, 1969

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Montego Bay, 1982

Regional Conventions

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Oslo Convention), Oslo, 1972

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), Paris, 1992

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1974 Helsinki Convention), Helsinki 1974

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Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, Bucharest, 1992

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Cartagena de Indias, 1983

Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, [Kuwait](#), 1978

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention), Barcelona, 1976

Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, Noumea, 1986

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, Lima, 1981

Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan, 1981

3. Major Conventions Regarding Living Resources:

Marine Living Resources

Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Canberra, 1980

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

Nature Conservation and Terrestrial Living Resources

Antarctic Treaty, Washington, D.C., 1959

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), Paris, 1972

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Nairobi, 1992

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Bonn, 1979

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Washington, D.C., 1973

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Ramsar, 1971

Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Paris 1994

FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, 1983

International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994), Geneva, 1994

Freshwater Resources

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki, 1992

4. Major Conventions Regarding Nuclear Safety:

Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (Assistance Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANE)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

Appendices

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

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The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

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Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original Country Reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

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Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- [Serbia](#) & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

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Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the [Human Development Index](#) (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US\$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: <http://www.undp.org>

Note on [History](#) sections

In some CountryWatch Country Reviews, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used.

Environmental Overview

Environmental Profiles: A Global Guide to Projects and People. 1993. Linda Sobel Katz, Sarah Orrick, and Robert Honig. New York: Garland Publishing.

The Environment Encyclopedia and Directory, 2nd Edition. 1998. London: Europa.

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: <http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming>

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/>

Global Warming Information Page. URL: <http://globalwarming.org>

Introduction to Global [Environmental Issues](#), 2nd Edition. 1997. Kevin Pickering and Lewis Owen.

London: Routledge.

Trends: Compendium of Data on Global Change. URL: http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/trends/emis/em_cont.htm

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

United States Department of Energy, Country Analysis Briefs. URL: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/contents.html>

World Climate Data Online. URL: <http://www.worldclimate.com>

World Directory of Country Environmental Studies. 1996. The World Resource Institute.

World Factbook. US Central Intelligence Agency. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group.

1998-1999 World Resources Guide to the Global Environment by the World Resources Institute. May, 1998.

1998/1999 Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development. 1998. London: Earthscan Publications.

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Other Sources:

General information has also been used in the compilation of this review, with the courtesy of governmental agencies from this country.

News Services:

CANA Daily Bulletin. Caribbean Media Agency Ltd., St. Michael, [Barbados](#).

Central and Eastern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa.

Daily News, Panafrican News Agency. Dakar, [Senegal](#).

PACNEWS, Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association. Suva, [Fiji](#).

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Washington D.C. USA.

Reuters News. Thomson Reuters. New York, New York. USA.

Southern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Southern Africa.

Voice of America, English Service. Washington D.C.

West Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa. 1998-1999

Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.

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Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. "People." *CountryWatch.com: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *CountryWatch.com: France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_topic.asp?vCOUNTRY=61&SECTION=SOCIAL&TOPIC=CLPEO&TYPE=TEXT. October 12, 2003.

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