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## I INTRODUCTION

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**Bangladesh**, in full, People's Republic of Bangladesh, republic of southern [Asia](#), in the northeastern portion of the Indian subcontinent, bordered on the west, north, and east by [India](#), on the southeast by [Myanmar](#) (formerly known as Burma), and on the south by the [Bay of Bengal](#). The area of the country is 147,570 sq km (56,977 sq mi). The capital and largest city of Bangladesh is [Dhaka](#).

Geographically, historically, and culturally, Bangladesh forms the larger and more populous part of [Bengal](#), the remainder of which constitutes the neighboring Indian state of [West Bengal](#). From 1947 to 1971 the area of Bangladesh was a province of

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[Pakistan](#). As such, its official designation was changed from East Bengal to East Pakistan in 1955. On March 26, 1971, leaders of East Pakistan declared the province independent as Bangladesh (Bengali for "land of the Bengalis"), and its independence was assured on December 16, 1971, when Pakistani troops in the region surrendered to a joint force of Bangladeshi and Indian troops.

## II LAND AND RESOURCES

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Bangladesh, a low-lying country traversed by numerous rivers, has a coastline of about 580 km (360 mi) along the Bay of Bengal.

### A Natural Regions

Most of Bangladesh lies within the broad delta formed by the [Ganges](#) (Ganga), [Brahmaputra](#), and Meghna rivers and is subject to annual flooding. Much fertile, alluvial soil is deposited by the floodwaters. Most of the land is exceedingly flat and low-lying. The only significant area of hilly terrain, constituting less than one-tenth of the country's territory, is the Chittagong Hill Tracts District in the narrow southeastern panhandle of the country. There, on the border with Myanmar, is Mowdok Mual (1,003 m/3,291 ft), the country's highest point. Small, scattered hills lie along or near the eastern and northern borders with India. These areas, which receive among the heaviest rainfall in the world, provide the headwaters of the Meghna and its tributaries. The eroded remnants of two old alluvial terraces—the Madhupur Tract, in the north central part of the country, and the Barind, straddling the northwestern boundary with India—attain elevations of about 30 m (100 ft). The soil here is much less fertile than the annually replenished alluvium of the surrounding floodplain.

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A huge tract of mangrove swamp, the Sundarbans (Sunderbans), lies along the coast of

Bangladesh and West Bengal between the estuaries of the Meghna and [Hugli](#) (Hooghly) rivers. The Sundarbans extends about 274 km (170 mi) along the Bay of Bengal and about 100 km (62 mi) inland. It contains a vast number of tidal rivers and innumerable islands, but very little development or agriculture.

## B Rivers

Rivers are a prominent and important feature of the landscape in Bangladesh. The country includes about 200 navigable rivers. Two of South Asia's largest rivers, the Ganges and Brahmaputra (locally known as the Jamuna), flow into Bangladesh, where they join to form the Padma. The Padma merges with the Meghna southeast of Dhaka; the combined rivers then empty into the Bay of Bengal. In the dry season other deltaic distributaries that lace the terrain to the west of the Meghna may be several kilometers wide as they near the Bay of Bengal, whereas at the height of the summer monsoon season they coalesce into an extremely broad expanse of silt-laden water. In much of the delta, therefore, homes must be constructed on earthen platforms or embankments high enough to remain above the level of all but the highest floods. In nonmonsoon months the exposed ground is pocked with water-filled borrow pits, or tanks, from which the mud for the embankments was excavated. These tanks are a chief source of water for drinking, bathing, and small-scale irrigation.

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