

## "Bangladesh Today"

BACO Essay Competition, 2010

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Bangladesh is located in Asia, bordering with India and Burma, and the Bay of Bengal in the south. It is a rapidly growing nation, undergoing many changes, mostly progressive. The people work very hard to provide for themselves and their families, and all of their hard work will eventually pay off. There are many natural/governmental issues in this nation, such as corruption, floods, and sewage problems. But it is improving its standards, and becoming more and more stable. Some of the main areas being improved are: the economy, communication/technology, education, transportation, sports, and government.

Bangladesh is known to be one of the world's poorest countries. In 2008, an average person in Bangladesh earned about the equivalent of \$500 USD per year, while the world average for each individual's salary is about \$10,000 per year. However, Bangladesh's economy has constantly been growing by about 5-6% every year since 1996 regardless of the corruption and inefficient government. Dr. Mohammad Yunus, the first Nobel laureate of Bangladesh, contributed to the improvement of the economy by building a new bank system of checks and loans, the *Grameen Bank*. Bangladesh had a global financial crisis in 2008-2009, which it is still recovering from today. This means that their economy in general needs to be worked on, but is definitely improving.

The industry, especially garment industry, in Bangladesh is very important in its export receipts. Many people work in the clothe and fabric factories of which the products are exported out. Bangladesh is ranked fifth in supplying the US with cotton apparel. However, some improvement and opportunities are needed in agriculture. The industries of Bangladesh make about 10% of GDP.

Although it has many protests and a questionable government, Bangladesh is setting new policies to further improve its government system. A new approach, started in 2007, was to have separation of powers between the judicial and executive branches. This is similar to the US democratic model and would mean that power is more distributed, and should make the government less corrupted.

In sports, Bangladesh has been performing with excellence. Its cricket team, especially, has improved, competing with the major cricket nations. It even beat the Indian and South African teams in the Cricket World Cup 2007. In 2009, Bangladesh Cricket team won a test series against West Indies. Now, Bangladesh is one of the countries which will host the ICC Cricket World Cup. Football (soccer in the US) in Bangladesh is an extremely popular sport and the team made it to the Millennium Super Cup in 2001. Bangladesh has also won the gold metal in the International South

Asian Games in 1999 and 2010. Although Bangladesh has many rivers and the majority of the people, especially outside of the cities, know how to swim, Bangladesh has not won at any international swimming competition due to lack of proper training.

Education in Bangladesh is an area the government considers very important to improve. There are many schools that are not well suited or built well enough for students to learn properly. However, many students work very hard to be successful and therefore prosper with education and jobs in other countries. A lot of progress has been made in the last twenty years. The most stress for improvement is for primary school, which only 76% of the students finish. The ratio of students to teachers is 60 to 1, meaning there are many students possibly eager to learn with too few teachers to teach. Also, students on average have school for only about 2.5 hours, which is a very small amount of time compared to the average school day around the world. However, there is also a fast growing number of universities to accommodate large number of students. Unfortunately, they are too expensive where only students from well-to-do families can afford attend. A number of government universities are offering Ph.D. these days and have joint collaborative effort with a few neighboring countries.

Today Bangladesh is better known as a country; more people are able to recognize it. Over the last few years, the number of tourists in Bangladesh has increased. The government runs a program, *Parjatan*, on tourism. Tourists are coming not only to visit relatives and friends, but also to take vacations/breaks. The country is covered with lots of farm land and the village side is beautiful. A great attraction in Bangladesh for Muslims all over the world is the religious Toblig event of Bishwa Estima. After performing Hajj, millions of people from many countries gather for the Estima every year in Tongi by the river Turag. Traveling through the country is relatively cheap, and many tourists from Europe or America would not have to worry about affording meals. However, quite a few Bangladeshi merchants have the unfair tendency to charge non-Bengalis more than the natives.

Transportation in Bangladesh is developing well. Bangladesh is constantly constructing new roads and bridges where it is needed, instead of using boats for traveling over water for fast and easy transportation. In fact, Bangladesh can take pride in having one of the longest bridges in the world, the Jamuna Bridge. This bridge is over 3 miles and is the 5th longest in South Asia. It is built over the Jamuna River and on on the Asian Highway. The bridge allows trade through Bangladesh.



Communication and technology is growing rapidly as well. Most of the people carry mobile phones with them because it is cost-effective. Latest music, movies, and software are available in open stores across the cities. The Internet is becoming increasingly more available in the cities and many people in Bangladesh now communicate through social networking websites.

One unfortunate aspect of Bangladesh is that it is suffering yearly due to natural floods, climate, and sanitation. Every year, the water level rises overall and the land of Bangladesh is slowly going under water. Although there are still many beautiful sights to see, these could be gone if water levels do not decrease. There is a major concern for the presence of poisonous arsenic in the water. Arsenic is causing many deaths through drinking water and crops grown using arsenic water. Now, the government has put red flags in those areas. Scientists are doing research to clean this poisonous water.

The popular foods in Bangladesh have not changed. Western food is offered at certain places, but rice, curry, biryani, and parata are most common. The farmers still mass-produce rice and various wheat. There is also a great selection of sweets to choose from, all of which Bengalis cherish.

The art and culture are expanding with higher standard. Bangladesh holds one of the most popular Book Fairs for the month of February where many new books on various subjects are available. National and international poets gather during Book Fair. It also holds many events of singing, traditional dancing, and art exhibits. Although traditional dresses are popular with creative designs, the youth, these days, are much more concerned about their outer appearance and are adopting Western-styled clothes. There are still a great diversity in the different cultures reside in the country. Bangladesh cherishes all religions and still observes all religious holidays.

In conclusion, Bangladesh has had great changes over the years. There were great advances in civilian life and great innovations. Bangladesh is rising as a nation, boosting the economy, technology, education, sports, and government standards. Soon, it will be able to compete on the same level as the top countries in the world.

Some Sources:

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