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Bangladesh

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Bangladesh

Abstract

Bangladesh (formally the People's Republic of Bangladesh) is a Muslim-majority parliamentary democracy located in South Asia. Originally called East Pakistan, it was created during the partition of India in 1947 as the eastern wing of the country of Pakistan. Its name was later changed to East Bengal and then to Bangladesh after its union with West Pakistan was broken following a bloody war of secession in 1971. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Ahmaddiya, India, Islam, Political Islam, Jamaat-e-Islamki, Pakistan, Sufism, Sunni Islam, Tabligh

Disciplines

Asian Studies | Hindu Studies | Islamic Studies

democracy located in South Asia. Originally called East Pakistan, it was created during the partition of India in 1947 as the eastern wing of the country of Pakistan. Its name was later changed to East Bengal and then to Bangladesh after its union with West Pakistan was broken following a bloody war of secession in 1971. It is bordered to the south by the Bay of Bengal and by India on all sides but the southeast, where it is bordered by Burma. It straddles the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta and is one of the most densely populated regions in the world, with a population of approximately 153.5 million people, 98% of whom are ethnic Bengalis and speak Bengali (also known as *Bangla*). Muslims constitute 83% of Bangladesh's population, making it one of the largest Muslim countries, and one of the few Muslim democracies, in the world. It is also home to Hindus, who constitute approximately 16% of the total population.

The region of what is now Bangladesh underwent processes of religious conversion to Islam (from the local Hindu tradition) beginning in the 13th century with the arrival of Sufis in rural farming areas following the Turkish invasion. The area was absorbed into the Mughal Empire in the 16th century and later by the British Empire. Today, the majority of Muslims in Bangladesh are Sunnī, though there are small numbers of Shi'a Muslims, mostly in urban areas. Sufi shrines are found throughout Bangladesh, and local *pirs* (Sufi mystics and saints) are important as figures of religious veneration as well as political leadership in contemporary politics.

Bangladesh's national politics has increasingly involved a struggle over the role of Islam in the state and society, as Islamist leaders and parties such as the Jamaat-e Islami Bangladesh, the former counterpart of Pakistan's Jamaat-e Islami, founded by Maulana Mawdudi, gain increasing support. In 1977, Bangladesh's founding principle of secularism was omitted from the constitution, and in 1988, Islam was declared the state religion of Bangladesh by a constitutional amendment. This saw an increase in the government's role in defining the form and place of Islam within the Bangladeshi state and society. In 2007, a military-backed regime declared a state of emergency, promising new democratic elections by the end of 2008.

BANGLADESH

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In recent decades, Bangladesh has seen a significant rise in Islamic revivalism. Through increased international travel and labor migration, particularly to Gulf countries, many Bangladeshis gain exposure to global movements of Islamism while abroad, thus compelling increasing support for Islamist movements at home. The Tablighi Jama'at, a transnational Islamic reform movement originating in South Asia, is also active in Bangladesh. With the continual rise in Islamism in recent years, Bangladesh's Hindu minority has decreased in size as some have migrated to India, and the state's commitment to the protection of religious minorities has come into question as attacks on Hindus and Ahmaddiyas by Muslim extremists in the country have risen.

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See also Ahmaddiya; India; Islam; Islamism (Political Islam); Jamaat-e-Islami; Pakistan; South Asia; Sufism; Sunnī Islam; *Tabligh*

Further Readings

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