

Shaukat Hassan

Bangladesh--part two

This is the second in a series of articles about Bangladesh, the land and the people. Shaukat Hassan is from Bangladesh and is a junior in political science at the University.

Bangladesh is situated on the northeast corner of India and has an area of 55,126 square miles.

It is one of the flattest pieces of alluvial land in the world and is formed by the delta of the combined Ganges-Brahmaputra system of rivers. Except for a small portion on the eastern borders and in the southeast where sandy hills form an undulating configuration, the gradient is extremely low from the central part. On the western side of the Jumna are the districts of Rajshahi, Bogra.

The riverine system generally divides it into four parts. The main stream of the Ganges, known in Bangladesh as Padma, cuts away a portion to the south which comprises the districts of Khulna, Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, Patuakhali and Bakerganj. The main stream of the Brahmaputra, known as Jumna, severs the portion on the west from the central part. On the western side of the Jumna are the districts of Rajshahi, Bogra.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, the average being 950 persons per square mile and the highest being in Dacca, the capital, with 1768 per square mile.

Except in specific areas, such as the Sundarbans (Beautiful Forests), the Chittagong Hill Tracts (where the Garos and Chakmas of the Buddhist Tribes live), and some parts of Dinajpur and Rangpur in the northern area of Bangladesh, the spread of population is more or less continuous and the population can generally be divided into two main categories—urban and rural. For administrative purposes Bangladesh will have 62 districts with direct links to the national Government in Dacca.

Bangladesh has a coastline of 430 miles in the south and shared a borderline with India of more than 3000 miles. In the southeast it borders Burma for about 100 miles. In the northwest, Bangladesh border parallels that of Nepal, the gap actually being of only 15 miles.

The country falls directly in the path of the monsoons. Various districts of Bangladesh are heavy rainfall regions. The monsoons which sets in during the month of June is preceded by Nor'westers, which bring heavy rains in the evenings accompanied by thunderstorms. These rains are very important, starting in the month of February and going on until May, turning into regular monsoons, and are a boon to the production of rice and jute.

The heavy rainfall generally results in the flooding of the rivers, which overflow their banks and cover an extremely vast area. This often causes a sudden on-rush of water in the rivers and streams resulting in loss of life and property. Intensive efforts are being made currently by the Government to safeguard against these floods. Normally, however, the overflowing of the streams carries silt and when the excess waters recede, they leave behind a new layer of deposits which is extremely rich and helps in the growth of good crops.

The innumerable villages are usually buried in groves of mango, jackfruit, bamboo, betelnut, datepalm, coconut and other useful trees. Herbs, shrubs and trees are common everywhere. Of the gregarious trees, some of the most conspicuous are the sal, sisso, khair, betelnut and coconut.

The flora of the Sundarbans is notable because it contains more local species due to the saline properties of the water and tidal action on the land. The islets of the Sundarbans are clothed with a dense evergreen forest of tress and shrubs—mangrove being predominant. Climbers and herbaceous plants dot the jungles.

No natural barrier militates against cultural cohesion among the peoples of Bangladesh. The monsoonic climate generates a common outlook on life and focuses man's attention on the higher ambition of the human spirit. A Bengali is born during a cyclone, lives through cyclones and dies in a cyclone. The monsoon has affected both the nature of the soil and the habits of man. The heavy rains augur joy for the thirsty earth, which is ever eager to absorb any amount of water and shoot up the greenery that is characteristic of this country. They create a spontaneous mirth in the hearts of men who witness the dance of nature in the rhythmic drops of rain. No wonder that the children in their movements imitate the marvels of nature's art. Love of dancing and music are an inborn quality of the Bengalis. Many a poet has sung praises and written odes to our Golden Bengal. The rural agricultural economy related to fixed seasons has dictated a particular social pattern, which despite historical cataclysms, is rooted in the native soil. This great love of the soil is accompanied by a sense of freedom and the circumstances have favoured the growth of a unified life in which love for freedom retains its basic character.

Bangladesh, a free, sovereign and independent country, is already recognised by more than 75 countries since it achieved independence last year. The people of Bangladesh, under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, are steadily moving toward

peace, progress and prosperity under the four basic principles of secularism, socialism, democracy and nationalism.

Official Name: The People's Republic of Bangladesh

Location: Latitude between 20.75 and 25.75 North; Longitude between 88.3 and 92.75 East.

Area: 55,126 sq. miles (less than half the size of Oregon)

Boundaries: North—West Bengal and Assam (India); South—Bay of Bengal and Burma; East—Assam (India) and Burma; West—West Bengal and Bihar (India)

Climate: Minimum temp. in Jan.—49.6 F to 56.2 F and in July—77.9 F to 78.9 F. Maximum temp. in Jan.—75.4 F to 78.4 F and in July—85.9 F to 89 F Annual temp. 57 F to 85 F.

Rainfall: Lowest rainfall—47.9 at Lalpur, Rajshahi (northwest of Bangladesh); Highest rainfall—225.76 at Lalkhel, Sylhet (northeast of Bangladesh)

Capital: Dacca (also seat of Government)

Population: 1972 (estimate) 75 million. 1961 Census: Muslims—40.9 million; Hindus—9.4 million; Buddhists—0.4 million; Christians—0.2 million; Total—50.9 million. Rural Population 80 per cent; Muslim Pop. 80 per cent. Female-male ratio 930-1000. Literacy rate—20 per cent.

State Language—Bengali (English, former official language, totally eradicated).

National days—a. Birthday of the Father of the Nation, March 17; b. Independence day, March 26; c. Victory day, December 16; d. Shaheed day (Martyrs), February 21.

Principal rivers: Meghna, Padma, Brahmaputra, Jumna, Surma and Karnaphuli

Important crops: Rice, jute, tobacco, tea, sugar-cane, pulses, etc.

Important industries: Jute, sugar, paper, textiles, cement, natural gas, newsprint, etc.

Seaports: Chittagong and Chalna (Khulna)

Airports: Dacca (International), Chittagong, and five other cities.

Media: Radio stations, 6; Television stations, 1; Daily newspapers, 17

Power: Installed capacity, 475 MW; Transmission & Distribution lines, 5767 miles; Total mileage of railways, 1752 miles; Total mileage of waterways, 4500 miles; Total mileage of roads, 3607 miles

Educational Institutions: Universities, 6; Colleges, 296; Schools, 36,300

Nicholas Von Hoffman

What's really wrong with him (buzz buzz)?

WASHINGTON—Gary Hart looked good. McGovern's campaign manager was wearing a pair of dynamite leather pants and a beautifully tailored jacket suggestive of blue denim and farm stitching. In the face of his campaign's recurrent low-comedy crises, he displays a faintly good-humored assurance and a composure that borders on the serene.

The other evening he was standing in the foyer of his headquarters, the same premises that Muskie once occupied, turning away any suggestion that Eagleton would be dumped. "I know why Muskie lost," he ventured, looking at a box of old Muskie leaflets. "It's the phone system he had in here."

The same attitude ran through the building. Upstairs Frank Mankiewicz, the national political director—all of St. George's people have these el supremo titles—was also not sounding worried. "The press is just trying to spook you," he reassured somebody on the other end of the phone line, and then hung up to make one of his small, dry funnyisms about Henry Kimelman, or "Kimelperson as we have to call him now with Women's Lib."

A Wonderful Opportunity

Outside in this most political of cities you could find a far wider spectrum of emotions and reactions to Tom Eagleton and his shrinks. There was the Massachusetts Congressman who kept saying it was a wonderful opportunity to educate the American public on mental health. "It's just like going to the hospital and getting your appendix out," he explained to someone who looked puzzled and then asked, "Three times?"

In the Senate the Republicans are reported to be tripping around chortling and saying to each other, "A great ticket, a commie and a kook," while another suf-

fering Democrat in the House remarked, "It's not the head-on-arguments I fear, it's the jokes...the jokes and those sympathetic background stories in the papers quoting some medical expert explaining that in nine cases out of 10 shock treatment does not result in permanent brain damage."

Underneath the many expressions of sympathy for Eagleton, there is a tone of hilarity, not about him but about Washington where most people seem to think they're crazy for being here. The whole town's a funny farm so why pick on him? Or, it serves the country right, if they think any sane man would want custody of the doomsday button.

For Eagleton himself you can't help but feel sorry. Win or lose, this gossipy, snippy city will be talking about him for a long time. Nervous fatigue, depression, ha! what's really wrong with him? Buzz-buzz, domineering father, drunk driver, and all the sweet maliciousness. It was still fitting, though, that this should happen to him, the realpolitik candidate, the practical pol's candidate, the guy who was going to bring the Catholics and the big labor boom-booms back to the Party. Better they should have eliminated the middleman and nominated George Meany himself. He still wouldn't endorse the ticket, but it is true that the only depression in Meany's life was when the stockmarket crashed in 1929.

If instead of picking Eagleton, who was nothing but an undistinguished pro-Muskie liberal, McGovern had picked the farthest-out veep candidate, mental health wouldn't be the nation's number-one conversational topic. That candidate would have been Frances Farenthold, the woman state representative from Corpus Christi, Texas. Sissy, as she's called by her followers, was runner-up in the Vice Presidential balloting in Miami Beach.

She got her big vote mostly because was the women's candidate, but in fact, she's a politician for all genders. In Texas they know that. There she not only came close to winning the gubernatorial nomination in the run-off election, but in the process sent John Connally spinning out of the Democratic Party and over to the Republicans where he belongs.

She pushed Connally out

I know Sissy and am biased in her favor, but it's still true to say the reason she missed out being elected governor of Texas was that she was a better McGovern woman than McGovern was a McGovern man. She endorsed him the day he declared and she stumped the state in a vintage 1941 DC-3 advocating the ideas he once seemed to espouse. She was forthright and her failure to equivocate on anything from busing to abortion cost her. "They'd come to me and want me to say just one word," Sissy said the other day. "I couldn't say it and I'd see that vote walk away."

The feeling among her friends is that she made such a record of good sense and honest statecraft that she will be elected next time around. It is just those qualities as well as her ability to present voters with new ideas without frightening them that McGovern needs right now and didn't get with Eagleton.

Sissy, however, is beyond the imagination of the men who wear the leather pants around the McGovern headquarters. As for the candidate himself, at this writing the word from South Dakota is that he has taken a stand at last and is waiting the reappearance of Gutzon Borglum to chisel his face on Mr. Rushmore.