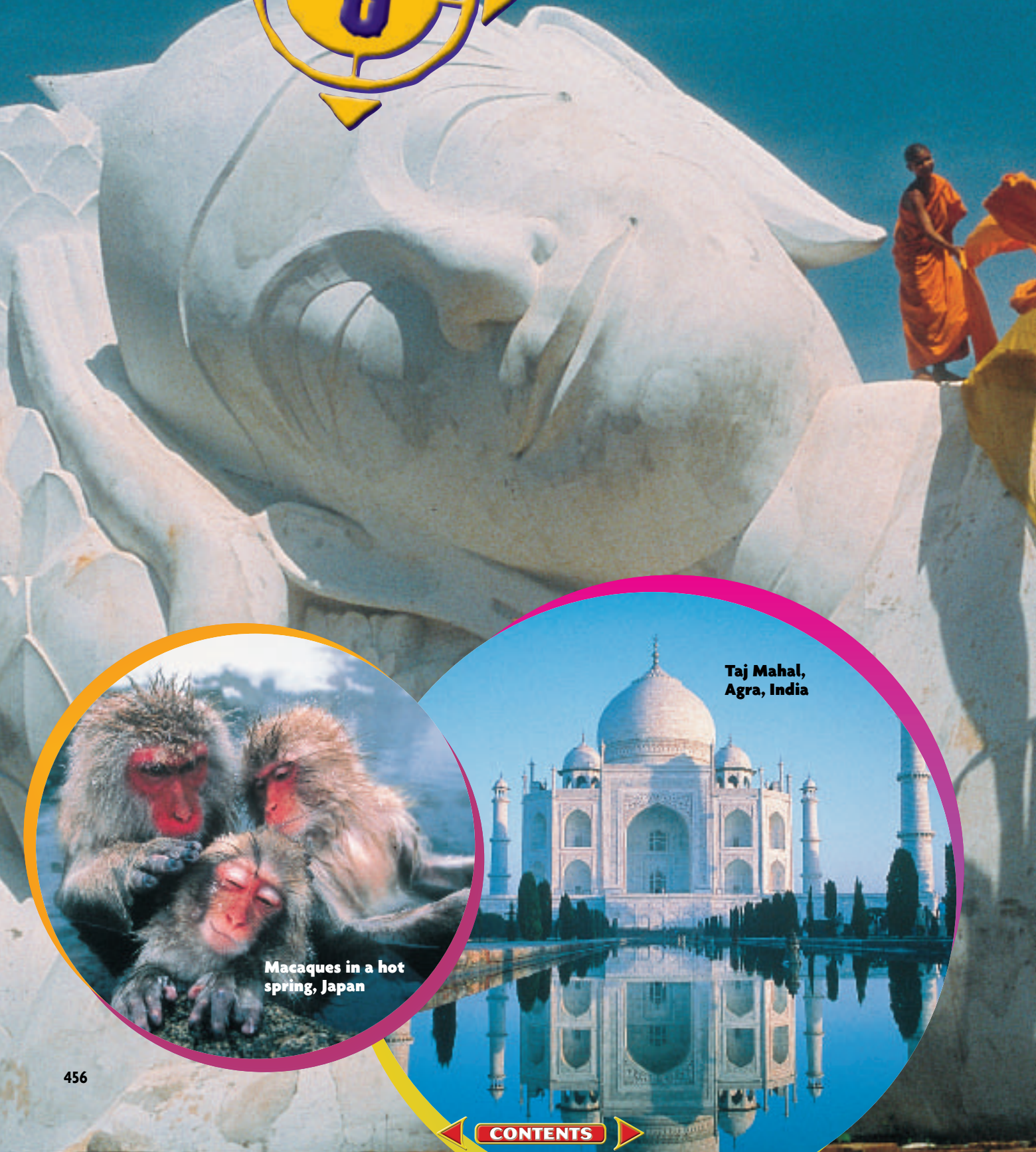
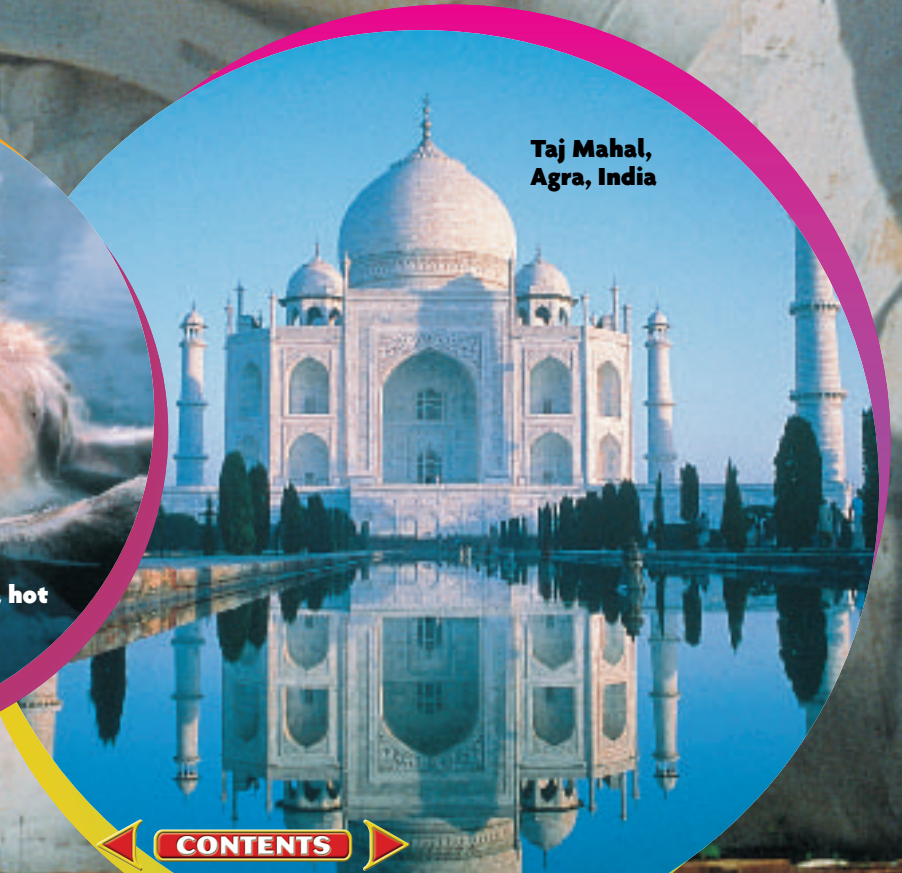


# Unit



**Macaques in a hot spring, Japan**



**Taj Mahal, Agra, India**



# Asia

**F**or many people in the Western Hemisphere, the region of Asia—in the Eastern Hemisphere—brings to mind exotic images. Ancient temples stand in dense rain forests. Farmers work in flooded rice fields. Pandas nibble bamboo shoots. Yet bustling cities, gleaming skyscrapers, and high-technology industries can also be found here. Turn the page to learn more about this region and its more than 3 billion people.



▲  
Monks wrapping statue of Buddha  
in yellow cloth, Thailand

**NGS** ONLINE

[www.nationalgeographic.com/education](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/education)

## Focus on:

# Asia

**THE REGION OF ASIA** is made up of surprisingly diverse landscapes. It includes a large chunk of the Asian continent, together with island groups that fringe its southern and eastern shores. Some of the world's oldest civilizations and religions had their beginnings in Asia. Now more than 3 billion people call this region home.

### The Land

Covering roughly 7.8 million square miles (20.2 sq. km), the Asian region stretches from the mountains of western Pakistan to the eastern shores of Japan. It reaches from the highlands of northeastern China to the tropical islands of Indonesia. The region's long, winding coastlines are washed by two major oceans—the Indian and the Pacific—as well as many seas.

**Lofty Landscape** Several mountain ranges slice through central Asia. Most famous are the towering Himalaya. The earth's tallest peak—Mount Everest—is located here. North of the Himalaya lies the vast Plateau of Tibet, so high it has been called the Roof of the World. Beyond the plateau are two immense deserts: the Taklimakan and the Gobi.

**Ring of Fire** Other mountain ranges cut across northeastern China, run down the Korean Peninsula, and sweep through the peninsulas of Southeast Asia. Japan, Indonesia,

and other mountainous islands lie offshore along the Ring of Fire. This is an area where adjoining plates of the earth's crust slip and buckle, setting off earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

**Mighty Rivers** Great rivers begin in Asia's lofty center. On their journey to the sea, they flow through fertile plains in several countries. The most important rivers include the Indus in Pakistan, the Ganges and Brahmaputra in India and Bangladesh, the Yangtze and Yellow in China, and the Mekong in Southeast Asia.

### The Climate

A person traveling across Asia would need clothes to suit almost every possible climate. The snowcapped mountains and high, wind-swept plateaus of northern and central Asia can be bitterly cold. The deserts can shimmer with heat by day, yet be frosty at night. Lowlands and coastal plains enjoy milder climates. The peninsulas of Southeast Asia and the islands straddling



**Terraced rice fields,  
Bali, Indonesia**



◀ **Street flooded by monsoon  
rain, Tamil Nadu, India**

the Equator have mostly tropical climates. They are cloaked in dense rain forests. Seasonal winds called monsoons blow across much of Asia, bringing dry weather in winter and drenching rains in summer.

## The Economy

Agriculture is the major economic activity across most of Asia. The region's rugged mountains and vast deserts mean that only a small amount of the land is suitable for growing crops, however. For example, only about 10 percent of China's land can be used for agriculture. To feed the region's huge population, Asian farmers must make the most of every possible bit of farmland. Terraces allow farmers to grow rice on steep hillsides. Rice, which grows well in places with warm temperatures and plenty of water, is the most important food crop in Asia. China, India, Indonesia, and Bangladesh are the leading rice producers in the world.

Most of Asia's manufacturing takes place in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, and India.

China and India are rich in coal, iron ore, and other natural resources. Japan, however, has few mineral resources and must import fuel and nearly all the raw materials it uses. Still, Japan has become one of the world's leading manufacturers of cars, electronic products, and other goods. In some of the region's other countries, such as Laos, Vietnam, and Bhutan, industry is less developed.

## The People

Nestled in fertile river valleys, some of the world's oldest civilizations arose in Asia thousands of years ago. Until the 1500s, Asia was more advanced than Europe in culture and technology. East Asians founded cities, set up states, and carved out trade routes.

**Religious Traditions** Ancient religions also took root in Asia. Both Hinduism and Buddhism, for example, originated in India. Hindus remain concentrated in India, but over time Buddhism spread throughout the region. The region's most widespread faith—Islam—began in Southwest Asia.

Europeans arrived in the region around 1500, bringing Christianity to some of the people. By the early 1800s, many Asian countries had fallen under European control. Many became European colonies and Western ideas spread throughout the region.

**Modern Times** In the early 1900s, Japan became Asia's leading power. World War II resulted in Japan's defeat, but it also ended Europe's hold on Asia. Nearly all of the Asian lands ruled by foreigners became independent by the mid-1900s.



◀ Robot welding car bodies in a factory, Japan



In many cases, however, independence in Asia was followed by political turmoil and conflict. Much of the region was caught up in the global struggle between communist and non-communist countries. Many countries were torn apart by civil wars between communists and other groups.

Today China, Vietnam, and North Korea have Communist governments. Nepal and Bhutan are ruled by traditional monarchs. Military leaders control Myanmar. Japan, India, and the Philippines are democracies.

About 3.6 billion people live in Asia. China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Japan are among the world's most heavily populated countries. Asia's population, however, is very unevenly distributed. Most Asians make their homes in river or mountain valleys or near seacoasts. As a result, some parts of Asia are among the most crowded places in the world. They include Bangladesh, eastern China, northern India, southern Japan, and the island of Java in Indonesia.




## Jodhpur, India ▼



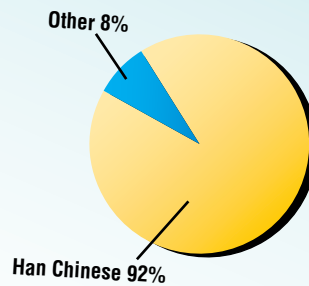
Asia

## China

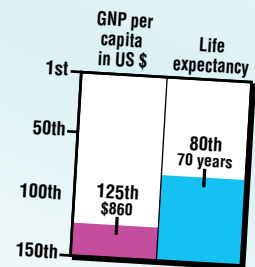
### Data Bits

 Automobiles per 1,000 people	3
 Television sets per 1,000 people	291
 Democratic elections	No

### Ethnic Makeup



### World Ranking



### Population: Urban vs. Rural



Sources: World Desk Reference, 2000; World Development Indicators; The World Factbook, 2003; The World Almanac, 2004.

## Exploring the Region

1. Why is the Plateau of Tibet called the Roof of the World?
2. How do monsoons affect the region?
3. What is the most important food crop in Asia?
4. Name two religions that originated in the region.

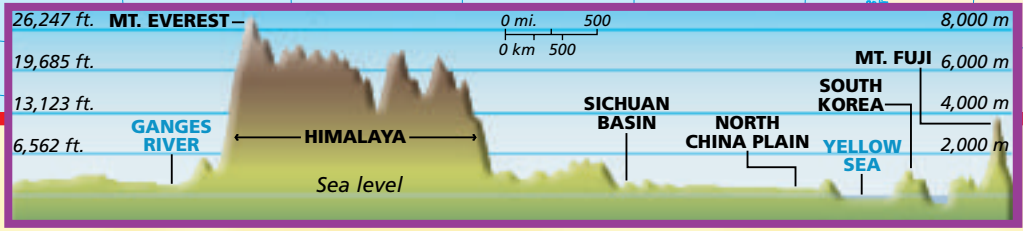
## Asia

### Physical



0 mi. 1,000  
0 km 1,000  
Two-Point Equidistant projection

▲ Mountain peak





## Political





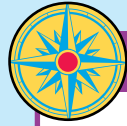
## Asia

### Monsoons



Annual Rainfall	
Inches	Centimeters
More than 60	More than 150
20 to 60	50 to 150
Less than 20	Less than 50

→ Summer wind direction  
← Winter wind direction



### MAP STUDY

- 1 How many inches of rainfall does Indonesia receive in a year?
- 2 In what general direction do most of the summer monsoons blow?



## Geo Extremes

- ① **HIGHEST POINT**  
Mt. Everest  
(Nepal and Tibet)  
29,035 ft. (8,850 m) high
- ② **LOWEST POINT**  
Turpan Depression (China)  
505 ft. (154 m)  
below sea level
- ③ **LONGEST RIVER**  
Yangtze (China)  
3,964 mi.  
(6,380 km) long
- ④ **LARGEST DESERT**  
Gobi (Mongolia and China)  
500,000 sq. mi.  
(1,295,000 sq. km)
- ⑤ **HIGHEST WATERFALL**  
Mawsmai (India)  
1,148 ft. (350 m) high
- ⑥ **LARGEST ISLAND**  
New Guinea (Indonesia  
and Papua New Guinea)  
306,000 sq. mi.  
(792,536 sq. km)
- ⑦ **WETTEST PLACE**  
Mawsynram (India)  
467 in. (1,186 cm)  
average annual rainfall



### COMPARING POPULATION: United States and Selected Countries of Asia

#### UNITED STATES



#### CHINA



#### INDIA



#### INDONESIA



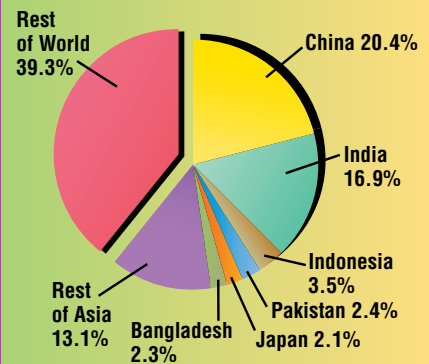
#### JAPAN



= 70,000,000

Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2003.

### WORLD POPULATION: Asia's Share of the World's People





Source: Population Reference Bureau, 2003.

### GRAPHIC STUDY

- ① The highest point in Asia is also the highest point in the world. What is it?
- ② What percentage of the world's population lives in Asia?

## Country Profiles

**BANGLADESH**

**POPULATION:**  
146,700,000  
2,639 per sq. mi.  
1,019 per sq. km

**LANGUAGE:**  
Bengali



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Clothing

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Dhaka

**LANDMASS:**  
55,598 sq. mi.  
143,999 sq. km

**BHUTAN**

**POPULATION:**  
900,000  
52 per sq. mi.  
20 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Dzongkha, Local Languages



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Cardamom

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Fuels

**CAPITAL:**  
Thimphu

**LANDMASS:**  
18,147 sq. mi.  
47,001 sq. km

**BRUNEI**

**POPULATION:**  
400,000  
162 per sq. mi.  
63 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Malay, English, Chinese



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Crude Oil

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Bandar Seri Begawan

**LANDMASS:**  
2,228 sq. mi.  
5,771 sq. km

**CAMBODIA**

**POPULATION:**  
12,600,000  
180 per sq. mi.  
69 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Khmer, French



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Timber

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Construction Materials

**CAPITAL:**  
Phnom Penh

**LANDMASS:**  
69,900 sq. mi.  
181,041 sq. km

**CHINA**

**POPULATION:**  
1,289,000,000  
349 per sq. mi.  
135 per sq. km

**LANGUAGE:**  
Mandarin Chinese



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Machinery

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Beijing

**LANDMASS:**  
3,696,100 sq. mi.  
9,572,899 sq. km

**EAST TIMOR**

**POPULATION:**  
800,000  
136 per sq. mi.  
53 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Tetun, Javanese, Portuguese



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Coconut Products

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Manufactured Goods

**CAPITAL:**  
Dili

**LANDMASS:**  
5,741 sq. mi.  
14,869 sq. km

**INDIA**

**POPULATION:**  
1,069,000,000  
842 per sq. mi.  
325 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Hindi, English, Local Languages


**MAJOR EXPORTS:**  
Gems and Jewelry

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Crude Oil

**CAPITAL:**  
New Delhi

**LANDMASS:**  
1,269,340 sq. mi.  
3,287,591 sq. km

**INDONESIA**




**POPULATION:**  
220,500,000  
300 per sq. mi.  
116 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Crude Oil

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Manufactured Goods

**CAPITAL:**  
Jakarta

**LANDMASS:**  
735,355 sq. mi.  
1,904,569 sq. km

**JAPAN**

**POPULATION:**  
127,500,000  
874 per sq. mi.  
337 per sq. km

**LANGUAGE:**  
Japanese



**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Machinery

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Manufactured Goods

**CAPITAL:**  
Tokyo

**LANDMASS:**  
145,869 sq. mi.  
377,801 sq. km

**LAOS**

**POPULATION:**  
5,600,000  
61 per sq. mi.  
24 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Lao, French

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Wood Products

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Vientiane

**LANDMASS:**  
91,429 sq. mi.  
236,801 sq. km

Countries and flags not drawn to scale



For more information on countries in this region, refer to the Nations of the World Data Bank in the Appendix.

**MALAYSIA**

**POPULATION:**  
25,100,000  
197 per sq. mi.  
76 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Malay, English,  
Chinese

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Electronic  
Equipment

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Kuala Lumpur

**LANDMASS:**  
127,317 sq. mi.  
329,751 sq. km

Kuala Lumpur

**MALDIVES**

**POPULATION:**  
300,000  
2,461 per sq. mi.  
950 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Maldivian Divehi,  
English

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Fish

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Male

**LANDMASS:**  
116 sq. mi.  
300 sq. km

Male

**MONGOLIA**

**POPULATION:**  
2,500,000  
4 per sq. mi.  
2 per sq. km

**LANGUAGE:**  
Khalkha Mongol

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Copper

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Fuels

**CAPITAL:**  
Ulaanbaatar

**LANDMASS:**  
604,826 sq. mi.  
1,566,499 sq. km

Ulaanbaatar

**MYANMAR**

**POPULATION:**  
49,500,000  
189 per sq. mi.  
73 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Burmese,  
Local Languages

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Beans

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Machinery

**CAPITAL:**  
Yangon  
(Rangoon)

**LANDMASS:**  
261,228 sq. mi.  
676,581 sq. km

Yangon  
(Rangoon)

**NEPAL**

**POPULATION:**  
25,200,000  
443 per sq. mi.  
171 per sq. km

**LANGUAGE:**  
Nepali

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Clothing

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Petroleum  
Products

**CAPITAL:**  
Kathmandu

**LANDMASS:**  
56,826 sq. mi.  
147,179 sq. km

Kathmandu

**NORTH KOREA**

**POPULATION:**  
22,700,000  
487 per sq. mi.  
188 per sq. km

**LANGUAGE:**  
Korean

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Minerals

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Petroleum

**CAPITAL:**  
Pyongyang

**LANDMASS:**  
46,541 sq. mi.  
120,541 sq. km

Pyongyang

**PAKISTAN**

**POPULATION:**  
149,100,000  
485 per sq. mi.  
187 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Urdu, English,  
Punjabi, Sindhi

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Cotton

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Petroleum

**CAPITAL:**  
Islamabad

**LANDMASS:**  
307,375 sq. mi.  
796,101 sq. km

Islamabad

**PHILIPPINES**

**POPULATION:**  
81,600,000  
704 per sq. mi.  
272 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Tagalog, English

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Electronic  
Equipment

**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Raw Materials

**CAPITAL:**  
Manila

**LANDMASS:**  
115,830 sq. mi.  
300,000 sq. km

Manila

**SINGAPORE**

**POPULATION:**  
4,200,000  
17,528 per sq. mi.  
6,768 per sq. km

**LANGUAGES:**  
Chinese, Malay,  
Tamil, English

**MAJOR EXPORT:**  
Computer Equipment











**MAJOR IMPORT:**  
Aircraft

**CAPITAL:**  
Singapore

**LANDMASS:**  
239 sq. mi.  
619 sq. km

Singapore

# Country Profiles

 <p><b>SOUTH KOREA</b></p> <p>POPULATION: 47,900,000 1,251 per sq. mi. 483 per sq. km</p> <p>LANGUAGE: Korean</p> <p>MAJOR EXPORT: Electronic Equipment</p> <p>MAJOR IMPORT: Machinery</p> <p>CAPITAL: Seoul</p> <p>LANDMASS: 38,324 sq. mi. 99,259 sq. km</p> 	 <p><b>SRI LANKA</b></p> <p>POPULATION: 19,300,000 761 per sq. mi. 294 per sq. km</p> <p>LANGUAGES: Sinhalese, Tamil, English</p> <p>MAJOR EXPORT: Textiles</p> <p>MAJOR IMPORT: Machinery</p> <p>CAPITAL: Colombo</p> <p>LANDMASS: 25,332 sq. mi. 65,610 sq. km</p> 	 <p><b>TAIWAN*</b></p> <p>POPULATION: 22,600,000 1,616 per sq. mi. 624 per sq. km</p> <p>LANGUAGE: Mandarin Chinese</p> <p>MAJOR EXPORT: Textiles</p> <p>MAJOR IMPORT: Machinery</p> <p>CAPITAL: Taipei</p> <p>LANDMASS: 13,969 sq. mi. 36,180 sq. km</p> 
 <p><b>THAILAND</b></p> <p>POPULATION: 63,100,000 318 per sq. mi. 123 per sq. km</p> <p>LANGUAGES: Thai, Local Languages</p> <p>MAJOR EXPORT: Manufactured Goods</p> <p>MAJOR IMPORT: Machinery</p> <p>CAPITAL: Bangkok</p> <p>LANDMASS: 198,116 sq. mi. 513,120 sq. km</p> 	 <p><b>VIETNAM</b></p> <p>POPULATION: 80,800,000 631 per sq. mi. 244 per sq. km</p> <p>LANGUAGES: Vietnamese, Local Languages</p> <p>MAJOR EXPORT: Crude Oil</p> <p>MAJOR IMPORT: Machinery</p> <p>CAPITAL: Hanoi</p> <p>LANDMASS: 128,066 sq. mi. 331,691 sq. km</p> 	<p>* The People's Republic of China claims Taiwan as its 23rd province.</p>

Countries and flags not drawn to scale

## BUILDING CITIZENSHIP

**Women's Rights** Not all countries have the same laws for men and women. In some countries, women are not allowed to own property, vote, go to school, or work. Part of the reason for this is that women's contributions to society in the area of raising children and running a household are not as valued as men's contributions.

Why is it important in the United States that men and women have equal rights and that those rights are protected by the law?

### WRITE ABOUT IT

Imagine that you are a sixth grade exchange student from an Asian country. Write a letter to your sister at home describing some activities that girls in your American school take part in on an equal basis with boys.



Vietnamese mother and baby ▶