

## Squiz the World goes to... Bangladesh

Each fortnight, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Christie Kijurina, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting a place playing host to the 2024 ICC T20 Women's Cricket World Cup. It has an ancient history but is a relatively young country. It's the home of the magnificent Bengal tiger and is one of the most densely packed places on the planet.

Can you guess? Strap yourselves into the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at Bangladesh.

### JUST THE FACTS

Bangladesh is nestled to the west, north, and east of its big neighbour, India, and meets the enormous Bay of Bengal to the south. It's one of the flattest countries in the world, with most of the land sitting less than 10 metres above sea level! That's like... shorter than a giraffe!

More than 700 rivers crisscross through Bangladesh, and one of the biggest is the Padma River. You might have heard of it because it's known as the Ganges when it flows through India. Water is super important in Bangladesh. It provides the fish and the water that farmers need to grow crops in a country where most people still live in rural areas.

Bangladesh is also home to the largest mangrove forest in the world. Mangroves are plants that can tolerate salty water. The forest is called the Sundarbans, where the famous Bengal tiger prowls! This powerful animal is a symbol of strength, courage, and pride in Bangladesh. Sadly, the Bengal tiger is endangered, with many of the remaining population surviving in the Sundarbans. Luckily the government and global organisations like the World Wildlife Fund have put protections in place to help restore its population. The tiger is so important to Bangladesh that the national cricket team is even called the 'Bangladesh Tigers'! More on that later...

Now, this might surprise you—Bangladesh has six seasons! One of them is the tropical monsoon season, where heavy rains flood huge parts of the country. Because Bangladesh is so low-lying, when the rain comes, it can cause major floods, and sometimes hundreds of thousands of people have to leave their homes.

Bangladesh is only a little bigger than two Tasmanias combined, but it's bursting with over 15 times Australia's population! That's a lot of people in a smaller space! And with sea levels on the rise, experts warn that up to 30 million people may have to abandon their homes in the next 10 years

Whenever you travel, it's important to know a bit about the history of the place you're visiting. So, let's do a little bit of...

## TIME TRAVEL

People have lived in what we now call Bangladesh for at least 20,000 years! But it wasn't always known by that name. The region was historically part of Bengal—just like the famous Bengal tiger. Today, 99% of the population speaks Bangla, also known as Bengali, but there are over 36 Indigenous languages spoken across the country, reflecting its rich cultural diversity.

Bengal has a long history of art, literature, and storytelling, and some of that creativity was influenced by the Muslim Mughal Empire, which ruled the region between the 16th and 18th centuries. The Mughals left a lasting mark on the architecture, food, and culture of Bangladesh.

But then, in the late 18th century, Bengal was taken over by the British Empire. When the British left in 1947, the land was given to Pakistan and became known as East Pakistan. It took a fierce fight for independence, but in 1971, Bangladesh was finally recognised as its own nation.

And here's a fun fact: today, about 50,000 people in Australia trace their roots back to Bangladesh!

That brings us to the present! Now that we've learned a bit about where Bangladesh came from, it's ...

## TIME FOR SCHOOL

School is compulsory from Grades One to Eight in Bangladesh, meaning that kids have to attend. Just like in Australia, public schools provide free education for primary school students, but here's the catch: secondary school (grades 9 to 12) isn't compulsory, although lots of kids do continue their studies.

The school year in Bangladesh runs from January to December, so while you're on summer holidays in December, kids in Bangladesh are wrapping up their final exams! The school day usually starts around 8:00 AM and finishes between 1:00 and 3:00 PM. Some schools, especially in rural areas, have morning shifts so the kids can work in their family business or farm in the afternoons.

Most kids wear uniforms, just like in Australia. And when it's time for lunch, many bring a homemade meal, often including rice, vegetables, lentils, and fish—or maybe a tasty snack like paratha (a type of flatbread) or samosas.

As for subjects, students study Bangla (the national language), English, maths, science, and social science—plus Islamic Studies or Moral Education for non-Muslims. PE is taught too, but it's not as big a deal as it is in Australian schools.

Speaking of PE, why don't we find out what Bangladeshi kids play in...

## SPORT TIME

We mentioned at the top of the podcast that the ICC T20 Women's World Cup is being hosted by Bangladesh, and I think it's fair to say that Bangladeshis love cricket. Cricket is the most popular sport in the country, with huge crowds gathering to watch their national teams play and their men's and women's teams are both ranked among the best in the world.

But cricket isn't the only sport Bangladeshi kids enjoy. Have you ever heard of Kabaddi? It's the national sport of Bangladesh, and it's totally different from cricket!

Kabaddi has been played in South Asia for thousands of years, and it's a mix of wrestling, tag, and strategy. It's a team game where players take turns running into the other team's half of the field, tagging as many opponents as possible, and then trying to run back to their own side without getting tackled. The tricky part? While tagging the other team, you have to hold your breath the entire time! Players chant "kabaddi, kabaddi" to show they aren't breathing in. Oooh that's tough!

If you want to have a go (it's super fun!) I've stuck a link to a video of the rules in the episode notes.

Phew! I've learned a ton about Bangladesh, and now I'm starving! I think it might be...

## DINNER TIME

When it comes to dining in Bangladesh, there are a few important rules to remember. For starters, many Bangladeshis eat with their hands, but only the right hand! The left hand is considered unclean because it's used for [Umhm] personal hygiene, so it's never used to pass food or eat.

As for the food, Bangladeshis love their rice, fish curry, and lentils. Fish is a big part of the diet, and Bangladesh is one of the most vegetarian-friendly countries in the world, with people eating on average, just 4 kilos of meat in a year and usually only on special occasions. Compare that to Australia: where the average Aussie eats 89 kilos of meat every year.

And let's not forget about dessert! Sweets are a big favourite, and many are made with milk. I've included a link to a simple recipe for a dessert called Sandesh in your episode notes—it only has three ingredients: milk, lemon juice, and, of course, sugar!

## THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 Which country is Bangladesh surrounded by on three sides? India

Question 2 Which majestic animal lives in the Sundarban Mangrove Forest? The Bengla Tiger

Question 3 How many seasons are there in Bangladesh? Six

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to Bangladesh.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.