Three Southeast Asian Nations

Brunei, Cambodia, and Laos

Brunei

Geography and Population
Area: 2,226 square miles, slightly smaller than Delaware
Population: 422,675

Government
Freedom House rating from “Freedom in the World 2015” (ranking of political rights and civil liberties in 195 countries): Not Free
Type: Constitutional sultanate
Chief of State and Head of Government: Sultan and Prime Minister Sir Hassanal Bolkiah (since October 5, 1967)
Elections: none
Legislative branch: Legislative Council (33 members, appointed by the Sultan)
Judicial highest courts: Supreme Court with two chambers (Court of Appeal and High Court; both have a chief justice and two judges); Sharia Court of Appeal
Judges: Appointed by the Sultan; Supreme Court serve until 65; no term limit for Sharia Court of Appeal

Economy
GDP: $32.11 billion
Per Capita Income: $77,700
Unemployment Rate: 2.6 percent
Population Below Poverty Line: data not available
Inflation Rate: 0.2 percent
Agricultural Products: rice, vegetables, fruits, chicken, cattle
Industries: petroleum, petroleum refining, liquefied natural gas, construction, transportation

Society
Religion: 78.8 percent Muslim, 8.7 percent Christian, 7.8 percent Buddhist
Life Expectancy: Approximately 77 years
Literacy Rate: 95.4 percent

Major Contemporary Issues
Human Rights: Under the new penal codes issued by the Sultan in 2013, citizens face harsh penalties for breaking Sharia law, including stoning, flogging, and limb amputation. Brunei is able to deflect calls for reform because of the vast wealth from energy resources.

SOURCES
Cambodia

Geography and Population
Area: 69,898 square miles, slightly smaller than Oklahoma
Population: 15.5 million

Government
Freedom House rating from “Freedom in the World 2015” (ranking of political rights and civil liberties in 195 countries): Not Free
Type: Multiparty democracy under a constitution monarchy
Chief of State: King Norodom Sihamoni (since October 29, 2004)
Head of Government: Prime Minister Hun Sen (since January 14, 1985)
Elections: King chosen by Royal Throne Council from all eligible royal males; Prime Minister is chosen by the majority party and appointed by the king
Legislative branch: Bicameral, consisting of the Senate (61 seats, serving five-year terms) and the National Assembly (123 seats, elected by popular vote, serving five-year terms)
Judicial highest courts: Supreme Court (five and nine judge panels including a court chief and deputy chief); Constitutional Court (nine judges)
Judges: Judges recommended by the Supreme Council of Magistracy, appointed by monarch; Supreme Court judges have no term limits; Constitutional Court judges serve 9 year terms, a third of the court selected every three years

Economy
GDP: $50.25 billion
Per Capita Income: $3,300
Unemployment Rate: 0 percent (2011 est.); 0.3 percent (2010 est.)
Population Below Poverty Line: 20 percent
Inflation Rate: 4.2 percent
Agricultural Products: rice, rubber, corn, vegetables, cashews, cassava, silk
Industries: tourism, garments, construction, rice milling, fishing, gem mining, textiles

Society
Religion: 96.9 percent Buddhist, 1.9 percent Muslim, 0.4 percent Christian
Life Expectancy: 63.78 years
Literacy Rate: 73.9 percent

Major Contemporary Issues
Human Trafficking: Cambodia is a source and a transit country for sex and labor trafficking. The country is currently listed as a Tier 2 Watch List, meaning that the government does not fully meet the minimum standards for eradicating trafficking.
Deforestation: In 2000, a study conducted by the Asian Development Bank called Cambodia’s forest management program a “total system failure.” A UN report on the matter stated that rainforest cover in Cambodia went from 70 percent in 1970 to 3.1 percent in 2007. Illegal logging continues in the country despite warnings from these organizations.

Sources
Laos

Geography and Population
Area: 91,429 square miles, slightly larger than Utah
Population: 6.8 million

Government
Freedom House rating from “Freedom in the World 2015” (ranking of political rights and civil liberties in 195 countries): Not Free
Type: Communist state
Chief of State: President Lt. Gen. Choummali Saignason (since June 8, 2006)
Head of Government: Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong
Elections: President elected by National Assembly (five-year terms); prime minister nominated by president and elected by National Assembly (five-year term)
Legislative branch: National Assembly (132 seats, elected by popular vote from a list of candidates created by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and serve five-year terms)
Judicial highest courts: People's Supreme Court (no set amount)
Judges: President of People's Supreme Court (elected by National Assembly, no term limit); Vice President of People's Supreme Court and other judges (appointed by national Assembly Standing Committee, no term limit)

Economy
GDP: $34.48 billion
Per Capita Income: $5,000
Unemployment Rate: 1.3 percent
Population Below Poverty Line: 22 percent
Inflation Rate: 4.7 percent
Agricultural Products: sweet potatoes, vegetables, coffee, sugarcane, tea, water buffalo, cattle
Industries: mining, timber, electric power, rubber, agricultural processing, garments

Society
Religion: 67 percent Buddhist, 1.5 percent Christian, 31.5 percent other/unspecified
Life Expectancy: 63.51 years
Literacy Rate: 72.7 percent

Major Contemporary Issues
Drugs: Opium poppy cultivation is a major issue in Laos. Production is estimated at 17 metric tons. There is also a growing use of methamphetamines in the country.
Human Rights: As a communist state, Laos does not have free or fair elections. The US State Department also outlines corruption in the Laos judiciary and police systems. Additional violations include arbitrary arrests, restrictions on religious freedom, infringement of freedoms of speech, and restrictions on privacy.

SOURCES