

# 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

“Brunei,” *Freedom in the World 2014*, *Freedom House*, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/mspnqtd>.

“The World Factbook: Brunei,” *CIA.gov*, last modified June 23, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/4u3d8u>.



# 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

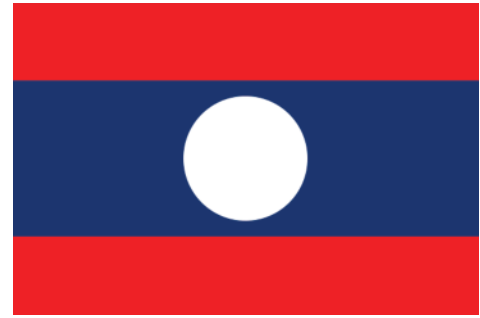
D.R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia: Past and Present* 6th. ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010).

“Brief on National Forest Inventory, NFI: Cambodia” *FAO.org*, June 2007, accessed on January 26, 2015,

<http://tinyurl.com/nbalqfs>.

“The World Factbook: Cambodia,” *CIA.gov*, last modified June 20, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/5qhhho>.

# 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

“Laos 2013 Human Rights Report,” *State.gov*, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://tinyurl.com/mb5fqrs>.

“The World Factbook: Laos,” *CIA.gov*, last modified June 20, 2014, <http://tinyurl.com/5qhho>.