INDIA



Source: esri

General

India - officially the Republic of India - is the second-most populous country in the world. It is bounded by the Indian Ocean on the South, the Arabian Sea on the Southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the Southeast. It shares land borders with Pakistan in the West, China, Nepal and Bhutan in the Northeast, and Myanmar and Bangladesh in the East. In the Indian Ocean, India is in the vicinity of Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands share a maritime border with Thailand and Indonesia. The area of India is 329 Mha (million hectares) with, in 2022, a population of 1420 million, or 4.3 persons per ha (Wikipedia and United Nations, 2022).

Climate and geography

The Indian climate is strongly influenced by the Himalayas and the Thar Desert, both drive the summer and winter monsoons. The Himalayas prevent cold Central Asian winds from blowing in, keeping the bulk of the Indian subcontinent warmer than most locations at similar latitudes. The Thar Desert plays a crucial role in attracting the moisture-laden south-west summer monsoon winds that, between June and October, provide the majority of India's rainfall. Four major climatic groupings predominate: tropical wet, tropical dry, subtropical humid, and montane. Temperatures in India have risen by 0.7 °C between 1901 and 2018. Climate change_is often thought to be the cause. The retreat of Himalayan glaciers has adversely affected the flow rate_of the major Himalayan rivers, including the Ganges_and the Brahmaputra (source: Wikipedia).

India accounts for the major part of the Indian subcontinent, lying atop the Indian tectonic plate, a part of the Indo-Australian Plate. Immediately south of the Himalayas, plate movement created a vast trough that rapidly filled with sediment and now constitutes the Indo-Gangetic Plain. The original Indian plate makes its first appearance above the sediment in the ancient Aravalli range, which extends from the Delhi Ridge in a south-westerly direction. In the west lies the Thar Desert. The remaining Indian Plate survives as peninsular India, the oldest and geologically most stable part of India. It extends as far north as the Satpura and Vindhya ranges in central India. These parallel chains run from the Arabian Sea coast in Gujarat in the West to the Chota Nagpur Plateau in Jharkhand in the East. In the south, the remaining peninsular landmass, the Deccan Plateau, is flanked on the West and East by coastal ranges known as the Western and Eastern Ghats (source: Wikipedia).

India's coastline measures 7,520 km; of this distance, 5,420 km belong to peninsular India and the remaining to the islands. The mainland coastline consists of 43% sandy beaches; 11% rocky shores, including cliffs; and 46% mudflats_or marshy shores (source: Wikipedia).

Major rivers originating in the Himalayas flowing through India include the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, both of which discharge via Bangladesh into the Bay of Bengal. Important tributaries of the Ganges include the Yamuna and Kosi rivers; the latter's extremely low gradient, caused by long-term silt deposition, leads to severe floods and course changes. Major peninsular rivers, whose steeper gradients prevent their waters from flooding, include the Godavari, the Mahanadi, the Kaveri, and the Krishna, which also discharge into the Bay of Bengal; and the Narmada_and the Tapti, which discharge into the Arabian Sea. Coastal features include the marshy Rann of Kutch in western India and the Sundarbans delta in eastern India; the latter is shared with Bangladesh.

The Centre for Civil Engineering Research and Codes (CUR) and Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water management (1993) describe that in the deltaic areas of the Ganges in India (Sunderbans in West-Bengal), islands have been reclaimed by the local farmers through constructing bunds or ring dikes. In many cases, the elevation of these lands is not higher than 1.5 to 2.0 m below high tide level. As a result, the conditions for gravity drainage are poor, there are many difficulties in closing breached dikes and considerable damage may occur through flooding. Reclamation of such land is therefore considered untimely or premature. According to the Indian regulations no land can be reclaimed, until its elevation is higher than 0.3 to 0.5 m below high water.

Existing polders

According to Babu (1992) the entire land water complex of the Kuttanad area is often called the Holland of Kerala. The Group Polder Development (1982) describes that the Kuttanad polders have an area of about 10,000 ha and a surface area upto 1.5 m-MSL (mean sea level). The Centre for Civil Engineering Research and Codes (CUR) and Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water management (1993) mention that the Kuttanad polder in Kerala can be up to 3.0 m-MSL. James (2004) describes that there are 1231 polders with a total area of 55,000 ha. Gopakumar et al. (2007) and Schultz et al. (2013) give an overview of the development of the area (Figure 1). Gopakumar et al. (2007) describe that the total area is 110,800 ha, of which 28% is located at about 1 m+MSL, 60% located at 0.6 - 2.2 m-MSL and 12% consists of interlinking water bodies. This would imply that about 66,000 ha are polders. They also describe that there were frequent problems with flooding during the wet monsoon and salinity intrusion during the dry monsoon. To encounter these problems the government of Kerala State initiated in 1950 a comprehensive scheme for the development of Kuttanad. The scheme included the Thottapally spillway (1955) for diversion of a part of the floodwaters from the upper Kuttanad directly to the sea; the Thanneermukkom Barrage (1975 – 1981) salt water barrier across the narrow portion of the Vembanad Lake, and a lock on the southern boundary of the lowland to prevent the entry of saline water from the southern side. Since then there have been new reclamations, of which the most recent are located in water at 2.5 m-MSL.



Figure 1. Location of the Vembanad-Kuttanad area (Gopakumar et al., 2007)

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) mentions that the Kuttanad Wetland Agriculture System is unique, as it is the only system in India that favours rice cultivation below sea level in the land created by draining delta swamps in brackish waters. This system also allows fisheries systems, livestock and home garden to be grown.

In its report the Department of Public Works (1978) presents a general description and a situation map of the Bhal Reclamation Scheme, According to the Group Polder Development (1982) the scheme consists of some 22,000 ha that is protected against the sea. In the region regularly salinity problems are being encountered.

The Group Polder Development (1982) also mentions that in the Lagoon of Koshia there is an impoldered area of 50,000 ha and in the Western Sunderbans an area of about 360,000 ha.

The total area of the Salt Lakes near Calcutta is about 12,000 ha. Of the area about 7,000 ha has been reclaimed as a polder (Group Polder Development, 1982).

The Group Polder Development (1982) also mentions that about 80,000 ha coastal lands have been reclaimed in the State of Maharastra.

They also mention that there are existing and proposed polders in the deltaic areas of the rivers along east coast of India, but don't specify the reclaimed area. Mention is made of the Cauvery Delta, Godavari Delta, Krishna Delta and Mahanadi Delta.

General characteristics of the polders in India are shown in Table I.

Proposed polders

There is a long standing plan to close of the Gulf of Khambat and to reclaim tidal areas in the gulf. However, so far construction has not yet started.

Location of the polders in India as shown on the World polder map

The location of the polders in India is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Location of the polders in India (source: esri – Batavialand)

The pictures by Prof. Adriaan Volker are shown in Table II.

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Lelystad, July 2023

Name	Reclamation	Area in ha	Type *)	Latitudes	Longitudes	Elevation in m+MSL	Land use
Kuttanad Polders	1834-1984	66,000	RLL	9° 21' N	76° 24' E	18	Agriculture and nature
Polders in Lake Vambanad	1920-1975	719	DL	9° 40' N	76° 27' E	1	Agriculture
Bhal Reclamation Scheme		22,000	LGS	21° 51' N	72° 13' E	16	Agriculture
Polders along the east coast:							
Cauvery Delta			RLL	11º 21' N	79° 48' E	14	Agriculture
Godavari Delta			RLL	16° 36' N	82° 2' E	14	Agriculture
Krishna Delta			RLL	15° 47' N	80° 55' E	23	Agriculture
Mahanadi Delta			RLL	20° 16' N	86° 10' E	21	Agriculture
Polders in the Lagoon of Koshia		50,000	LGS	9° 56' N	76° 17' E	20	Agriculture
Reclaimed coastal lands in Maharashtra		80,000	LGS	19º 08' N	72° 56' E	2	Agriculture
Reclaimed Salt Lakes		7,000	DL				
Vavakkad paddy polder			RLL	10° 09' N	76° 11' E	0	Rice
Western Sunderbans		360,000	RLL	9° 40' N	76° 27' E	20	Agriculture and nature
Total		585,719					

Table I. General characteristics of existing polders in India

*) RLL = reclaimed low-lying land; LGS = land gained on the sea; DL = drained lake



A7 007/IV.7.7 A7 008/IV.7.8 A7 009/IV.7.9 A7 006/IV.7.6 Maquette of the delta area Maquette of the delta area Central Office ICID New Delhi. Maquette of the delta area Picture taken during the 6th Congres of the International Commission on irrigation and Drainage (ICID), 4-13 January 1966 New Delhi, in India in the state of th A7 010/IV.7.10 A7 012/IV.7.12 A7 011/IV.7.11 A7 013/IV.7.13 Barrier in river or sea arm Barrier in river or sea arm Barrier in river or sea arm Barrier in river or sea arm





Table II. Pictures of polders and lowlands in India by Prof. Adriaan Volker (continued)





Table II. Pictures of polders and lowlands in India by Prof. Adriaan Volker (continued)



A7 075/IV.7.75 A7 076/IV.7.76 A7 074/IV.7.74 A7 077/IV.7.77 Lowland area, presumably Bagjola Traditional fisher boats, presumably Lowland area, presumably Bagjola Lowland area, presumably Bagjola Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme near Bagjola Ghui I Jatragachi Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme Drainage Scheme A7 078/IV.7.78 A7 079/IV.7.79 A7 080/IV.7.80 A7 081/IV.7.81 Lowland area, presumably Bagjola Lowland area, presumably Bagjola Lowland area, presumably Bagjola Lowland area Sunderbans, test section Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme for dike with protection of the outer slope with stone blocks A7 085/IV.7.85 A7 082/IV.7.82 A7 083/IV.7.83 A7 084/IV.7.84 Lowland area Sunderbans, test Lowland area Sunderbans, test Lowland area Sunderbans, test section Lowland area, presumably Bagjola section for dike with protection of section for dike with protection of for dike with protection of the outer Ghui I Jatragachi Drainage Scheme the outer slope with stone blocks the outer slope with stone blocks slope with stone blocks



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C4 3 027/C.4.3.27	C4 3 028/C.4.3.28	C4 3 029/C.4.3.29	C4 3 030/C.4.3.30
River. September presumably	River. September presumably 1982	Segment of a discharge sluice.	Shiplock.
1982		September presumably 1982	September presumably 1982
C4 3 031/C.4.3.31	C4 3 032/C.4.3.32	C4 3 033/C.4.3.33	C4 3 034/C.4.3.34
Road over discharge sluice.	Shiplock.	Discharge sluice.	Dike along river.
September presumably 1991	September presumably 1982	September presumably 1991	September presumably 1991
C4 3 035/C.4.3.35	C4 4 001/C.4.4.1	C4 4 002/C.4.4.2	C4 4 003/C.4.4.3
Installation of a drain. September presumably 1991	House in lowland area	Presumably drain in lowland area	Presumably drain in lowland area





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A9 076/D1.IX.76		
Bank protection in Kuttanad area		

Table II. Pictures of polders and lowlands in India by Prof. Adriaan Volker (continued)