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Location and Extent of Manipur

Manipur is a northeastern state of India, known for its rich cultural heritage, picturesque landscapes, and significant role in the socio-political and economic dynamics of the region. It shares borders with Myanmar (Burma) to the east and is surrounded by the states of Nagaland, Mizoram, and Assam. Its unique geographical position and strategic location make it a key area in the Indian subcontinent. This article delves into the location and extent of Manipur, highlighting its geographical features, boundaries, and significance.

Geographical Location

Manipur is located in the northeastern part of India, in the lap of the Eastern Himalayas. The state lies between 23°83′N and 25°68′N latitudes and 93°03′E and 94°78′E longitudes. Its unique location places it in a strategic position at the confluence of India's northeastern frontier and Southeast Asia. This geographical position has led to Manipur's importance as a gateway to India from Southeast Asia and vice versa, enhancing both trade and cultural exchange.

Key Coordinates:

- **Latitude:** 23°83′N – 25°68′N
- **Longitude:** 93°03′E – 94°78′E

Manipur is situated at an altitude ranging from 790 meters to 2,994 meters above sea level, with its topography ranging from hilly terrain to valleys, making the region ecologically diverse.

Boundaries and Neighboring Regions

Manipur shares its boundaries with Myanmar to the east and is bordered by the Indian states of Nagaland to the north, Mizoram to the south, and Assam to the west. These borders are significant not only for the state's geographical makeup but also for its strategic importance in terms of trade, defense, and cultural connections.

1. International Border with Myanmar

The eastern boundary of Manipur forms an international border with Myanmar, stretching approximately 398 kilometers. This border is of high geopolitical importance, as it connects India to Southeast Asia. The border facilitates trade and cultural interactions and is a critical point for security and strategic military considerations.

2. Neighboring States

- **Nagaland (North):** Manipur shares a border with Nagaland to the north. The Nagaland-Manipur border region is rugged and predominantly hilly.
- **Mizoram (South):** To the south, Manipur is bordered by Mizoram. The hilly terrain continues across this border, and both states share common environmental features, including tropical forests and a humid subtropical climate.
- **Assam (West):** To the west, Manipur shares a border with Assam. The Barak River, which forms part of the boundary, is one of the main natural demarcations between the two states.

Physical Features and Topography

Manipur is characterized by varied topography. The state consists of two distinct geographical regions: the **Manipur Valley** and the **Surrounding Hills**.

1. Manipur Valley

The valley is situated at an altitude of about 790 meters above sea level. The valley is the heart of the state, where the majority of the population resides. It is surrounded by hills, forming a natural basin. The valley is the site of the capital city, **Imphal**, and is fertile, with agricultural activities being the primary source of livelihood for the population.

2. Surrounding Hills

The state is encircled by hills, most of which are part of the **Mizo Hills** to the south and the **Naga Hills** to the north. These hills are part of the **Purvanchal Range**, which is a branch of the larger Eastern Himalayan range. The average elevation of the hills is between 1,000 meters and 2,000 meters above sea level. The rugged terrain and diverse flora and fauna contribute to the ecological richness of the region.

Climate and Weather

The state enjoys a **tropical monsoon climate** in the valley and a more temperate climate in the hilly regions. The Manipur Valley experiences warm summers and cool winters, while the surrounding hills have cooler temperatures throughout the year.

Monsoon Season:

- The monsoon season is from June to September, with heavy rainfall during this period, which is crucial for the agriculture of the region.

Summer:

- Summers are warm, with temperatures ranging from 25°C to 35°C in the valley. The hilly regions remain relatively cooler, with temperatures ranging between 15°C and 25°C.

Winter:

- Winters in Manipur are cool, particularly in the valley, where temperatures can drop as low as 4°C. In the hills, temperatures can fall below freezing point in certain areas.

Area and Extent

Manipur covers an area of approximately **22,327 square kilometers**, making it one of the smaller states in India. Despite its modest size, its location and landscape make it ecologically significant and culturally rich. The state's land area is divided primarily into two regions:

1. **Manipur Valley:** Covers about 2,500 square kilometers.

2. **Hilly Region:** Accounts for the remaining area, with forested lands and rugged terrain.

Strategic Importance

Manipur's location makes it one of the most strategic states in India. It serves as the gateway to Southeast Asia due to its proximity to Myanmar and its position in the Indo-Myanmar region. The international border with Myanmar also facilitates cross-border trade, cultural exchange, and tourism. Furthermore, the state holds significant importance in India's security apparatus, especially concerning its northeastern frontier, making its location geopolitically sensitive.

Physiographic Divisions of Manipur

Manipur, a jewel of Northeast India, is a land of remarkable physical diversity. Its landscape is a captivating blend of verdant valleys, rolling hills, and towering mountains, creating a mosaic of ecosystems and breathtaking scenery. This article delves into the intricate physiographic divisions that characterize this enchanting state.

Two Main Physiographic Regions:

Manipur's physiography can be broadly classified into two distinct regions:

1. **The Manipur River Valley:** This central valley, an oval-shaped basin, forms the heart of Manipur. Covering approximately 700 square miles, it lies at an average elevation of 790 meters above sea level. The valley gently slopes from north to south, cradled by protective mountain ranges.
    - **Logtak Lake:** A prominent feature of the valley is Loktak Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India. This lake plays a vital role in the region's ecology and economy.
    - **Fertile Plains:** The valley floor is composed of fertile alluvial soil, making it ideal for agriculture, particularly rice cultivation.
2. **The Surrounding Hill Ranges:** Encircling the Manipur River Valley is a series of hill ranges, running predominantly north-south. These hills, interspersed with narrow valleys and deep gorges, create a rugged and picturesque terrain.
    - **Mountain Ranges:** Notable ranges include the Naga Hills to the north, the East Manipur Hills along the Myanmar border, the Mizo and Chin Hills to the south, and the West Manipur Hills to the west.
    - **Elevation:** The average elevation of these hills varies between 5,000 and 6,000 feet, with some peaks in the north exceeding 9,500 feet.
    - **Barak River:** The Barak River (known as the Surma River outside Manipur) carves a path through the West Manipur Hills, creating a steep-sided valley.

Impact on Climate and Biodiversity:

The physiography of Manipur significantly influences its climate and biodiversity. The surrounding hills act as a barrier, protecting the valley from cold northern winds and cyclonic storms from the Bay of Bengal. This results in a pleasant, subtropical climate in the valley, while the hills experience cooler temperatures and higher rainfall. The diverse topography also supports a wide range of flora and fauna, making Manipur a biodiversity hotspot.

Physiographic Subdivisions:

For a more detailed understanding, Manipur can be further divided into several smaller physiographic units:

- **Northern Mountains:** This region is characterized by high, rugged mountains, including the Naga Hills, with elevations reaching over 9,500 feet.
- **Eastern Hills:** Bordering Myanmar, the Eastern Hills are a series of parallel ranges and valleys, covered in dense forests.
- **Western Hills:** The Western Hills are dissected by the Barak River, creating a complex topography of steep slopes and narrow valleys.
- **Southern Hills:** This region comprises the Mizo and Chin Hills, gradually sloping southwards towards Mizoram.
- **Central Valley:** The fertile Manipur River Valley, with its alluvial plains and Loktak Lake, forms the core of this subdivision.

Importance of Physiography:

Understanding Manipur's physiographic divisions is crucial for various reasons:

- **Agriculture:** The fertile valley supports agriculture, while the hills are suitable for horticulture and forestry.
- **Water Resources:** The rivers and lakes are vital for irrigation, hydropower, and fisheries.
- **Disaster Management:** The hilly terrain is prone to landslides and earthquakes, necessitating effective disaster preparedness.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Constructing roads and other infrastructure in the hilly regions requires careful planning and engineering.
- **Conservation:** Recognizing the diverse ecosystems and their interconnections is essential for biodiversity conservation.

Valley Region

The Manipur Valley, located in the northeastern part of India, is a region of immense geographical, cultural, and historical significance. This article delves into the various aspects of the Manipur Valley, exploring its topography, economy, biodiversity, human geography, and role in the broader context of India's development.

1. Geographical Location and Features

The Manipur Valley, often referred to as the "heart of Manipur," is nestled within the larger state of Manipur, which is bordered by Nagaland to the north, Myanmar to the east, Mizoram to the south, and Assam to the west. The valley is located at an altitude ranging from 790 to