



Location: Southern Asia, north and west of Pakistan, east of Iran.

Area total: 647,500 sq km

Area - comparative: slightly smaller than Texas

Border countries: China 76 km, Iran 936 km, Pakistan 2,430 km, Tajikistan 1,206 km, Turkmenistan 744 km, Uzbekistan 137 km.

Capital: Kabul

Climate: arid to semiarid; cold winters and hot summers

Terrain: mostly rugged mountains; plains in north and southwest

Geography: landlocked; the Hindu Kush mountains that run northeast to southwest divide the northern provinces from the rest of the country; the highest peaks are in the northern Wakhan (Wakhan Corridor).

Afghanistan, (which literally means Land of the Afghan) is a mountainous land-locked country located in Central Asia. It has a history and culture that goes back over 5000 years. Throughout its long, splendid, and sometimes chaotic history, this area of the world has been known by various names. In ancient times, its inhabitants called the land Aryana. In the medieval era, it was called Khorasan, and in modern times, its people have decided to call it Afghanistan. The exact population of Afghanistan is unknown, however, it is estimated to be somewhere around 21-26 million.



Afghanistan is a heterogeneous nation, in which there are four major ethnic groups: Pashtoons, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. Numerous other minor ethnic groups (Nuristanis, Baluchis, Turkmens, etc.) also call Afghanistan their home. While the majority of Afghans (99%) belong to the Islamic faith, there are also small pockets of Sikhs, Hindus and even some Jews. The official languages of the country are Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian). The capital of Afghanistan is Kabul, which throughout history, was admired by many great figures, such as the great Central Asian conqueror, Zahirudeen Babur. Unfortunately, due to many years of war, this great city has been shattered and nearly destroyed.



Masjid in Mazar-i-Shariff

Today, Afghanistan is on a road to recovery, however, after decades of war, the economy is still in ruins, its environment is in a state of crises.

The country is riddled with landmines left from the war, which are still injuring and killing people on a daily basis. Afghanistan is being run by an interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai.

The administration took power in December 22, 2001 after various delegates in Bonn, Germany signed an accord. The administration is to rule for 6 months, after which an emergency Loya Jirga (Traditional Grand Assembly) will be convened to decide on a transitional authority.

This will include a broad-based transitional administration, to lead Afghanistan until the people can elect a permanent government. The permanent and elected government is supposed to be in place no more than 2 years after the emergency Loya Jirga is convened.

ECONOMY:

Economically speaking, Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries. Many years of war and political instability have left the country in ruins, and dependent on foreign aid. The main source of income in the country is agriculture, and during its good years, Afghanistan produces enough food and food products to provide for the people, as well as to create a surplus for export. The major food crops produced are: corn, rice, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruits and nuts. In Afghanistan, industry is also based on agriculture, and pastoral raw materials. The major industrial crops are: cotton, tobacco, madder, castor beans, and sugar beets. Sheep farming is also extremely valuable. The major sheep product exports are wool, and highly prized Karakul skins. Afghanistan is a land that is rich in natural resources. There are numerous mineral and precious stone deposits, as well as natural gas and yet untapped petroleum stores. Some of these resources have been exploited, while others have remained relatively unexploited.

The unit of money in Afghanistan is the Afghani, divided into 100 pul.

GEOGRAPHY:

Afghanistan is known for its mountainous terrain. The huge Hindu Kush mountains form a barrier between the Northern provinces and the rest of the country. This mountain range has also divided Afghanistan into three very different geographic regions known as; The Central Highlands, The Northern Plains, and



the Southwestern Plateau. The altitude, climate, and soil conditions in Afghanistan varies greatly on where in the country you are.

