



2005 Minerals Yearbook

AFGHANISTAN

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF AFGHANISTAN

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Afghanistan, which literally means Land of the Afghan, is a mountainous land-locked country located in southwest Asia. It is bordered by Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan to the northwest, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to the north, and China to the northeast.

Afghanistan is an extremely poor country with rugged terrain and a seasonally harsh climate. The country encompasses approximately 647,500 square kilometers (km²) of land and is slightly smaller than Texas (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2005¹). The population was estimated to be about 29.9 million in 2005.

Afghanistan's economic outlook has improved significantly since 2001 following the fall of the Taliban regime (1994-2001). The infusion of more than \$4 billion in international assistance has aided the recovery of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, growth of the service sector, and reestablishment of market institutions. Afghanistan's 2005 gross domestic product (GDP) based on purchasing power parity was estimated to be \$31.9 billion, exclusive of illicit opium production. The estimated GDP real growth rate for 2005 was 13.8%. The GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity was estimated to be \$1,310 for 2005. The estimated GDP composition by sector for 2005 was 38% agriculture (excluding opium production), 24% industry, and 38% services (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2005¹).

The country has a history and a culture that go back more than 5,000 years. Afghanistan's recent history is marked by war and civil unrest. The Soviet Union invaded the country in 1979 but was forced to withdraw in 1989 by anti-Communist mujahideen rebels. Since the successful military operation against the

¹A reference that includes a section mark (§) is found in the Internet Reference Cited section.

Taliban in 2001 by the United States and coalition forces and anti-Taliban forces within Afghanistan, ongoing combat and guerilla operations have continued to affect mineral output adversely. In 2005, mineral production in Afghanistan was estimated to have included about 500,000 metric tons of cement, 20,000 barrels of crude oil, 50 million cubic meters of natural gas, and an unknown amount of gemstones.

Afghanistan's major natural resources include barite, coal, chromite, copper, iron ore, lead, extensive deposits of natural gas (proven reserves of 49.98 billion cubic meters), petroleum, precious and semiprecious gemstones, oil, salt, sulfur, talc, and zinc. The precious and semiprecious gemstones include the exotic lapis lazuli gem, aquamarine, kunzite, ruby, and tourmaline. Most of the gemstones were exported to Pakistan.

The overland transport system in Afghanistan remained in poor condition, with only 24% of the 34,789 kilometers (km) of highway paved. Afghanistan had about 1,200 km of inland waterway, which consisted chiefly of the Amu Darya River. River ports included Kheyraabad and Shirr Khan. In 2004, Afghanistan had 387 km of gas pipeline.

Internet Reference Cited

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2005 (August 30), Afghanistan, World Factbook 2005, accessed September 21, 2005, at URL <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html>.

Major Sources of Information

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Kabul, Afghanistan
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