

Jammu and Kashmir (Kashmir)

Last updated: 31-01-2004

Location and area

Jammu and Kashmir, commonly known as Kashmir, is a territory in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent bounded on the northwest by Afghanistan, on the northeast by China, on the south by the Indian states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, and on the west by the North-West Frontier and Punjab provinces of Pakistan. Kashmir has an area of about 222,236 km².

Both India and Pakistan claim all of Kashmir, but the territory has been partitioned between them since 1947. India controls the southern half of Kashmir, which it has organized as the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Before 1962, the state of Jammu and Kashmir also included the north-eastern section of the territory, which India still claims as part of Jammu and Kashmir State, but which has since been occupied by China as Aksai Chin.

Pakistan controls the northern and western portion of Kashmir which is organized into three main regions: Azad (Free) Kashmir, occupying the crescent of land on the western border of Kashmir, between the state of Jammu and Kashmir on the east and Pakistan on the west; and Gilgit and Baltistan (the Northern Areas) located in the Karakorum Range in the far north-west. Azad Kashmir has a government protected and financed by Pakistan; Gilgit and Baltistan are notionally autonomous, but in practice are administered by political agents of the Pakistani government. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Kashmir is almost entirely mountainous. The Lesser Himalaya separates the Jammu plain in the extreme southwest from the large, fertile Vale of Kashmir, which has long been the economic and demographic heartland of Kashmir. The Vale is formed by the basin of the upper reaches of the River Jhelum. The north and west is dominated by the mountains of the western Himalaya, notably the peaks of the Karakorum Range, including K2 (8,611 m), the world's second highest mountain. Within this area is the plateau region known as Ladakh, which is cut by the valley of the River Indus. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

Kashmir generally possesses a more equable climate than that of southern and central India, and the beautiful Vale of Kashmir is a noted resort region. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Most of the population is engaged in agriculture; the principal crops are rice, maize, wheat, and oilseeds (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

Singh (1961) mentions swamps all over the Vale of Kashmir between 1,500 and 1,650m mostly with a mineral soil, but "organic deposits are infrequently formed at such sites". In the

Vale of Kashmir peatlands have been formed on the valley slopes of the Pir Panjal Range and the Main Himalayas (1,600-3,500 m) with occasionally fairly thick deposits of peat (Singh 1963, Sharma & Vishnu-Mittre 1968). Vishnu-Mittre (1966) gives an overview of the occurrence of peat deposits in the Kashmir Valley. The surficial deposits of peat are nowhere more than 0.9 – 1.2 m (“three to four feet”) thick. In some of the lakes and swamps peat is still being formed. Fuel peat is mainly won from the Hokar Sar peat deposit. Extensive but superficial deposits of peat occur at high altitude at Drang, Pejan Pahari and Toshmaidan, whereas the depressions are filled with organic detritus. Intercalated sandy and silty deposits suggest flooding episodes.