



UNHCR OCM Afghanistan, P.O.Box 3232, Kabul, Afghanistan

Free of Charge

15 October 2004

Issue: 67

# RETURN

Information Update

1 - 15 October 2004

**ADVICE FOR CIRCULATION:** This update is intended for Afghans abroad, as well as those displaced inside their country, to help them make an informed choice about returning to their homes. It is a public document and should be circulated as widely as possible.

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## Announcements to Returnees

**Note for Students and Teachers:** All refugee students who want to be admitted to schools must have their school certificates stamped by Afghan embassies or consulates before returning to Afghanistan. According to a directive issued by the Afghan Foreign Ministry, Afghan diplomatic missions in the region should NOT charge fees for validation and stamping of academic certificates of returning Afghan students. Those teachers or graduates who want to work as teachers in Afghanistan should also have their documents stamped by the Afghan embassies or consulates. (*See page 10*)

### 1. The Opening of National Women's Dormitory at Kabul University

The National Women's Dormitory, located at Kabul University, has been officially opened. The dormitory will provide the first modern accommodation for 1,100 female students who may participate in all of the higher education programmes offered at Kabul University and at other institutions.

There are 182 bedrooms, a modern kitchen, a 1,200 seat dining room, and laundry facilities. The rehabilitation of the facility also considered the need of disabled students, building access ramps and disabled bathroom facilities. The entire sewage and electrical distribution network have also been repaired.

The project cost US \$8.1 million with funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The work was implemented by the United Nations

Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

UNOPS will manage the facility during the first year of a 3-year transitional period, before handing it over to the Ministry of Higher Education. Officials expect the majority of students to move into the dormitory by March 2005, when the new school year starts.

## **2. Night Faculty in Herat**

The University of Herat will open its night faculties in near future to help the students who wish to attend the night shifts. The Minister of Higher Education who issued the letter of authorisation for opening the night faculties announced that the governmental employees will be required to pay \$11 (500 Afs) and UN & NGO employees will pay \$112 (5000 Afs) fee for each semester. The night faculties include the faculties of Literatures & Humanities, Law, Islamic Science, Fine Arts, Agriculture and Economy, and Intermediate Medical Institute and Institute of Science & Computers. According to administration of the Herat University, each faculty will admit more than 100 students.

## **3. Bamyan Province**

After the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration, many aid agencies together with the government have emerged to contribute in rehabilitation of the Bamyan province including the maintenance of the Buddha.

### **Education:**

**Bamyan University:** Bamyan University was rehabilitated by the American Forces serving for Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Bamyan province and inaugurated on 25 March 2004. There are 90 male and three female students in faculty of Agriculture and 45 male and four female students in the faculty of Education which are taught by 27 male and three female lecturers.

The university is in need of five lecturers with master degrees in the field of education and 10 lecturers in agriculture for its spring semesters.

According to the Bamyan University officials, those professors who are willing to teach at Bamyan University can mail their CVs, applications and or scanned educational documents to [safaius2@yahoo.com](mailto:safaius2@yahoo.com). The successful candidates whose educational documents and qualifications match the posts will be selected for a probationary period of four months and their permanent employment would be referred to the Ministry of Higher Education for approval.

90% of the students are from Bamyan City and surrounding districts and the rest are from other provinces such as Parwan, Ghor and Wardak. The university with the financial support of PRT has got male and female dormitory in Bamyan City. The Ministry of Higher Education has promised to provide the students with food and other expenses in the near future. The Bamyan University will be connected to Internet by PRT soon.

As the current university is small, the government has allocated land for Bamyan University next to Bamyan airport, where a larger university will be built in the near future.

**Assistance:** PRT has provided the Bamyan University with 30 computers, printers, chairs, tables, office equipment, carpets and a land cruiser vehicle while the Ministry of Higher Education has provided it with six computers and a jeep vehicle for the lecturers, and the Ministry of Transport has provided the university with two buses, which pick and drop the students from and to their residences.

**Schools:** There are 185 schools in Bamyan province in which 46,848 male and 23,289 female students are taught by 1,197 male and 241 female teachers. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development with the financial support of the World Bank are planning to construct and rehabilitate 70 more schools all over the province, which will increase the total number of schools to 255.

According to the Education Department officials, they need 1,200 teachers for the schools across the province because some of the teachers have quit their jobs and joined international organisations due to lack of payments/financial problems. The official added that those willing to get jobs as teachers are required to have their educational documents in hand and apply for jobs either at the Ministry of Education in Kabul or at the Education Department in Bamyan.

**Assistance:**

- UNICEF has provided training to 1,350 teachers during the past two years.
- PRT has provided six schools in the centre of Bamyan with chairs and carpets.
- Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) has started construction of few schools in Bamyan and will provide these schools with chairs, tables, books and floor cover. SCA is also planning to provide monthly salary to the teachers of these schools.
- WFP distributed rice, cooking oil and biscuits to the students and cooking oil to the teachers in Bamyan last year. Distribution of food items to students is going on this year.
- Care International has rehabilitated and constructed five schools in Bamyan province and is working on other two schools in Bamyan centre and Saighan district. This agency has also provided training programmes and seminars to 345 teachers from all

over the province. Care International under its “Cash Grant” programme financed by World Bank has provided \$1,000-10,000 to schools in Bamyan centre and districts.

- PRT established the Education and Aid Centre (EAC) and started a carpentry training programme in April 2004 which was followed by English language and computer training programmes in June 2004. The English language training is for the government employees who are referred to EAC by the government departments. Currently, 60 people are learning English language and computer and also 120 disarmed soldiers referred to this centre by DDR office in Bamyan are learning carpentry.

**Health:** According to health officials in Bamyan, there are two hospitals functioning in Bamyan City and Yakawlang district of Bamyan province and there is a plan for the construction of another hospital in Panjab district in the near future. There are five clinics in Bamyan centre, six in Yakawlang, six in Panjab, five in Waras, four in Shibar, one in Saighan and four in Kahmard districts functioning under the supervision of the Bamyan Health Department. According to the head of Bamyan hospital, there are 80 health staff including 20 females working in Bamyan hospital and 465 male and female medical staff in the mentioned districts. The officials added that the districts lack female medical staff. The head of Bamyan Health Department said that each health centre in the districts needs ten medical staff.

Those repatriating refugees willing to be employed as doctors, nurses, midwives and health workers in Bamyan health centres need to apply to the Ministry of Health in Kabul. Their educational documents from neighbouring countries would be evaluated by the Ministry of Higher Education. Those recruited through Bamyan Health Department would serve a period of 4-5 months and if they pass the probation period successfully, they would get a permanent employment.

#### **Assistance:**

**Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN):** The agency constructed three clinics in Shibar district as well as in Ghandak, Iraq and Kalo valleys. Each of the above health centres covers the health needs of 1000-1500 families. The agency has a health post in every 16-18 Km in the districts and each health post is covering the health needs of 100-150 families.

AKDN is currently constructing a surgical ward in Bamyan hospital, which would be equipped with all necessary equipment within one month. The agency with financial support from UNICEF is planning to construct an Emergency Obstetric Centre in Bamyan hospital in near future.

#### **Water and Agriculture:**

**Water:** People in Bamyan use wells, hand pumps, river and spring water for domestic uses. Many aid agencies have contributed to both agriculture and drinking water facilities in Bamyan.

**Assistance:**

- In 2004, UNHCR has allocated 180 wells in Bamyan centre, Saighan, Kahmard, Shibar, Yakawlang, Panjab, Waras, Shahristan, Daikundi, Behsud 1 and Behsud 2. The work on these projects started in early 2004 and is still ongoing. After the completion of this work, 3,240 families (19,440 individuals) will benefit from these projects.
- UNHCR completed construction and rehabilitation of 48 wells, four springs, eight canal protection projects, rehabilitation of a dam, three water intakes, one reservoir and two protection walls in Bamyan centre and Yakawlang, Saighan and Kahmard districts in 2003. The work on these projects has been completed and 1,296 families (7,776 individuals) benefit from them.
- UNICEF is planning to provide 22 schools with wells in 2004, which will be completed by the end of the year. The work on construction of 15 wells in Yakawlang and Kahmard districts will begin in the near future and will be completed by the end of 2004.

UNICEF has provided 13 schools with wells in Bamyan in 2003.

**Agriculture:** According to Bamyan Agriculture Department officials, the agricultural outcome of Bamyan is better this year than last years. The agricultural products of Bamyan are potatoes, wheat, barley, apple, pear, almond, grapes and apricot.

The Bamyan Agriculture Department has planted 124,000 saplings in Shash Pul and 14,000 inside Bamyan City during the current year. 1,400 decorative saplings were provided by the Ministry of Agriculture to Bamyan. The officials said that the department is facing lack of professional staff, machinery and agricultural tools.

**Assistance:**

- 16 tractors donated by Iran were distributed to farmers in Foladi and Sadat valleys and shaheedan and Band-i-Amir areas in mid 2004.
- Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN) has distributed seeds, black and white fertiliser and vegetable seeds as loans in six locations of Bamyan province such as Kahmard, Shibar, Shaikh Ali, Surkh-i-Parsa, Panjab and Waras. The loans which are supposed to be returned to community shura will then be used for other development aspects such as dams and electricity supply in the villages. According to officials, almost 20,000 farmers have benefited from the loans during the past two years.

- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) distributed 254 metric tones of wheat in Yakawlang district to 1,200 farmers in September 2003. FAO is planning to distribute 20 tones of wheat to 120 farmers in Bamyán centre in 2004 as well as to provide farmers with some training programmes. So far the agency has provided 110 farmers with training on agriculture development in Yakawlang district.

**Electricity:** There is no government electricity supply department in Bamyán and the people are using small power supply generators in the city and some districts, however, some aid agencies are providing people with hydropower and diesel generators.

In 2004, UN Habitat is implementing the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) under which more than 10 locations and 2000 families will benefit from the hydro and diesel power generators. In 2000, UN Habitat provided hydro and diesel power generators in 12 areas of Bamyán province including districts where 2,216 families now benefit from them.

**Housing and Shelter:** It is not common to rent a house in villages or districts; however families in the city share the rent of a house. The rent of a room varies between \$2-10 (100-500 Afs) according to the type of the room and location. The rent of house with three rooms is between \$6-30 (300-1500 Afs).

**Assistance:**

- In 2004, UNHCR is constructing 800 units of shelter in Bamyán centre as well as Shibar, Kahmard, Saighan Yakawlang, Panjab, Waras, Daikundi, Shahrístan, Behsud 1 and Behsud 2 districts. The work on these shelters started in early 2004 and still ongoing. UNHCR completed 500 units of shelter in Bamyán centre as well as in Shibar, Yakawlang and Saighan districts in 2003.
- UNHCR, WFP and some other donors constructed 105 shelters in the centre of Bamyán to those who were living in caves in 2003. UNHCR, FOCUS, AKDN and some other agencies rehabilitated 10,000 shelters located between Bamyán and Yakawlang district, which were burnt down by the Taliban in 2003 and 2004.

**Women:** According to the head of Bamyán Department of Women Affairs, many educated women approach this department for job opportunities since its establishment in 2003. The department was able to provide jobs to 40 women working in this department and other NGOs in 2003 and 2004. Most of these women are now working for the UNAMA electoral office.

**Training:** JICA, IOM, Mercy Corps, Solidarity, UNHCR, WFP and others have provided training programmes in small businesses, protection, bee keeping and literacy during the past two years in Bamyán province.

**Telecommunication:** There is a satellite telephone centre in Bamyán City. Calls from Bamyán to Kabul cost \$1.4 (60Afs) and to Pakistan, Iran and European countries \$0.8 (40 Afs) per minute.

**Roshan Mobile Network:** The network started its activities in Bamyan City on 15 July 2004 selling two types of Sim Cards and variety of sets. One of the Sims costs \$74 (3330 Afs) and the other one \$99 (4455 Afs). Roshan mobile network currently has nearly 1,000 customers in Bamyan.

**Radio Bamyan:** Radio Bamyan with five male and two female staff members was established in August 2003 with the financial support of INTERNEWS and USAID and is currently broadcasting 15 hours radio programmes from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm. The radio station is broadcasting news and other programmes on sports, agriculture, animal husbandry, rehabilitation activities, women, children, culture, child protection and women's rights on FM 88 MHz covering 50 Km where 65,000 people listen to this radio.

#### **Construction and Rehabilitation Projects by the Government and Aid Agencies:**

- UN Habitat is implementing the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) in Yakawlang, Saighan, Kahmard and Bamyan districts of Bamyan province. Of the 500 different projects, currently 70 rehabilitation projects of wells, dams, intakes, springs, hydropower station, schools, protection walls, pipe scheme, bridges, culverts & irrigation canals and carpet weaving project is ongoing. Each of these projects takes 2-5 months.
- The Italian Embassy started to support asphaltting the road between Kabul and Bamyan a few weeks ago. It currently provides financial support to rehabilitation of culverts and bridges.
- AKDN is working on construction and rehabilitation of schools, clinics, canals, intakes etc. AKDN is currently working on rehabilitation of a 5 km road in Shibar, which will be completed by the end of 2004, and will start construction of irrigation and drinking water scheme in Shibar district soon to be completed by the end the current year which will provide 150 families with safe drinking water. AKDN started construction of 50 wells in Panjab and 50 in Waras a month ago to be completed in March 2005 which will provide 2,000 people with drinking water.

AKDN built two clinics in Ghandak and Kalo, one clinic in Iraq district and rehabilitated three schools in Panjab and one in Shibar in 2003, and will complete construction of a new school in Shibar district in near future and of another one in Waras district to be completed in mid 2005, and constructing a hydropower station in Shibar district, which will be completed in near future and provide 400 families with electricity. In addition to the above, AKDN also constructed and rehabilitated 50 wells in Panjab and 50 in Waras last year which provided 2,000 families with drinking water.

AKDN's future plan is to construct two pipe schemes in Panjab and Waras, which will be completed by March 2005 and will provide drinking water to 1000 families, and to

construct a bridge in Panjab in near future which is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

- UNOPS has completed rehabilitation of 98 km road project between Bamyan and Panjab which had been started last year. This agency will complete rehabilitation of 80 km road between Panjab (Bamyan) and Lal district of Ghor province by the end of 2004. Construction of another 26 km road project between Shibar Pass and Bolola village of Shibar district has been completed four months ago with the financial support of the World Bank, and graveling of the 3.5 km road inside Bamyan City in July 2004. The roads inside the city took 40 days to be gravelled and 150-200 people were working on it for a daily wage of \$2.
- UNOPS is also working on a PRT funded bridge rehabilitation project. Construction of four metal bridges (each 36m long) was completed in Ghandak area of Shibar district last year. They have surveyed other four bridges in Yakawlag, rehabilitation of which will start soon. Skilled labours will be paid \$5 and unskilled \$3 daily wages for the construction work. UNOPS is planning to construct one bridge in Kahmard, and four in Panjab, Waras and Lal. The work on these bridges will start soon.

**Employment:** According to the Bamyan Department of Labour and Social Affairs (BDLSA), there are vacant posts in government departments in Bamyan but there are no professional staffs to be employed. Professional returnees can approach DLSA for employment.

A large number of people in Bamyan have private shops and some import fruits from other provinces such as Mazar-i-Sharif. Some work as porters in the city and some sell different items in the city.

**AGEF:** This agency has provided training for 45 people in carpentry, tailoring, metallurgy and tin smithy. Most of the graduates of this programme have opened their own shops and businesses while those with no financial abilities shared with other professionals to start such activities or work for daily wages in the city.

Apart from DDR projects which provide disarmed soldiers with training and employment, AGEF has provided small business start up facilities. So far, the agency has registered 27 people for its small business projects. Those who pass the exam successfully would be offered \$250 as a first instalment and after their work is evaluated, they will receive \$450 as the second instalment.

**Maintenance of Buddha:** A delegation of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) from Germany comprised of two archaeologists visited Bamyan a couple of months ago to see how they can preserve the remnants of Buddha. This agency has surrounded the big Buddha with a fence and a door is installed to prevent people carrying the remnants away. Next year, they will start training Afghans in order to enable them to look after not only Buddha but also other destroyed monuments in the country.

*Sources of Information: Bamyan University, Bamyan Department of Education, UNICEF, Bamyan Department of Health, Agha Khan Development Network, Bamyan Department of Agriculture, UNHCR, FAO, UNOPS, UN Habitat, Care International, WHO, Bamyan Department of Women Affairs, Bamyan Department of Telecommunications, Roshan Mobile Network, Radio Bamyan, Bamyan Department of Labour and Social Affairs, AGEF, ICOMOS, PRT and DRRD.*

## 4. Security

Despite the security threats the presidential elections campaign in Afghanistan and the voting day ended peacefully in most parts of the country. The Afghans had an active participation in a peaceful environment in the Presidential elections on 9 October 2004. This happened as a result of a well coordinated security plan that brought together national and international forces. Although in certain parts of the country, clashes happened between the insurgents and the government forces, and as a result a number of police and military personnel were killed, no major civilian casualties were reported. A number of people and vehicles were detained and caches of arms and ammunition discovered by the law enforcing agencies. Rocket attacks in the East, South, North and Central Afghanistan were also reported. The major security problems that were reported are:

### **Central region:**

**Kabul:** On 26 September 2004, National Security Department (NSD) personnel confiscated a large amount of explosives contained in 21 Bags from a Bus. Three suspects were arrested in Karez-i-Mir area North of Kabul.

On 10 October 2004, three rockets landed in Kabul Districts 9 and 10. One pedestrian was seriously injured and he died later in the hospital. Only minor damage to one of the buildings reported.

**Logar Province:** On 12 October 2004, a rocket hit the yard of a private house in Qala-i-Musa Village, in Pul-i-Alam District. Minor damage to the perimeter wall was reported.

### **Northern Region:**

**Sar-i-pul Province:** On 29 September 2004, WFP reported that one of their rented trucks, transporting food to Balkhab district, was stopped by a local commander and offloaded by force.

### **Southern Region:**

**Kandahar Province:** On 11 October 2004, a group of insurgents attacked the Regional District Commissioner's Compound. Coalition Forces air support responded to the incident. One insurgent and two policemen were reported killed.

**Zabul Province:** On 28 September 2004, a group of insurgents attacked Khak-i-Afghan district. The fighting lasted for 3 hours and two attackers and five Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were reported killed. Two insurgents were arrested.

**Western Region:**

**Heart Province:** On 10 October 2004, a rocket hit the airport area and no damage or casualty was reported.

**Eastern Region:**

**Nangarhar Province:** On 7 October 2004, two rockets hit a residential building near the Prosecutor's Department in Jalalabad provincial capital of Nangarhar province, wounding a 21 year old male and a 12 year old girl. Another rocket landed in an area near the Meteorology Department, but did not inflict any casualties. Another two rockets, which were ready to be fired on the southern parts of Chaparhar District in Nangarhar Province were discovered and defused.

## 5. Announcements to Returnees

**Note on Religion:** In response to queries received from prospective returnees, UNHCR reminds that Afghanistan is a Muslim State and the Constitution states that “The religion of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam” and “In Afghanistan; no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam and the values of this constitution.” The constitution also adds that “followers of other religions are free to perform their religious ceremonies within the limits of the provisions of law”.

- Returnees are advised to ensure that their VRFs are correctly filled out in the country of asylum, as VRFs are not issued or changed in Afghanistan.
- The returnees' personal belongings are exempt from all customs duties. But please note that returnees can take neither commercial amounts of any item nor can they export government-proscribed items. Returnees should also advise their truck drivers not to carry business goods on returnee trucks in order to avoid delay at the border and undesired consequences at the customs. Returnees are advised to ensure the truck is empty when they begin loading their belongings.

**Note:** All returnees are advised NOT to travel during the night hours, and should seek shelter in a major settlement. Several robberies of returnees have recently been reported on the road between Herat and Kandahar.

**Note on Land:** UNHCR has learned about the existence of fraudulent schemes which extract money from refugees in return for a promise to get them government land for housing. As far as UNHCR is aware there is at present no legitimate government programme to distribute land. The general freeze on land distribution ordered by the President's decree is still enforced. UNHCR would like to advise refugees not to pay any money for fraudulent land schemes and to check the authenticity of any land scheme with the representatives of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in Pakistan and Iran or with UNHCR offices. UNHCR

will therefore not be able to provide shelter assistance to refugees who acquire land under such schemes.

## 6. Radio Programmes

**UNHCR/BBC Radio Programme:** There is a joint BBC/UNHCR radio programme specifically aimed at Afghan refugees, IDPs and returnees. The programme focuses on the situation in Afghanistan, including security, development activities of the Afghan government, United Nations and other aid agencies, and the challenges that the Afghans, especially returnees, are facing. The BBC radio programme is part of UNHCR's efforts to provide an accurate account of the situation in Afghanistan to those wishing to return home, and to offer a forum for a wider debate on all aspects of repatriation and reintegration. The programme is broadcast from Saturday to Thursday (6 days a week) on short wave frequencies of 13,605 kHz, and 9,795 kHz and on FM frequency of 89 MHz in Kabul.

Language	Days	GMT	Afghanistan Time
Pashto 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	Saturday to Monday	0916	1346
Pashto 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	Tuesday to Thursday	1603	2033
Dari 1 <sup>st</sup> edition	Saturday to Monday	1616	2046
Dari 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	Tuesday to Thursday	0846	1316

It has a section for listeners' letters. If you have any comments or questions please write to the following addresses. The BBC will include them in the programme as time permits.

Afghanistan: BBC, Post Box No. 1, Central Post Office, Kabul, Afghanistan.  
 Pakistan: BBC, Post Box 255, University Town, Peshawar, Pakistan.  
 Iran: UNHCR (BBC) – P.O.Box No. 91775 – 1876, Mashad, Iran.

BBC FM transmitters in different provinces of Afghanistan are as follows:

City	Kabul	Mazar	Jalalaba d	Bamyan	Kunduz	Faizabad	Pul-i-Khumri	Herat
FM Trans. MHz	89.0	89.0	89.0	89.0	88.1	88.4	99.6	89.2

City	Gardez	Kandahar	Jabulsaraj	Shibirghan	Maimana	Khost	Taloqan
FM Trans. (MHz)	87.9	88.0	89.1	91.0	92.1	90.1	88.3

**UNHCR/ERTV Radio Programme:** UNHCR also runs a joint radio programme with Afghanistan Radio and TV called "Coming Home" as part of its efforts to provide information

to refugees. The programme is broadcast on Sundays and Fridays (two days a week) at 2100 hrs for 30 minutes in Dari and Pashto languages.

### **7. Prices of Essential Commodities in the Market Place (WFP, 1<sup>st</sup> Week of October 2004)**

Cities	Wheat (Kg)		W/Flour (Kg)		Bread (Kg)		Diesel/Litre	
	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$
Kabul	11.0	0.25	13.0	0.29	16.0	0.36	23.0	0.52
Kandahar	10.0	0.23	11.5	0.26	12.0	0.27	21.5	0.49
Jalalabad	9.2	0.21	11.3	0.25	17.6	0.40	23.5	0.53
Herat	10.0	0.23	12.2	0.28	15.0	0.34	22.0	0.50
Mazar	8.5	0.19	10.7	0.23	15.0	0.33	24.0	0.52
Faizabad	11.4	0.25	14.3	0.32	33.3	0.74	27.0	0.60
Bamyan	9.8	0.22	13.3	0.30	17.8	0.40	26.0	0.59

Cities	One year old Live Sheep		Casual Labour/day		Exchange Rate		Wheat / Labour Day
	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	AFS	US\$	Kg
Kabul	3,450	77.53	150.0	3.37	44.5	1	13.6
Kandahar	3,800	85.78	145.0	3.27	44.3	1	14.5
Jalalabad	4,033	91.00	133.0	2.99	44.5	1	14.5
Herat	2,700	61.22	147.0	3.33	44.1	1	14.7
Mazar	3,500	76.42	140.0	3.06	45.8	1	16.5
Faizabad	3,700	81.86	200.0	4.42	45.2	1	17.5
Bmayan	3,200	72.07	110.0	2.48	44.4	1	11.2

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