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RETURN

Information Update

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Security:

Areas of concern

Faryab: Enquiries on the violations of rights committed against returnees are presently conducted by the Return Commission in Almar, Qaisar and Shirin Tagab districts of Faryab. The Return Commission has been set up to look at security and human rights obstacles to the return of IDPs and Refugees to some areas in the north of the country, and to try to remove these obstacles.

Tirinkut, Uruzgan Province: Clashes between the Afghan authorities and poppy traffickers were reported in this area, resulting in seven deaths and two injuries.

Assadabad City, Kunar Province : The city was the target of three missile attacks, one of which landed close to the MoRR office. No casualties were reported.

Other issues:

The Decree on Administrative Reform was passed in July. As explained by the President in a speech about the Decree, it aims to ensure that the civil service authorities are free from political affiliations, and that those appointed to positions within the civil service are appointed on the basis of their own merits, experience and knowledge, rather than on the basis of their links with a political group.

Bamyan Return Shura : It was decided at the last return shura meeting that permanent members of the shura will be appointed by all agencies and ministries and that the shura will meet twice-weekly to follow up cases.



Road Safety: Road robberies are a major security problem for returnees from both Pakistan and Iran. In a recent incident, 3 were killed and 2 seriously injured in an ambush that occurred on the road from Islam Qala village to Charrig Village, Ghorian District, Hirat Province. Returnees should exercise particular caution when travelling on the following roads:

- The road from Kunduz city to Shirkhan border.
- Route from Hirat to Farah and Kandahar (Shindand to Dilaram)
- Roads in the districts of Farsi, Gulistan and Ghormach (route to Bala Morghab)
- Main road from Nili to Tirinkut, Uruzgan
- Road between Ghazni centre and Malistan district and on connecting road between Malistan and Nawur.
- The road from Ghazni to Kabul, especially in Saalar area of Said Abad district of Maidan/Wardak province.
- Main road between Qalat and Ghazni.
- The road linking Qalat to Lashkargah, Helmand Province.

The Afghan and Coalition forces have established joint check-posts on the main Kandahar-Spin Boldak road to inspect all traffic for security purposes.

Note: All returnees are advised NOT to travel during the night hours, and should seek shelter in one of the major settlements.

Safety Message: Returnees are advised to refrain from smoking while travelling with their luggage to ensure the safety of their inflammable items, and to avoid sitting dangerously on the top of the trucks. Returnees are solely responsible for their own safety and that of their belongings. UNHCR assumes no responsibility for accidents while travelling.

Salang Tunnel: The tunnel is currently closed and will remain so for at least three months, while the rehabilitation work is carried out by the Turkish Construction Company (Cukurova), that intends to complete the task before December when winter sets in. An alternative route to the north is through Maidan Shahr (Wardak) and up through the Haji Gak passes to Bamyan. And from Bamyan it passes north to Doshi, Sayghan and Doabe Mikh Zarin, and then on to Pul-I-Khumri and north.

The trip from Kabul to Pul-I-Khumri through Bamyan - Dosi takes at least 2 days with a good vehicle under optimal conditions. During the rehabilitation process of the Salang Pass, returnees who return to the North through this alternative route, will receive a UNHCR additional transport assistance depending on the distance they travel:

From Torkham, Nawa Pass, Chamkani, Joji Ariub, Babrak Tana, Ghulam Khan and Joji Maidan, those travelling

1. to Faryab, Jawzjan and Badakhshan will receive \$30; \$15 in the Pul-e-Charkhi, and \$15 in Pul-e-Khumri encashment centers.
2. to Balkh, Kunduz and Takhar, will receive \$25; \$15 in the Pul-e-Charkhi, and \$10 in Pul-e-Khumri encashment centers.



3. to Baghlan and Samangan will receive \$20; \$10 in the Pul-e-Charkhi and \$10 in Pul-e-Khumry encashment centers.

From Spin Boldak, those travelling

1. to Faryab, Jawzjan and Badakhshan will receive \$25; \$15 in the Ghazni and \$20 in Pul-e-Khumry encashment centers.
2. to Balkh, Kunduz and Takhar, will receive \$30; \$15 in the Ghazni and \$15 in Pul-e-Khumry encashment centers.
3. to Baghlan and Samangan will receive \$25; \$10 in the Ghazni and \$15 in Pul-e-Khumry encashment centers.

UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation –2003

Neighbouring Countries:

Returnees have the free choice of either returning to their village (location of origin) or to any other place in Afghanistan – but not to **the IDP camps**.

Iris Validation Centres: All refugees returning from **Pakistan** to Afghanistan with UNHCR assistance will have to go through an iris machine, a computer-based technology that examines the eye and can detect if someone has been tested before. **(Iris Recognition Centres are located at Hayatabad in Peshawar, Alizai in Kurram Agency and Chaman in Balochistan in Pakistan, and in Khost in Afghanistan.)**

Returnees who want to receive the UNHCR assistance package have to go through the Iris screening, otherwise they will not receive their entitlements. Returnees are advised to have their VRFs with them while travelling in the host country and Afghanistan. Anyone who is discovered to have received assistance before will not receive assistance.

Single returnees will have to join other single returnees or families to make a minimum distribution unit.

Returnees should not approach just any Distribution Centre, but only the one marked on their VRFs, otherwise they will not receive assistance.

Transport Assistance: Returnees will receive cash assistance at the following encashment centres in Afghanistan located in **Pul-I-Charkhi, Ghazni, Mohmand Dara, Zaranj, Daman, Mazar-I-Sharif, Pul-I-Khumri, Kunduz, Herat, Gardez and Khost. The DC's in Mazar and Kunduz are assisting only the returnees from the Central Asian republics – those returning to northern provinces (Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan, etc) should receive their entitlements at the first EC or in Pul-I-Khumri.**

Note: Please be advised that the working hours at **Pul-I-Charkhi** encashment centre is from 0800 in the morning to 1400 in the afternoon. The returnees arriving after 1400 hrs, will be verified until 1600 hrs, but they will not receive their entitlement on that day, and the next day only the head of the household should go to the centre to receive the assistance (cash, food and non-food items).



Properly filled, signed and stamped VRFs will be valid for seven days (from the day the returnees (from **Pakistan**) leave the Iris Scan Centre, and returnees from Iran from the day they leave the registration centre and arrive at the encashment centre inside Afghanistan.

Depending on final destination in Afghanistan, each family member will receive between 3 - 30 dollars, and is limited to 7 persons per family. Children under 12 months of age (less than one year) will receive only half of the amount given to other members of the family. **Returnees from Karachi and Lahore will receive an additional 5 dollars per person at the first encashment centre.**

Returnees from camps in Pakistan will receive 5 dollars per family in addition to the established amount if they transport construction material **only** from their dismantled houses. The transportation of construction material will be certified by a special note made on the VRF at the Registration point in Pakistan

Note: The Returnees' personal belongings are exempted from all customs duties. But please note that returnees neither can take commercial amounts of any item nor can they export governments' proscribed items.

Working Days: The UNHCR-assisted repatriation operation in **Pakistan** will run from Sunday to Thursday. There will be no UNHCR-assisted repatriation on Friday and Saturday. In **Iran**, the operation will run from Saturday to Thursday. There will be no operation on Friday.

Note: All refugee students must have their school certificates stamped by Afghan embassies/consulates before returning to Afghanistan. There have been reports that some Afghan embassies and consulates in the region have been charging Afghan refugees for validation/stamping of the school certificates of the students. The Afghanistan Foreign Ministry has issued a directive to its missions in the region that they should NOT charge validation/stamping fees on academic certificates of repatriating Afghan students. Those graduates who want to work, as teachers in Afghanistan should also have their documents stamped by Afghan embassies/consulates.

Messages to women:

1. The Ministry of Public Health has urgent need of women health professionals in all provinces of the country. Women with interest in professional training as nurses, midwives and community health workers are advised to register their interest with Departments of Public Health or of Women's Affairs at provincial level, so that they can be contacted when opportunities arise.
2. Tetanus (TT) vaccination campaign for women between 15 – 45 years of age is ongoing inside Afghanistan. All women returnees who have been vaccinated against TT are advised to keep the records - before they return.
3. Refugee Women are advised to seek professional training in safe delivery, early infant care, nutrition, and hygiene, 'first aid', emergency medical care, or as a midwife/auxiliary nurse.



4. They are advised to bring certificates of educational certificates, including courses they have taken.
5. Single women should link with a family for the journey and identify themselves immediately on arrival.

Non-neighbouring countries: There are two types of voluntary repatriation schemes;

1. The first type includes schemes paid for by the host governments or in support of host governments. Such schemes are currently in place in the UK, France, the Netherlands and Nauru, the latter with funding from Australia. The host countries provide a return package and ensure safe return to final destination, including coverage of travel expenses. Some of these programmes are administered by IOM in conjunction with UNHCR. The IOM also assists Afghan returnees from some other European, Asian, African and South American countries.
2. The second scheme is a UNHCR-assisted programme for the repatriation of Afghans from countries where the host government cannot be expected to pay for the return (such as in India, Kyrgyzstan and Kazhakstan). The programme has also benefited Afghans repatriating from other countries such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Thailand and Zimbabwe, which covers a pre-departure grant of US\$ 20 per person (maximum \$100 per family), as well as travel and visa costs. Returnees are entitled to the same assistance (inside Afghanistan) as those returning from neighbouring countries.

Note: For further information about IOM programmes, please contact your local UNHCR or IOM office, or see their website: www.iom.int to find out whether a return programme operates in your country of asylum.

Shelter: To help returnees in their initial phase of reintegration, the UNHCR is providing shelter for 60,000 families in the year 2003. The shelter project is **NOT** for every returnee family but only for the most vulnerables, who have been identified from returning IDPs and refugees, as well as returnee receiving communities. The beneficiaries are selected with the help of local Shuras, local authorities and UNHCR partners. They have to build the shelter on their own land or property, in their places of origin. Shelter (a **standard** two-room, one corridor and one latrine unit) programme is self-help assistance, and while building material (timbers, lintels, doors, windows and tool kits) is provided by UNHCR, the beneficiaries are responsible for the construction work. The recipients are also entitled to a sum of money or food for work for standard and domed type shelters.

Important Message: Refugees prior to their voluntarily return should note that:

1. Shelter programme is only for the most vulnerable.
2. UNHCR shelter programme is not for every returnee family
3. The conditions for benefiting from the shelter project are; for the returnees to be in their village of origin, be identified through the help of local Shuras and UNHCR partners, and to build the shelter on their own land or property.



Legal Aid Centres in the Region:

Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALACs) are now operating in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. These centres provide legal advice on various issues such as lodging petitions and complaints before courts, obtaining personal status documents such as birth and divorce certificates, tenancy and rent disputes, reimbursement of security deposits, and procedures in closing and transferring a business to Afghanistan, as well as legal assistance to Afghans in Jails.

1. Pakistan: In total, there are currently 11 ALACs in Pakistan, with the participation of three UNHCR IPs: NRC, ICMC and SHARP.

Punjab: There are 4 ALACs in Punjab province; 2 ALACs (one by ICMC and one by SHARP) are functioning in Islamabad, one by SHARP in Rawalpindi, and one by SHARP in Mianwali.

Balochistan: There is only one Advice Centre run by ICMS located in the Quetta City.

NWFP: There are 6 Legal centres; 4 of them (3 NRC centres and one ICMC centre) are located in Peshawar city, one NRC centre is based in Haripur, and one by NRC in Kohat.

2. Afghanistan: Inside Afghanistan, these centres are helping returnees by advising them on issues of land disputes, property issues, detained family members etc.

Kabul: NRC office: Qala-e-fatullah, House No. 570, Between Street 8/9, KABUL
Mob: (0093)(0) 702.843.65
Sat. Ph: 008821.689.801.273

Nangarhar: NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council): House No. 4, Street No. 1, North of Sehat-e-Ama, (Beside UNDP Implementation Office)

3. Iran:

Tehran: These centres addresses are:

(i) Afghan Embassy, Pakistan Street, Corner of 4th Street, Tehran-Iran
Tel. (98 21) 875-3089 / 873-7531 / 873-5040

(ii) Legal Commission of Vahdat Party, c/o Office of Vahdat Party, Vali-asr Street, Corner of Mahdi-ye Tehran- Iran, Tel. (98 21) 537-1479

(iii) Afghan Constitution Commission office recently opened in Tehran and located at:
Office of the Afghan Constitution Commission in Tehran, North Sohrevardi Street, No. 3-161
Ground Floor, Tehran – Iran, Tel. (98 21) 874-3943

Mashad: The LOHK (Law Office of Ms. Haleh Keshawarz) provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Khurasan province and it is located at:

LOHK representative works two days a week (Sundays and Tuesdays from 08:30 to 1200) in UNHCR, Mashad office -No. 45, Sajjad Boulevard, Mashhad 91877.



Tel: 785081, Fax: 783017).

And on Mondays from 16:30 to 19:00 at the Mediation Commission, with the participation of an Afghan elder and an Iranian official (judge), located in BAFIA Office. Ms Hale Keshawarz could be reached at: Tel (mobile): 0911 511 6090, Fax: 8412926

University Entrance Exams (Evening Classes): Entrance Exams for evening classes at Kabul University will be held in Kabul during the first two weeks of July. The exact date will be announced through Mass Media. Applicants should submit their 12th grade certificate along with their application form and a photo to the Department of Students' Affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education. The evening classes are to start on 23rd August 2003.

Closure of Waiting Area in Chaman:

UNHCR has started the voluntary relocation of Afghan refugees stranded at the Chaman Waiting Area. The camp, near the border with Afghanistan, currently houses around 20,000 Afghans. After the closure of Killi Faizo staging camp at the end of December 2001, and the temporary suspension of registration in mid-February 2002, thousands of Afghan refugees gathered in the WA seeking to enter Pakistan. The camp will be closed after the completion of relocation process this summer.

The refugees have been offered three options; repatriation to the places of their choice in Afghanistan, relocation to the Zhari Dasht settlement outside Kandahar, or relocation to the Mohammad Kheil camp further inside Pakistan. For the second option, UNHCR is providing an enhanced assistance package. After an agreed period, refugees still remaining in the Waiting Area would be relocated voluntarily to Mohammad Kheil camp and all assistance to the WA would be cut simultaneously. Last year, 7 thousand people returned to Afghanistan to the Zhare Dasht settlement.

So far, 10,800 people (2,360 families) have requested to move to Zhare Dasht, and another 8,000 people (1,700 families) have decided to go to Mohammad Kheil. UNHCR will arrange transportation to Zhare Dasth, where families will receive \$3 per person, food packages (wheat flour, pulses, vegetable oil, sugar and salt), household items (blanket, sleeping mat, jerry can, bucket, lantern, soap, hygiene items, stove and kerosene), and shelter packages to help them construct their houses (wheel barrow, tool kit, plastic sheets, bamboo and plastic pipes.)

Kabul City

Kabul City turned a new page following the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration in December 2001. A large number of international aid organisations, donors and others moved in to contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Today, Kabul looks no different from any normal capital, with many cars on the roads, traffic jams, an abundance of food, fruits and vegetables in the markets, and shops full of all kinds of commodities, including luxury items. There is no scarcity of any kind, but life in Kabul is expensive.



The city, one of the oldest in the world, was made the capital city by the Afghan King, Temor Shah Durani, nearly 250 years ago. More than two decades of conflict damaged 80% of industrial production and economic and other activities, destroyed 40% and damaged 90% of the buildings/houses, and displaced 60% of its inhabitants.

Since the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration, the population of the capital has increased to an estimated 2,800,000, much higher than the city's absorption capacity, and its ability to provide shelter, water, electricity and health and education facilities. There are obvious reasons for this attraction; being the capital city, economic activities are naturally concentrated at the centre, the economy/market created round the international community, and the belief that it enjoys better security than other parts of the country. Apart from the Afghan Security Forces, ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) is deployed in Kabul to help maintain security in the city.

The people, including 40% of the returnees, have poured to Kabul in their hundreds of thousands over a short time, but repairing the damages and building facilities to accommodate this population will take much longer. Nearly 40% of the returnees have chosen Kabul as their destination. This is posing a serious problem for the authorities as the city is not fully prepared to cope with this sudden and massive increase of population and the pressure it puts on its damaged and limited facilities and basic utilities such as housing, water, electricity etc.

City Planning:

The first Master Plan for the capital city was drawn 40 years ago with the help of Soviet experts that included the residential areas of Vazir Akbar Khan, and Microrayon apartment complexes. The plan was for a population of 800,000. In 1978, the plan was updated expecting increase in the city's population up to 2 million. But the implementation has been disrupted by years of conflict.

There has been no decision yet either to update or to scrap this Master Plan. Meanwhile, rehabilitation of some buildings and some construction activities outside the Plan are ongoing.

Housing : Housing is the biggest problem for both returnees and the rest of population residing in the capital. This problem got serious when a big number of refugees started returning to the country, mainly to Kabul City. Some of these returnees are homeless and some live in semi destroyed buildings or with their relatives. There is a shortage of houses/apartments/rooms for rent and the prices are high and vary according to the type and location. Anyone wanting to rent a house/apartment inside Kabul City has to pay a six-month's or a year's rent in advance. The rent for a two-room apartment in Microryan is between \$100-130 and the rent for a three or four room apartment is \$150-250. Houses are much more expensive. Some families share the houses/apartments and the rent.

A number of homeless returnees and IDPs have squatted in some semi-ruined houses and government buildings of the city in Khairkhana, Koti Sangi etc, or live in tents in some fields such as Chaman-e-Babrak, and Chaman-e-Hozuri. There are concerns about the relocation of these families once the rehabilitation of these buildings begins.



Kabul Municipality: Over the next three years, the Municipality is planning the construction of 300 000 apartments in various locations of the city particularly in the west and other places, where there are land available for construction. There is also a plan for the distribution of 30,000 plots of land to the homeless in DehSabz and Char Asiab areas of Kabul. So far 300 000 applications have been received, of which 100,000 are thought to be eligible families. The municipality is planning to have a computerized system, which could keep track of the beneficiaries.

Electricity: This facility had been badly damaged by fighting, and needs rehabilitation and renovation. Although in the past year the government has put great efforts into rehabilitating the system there are still problems in the west, south, southwest and in part of eastern section of the city, where residents are facing serious shortages of power. In order to supply electricity to these parts of the capital, the Ministry of Water and Power has signed an agreement with the Asian Development Bank with regards to the transfer of electricity from Uzbekistan to Pul-I-Khumri, and the Indian government will help with the construction of transfer facilities from Pul-I-Khumri to Kabul. The evaluation and surveys have started and the project is expected to be completed within the next two years.

Water : The Water network has also been damaged and needs rehabilitation and renovation for most parts. It's only able to meet 50 percent of the demand for safe drinking water. Most of the residents in this city have wells in their homes, however there are some places in Kabul City where people have to bring water from some distances far from their homes. The water supply department of Kabul city has approached the aid agencies for support and is asking for cooperation to do an overall rehabilitation of the network which is vital for the residents of the city.

Transportation System: Improvement in both land and air transportation system has been a significant achievement in the past year or so with assistance from India and other countries. The Government sector is reviving the former city-bus transportation system, which was completely destroyed and left with a few vehicles in recent years. Prior to 1992, there were 1000 buses operating in the Government-owned Kabul City transportation system. After the conflicts and before the AIA, however, only 78 buses in very poor condition remained in the system.

In the beginning of 2002, India gave 50 buses to Afghanistan. In the Tokyo Conference India pledged to provide Afghanistan with 400 more buses. So far more than 135 of these buses have arrived, and the rest are expected to arrive soon. Iran also sent 5 buses as a gift in the initial phase of assistance to Afghanistan. Taxis, mini buses, flying coaches, and various other types of privately-owned vehicles serve the passengers of the capital. The government buses charge one Afghani from the city center to all locations inside Kabul, but the fares of private transport is different, charging between 3 to 10 Afghanis according to distance and type of the vehicle.

Due to high number of cars, narrow roads, and lack of well functioning traffic system in Kabul, the traffic, especially during the rush hour, is very heavy and causes long delays. In recent months traffic police have taken charge of directing the ever increasing load, and recently a number of traffic lights have been installed at some intersections in the city. The high number of vehicles and the condition of their old engines are a main factor to the pollution in the city.



The Kabul International Airport is being reconstructed, which includes the installation of basic airport instruments, repair of lights along the runway, and repair and extension of its terminal. A restaurant in the airport is also being rehabilitated. Currently there's a daily traffic of between 30-40 internal and external flights to the airport which include some foreign airlines.

Postal facilities:

The Central Post Office in Kabul was established in 1870 during the reign of Amir (King) Sher Ali Khan. The first stamps, carrying the picture of a lion's head was also minted at this time. The CPO is located at the center of Kabul City and is run by the Ministry of Telecommunications. Of the 28 branches around the city only 18 are operating at present. The collection and delivery service of mail between the Central Office and branches is twice a day (8:00 am and 2:00pm). The received mail is delivered to the addresses the same day. This post office offers mail service in Afghanistan (between all 32 provinces) and with 179 countries in the world. The mail, carried by Afghanistan's Ariana Airlines, takes about a week or less (in the case of neighbouring countries) to reach its destination. The stamp charge is between 2 to 30 Afghanis depending on destination and weight. The post office is also offering services in delivering parcels/packages from the capital to other countries. The charge for parcels varies according to weight and destination. A parcel to Pakistan and Iran would be charged 463 Afghanis for one kilo, 535 afs for two kilos and 646 afs for three kilos.

Bakhtar Express Post:

This is a private company which was established in Kabul City in early 2001 after signing a contract with the Ministry of Telecommunications, to which it pays 15% monthly revenue tax. The company offers a mail/parcel delivery service across the world through a Japanese International company. It is fast and it's expensive; 70 afs to deliver mail to Peshawar (Pakistan) in 24 hours, Karachi (Pakistan) 170 afs in 3 days, and Mashhad (Iran) 1,500 afs reaching in 3-4 days. The parcel charges also vary; Peshawar 200 afs per kilo, and other cities of Pakistan 400 afs, and London 2,300 afs per kilo.

City Telephones System:

There are two types of telephone in the city at present; analog (14,000 subscribers) and digital (8,000 subscribers), and 6,000 homes and businesses are awaiting connection to the system. The digital system has 12,000 capacity, but the Ministry of Communications has delayed further allocations until the network has been extended to all parts of the city, including Khairkhana, Miroryan and Shahri Naw, where work is currently ongoing. The Ministry is planning to phase out the analog system and replace it with digital by the end of 2003.

Mobile Network in Kabul City:

Afghan Wireless Communications Company (WACC), a branch of the American- Based TSI, launched a mobile telephone service in Kabul in April 2002, with more than 20 000 customers at present. It charges \$230 for a mobile set, \$110 for a sim card and between \$10 and \$100 for credit loading cards.

The AWCC has also provided 250 lines of IDD (International Direct Dialing) telephones in Kabul City mostly to the International Organizations and NGOs. Each subscription costs \$300.



For international calls, a call credit card has to be purchased, and for local calls there is a regular bill system.

Health facilities in Kabul City:

There are 22 hospitals and health centres, 29 MCH (Mother and child health) and TB clinics and EPI canters in Kabul City functioning under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Health.

There is an Italian well-equipped Emergency Surgical Hospital in Kabul City serving war victims, including those with superficial and serious injuries and burns. The hospital is also providing artificial limbs. Afghan and Italian male and female doctors and nurses work together in the hospital and patients are receiving free medicine and treatment.

The ministry of Health, with the support of aid agencies and government development budget, is currently working on assessment of health needs, improving administrative system of the ministry, job description for the health centres and co-ordination with NGOs, UN agencies and donors. The ministry also plans training for the professional staff including midwives.

Educational Facilities:

Kabul has 80 primary and secondary schools and 73 high schools, but there are shortages of all kinds, including qualified teachers, equipment and textbooks.

More than 7000 male and female students are studying at Kabul university's 14 faculties, which include engineering, law, science, agriculture, education, pharmacy, geology, fine arts, journalism, economics, veterinary, political sciences, literature and Islamic Studies.

In addition, there are more than 3300 male and female students in Kabul Medical College, and about 2000 students in the Teacher Training Institute. Kabul Polytechnic Institute accommodates about 2186 students.

Institutes of Learning Foreign Languages and Computer.

There are a large number of English and computer course centres in the city that are equipped with Audio and Video learning programmes. The fee is between 200 and 500 Afghanis per semester (two and half months), depending on the level and the type of training course. The centers also provide classes in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry as well as Social Sciences subjects, mainly for those students who use their summer and winter vacations to prepare for the next educational year.

Media:

After the fall of the Taliban, Kabul TV resumed its broadcasts after an interval of 5 years, female announcers returned to their jobs, and the whole radio and TV programming style underwent a transformation. Since then, various radio stations have been set up around the country, and Kabul FM also airs the programmes of international stations such as BBC, VOA, Radio Liberty, ISAF, French International, etc. The newly-established radio stations aim to provide the Kabul city residents with information and entertainment.

Besides, nearly 150 various registered and unregistered newspapers and magazines, including women and children's magazines, are published in the capital, reflecting the emerging



sophistication of the residents of the Afghan capital. More than 50 International media, including various Radio and TV stations of different countries, have offices in Kabul.

Youths:

Compared to other capital cities, Kabul doesn't have much to offer to its young residents in terms of entertainment. There are not many parks, cinemas and other recreational facilities, where the young could spend their free time and enjoy themselves. There are, however, tens of sports clubs training youths in various sports such as martial arts, Boxing, Body Building, Wrestling and many more. And after a long interval, the Afghan sports teams now have the opportunity to participate in International championships. Some of Kabul students attend language and computer courses in more than a hundred private centers around the city. Some visit Internet Clubs, which is not affordable to all. Unemployment is a serious problem, and as a result many young people don't have the money to engage in the limited recreational activities.

Recreation and Entertainment:

Cinemas used to be a family entertainment, but nowadays a handful of cinemas, that cheap show Indian films, or American and other action movies, attract men, who usually go there to voice their frustration, creating an environment unsuitable and unpleasant for families and even individuals.

Some have access to cable TV, which costs 1200 af\$ for the initial registration and 200 Af\$ monthly charges.

Public Library:

The Kabul public library is the only library in the city located at the city centre, where people could read books there or take them out, after being registered and getting a Library Card. Students should bring a stamped letter from their institution and if they are working should bring a stamped letter from their employer. The library has two other branches; one in the Central Prison, and the other in Khair Khana. There are a total of 20 000 books in the three branches of the library. Most of them are in Pashto and Dari, and some in foreign languages. More than 500 people visit the library every day and the library is open from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. Iran has recently pledged to donate 14,000 books to library which are expected to arrived in the near future. The library also has a children's section with books and posters.

Internet:

The Ministry of Telecommunications is offering Internet services to those citizens who have got access to the digital telephone system. The charge is \$200 per month for 12-hour internet access, and \$300 per month for a 24-hour access, with \$20 charge of installation.

To provide Internet access to the youths, several Internet cafes have been opened around the city, but the biggest and the best equipped one is "Afghan Com" which charges \$3 per hour. Nearly 100 people including students, Afghans and foreigners visit this centre every day.

Employment in Kabul:

Although a considerable number of people, both male and female, have been employed by government offices, as well as UN agencies and NGOs, and many more have either found jobs in



other businesses and professions, or work in shops and markets, there are many who are still unemployed. There are also daily wagers who gather at various points in the city waiting to be hired, for 100 to 300 afs a day, by individuals and businesses to do construction work or other temporary jobs.

Food Prices:

There is no scarcity or shortage of any food item in Kabul, which mostly imported from the neighboring countries. The price of a 16 kilo can of cooking oil is 870 afs, mutton 160 Afs per kg, beef 120 afs per kg, sugar 30 afs per kg, and 850 afs for a 98 kg bag of flour.

UNHCR/BBC Radio Programme: There is a joint BBC/UNHCR radio programme specifically aimed at Afghan refugees, IDPs and returnees. The programme deals with the situation in Afghanistan, including security, development activities of the Afghan government, United Nations and other aid agencies, and the difficulties 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 Wednesday (5 Days a week):

- **1st edition:** 0730 to 800 GMT = 1100 to 1130 Iran time, 1200 to 1230 Afghan time, and 1230 to 1300 Pakistan time.
- **2nd edition:** 12.00 to 1230 GMT = 1530 to 1600 Iran time, 1630 to 1700 Afghan time and 1700 to 1730 Pakistan time.

The programmes are broadcast on Short wave frequencies of 15420 kHz (19-meter band, and 17870 kHz (16-meter band).

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

- **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, Mashhad, Iran.

UNHCR/ARTV Radio Programme: UNHCR has also a joint radio programme with Afghanistan Radio and TV, "Coming Home", as part of its mass Information efforts. The programme is broadcast on Sundays and Fridays (2 days a week) at 9:00pm for 30 minutes in Dari and Pashto languages.



Questionnaire: The aim of this information update is to provide refugees, IDPs and returnees with accurate information on the situation inside Afghanistan and other related issues. You are kindly requested to reply to the following questions. You can cut this piece from here and return it to the near-by UNHCR office or its staff in your camp or area:

Question No. 1: Do you think information of this update is useful to you?

Answer: Yes. No.

Question No. 2: If your reply to the above question as yes, please explain why?

Answer:

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Question No. 3: What kinds of information you would like to read in this update in the future?

Answer:

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For More Information Contact
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