

Nepal

Geography

Location: Southern Asia, between China and India

Area:

total area: 140,800 sq km

land area: 136,800 sq km

Land boundaries: total 2,926 km, China 1,236 km, India 1,690 km

Coastline: 0 km (landlocked)

Maritime claims: none; landlocked

Climate: varies from cool summers and severe winters in north to subtropical summers and mild winters in south

Terrain: Terai or flat river plain of the Ganges in south, central hill region, rugged Himalayas in north

Natural resources: quartz, water, timber, hydroelectric potential, scenic beauty, small deposits of lignite, copper, cobalt, iron ore

Land use:

arable land: 17%

permanent crops: 0%

meadows and pastures: 13%

forest and woodland: 33%

other: 37%

Irrigated land: 9,430 sq km (1989)

Environment:

current issues: the almost total dependence on wood for fuel and cutting down trees to expand agricultural land without replanting has resulted in widespread deforestation; soil erosion; water pollution (use of contaminated water presents human health risks)

natural hazards: severe thunderstorms, flooding, landslides, drought, and famine depending on the timing, intensity, and duration of the summer monsoons

Note: landlocked; strategic location between China and India;
contains eight of world's 10 highest peaks

People

Population: 21,560,869 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 43% (female 4,479,950; male 4,692,575)

15-64 years: 55% (female 5,778,107; male 5,994,147)

65 years and over: 2% (female 305,502; male 310,588) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.44% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 37.31 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 12.9 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 81.2 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 53.09 years
male: 52.86 years
female: 53.34 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 5.15 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Nepalese (singular and plural)
adjective: Nepalese

Ethnic divisions: Newars, Indians, Tibetans, Gurungs, Magars,
Tamangs, Bhotias, Rais, Limbus, Sherpas

Religions: Hindu 90%, Buddhist 5%, Muslim 3%, other 2% (1981)
note: only official Hindu state in world, although no sharp distinction
between many Hindu and Buddhist groups

Languages: Nepali (official), 20 languages divided into numerous
dialects

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1990)
total population: 26%
male: 38%

female: 13%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Kingdom of Nepal

conventional short form: Nepal

Type: parliamentary democracy as of 12 May 1991

Capital: Kathmandu

Independence: 1768 (unified by Prithvi Narayan Shah)

National holiday: Birthday of His Majesty the King, 28 December (1945)

Constitution: 9 November 1990

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: red with a blue border around the unique shape of two overlapping right triangles; the smaller, upper triangle bears a white stylized moon and the larger, lower triangle bears a white 12-pointed sun

Economy

Overview: Nepal is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, providing a livelihood for over 90% of the population.

Industries: small rice, jute, sugar, and oilseed mills; cigarette, textile, carpet, cement, and brick production; tourism

Agriculture: rice, corn, wheat, sugarcane, root crops, milk, buffalo meat; not self-sufficient in food, particularly in drought years

Illicit drugs: illicit producer of cannabis for the domestic and international drug markets; transit point for heroin from Southeast Asia to the West

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 101 km; note - all in Terai close to Indian border

Highways:

total: 7,400 km

Ports: none

Airports:

total: 44

Defence Forces

Branches: Royal Nepalese Army, Royal Nepalese Army Air Service,
Nepalese Police Force