



Quetta is the capital city of Pakistan's largest province Balochistan. Quetta gained prominence when it was subjected to a devastating earthquake in 1935 rated as one of the worst of the 20th century. Balochistan is a huge swathe of land with rugged mountainous regions and sturdy people. Constituting 44 percent of the total land area of Pakistan, Balochistan is of tremendous strategic value to Pakistan as it is located close to Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. The Muslim connection got established when Mehmood Ghaznavi invaded Balochistan in 11th century.

Quetta has always retained central place in Balochistan since it became a contiguous unit in 15th century when Sardar Mir Chakar Khan Rind united the main Baloch tribes and also ruled over southern Afghanistan and parts of Punjab and Sindh. Subsequently from Quetta, Balochistan was governed by Safvids, Mughals and Ghilzais for three centuries. The British first came to Balochistan during the first Afghan War (1939-42) on their way to Kandahar and by 1887 most of the area was in British hands. Ultimately, in 1947, Balochistan became part of Pakistan.

Quetta has been a central location in Balochistan which is an entry point to the southwest of the sub-continent crisscrossed by numerous passes including *Bolan Pass* used as gateway by migrants from Central Asia. It links Balochistan with Punjab and upper Sindh through

Sibi. Lak Pass is located between Kallat and Quetta at a point where the highway makes a turn for Koh-e-Taftan, Saindak copper mines and Zahidan in Iran and the other section links Karachi via Kallat, Khuzdar and Bela. Khojak Pass is 7575 ft. above sea level leading directly to the border of Afghanistan at Chaman which is 153 km from Quetta. The train passes through the longest tunnel of the sub-continent. Harnai Pass linked with Ziarat is at some distance from Loralai and is just as spectacular as Khyber Pass.

Quetta, the name in local vernacular is derived from the word Kuwetta meaning a fort. The city is 1692 meter above sea level lying at the mouth of Bolan Pass. It



has three large craggy mountains, Chiltan, Zarghun and Koh-e-Murdar brooding over it. Their copper red and russet rocks and crests powdered with snow in winters add immense charm to the town. Quetta is known as the fruit basket of Pakistan producing in abundance plums, peaches, pomegranates, apricots, apples, melons, cherries, pistachios and almonds. Saffron grows very well on mountains around 5000 high and is cultivated on a commercial scale. The yellow and red varieties of tulip grow



wild around Quetta.

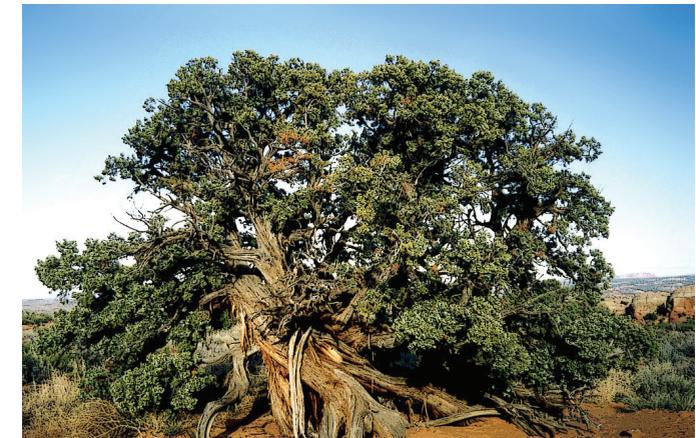
Quetta is home to panoply of people reflecting the demographic pattern of the province it is the capital of. It is inhabited by Pathans,



Baloch and Brahui along with Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmen. Nomadic tribesmen pass through Quetta valley during *spring* and autumn with their herds of sheep and camels and their assorted wares for sale.

Quetta's brisk commercial activity takes place in Kandahari Bazar, Liaqat Bazar and Suraj Ganj Bazar offering world famous Balochi mirror work, colorful handicrafts, intricately designed carpets, fur coats, jackets, sandals and other creations of traditional Balochi skills. The most alluring aspect is old quaint old teashops. Quetta is hub of traditional Balochi cuisine including Sajji, Landhi, Khadda Kebab and Namkeen Gosht.

Quetta's Archaeological Museum has a collection of rare antique guns, swords, coins and manuscripts. It



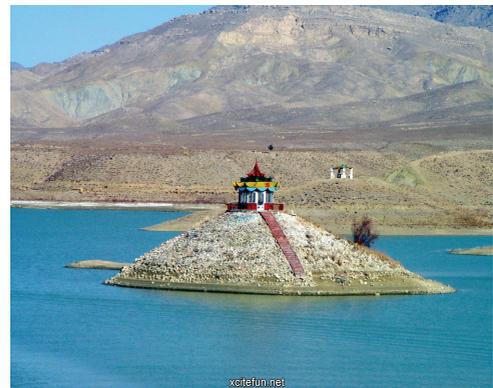
displays Stone Age tools, prehistoric pottery and articles found from Mehrgarh. The Geological Museum has a collection of rocks and fossils found in Balochistan.

Quetta has nice recreation venues such as *Askari*

Park, Liaquat Park and Chiltan Hill viewpoint on Brewery Road offering a panoramic view of Quetta. Karkhasa is a recreation Park situated at distance of 10 kilometers to the west of Quetta. It is a 16 km long narrow valley having a variety of flora like Ephedra, Artemisia and Sophora. In Hazarganji Chiltan National Park, spread over 325,000 acres at an altitude ranging between 2000 to 3200 meters Markhor, national animal of Pakistan, has been given protection. The park also houses birds like partridges, warblers, shikras, blue rock pigeons, rock nuthatches, red gilled choughs, golden eagle, sparrow, hawks, falcons and bearded vultures. Reptiles like monitor and other wild lizards, geckos, Afghan tortoise, python, cobra, horned viper and Levantine may also be seen in the park. Amongst the flora of the Park are the 225 species of plants prominent among them being pistachios, juniper, wild olive, wild ash and wild almond. Many shrubs like wild fig, barberry, wild cherry and makhi.

Quetta's primary tourist attraction, *Hanna Lake* is located 10 kilometers from Quetta where Golden fish end up swimming right up to the edge of the lake. The water of the lake take on a greenish blue tint and right where it ends pine trees have been planted on the grass filled slopes.

Quetta is an excellent base for further exploration of Balochistan as the adjoining areas are a typical example of a land of contrast interspersed with rugged mountains like Chiltan, Takatu, Sulaiman and



Sultan and plains stretching hundreds of kilometers. It has fertile land such as in Nasirabad and the tracks which are thirsty for centuries in the Pat section of Sibi district and the Makran desert zone. It has hottest places in the country like Sibi and the cool towns like Quetta, Ziarat, Kan Mehtarzai

and Kallat where temperature goes below freezing point and these areas remain under a thick cover of snow in winter.

Loralai, the almond bowl of the country, is 265 km away. Besides, there are numerous other valleys that are fascinating places to be in for explorers. Some 50 kilometers from Quetta is the valley of Pishin with its numerous fruit orchards, irrigated by Karez, an artificial spring



made by boring holes into rocks to bring to the surface the subterranean water. 16 km from Pishin is the man-made lake Bund Khushdil Khan whose cool gentle waters attract many visitors for duck shooting in early winter.

Ziarat reveals the beauty of Balochistan situated on an altitude of 2449 meters above sea level and is a holiday resort amidst one of the largest and oldest Juniper forests containing Juniper trees as old as 5000 years. The magic of Ziarat is its honey, its flowers which attain large size here, its lush green grass and cool weather even in the hottest months of summer. The highlight of Ziarat is Quaid-e-Azam Residency with its lush green lawns, Chinar trees and flower gardens where the father of the nation spent his last days of life.

Sibi is 163 km from Quetta and bears great historical importance as it is associated with Alexander and Muslim conquerors Muhammad Bin Qasim, Mehmood Ghaznavi and Nasir-ud-Din Qabacha. Mir Chaker Khan Rind, the legendary Baloch hero, built a massive fort in the 15th century near Sibi, the remains of which are found near the town. Quaid-e-Azam presided over the annual Darbar



at Sibi as the first Governor General of Pakistan. Neolithic Mehrgarh is a 9,000 years old site of settlement of Katchi district at the foot of Bolan Pass near Sibi. Excavations here revealed that chronology of civilization in Pakistan was 4000 years old than found in Meonjodaro and Harappa.

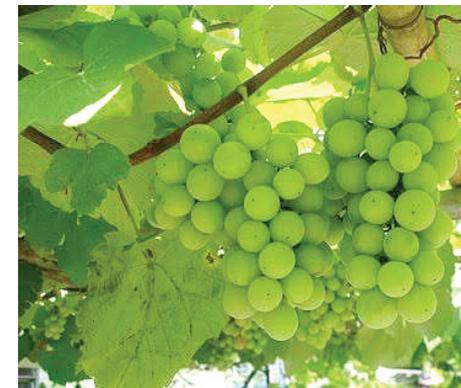
Located at a distance from Quetta, Balochistan's coastline extends over 750 km ranging from Hub near Karachi to the Gwadar Bay on Pakistan-Iran border. The coastal tribes are as colorful as that of central and upper Balochistan. The whole area is rich with long un-spoilt golden sunny beaches and a variety of sea fish. Because of the importance of this coast Pasni, Jiwani and Gwadar, the three important coastal towns, have been linked by air with Karachi and Quetta. Gadani beach near Karachi is an excellent seaside spot for picnic. Gwadar is an important



place in Balochistan bounded on the north by Turbat and Awaran districts, on the east by Lasbela district, on the south by Arabian Sea and on the west by Iran. The coastline of Gwadar is about 600 kilometers long and the area is fast developing into an industrial zone based on fisheries with three mega projects, Gwadar deep sea port, coastal highway and 132 KV electricity line have been developed there. The importance of the area can be judged from the fact that four airports have been developed in Gwadar, Jiwani, Pasni and Ormara and there are daily flights between Karachi and these places.



Quetta is linked with the rest of the country and so is Balochistan by road, rail and air. The highway connects it to Karachi and then on (via Koh-e-Taftan) to Tehran located 1435 km away. The road to Sibi connects it with Punjab and upper Sindh. The road via Loralai-Fort Monro-



D.G. Khan and Multan is a shorter route for Punjab. The Chaman Road is a link between the country and the Afghan border. Quetta is linked by PIA with Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

Data courtesy PTDC

QUETTA

