



March 2010



Afghan News

Highlighted Achievements

- Teacher Training Centers have increased from 4 to 42—at least one per province.
- Over 79,000 students graduated from 12th grade in 2009 (26% female)
- 250,000 adults (62% female) attended a nine-month literacy course every year since 2003; expected to reach 500,000 this year

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Latest News

H.E. President Karzai receives Madame Ogata of JICA

H.E. President Hamid Karzai met with Madame Sadako Ogata, the president of JICA at the presidential palace. During their meeting, the two spoke about the future plans for JICA's continued role in the development of the Kabul Metropolitan plan. JICA was instrumental in the design of the Master Plan for the city.



ment plan and hopes to capitalize on Japan's unique knowledge in this area..

JICA Seminar "Rebuilding Agriculture in Afghanistan ~ Challenges and Future Perspectives" held at the Embassy of Afghanistan

H.E. Ambassador Hakimi and Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Asif Rahimi, took part in Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)'s seminar entitled "Rebuilding Agriculture in Afghanistan ~ Challenges and Future Perspectives" hosted at the Embassy of Afghanistan on March 4th. Roughly 80 people from government, private, and academic sectors attended the seminar as the speakers, H.E. Minister Rahimi; H.E. Ambassador Hakimi; and JICA's Director General of the Rural Development Department, Mr. Motofumi Kohara, spoke on Afghan-Japanese relations, the successes and

Minister of Education visits Japan

This month from the 23rd—29th H.E. Minister Faruq Wardak will visit Japan. H.E. Minister Wardak met with various officials and members of the media. H.E. will serve as the chairman for the upcoming Peace Jirga. H.E.'s successful visit allowed him to secure and discuss ongoing Japanese support for the educational sector and support for the Peace Jirga.

The government holds education as one of the major pillars in the national develop-



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challenges of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, and the current and future role of Japan in Afghan agriculture.

More Doctors to Serve as Specialists

By building the capacity of doctors through Medical Specialty Programs in various regions of the country as well as Kabul, there has been significant progress in empowering the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Human Resources to improve health services delivery and to lower the mortality rate among mothers and children.

Around 300 doctors passed a Specialty Program exam at MoPH auditorium. These doctors will serve as specialists in sub-departments around the country. The doctors, 108 of which were female, had been trained in terms of theory and practice at governmental specialty hospitals for 4 to 5 years.

Six uplift schemes executed in Baghlan

Six uplift schemes have been executed under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) in northern Baghlan province and more than 1,300 families of Khost, Farang, Baghlan Jadeed, Baghlan Kohna and Andarab districts will benefit from the projects. The projects included construction of a school building, eight small bridges, a water reservoir, a 142-meter retaining wall, three public toilets, and the digging of three wells equipped with hand pumps.

A building for a girls' school was also inaugurated in Andarab district. District chief Abdul Wali Hameedzai stated that the single story building had the capacity of housing 1,000 students.

32,000 more families to enjoy electricity in Kabul



A new power transformer was installed on March 7th for the provision of electricity to approximately 32,000 families in the Hodkhel neighborhood, east of Kabul. Acting water and energy minister Ismail Khan expressed his thanks to the Indian government for funding the project.

With the installation of the new transformer, 70 percent of Kabul residents will have electricity. Acting minister Khan promised the remaining 30 percent would have power facilities in the near future.

Two school buildings constructed in Kapisa

Two newly-built school facilities were inaugurated in Kohband district of central Kapisa province on March 3rd. Currently, 7,800 students are studying in 15 schools in Kohband district.

Women's Day Celebrated

In a gathering on March 6th organized with the U.S. military to recognize Afghan women's accomplishments, Afghan women sat side-by-side with U.S. military women during an International Women's Day recognition at the Ministry of Defense in Kabul.

The event, which preceded International Women's Day's officially recognized date of March 8th, was followed by larger celebrations on the

actual day.

Earlier in the week, the Ministry of Interior held a women's day event in which Col. Shaifiqa Quraishi, Afghan National Police chief of Gender and Human Rights Division, was recognized as one of 10 worldwide recipients of the U.S. Secretary of State's International Women of Courage award.

236 almond gardens planted in Samangan

236 almond gardens have been planted in northern Samangan province. Acting Agriculture Director Noor Mohammad stated that the Swiss-funded project was conducted by Afghanaid Agency and that out of the 236 gardens, 191 were planted on barren land.

The Afghanaid head in Samangan, Engineer Abdul Samad, said the project aimed to encourage almond cultivation in the province and Ghulam Sakhi, head of the agriculture branch of Afghanaid, stated that the growers were assisted with gardening tools such as shears, fertilizers and instruments of grafting.

Afghans take 7 medals at the Asian Full Contact Kickboxing Championship

All 7 Afghan boxers competing in the Asian Full Contact Kickboxing Championship in India won medals. The boxers claimed five gold medals, a silver, and a bronze in the 15-nation boxing championship.

According to Mr. Muhammad Zahir Ahghbarm, head of the National Olympic Committee, the government will reward 100,000 Afghans for gold medals, 80,000 for silver medal, and 50,000 for bronze.

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Work has started on a building to promote women's handicrafts



Construction work on a building to initiate a project for the promotion of women-made handicrafts has been launched in the western province of Herat.

The project would play an important role in enhancing the skills of women in making handicrafts in the province as it will provide the women the opportunity to have access to the international market for their products. The project is aimed at enabling women to have a permanent source of income through their handicraft making profession. The first two floors of the four-story building will be dedicated to shops while the third to a restaurant and exhibition center and the fourth to a sports complex and conference hall.

Persian New Year Celebrated

Nowruz, the Persian New Year, is celebrated annually on the vernal equinox. This year however, the festival holds even more significance and importance since the UN has declared March 21st as the International Day of Norwuz .

Nowruz is celebrated for two weeks throughout the country. This time of year is one of forgiveness for Afghans allowing the New Year to start with new hopes and new goals.

Jashni Dehqan, which literally means the festival of farmers, is also celebrated in the first day of year. For the last few years, H.E. President Hamid

Karzai has participated in the festival of farmers and encouraged the farmers in agricultural production and the environmental green movement.

Afghanistan exports Pomegranates to UK based firm

A British fruit juice firm has struck a pioneering deal to buy 3 million sterling pounds worth of pomegranates and pomegranate concentrate from Afghanistan.

Pomegreat, a Gloucestershire-based company that sells pomegranate juice to UK supermarkets, has made a commitment to purchase 500 tons of concentrate and 500 tons of fresh fruit from Omaid Bahar Ltd., Afghanistan's first fruit processing facility.

It is a business deal that Adam Pritchard, chief executive of Pomegreat, says he has long been waiting to achieve.

"The Afghan pomegranate is the best in the world and in ten years working with pomegranates from many countries, I have never previously encountered juice of the quality Omaid Bahar is offering," he said.

"My long-term aim is for pomegranates and other fruit juices from Afghanistan to become a valuable and valid commodity that can be exported around the world."

Mr. Pritchard says it is very much a long-term relationship. "The country is landlocked, and it's a longer distance from factory to port, so there are some logistical challenges," he said.

"These are challenges we think we've overcome, though, and I have been over to Kabul to meet the factory owner and talk about his long-term ambitions."

He went on: "Initially we'll use a percentage of Afghan pomegranates in our product, but we aim to make this 100% in future years."

Mr. Sadiq has kindly allowed this embassy to conduct an interview with him about his experience and his company which can be found below.



Interview with Mustafa Sadiq

Owner of the fruit processing company Omaid Bahar

Q: What lead you to pursue the fruit/juice industry?

Afghanistan is an agricultural country where more than 80% of labor is involved in agriculture. Afghanistan is God—gifted with a suitable climate for fruits, especially pomegranates and apples. The production of horticultural commodities in Afghanistan is high, but lack of marketing and processing is causing huge losses of the fruits which ultimately affect the farmers and Afghan economy. These fruits need to be processed into high quality products like juices to bring sustainability in Afghan agriculture.

Building a fruit juice factory is the only way to utilize all produce in-

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cluding B and C grade of fruits which were not sold before.

Q: What is unique/special about Afghan Pomegranates?

Pomegranates are popular due to their health beneficial properties and are the consumer's choice throughout the world. The unique properties in Afghan pomegranates are that they possess a wide range of consumer preference characteristics. For example, the pomegranates grown in our southern region, mainly in Kandahar, are very sweet with an attractive red color, while the pomegranates grown in the north of Kabul (Tagab) are juicier and the sweetness increases gradually with the passage of time. Also, a unique variety called Bedana which are seedless are produced in this region and exported worldwide.

Q: Along with Pomegranates, what other fruits does your factory handle? Do you also produce other products (i.e. juice, dried fruit, etc) besides fresh fruit?

Our plant is a multi-fruit processing plant in which we can process pomegranates, apples, apricots, peaches and plums. Currently our Products are: apple and pomegranate juice concentrate as well as apricot and peach puree. The next phase of our plan is to fill the juices in Tetra-Pak cartons for the local market.

Q: Japan has been said to have the highest standards in the world for products such as yours – how



are you addressing value-added aspects, and in what ways can Japanese groups partner with you in this aspect?

We are operating according to HACCP quality system and ensuring food safety standards. We are producing natural juice by extracting the juice from fresh fruits and converting it then into high quality juice concentrates. There are opportunities for Japanese companies to use our quality concentrates and convert it into drinkable, quality juices which will be of Afghan quality.



Q: What sort of benefits do you think Japanese companies would gain from investing in or dealing with the Afghan pomegranate market?

They would have the opportunity to have quality products such as Afghan pomegranates. Consumers are willing to pay more for them due to the quality of Afghan pomegranates.

Q: What is your outlook on the Afghan Pomegranate market?

There are many opportunities for Afghan pomegranates, both fresh and in juice form, in the international market. Tons of pomegranates are exported each year. There is a market because there is no alternative to Kandahar's sweet red type and Tagab's seedless varieties.

Q: How has the Pomegranate market affected the economy of Afghanistan?

Pomegranates have proved themselves as a good cash crop plant for the economy to Afghan farmers. They require less input costs than opium cultivation and the quality of the fruits reflect good income for the farmers.

Additionally, our factory is buying all its produce from Afghan farmers (A, B and C grades) including the split ones (with no objectionable parts) which opens opportunities for the farmers to sell all their produce and receive more income. Furthermore, it creates good employment opportunities through the whole chain of processing and generating export revenue.

Q: Besides your recent success in the British market, which other markets have you been successful in?

The Middle East.

Q: Can interested parties contact your company with questions or business ideas?

Any Japanese company interested in Afghan fruits can contact us any time and we will be happy to serve them. Most companies to whom we sent our samples are interested in our products. Pomegranates in the UK are on the rise and the companies we dealt with put in immediate orders for 25,000 kg of juice concentrates. They also agreed on taking 500,000 kg concentrate by next year. Nestle in Pakistan has showed interest in our products.

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Omar's Kitchen



Each month, Omar will offer a recipe for authentic Afghan food.

Awshak (Onion dumplings in meat sauce)



Ingredients:

- About 30 wonton wraps
- Leeks (green tops only) finely chopped
- 30 ml of vegetable oil
- 1 large spoon of ground spearmint
- 240 ml of yogurt at room temperature
- 230 grams of ground beef
- 120 ml of finely chopped onion
- 120 ml of water
- 45 ml of tomato paste or 4 fresh crushed tomatoes
- 2 cloves of minced garlic
- Salt, pepper and cayenne pepper to taste

To cook:

Sautee the chopped onion in vegetable oil until soft. Add beef and lightly brown. Add water, tomato paste, salt and pepper. Bring contents to a boil and simmer until liquid is half reduced. Set aside.

Put the chopped spring onions in a colander/strainer and rinse in cold water then squeeze as much liquid as possible out of the onions. Repeat this process twice more. Put the onions in a bowl with 30ml of vegetable oil, salt and cayenne pepper.

Bring 4 liters of water to a boil. Lay out wonton wrappers and run cold water along the edges with a finger. In the middle of each wrapper, lay 1 small spoon full of onions, roll the edges and press closed in triangle shapes.

Add dumplings to the boiling water. Cook for 5 minutes and remove with a slotted spoon. Place on a plate or platter on which the yogurt has been spread. Spoon the meat sauce on top then sprinkle the minced garlic and ground spearmint on top. Serve immediately.

Language Lesson

There are many languages spoken in Afghanistan, but two are designated as the nation's official languages: Pashto and Dari. For audio samples of the vocabulary and phrases, please go to:

<http://www.afghanembassyjp.org/en/life/?pn=226>

English	Pashto	Dari
I don't feel well.	Sha ihsas nakawam.	Ihsas khobi namikun am.
Where is (the) ~?	~ agha chirta da?	~ darkuja astan?
It's over there.	Halta de.	Onjast.
Hospital	Roghtun	Shafakhana
Waiting room	Da intizar khana	Utaqi intizar
Bathroom	Tashnab	Hamam (tashnab)
Cafeteria	Kafeteria	Kafeteria
Get better.	Sha ihsas woka.	Lutfan ihsasi bahtary kon.

Conversation

I don't feel well. Where is the hospital?	Za sha ihsas nakawam. Roghtun chirta da?	Man ihsas khobi namikun am. Shafakhana darkuja ast?
It is over there.	Halta de.	Onjast.
Thank you.	Manana.	Tashakur.
Get better.	Sha ihsas woka.	Lutfan ihsasi bahtary kon.

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