



January, 2012



Afghan News

Latest News

Select developments in ever-increasing security

More than 3,000 anti-government militants joined the peace process last year.

In the last 20 years, more than 500,000 anti-personnel mines, more than 22,000 anti-tank mines, and more than 15 million unexploded munitions have been cleared from Afghan territory. Once the world's most heavily mined nation, the country will soon be mine-free.

The Afghan national police now employs more than 140,000; this will increase to 155,000 by 2014.



H.E. President Karzai, H.E. Foreign Minister Rassoul welcome H.E. Japanese Foreign Minister Gemba to Afghanistan

H.E. President Hamid Karzai on January 11 welcomed to Afghanistan H.E. Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba of Japan. During their meeting at the Presidential Palace, H.E. the President expressed his deepest gratitude to H.E. Minister Gemba for visiting, and conveyed heartfelt appreciation on behalf of the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the people and Government of Japan's generous and highly meaningful support.

H.E. Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmay Rassoul also welcomed H.E. Minister Gemba to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two

discussed the upcoming Tokyo Conference, scheduled to be held this summer in Japan. The conference will build upon the achievements of last year's Bonn Conference, rededicating international efforts towards Afghanistan's reconstruction, development, and peace process, specifically in the decade following 2014.

Ambassador, Ambassadors Fatimie attend events at the Imperial Palace, pay deepest respects to Their Majesties

Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin

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Fatimie and the Ambassadors attended a reception in honor of the New Year on January 1st at the Imperial Palace. The Ambassador and Ambassadors offered to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress respectful gestures of congratulations on the New Year.

This event was one in a series of valued and important interactions between the Embassy and Their Majesties the Imperial Family.

Previously, on December 23, 2011, Ambassador Fatimie and the Ambassadors also attended, along with a number of key dignitaries, a reception to celebrate the birthday of H.M. the Emperor. Taking the important opportunity, at that time Ambassador and Ambassadors Fatimie expressed sincerest, heartfelt congratulations to H.M. the Emperor on H.M.'s day of birth, wishing, on behalf of the people and Government, a long and healthy life filled with even more inspiring accomplishments. Furthermore, the Ambassador and Ambassadors offered deepest gratitude for the selfless and impactful assistance provided by Japan to Afghanistan's peace and development, particularly calling attention to the roles of Their

Majesties. The Ambassador and Ambassadors were fortunate enough to also be able to pass the same sentiments to H.M. the Empress. H.M. the Emperor cordially offered his gratitude for the warm wishes. Ambassador and Ambassadors Fatimie also, among a other notable persons, were honored to also meet with an Imperial Princess in attendance.

Ambassador Fatimie attends event at JICA's Tokyo International Center to celebrate successful visit of Afghan teachers

Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie on January 26th attended an event at the Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA's) Tokyo International Center to celebrate the successful visit of female Afghan teachers. The Ambassador was accompanied from the Embassy by Ambassador Wahida Fatimie; Mr. S.A. Razaq Luqman, First Secretary; and Ms. Parwana Paikan.

Through the program, 16 teachers were brought to Japan by JICA for a period of about 2-weeks, receiving training from a consortium of five women's universities (Ochanomizu University, Tsuda College, Tokyo

Woman's Christian University, Nara Women's University, and Japan Women's University), as well as having the opportunity to visit schools and a number of Japanese sites of interest. This program has thus far trained about 120 women from Afghanistan. Madame Sultani and Madame Mulghular served as coordinators during this session.

Ambassador Fatimie took the opportunity to speak to the instructors, motivating them to work hard to better the nation upon their return to Afghanistan and to implement effectively the knowledge that they gained in this special opportunity.

In a meeting afterwards with the Center's Director General, Mr. Nobuhiko Hanazato, Ambassador Fatimie expressed deepest gratitude for JICA's inspired organization of this important program, underscoring the positive investment that it will play in Afghanistan's capacity building, not only for the women who participated, but also for the colleagues and students that they interact with. The Ambassador stated that this latest initiative is yet further evidence of Japan's strong commitment to and friendship with Afghanistan, sincerely offering appreciation for all that the noble nation, and in particular their effective agent JICA, has done to support peace and development.

Educational updates announced from around the nation

An institution of semi-higher education is planned for construction in Balkh province. The institution, which will be known as Aryaian, will accommodate 550 students and offer education in fields such as engineering, administration, economy, trade, and accounting.

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The construction of a 1-story, 8-classroom girls' school was completed in Mohmmad Agha district of Logar province with the assistance of the Central Asian Institution. The school will serve 320 students at a time.

A new 7-classroom building for a middle school in Doulatabad district of Faryab province was inaugurated earlier this month.

Development continues to benefit the people



An irrigation canal is under construction in Parwan province with the assistance of China. Originally, the canal was started by that nation in the 1970s, but had not been finished – it is now scheduled to be completed in a few months and will irrigate thousands of hectares of farmland in Parwan and neighboring Kapisa and Kabul provinces.

A 300-meter long bridge spanning the Kunar River was inaugurated in Kunar province's Sawaki district this month. The bridge was built with the assistance of the United States.

Arrangements have been made to upgrade Helmand's Gereshk hydro-power plant, replace 30 kilometers of smaller distribution lines with larger capacity lines, and install power distribution meters, ensuring that 50,000 residents and local businesses have access to a more reliable electricity supply. The project is being supported by the Asian Development Bank, the United Kingdom, and Denmark.

Two bridges, one to be 30 meters long and the other 10 meters, will be constructed in the Nurgaram district of Nuristan province. Since 2002, 673 development projects have been launched in various villages of Nuristan through the national programs of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. 521 of these projects have been completed thus far, benefiting 22,000 rural families.

Health sector reaches more

A 10-room building for a medical clinic was opened in the Shinwari district of Parwan province. The building was constructed with the assistance of the Japanese government. The clinic will provide health services to the more than 20,000 residents of the district.

House Numbers and Street Signage being updated in Kabul Province

Kabul Municipality has begun, with the support of Afghan Wireless Communication Company, modernizing and bringing accuracy to its house numbering and street signs. The project has started in the 4th and 10th districts and will soon be extended to other districts.

Oil extraction to begin for first time

The first oil production in Afghanistan will begin by October 2012. China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and its local partner, the Watan Group, will extract for a period of 25 years crude oil from three fields, including Kashkari, Bazarkami and Zamarudsai in Sari-pul and Faryab provinces. The three are estimated to contain around 87 million barrels oil. In two years, the group will build an oil refinery as well.

Oil exploitation by the group will further increase government reve-

nue in natural resources and will also create thousands of job opportunities for locals.

Northern Afghanistan is believed to contain more than 1.6 billion barrels of crude oil, 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 500 million barrels of natural liquids gas. Overall, Afghanistan's mineral deposits contain around 3 trillion dollars of such natural resources as copper, iron, coal, marble, precious metals, gemstones and hydrocarbons.

New 5-star hotel to open

The new five-star, six-story Kabul Grand Hotel is being built in Mas-soud Circle near Kabul International Airport by the Marriott group. It is due to open in February of 2013. In addition to the 209 guest rooms, the hotel will feature a café, a swimming pool, and an Afghan wedding ballroom.

New transit lines open

Safi Airways plans to buy three narrow-bodied aircraft next year to operate on new international routes. The airline already has two Airbus A320s, one Boeing 767, and two Boeing 737s. As of January 5, the airline has begun 4 weekly flights between Kabul and Abu Dhabi, in addition to its previously established twice a day flights between Kabul and Dubai. The new aircraft will be used for Kabul-Bahrain flights from February and flights between Kabul and Kathmandu from May.

There also are plans to increase the number of flights to seven per week on the Kabul-Delhi route and to operate three flights a week to Mumbai.

This builds upon December 2011's successful first running of an Afghan train to further improve mobility of goods and services within the nation and the region.

National Kick Boxing Team get Gold, Silver Medals

The national kick boxing team, a six member contingent, won one gold and 4 silver medals from an international competition in India. Faizullah Mohammad won gold in the 63kg division. Silver medals were won by Ahmad Wali Azizi, Ghulam Abas Mohammadi, Reza Haidari, and Khadija Hosaini.

Athletes from Afghanistan, Bangla-

desh, India, Maldives, Myanmar Nepal, Philippines, and Sri-Lanka, competed.

Afghan calligrapher creates world's largest Koran

Mohammad Sabir Khedri, an Afghan master calligrapher, and nine students have created after five years of work the world's largest Koran, measuring 2.28 meters by 1.55 meters and weighing 500 kg. The holy masterpiece has an embossed leather

cover and ornate pages. It is housed at a Kabul cultural centre. Khedri was quoted as saying, "I will be happier if someone else makes a bigger Koran, it is serving Islam."

Photograph below: heavy snowfall throughout has blanketed the country in white. Pictured are the streets of Kabul. Courtesy of Associated Press.



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