



January 2010



Afghan News

Latest News

London hosts conference on Afghanistan

Highlighted Achievements

- 72% support President Karzai.
- 70% think the country is heading in right direction, the highest level of optimism since 2005.
- 71% expect that their own lives will be better a year from now, the highest ever.



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Leaders and government officials from 60 nations met in London from January 28th to discuss the continued political and financial support for Afghanistan.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, stated that the goal of the conference was to “drive forward our campaign in Afghanistan, to match the increase in military forces with an increased political momentum, to focus the international community on a clear set of priorities across the 43-nation coalition and marshal the maximum international effort to help the Afghan

government deliver.”

The three-day conference set goals and priorities for security, governance, development and prevention of conflict as well as regional development. H.E. President Karzai highlighted 6 key areas for Afghanistan to address in the future: 1. peace and integration through reconciliation with disenchanted brothers, 2. security, 3. good governance, 4. fighting corruption, 5. economic development, 6. regional cooperation. Leaders have promised to focus on how international forces can help men-

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tor, and develop the national army, how the international community can effectively align its aid with Afghanistan's economic plan, and build on existing regional relationships.

Senior Vice Foreign Minister Teturo Fukuyama attended the conference on behalf of Japan.

H.E. Dr. Zalmi Rassoul assumes Foreign Minister post



As of January, 2010, H.E. Dr. Zalmay Rassoul has assumed the post of Foreign Minister, taking over from the previous F.M., Dr. Rangin Spanta.

Dr. Rassoul was born in 1944 in Kabul. He is son of Professor Abdul Qayyum Rassoul and is related to the former king, His Majesty Mohammad Zahir Shah. He received primary and secondary education at the Istiqlal French High School and received his MD from the Paris Medical School in 1973.

Dr Rassoul has worked in a variety of important roles. He served as a doctor at the Research Institute of Cardiac Diseases in Paris and at the Military Hospital of Saudi Arabia, was Chief of Staff under His Majesty Mohammad Zahir in Rome, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism for Afghanistan's Interim Government, and served as National Security Advisor to President Karzai, in addition to being an instrumental actor during the early stages of the Bonn Agreement. Dr. Rassoul can speak Pashto, Dari, English, French, Italian and Arabic and has published

30 medical books.

H.E. Dr. Rassoul has already been actively functioning in his new role and has met with several members of the diplomatic community in Kabul.

\$500 million international fund for Taliban rehabilitation set

The federal government, with the help of the governments of Japan and the UK, will establish an international fund of \$500 million (about 45 billion yen) for a program to help former Taliban return to civilian life.

Under the rehabilitation program, the fund will be used for job training and provide living expenses during the transition to civilian life.

The fund will be provided over five years, beginning this year.

Japan is expected to contribute about 20 to 25%.

Many low-ranking Taliban joined due to financial difficulties and will return to society if provided the opportunity.

The fund is also expected to be used to build and improve public facilities for tribes and villages.

Teachers appreciated in Kapisa

Head of Education for Kapisa Province, Mr. Abdul Wahid Hekmat, reported that 250 teachers and education department employees, in a gesture of appreciation, were awarded with certificates and state medals by the Ministry of Education for their excellent performance.

Ghazni to receive three new schools

Three new schools are to be constructed in the southern province of Ghazni with the support of Iran,

according to officials. Ghazni province has currently has 557 schools.

The construction of schools, in Andar, Khwaja, Umari and Jaghato districts, will be launched shortly. Each will have 14 rooms and will be built at the cost of US\$230,000.



One of the districts, Jaghato is undertaking the challenge to improve upon its 25 schools in the district, of which Muhammad Saeed Himmati, head of the areas school board, said that six of those now have proper buildings.

The Iranian Education Department's Hasan Mubarak Azizi said that the motivation to get involved with the project was formed by the positive cultural exchange at the Iranian embassy during his visit to the province

H1N1 vaccines arrives as caseload falls

A donation of 600,000 doses of H1N1 influenza vaccine has arrived, coinciding with what seems to be a decrease in the number of those contracting the disease.

According to the Public Health Ministry (MoPH), 948 people have contracted the disease and 17 have died since July 2009, but evidence from the past few weeks points to a decline in the rate of spread.

Over 500 confirmed cases were reported between November 1st and 24th, but from November 24th to

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January 11th only about 110 cases were confirmed. No H1N1-related fatalities have been reported in 2010, according to MoPH, which declares that the virus is under control.

But the Ministry warns: "Although the influenza has been controlled effectively in the country, we are still concerned that it could rise in the cold season."

The vaccines were generously provided by the Republic of Turkey (100,000 doses) and the UN World Health Organization (500,000). They are to be used to immunize the most vulnerable, such as health workers, pregnant women, and children.

Tajikistan Ready to Launch Joint TV Station with Iran, Afghanistan

The Head of Tajikistan's Radio and Television Committee Asadollah Rahmanov announced the launching of a new joint Afghan-Tajik-Iranian TV station, "A joint TV for the Persian-language speakers set up through partnership of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, broadcasting programs for only these three countries, is a proper ground for expanding cooperation among these countries."

The station will also enable the three nations to inform viewers of the contents of major agreements on mutual and tripartite cooperation.

According to Rahmanov, all legal and technical documents for launching the TV station have been prepared and a building has also been specified for the staff and also for the telecasting of the programs.

Radio station launched for residents of Surowbi

In a testament to Afghan resolve and ingenuity, a group of civilians, with assistance from French Foreign Legion officers, have successfully

launched a new radio station using only a couple of laptop computers and microphones. Surowbi Radio, launched in December, is the first-ever FM broadcast in Surowbi district, an area east of Kabul that is home to 130,000 people.

Radio Surowbi is a non-partisan station.

"The goal really is to give local people their own community radio," said Capt. Michel, a 32-year-old Foreign Legion paratrooper.

Music takes up most of the 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. air time, with an hour-long dedication program in the evenings.

The broadcast also includes two daily news bulletins, a weather forecast, and an hour of reading. The first story was a Pashto translation of "The Pearl," a short story by John Steinbeck.

"We're very, very busy, it's a big success," said Nassir Ahmad, one of the local hosts.

Musician Jawad Tabesh establishes music school for girls and women in Herat

Musician Jawad Tabesh has opened a music training center dedicated to educating women in Herat. A basic, small room, Tabesh hopes that international partners will help transform the center into a venue capable of inspiring more than it already does.

The center teaches a great deal of different disciplines, from singing to playing instruments such as the harmonium, tabla, drums, guitars, and other stringed instruments.

Tabesh, a pioneer of music in Herat, decided to start a training center for girls after repeated requests. He said he established the

center, "to serve my country-women and our music."

One student, 25 year-old Elaha, is learning to play guitar at the centre. She hopes to become a professional singer, to play for women's music parties and earn enough to support her family, commenting, "now that the situation has improved, we should take advantage of it."

Another, Nahid Afshar, said "Many of my [secondary school] classmates also want to come."

Music is alive in Herati. Two Herati female singers participated in the popular television program "Afghan Star" and did extremely well, with one, Setara, reaching the final rounds. The other, Farida Tarana, recently won a seat on the Kabul provincial council.

Safi Airways enters interline agreements

Safi Airways, the nation's international carrier, has announced interline agreements with Lufthansa, United Airlines, Emirates and Qatar Airways.

These agreements, effective from February, allow passengers traveling to and from Kabul to international destinations served by these partners to enjoy single-fare tickets and reduced lead time. Interline tickets will be available from February 1.



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Qatar Airways will offer fares via the new Safi route from Kabul to Doha from March 13 with three weekly flights to the Qatar Airways hub. Daily flights will be introduced later this year.

These agreements mean passengers will require only one ticket to their destinations. Safi Airways will, however, not be code-sharing with its partner airlines, which means that the Safi flight number will be valid throughout the passenger's journey.

Furthermore, passengers holding these interline tickets are entitled to standard treatment in case of flight interruptions. Safi Airways inks interline agreements

Rare bird's breeding ground found

The first known breeding area of one of the world's rarest birds has been found in the Pamir Mountains, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society, a New York-based conservation group.

A researcher stumbled upon the small, olive-brown large-billed reed warbler in 2008 and taped its distinctive song – a recording experts now say is probably the first ever. He and colleagues later caught and released 20 of the birds, the largest number ever recorded.

At the time, however, Robert Timmins, who conducting a survey of aviary communities along the Wakhan and Pamir rivers, thought he was observing a more common warbler species, but later realized he had something else on his hands.

"Practically nothing is known about this species, so this discovery of the breeding area represents a flood of new information on the large-billed reed warbler," said Colin Poole, ex-

ecutive director of group's Asia Program. "This new knowledge of the bird also indicates that the Wakhan Corridor still holds biological secrets and is critically important for future conservation efforts in Afghanistan."

Researchers returned to the site of Timmins' first survey in 2009, armed with mist nets used to catch birds for examination. The research team broadcast the recording of the song, which brought in large-billed reed warblers from all directions, allowing the team to catch 20 of them for examination and to collect feathers for DNA.

Lab work comparing museum specimens with measurements, field images, and DNA confirmed the find: the first-known breeding population of large-billed reed warblers.

"This is great news from a little-known species ... and suggests that there may be more discoveries to be made here," said Mike Evans, an expert on birds in the region for BirdLife.

Researchers are hoping the discovery sheds light on the bird, which U.K.-based Birdlife International in 2007 called one of the world's rarest. The first specimen was discovered in India in 1867, with more than a century elapsing before a single bird was found in Thailand in 2006.



WCS was involved in helping set up the first national park, Band-e-Amir, as well as working with the

government to create the first-ever list of protected species.

A preliminary paper on the finding appears in the most recent edition of *Birding ASIA*, the magazine of the Oriental Bird Club.

U-19 World Cup: National team celebrates first victory

The national cricket team, as a first-time qualifier at the ICC U-19 Cricket World Cup, had a strong performance in Christchurch, New Zealand on Tuesday when it defeated Hong Kong by eight wickets for its first-ever victory in any World Cup finals.

Upcoming Events & Important Dates

March 16: Refugees International Japan's "Art of Dining" fundraiser.

RIJ is hosting their 20th "Art of Dining" event, which is a one-day exhibition of beautiful and imaginative table settings. Celebrities, Representatives of the diplomatic community and other talented and generous people donate their time and energy to design unique table settings which reflect their individual styles, nationalities, and personalities. This event has raised about ¥150 million since its establishment and attracts some 1,500 people each year.

The event is held at the Westin Tokyo hotel in Ebisu Garden Place and is from noon to 8:30pm.

For more information call RIJ at 03-5500-3093 or send a message to enquiries@refugeesinternationaljapan.org.

Advance tickets can be purchased through this embassy by contacting Jason Pratt. (contact information is available at the end of this newsletter.)



Omar's Kitchen

Each month, the Embassy's Chef, Omar, will offer a recipe for authentic Afghan food.

Naan (Traditional bread)

Ingredients:

- 1 package of dry yeast
- 5ml of dark brown sugar
- 60ml of lukewarm water
- 220 grams of whole wheat flour
- 9gm of salt
- 120ml of cold water
- Seasonings of choice (optional)

To cook:

Put in the yeast and the dark brown sugar in a large bowl . Add the lukewarm water and stir to dissolve. In another bowl, sift the flour and add the salt. Add the yeast mixture. Knead the bread by hand while adding the cold water. Knead until smooth, firm bread dough is achieved. Cover and put in a warm place for one hour. Preheat a lightly oiled cooking sheet in a 260°C oven. Divide the dough into two balls and shape into oblong pieces 30cm long and 1.3cm thick. Dip three fingers in cold water and make three length-wise grooves in the center of both loafs. Put the naan on the cooking sheet and bake 5 to 6 minutes until just beginning to brown.



You can also create the bread called lawawsha, another traditional bread, by making the two pieces 60cm long and 0.5cm thick instead. Lawawsha is used to roll up kebabs or raw greens or to make sandwiches. Naan is sometimes used as a plate for rice and meat dishes and pieces are broken off to pick up the food.

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=214>

English	Pashto	Dari
Hello	Salaam	Salaam
How are you?	Taso sangay?	Chetor hasted?
I'm fine.	Za khem	Man khob hastam
And you?	Taso?	Wa shoma ?
How are you feeling?	Sanga da staso saht?	Chetor hast sahy shoma?
How's your family?	Senga da staso koranai?	Chetor ast famil-e shoma?
They're fine.	Aghoi kh da.	Anha khob astan..
It's nice to see you again.	Khoshala shom che bia me vledo.	Khosh shodum ke baz shoma ra dedam.

Conversation

Hello, It's nice to see you again. How are you?	Salaam, khoshala shom che bia me vledo. Taso sengay?	Salaam, khosh shodum ke baz shoma ra dedam. Chetor hasted?
I'm fine. And you?	Za khem. Taso?	Man khob hastam. Wa shoma?
I'm fine. How's your family?	Za khem. Sanga da staso koranai?	Man khob hastam. Chetor ast famil shoma?
They're fine.	Aghoi kha da.	Anha khob hastan.

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Contact Us

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