



May 2010



# Afghan News

## National Consultative Peace Jirga

Date: June 2 – 4

Venue: Kabul Polytechnic Institute

Members: 13 categories representing members of the National Assembly; members of the Provincial Councils; Provincial Governors; members of National Ulema Council; former members of the Senate, eminent women; elders & influential tribal leaders; representatives of nomads; representatives of educational, cultural, social & civil society institutions; disabled; refugees; industrialists.

**Purpose:** To establish a unified voice on the national peace plan.

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## Latest News

### Upcoming Peace Jirga to promote peace and offer new



On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the National Consultative Peace Jirga will convene as part of a series of important events aimed at helping with reintegration activities.

The Kabul Conference will bring together representatives of all segments of Afghanistan in order to receive the people's input on and blessing for the government's peace plan.

### Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation begins new pay and grading system, announces 600 vacancies

With the majority of Afghans involved in the agricultural sector and the nation's potential to become an agricultural hub for the region, thus contributing greatly to national development, the government has prioritized the sector as one area to invest

highly in. The Ministry of Agriculture (MAIL) has therefore been selected as one of five ministries (which also include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education) to pilot the new pay and grading system of the Civil Service Commission. MAIL has announced 600 new job vacancies of different levels in relation.

"Ministry of agriculture is expanding its structure to cover additional professional and technical work areas, and to meet the objectives of its mission," said Dr. Javid Qaem, MAIL's acting director of Human Resources and Capacity Building Department. A new Program Coordination Unit, Private Sector Investment Support Unit, and a Deputy Minister's Office for Irrigation Affairs, are among the newly added structures. Many of the newly cre-

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ated posts are designed to attract and employ recent university graduates.

“Change Management” is one of the four major pillars of MAIL’s newly developed National Agriculture Development Framework (NADF). NADF aims to increase economic growth by creating more in-farm and off-farm job opportunities.

### **MoPH opens 1st National Maternal & Child Survival Committee Meeting**

The first National Maternal & Child Survival Committee (NMCS) meeting was inaugurated at Serena Hotel by Dr. Suraya Dalil, Policy & Planning Deputy Minister and Acting Minister of Public Health. Many high-ranking representatives, including those from relevant ministries, the parliamentary Health Affairs Commission, UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society, attended.

NMCS monitors progress on infant and child mortality rate reduction indicators. The committee will meet twice annually to assess maternal and child survival improvement.

At the inauguration, Dr. Dalil, detailed briefly the four-year implementation process of the recently revised National Child and Adolescent Health Policy. The revised policy aims to prevent avoidable deaths by providing curative and preventive services at the community and household levels; thus improving children’s nutrition levels by means of strengthening proper health interventions and essential health services delivery.

### **New Railway project to stimulate economy**

The construction of the 50-kilometer Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif railway

that will connect Afghanistan to Uzbekistan’s railway network, and thus to Central Asia, continues to progress. Now four months into the project, it will be completed in another four.

The line will more than double shipments of fuels, food grains, consumer goods, and construction mate-



rials through a border crossing that handles half of the country’s imports.

The line not only will also be a key asset in developing the north, and enable Mazar-e-Sharif, a city of more than 300,000 people, to realize its potential as a transport hub.

This is just one of several ambitious projects that are sought to make rail links between Afghan cities and neighbor states. "In the next four to five years, the work of railway projects that will connect Herat to Mazar-e-Sharif and Sherkhan Bandar, as well as the north with the east and Kandahar to Chaman, will be completed," said H.E. Mr. Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal, Minister of Finance.

The Hairatan - Mazar-e-Sharif railway project is being supported by the Asian Development Bank.

### **Paktia province celebrates Pashto poetry**

The Paktia Cultural and Literary Society recently held the annual

“Nashtar” poetry symposium in Gardez city.

Participating in the festival were hundreds of people including poets, writers, intellectuals, scholars, parliamentarians, provincial government authorities, representatives of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and devotees of Pashto literature and poetry from the provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, Khost, Ghazni, Kandahar, Zabul, Kunar, Laghman, Maidan Wardak, and Paktika.

This event provides an opportunity for the youth, especially budding and promising poets, to express themselves by reciting their poems which carry messages of love, peace, stability and unity.

Participating poets were awarded gifts, including turbans and the “Gulabona,” a collection of poems and biographies of Paktia-based poets which were compiled and printed as a special anniversary edition for this festival.

### **School promotes music culture**

In Kabul, the new National Institute of Music has begun offering courses as of several months ago; the formal opening will be later this month. Already there are 150 students, and this is soon expected to increase to 300. The school aims to draw new attention to musical traditions, to stock schools with qualified teachers, and to possibly form the first national symphony orchestra.

The National Institute of Music offers other courses as well, including math and history, and teaches classes in English, but within the 10 years of schooling, students will be exposed to traditions, master new instruments and learn Af-

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ghan musical heritage. They will study domestic music, as well as that of South Asia and the West.

In 2001, Ahmad Sarmast founded the school through a joint initiative with the Ministry of Education and Monash University in Australia. Support also came in the form of instruments from the German government and the German Society of Music Merchants. The curriculum was developed with the help of the National College of Music in London.

**Children finding a new outlet in circus**

At the Afghan Educational Children’s Circus in western Kabul, there are children practicing drills, singing, and juggling.

Trainer Hamid Ruban commented on the popularity, saying, "Now, every place we go, kids want to join," he said.

The boys and girls wear shiny outfits while practicing different events for their performances. The children have performed in 16 provinces around the

country, Europe, and Japan, dancing and tumbling at orphanages, city centers, schools and public events. Some of the older children are trained in radio and TV production and help broadcast the performances for people who can not attend.

The Kabul center attracted 350 children during the winter months. The circus has opened centers in Herat and Bamiyan and plans two more centers this year.

**TV show *On the Road* illuminates progress**



The first domestic travel show, “On the Road,” has gained a following on Saturday nights. Host Mujeeb Arez has been called “part teacher,

part explorer” as he travels the nation showcasing different examples of progress.

Episodes have featured Mujeeb exhibiting a paved highway built along the historic Silk Road and touring a power station in Kandahar. Along the way, Mujeeb tastes local foods, tries his hand at local games and talks to people about their lives and history.

The show is produced by TOLO TV, the largest private TV station nationally, and is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

“On the Road” and TOLO TV are indicative of a rapidly growing media and entertainment industry. There are now more than two-dozen radio and TV stations broadcasting in several languages and there is a growing film industry.

**Ski industry comes alive**

Bamiyan’s tourist industry, both domestic and international, has been growing quickly. Adding to the beautiful lakes, historical Buddhist art worlds, and the first National Park, American ski consultants have said they believe central Afghanistan has some of the best "outback skiing" in the world.

Key supporters hope to develop the ski industry and “ecotourism,” including the governor, the Aga Khan Development Network, and the government of New Zealand.

In a few years' time, Bamiyan holds the potential to offer ski rental businesses, a nursery slope with a tow-lift to drag beginners to the top, and maybe even heliskiing.



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The unique scenery offers skiers the chance to observe farmers busily ploughing their fields with ox teams under the snowy peaks.

Last year, Bamiyan's historic sites were visited by 1,560 Afghans and 756 foreigners, generating around \$250,000 a year in the three hotels the tourist authorities have information on.

But Amir Foladi, manager of the Bamiyan ecotourism program, wants to see that increase. He hopes that by 2015 the 116 hotel beds currently available will have increased to 1,000, creating at least 1,000 jobs. He expects 10,000 foreign visitors and 100,000 Afghans to come each year, generating around \$5 million for the valley, excluding income from drivers, restaurants, and handicraft shops.

### **Afghans win Asian weightlifting competition**

Ali Raza Rafezada won the top spot as Asia's number one weightlifter. A total of 46 countries participated in the seven-day Asian Powerlifting Championships in Mongolia.



Rafezada was among four Afghan competitors, all of whom won gold medals. The three other medalists were Jamil Arab, Ali Ahmad Shahabi and Muhammad Nadar Mujadidi.

Rafezada, 28, from Herat province, competed in the 125-kilogram category. He lifted seven kilograms more than his closest rival, a former Asian champion from Iran.

Director of the Olympic Committee General Zahir Ahbar said Rafezada's success was an achievement for the whole country. He said that it was the first time that Afghanistan had won such a big competition.

### **Journalism centre for women opened by inspired female journalist in Herat**

Currently there is an average of 20 female journalism graduates from Herat University – about 20 women a year. In order to support these graduates and other aspiring female journalists, a peer, Fawzia Fakhri started a Women Journalism Center two months ago. The center aims to train female journalism graduates and help them find media-related jobs. Training has already begun for the 10 members already enrolled.

Ms. Fakhri established the center with support from two of her journalist friends, Masume Hasan, who is working for a newspaper published by the International Security Assistance Force, and Parwana Ali-zade, working for Deutsche Welle Radio.

Ms. Fakhri has worked with a diligence indicative of Afghan women and had been serving as a newscaster for radio Sahar – an all-women radio – for four years and contributing to Radio Watandar and

a few local magazines. Now she is fully devoted to helping others in media, splitting her time at the new center with training duties for an international non-Governmental organization specializing in media.

Ms. Fakhri's dreams are boundless: "I would like to create an internet café for women ... We also look forward to exhibiting photographs by women, and publish a booklet which can be sold to visitors."

## **Upcoming Events & Important Dates**

### **Exhibition of Textiles & Jewelry from Silk Road & Afghan Refugees**

May 20 - June 16  
Gallery Nishimura, Hiroshima  
090-3748-0459  
(closed May 26 & June 9)

### **National Consultative Peace Jirga**

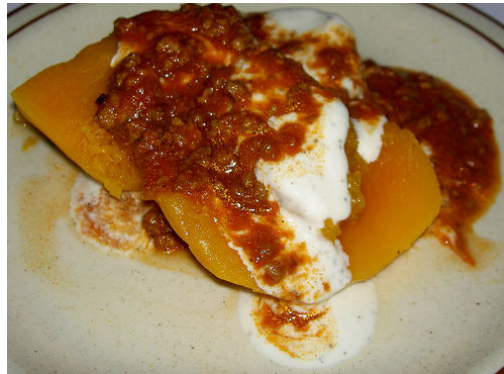
June 2 - June 4  
Kabul

## Omar's Kitchen



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

### Burane Kudu (Pumpkin Stew)



#### Ingredients:

- 3 lb. Pumpkin
- 1 cup Water
- 1 oz. Oil
- 1 lg. Onion chopped
- 2 oz. Oil
- 1 lb Ground beef
- 1 cup Crushed fresh tomatoes
- 8 oz. Plain yoghurt
- 2 cloves Garlic crushed
- Salt and cayenne pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon stick

#### To cook:

Peel and remove the seeds from the pumpkin and cut into pieces, 2 inches in length and 1 inch in width. Put the pumpkin in a Dutch oven, add the water and 1/4 cup oil and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally until all the water is evaporated and the pumpkin is soft, approximately 15-20 minutes. Drain and keep warm in a serving dish.

In a frying pan, brown the chopped onion in 2 oz. oil. Add ground beef that has first been crumbled with a fork (a little at a time so it does not stick together) and fry until beef is browned slightly. Add the crushed tomatoes, stir, bring to a boil and cook over medium heat until all the water is evaporated. Add salt, red pepper and cinnamon. Cook another five minutes. While the meat is cooking, crush garlic in a small bowl and blend in the yoghurt and salt to taste.

To serve: Take the serving dish with the pumpkin and drizzle with meat sauce. Top with yoghurt and serve immediately.

Serves 6 people.

## Language Lesson

There are many languages spoken in Afghanistan, but two are designated as official languages: Pashto and Dari. Each month we offer a lesson in both.

### Telephone Language

English	Pashto	Dari
Hello? (when picking up phone)	Sallam malekum.	Sallam malek bale bofarmayen.
May I ask who is calling?	Sook khabare kawee?	Esme shoma?
This is ~.	~~khabare kawome	~~astam
Could you please hold?	Lejh saber wokoi?	Lotfan kame saber koned?
Thank you for waiting	Wobakhowi montazer showoii.	Tashakor az entarzar tan
I'm sorry, I think I have the wrong number.	Bakhana ghowaram number ghalata da.	Mazarat mekhoham nomra esteba shoda.
Could I/you take a message?	Tsue payam lare?	Che payam dareid?

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