



June, 2012



Afghan News

Latest News

Select sports numbers in honor of the upcoming Olympics

1 - Afghan Olympic medals up to now: a bronze in men's taekwondo at the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

12 - Afghan Olympians looking to gain medals at the upcoming London Olympics.

6 - medals captured by Afghan athletes April's 18th Karate Ashihara World Competitions

* Afghanistan's surging world-class cricket athletes will participate in the Under 19 World Cricket Cup in Australia in August. The team has become a world power very quickly.



H.E. President Karzai opens Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference

Building upon the commitment to regional solidarity and shared efforts against terrorism made at last year's Istanbul Summit, the second "Heart of Asia" conference was held on June 14 in Kabul at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The event was attended by 40 regional and involved Foreign Ministers and national representatives, as well as delegates from international organizations, including the United Nations.

In his opening remarks, H.E. President Hamid Karzai focused on the shared role and benefit of securing stability in Afghanistan: "Indeed, it is Afghanistan where there is cooperation of all of us, countries in the region, the neighbors and our allies in NATO and ISAF that will bring stability not only to Afghanistan but the much needed relief from terrorism and radicalism and violence to more stability and peace and progress in this region ... So indeed, as the Heart of Asia, Afghanistan wishes to be and is seeing the signs of a more cooperative environment in Afghanistan and in the region." H.E. the President also in his speech

spoke of the commitment to the greater Afghanization of security, now in its 3rd phase, the successes thus far and projected for the future in the peace process, and the upcoming Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, saying, "we would be moving in two to three weeks time to Tokyo, where Japan as always will be a gracious and generous host to an Afghan conference for the economic development in Afghanistan. Afghanistan will be presenting a vision for its economic future to the Tokyo Conference, a strategy for its economic development in the Tokyo Conference." The majority of attendees at the Heart of Asia Conference are also scheduled to attend the Tokyo Conference.

UN secretary-general Ban-Ki Moon, who joined by video conference, praised the "Heart of Asia" nations, saying, "you have made real progress on the road to security and development."

A number of nations at the conference reit-

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erated their support to the initiative, including the United States, Britain, Turkey and Pakistan. H.E. Chinese Foreign Minister Fu Ying expressed the importance of continuing support to Afghanistan as the nation continues to develop growth-generation capacity.

Excerpts from statement of H.E. Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmay Rassoul at Heart of Asia Ministerial

Joining H.E. President Hamid Karzai, H.E. Dr. Zalmay Rassoul, Minister of Foreign Affairs, represented Afghanistan at the recent Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Kabul.

Expressing gratitude to those in attendance and, in particular, to the Turkish Government and H.E. Foreign Minister Davutoglu personally for their role in the conception of this important initiative, H.E. Minister Rassoul remarked, "this process has been more successful, more productive and enjoyed much stronger ownership and support by the participating countries than just about anybody expected, especially those outside our region. In our view, the Istanbul Process is one of the most meaningful, the most concrete and the most promising efforts at realizing the vision of sincere, result-oriented cooperation among countries of the Heart of Asia region at least over the past one decade."

Elaborating on the successes of the process, H.E. Dr. Rassoul stated that "there is a more intimate, far greater and far clearer understanding of the intertwined nature of both the challenges and problems but also the great potential and opportunities in our region." H.E. the Minister defined these opportunities as including "human and natural resources; trade, transit and investment;

services and other fields can not only transform the lives of the peoples of this region for the better but significantly contribute to security and prosperity in the broader world." Another success H.E. Dr. Rassoul cited was the instilled clarity that, through proper will and commitment, "the countries in this region are more than capable of finding workable, consensus-driven solutions for the region's common challenges and problems;"

In closing, H.E. Minister Rassoul expressed the resolve of Afghanistan to transition into a new role regionally: "We in Afghanistan are also determined to reclaim our rightful place in this region – not as an issue, a topic or a problem. Rather, we want to play the role of a regional convener, connector and mediator in improving confidence and cooperation in the Heart of Asia."

H.E. President Karzai Meets Japan's



Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs

President Hamid Karzai met on June 14th with H.E. Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Ryuji Yamane. H.E. Vice-Minister Yamane was in Kabul to attend the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference. Praising the conference as successful, H.E. Vice-Minister Yamane spoke on preparations for the upcoming initiative that Japan will host, the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan.

President Karzai in turn again expressed

his gratitude to H.E. the Vice-Minister for attending the Heart of Asia Ministerial and further offered deepest appreciation for Japan's continued and effective support, citing the upcoming Tokyo Conference as part of a legacy of generous conference coordination in support of the Afghan people. The President said that the prestige and special position Japan enjoys worldwide and the economic plan that the Afghan government had devised would lead to successful conference.

Kamwai secures seat in Supreme Court

At the general session of the House of People on June 3rd, Abdul Malik Kamwai was voted as a new member of the Supreme Court with 127 votes in his favor, after giving a presentation and responding to officials' questions. The other candidate presenting that day, Sarwar Danesh, was unable to secure a seat.

Foundation stone of new mental health hospital laid in Kabul

H.E. Acting Deputy Minister of Public Health Dr. Abdullah Fahim laid down the foundation stone for a new 3-story mental health hospital in Kabul on June 6th. The hospital is scheduled to be completed by the end of August and will provide services for psychotic patients and facilitate laboratories and pharmaceutical services.

International Women's Day, International Children's Day observed

The Ministry for Women Affairs observed International Women's Day in Kabul on June 10. H.E. Minister for Women Affairs Dr. Hosn Banu Ghazanfar called for support and protection of women's rights, especially through poverty alleviation and education provision.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs also celebrated this past month International Children's Day with a ceremony in Sinama Zinab Hall on June 2nd. H.E. Dr. Ghazanfar presented tokens to the participating children.

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New schools opening, education opportunities increase nationally

The foundation stones were laid for two new eight classroom schools in the Quarghayi district of Laghman: Mandar Awal High School and Baluchabad Elementary school. The construction was made possible with the cooperation of the Japanese government.

A new 8-classroom school will be built to accommodate 800 students in Kenara Shahr Sheberghan village, Jowzjan province.

3,800 youths will be granted enrolment to the private educational institutes of Spinghar, Khanai Noor, Behzad, Avicena Balkhi, and Dunya Maasir. The Teacher Training Center of Roshan.Khanai Noor has also pledged to provide education to ten lower income students free of charge, while Avicenna Balkhi will provide fifty girls with free education for nursing and midwifery.

Airports planned for every province

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is planning to re-enforce the air network of the nation. Already there are tens of airports in operation, with four of them international: Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif airports. Newly being planned are airports in Khost, Bamyan, Daikundi, Farah, Nimroz, Kunduz and Ghazni provinces.

Silk production flourishing in Balkh

The million Afghani silk farming industry has been reviving strongly in Balkh province. One farm in particular alone produces five thousand boxes of silk-



worm cocoons annually. Each box contains 15-25,000 silk worms, and each worm is capable of producing 300 to 1000 meters of raw silk thread. To further increase production, the Balkh Agriculture Department is working with relevant organizations to provide training courses for women and is providing equipment.

Oil and Gas exploration blocks to be auctioned off

Six oil and gas exploration blocks north of Mazar-i-Sharif will be auctioned off. Already interest has been strong from a number of groups, including India's Oil & Natural Gas Corp.

Last year, a Chinese company won rights to three energy blocks in the Amu Darya basin.

Oil, Gas Revenues Rise. Already production has also begun successfully elsewhere. Oil and gas revenues in Baghlan province have increased by US\$14,000 over the past two months in comparison compared to last year. The oil and gas department credits the increased capacity of the workforce has lead to this progress.

New Embassy Podcast uploaded



The Embassy's latest podcast, Podcast 4, has been made available on itunes, YouTube, and BlipTV.

This month's episode focuses on Afghanistan and Sports. Ms. Fahima Rezayee, an Afghan Judo athlete who will compete in the London Olympics, is interviewed at her training base of Tokai University in Japan; Skateistan, a Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif based NGO focusing on promoting education and empowerment through skateboarding, is featured; and the national sport of Afghanistan, Buzkashi, is explained.

Please take a few minutes to watch this and pass the information on.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0K3QTW-BYyg&feature=youtu.be>

<http://blip.tv/afghan-embassy-podcast/episode-6198789>

<http://itunes.apple.com/jo/podcast/afghan-embassy-podcast/id446321280>

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