



January, 2013



Afghan News

Latest News

Select Economic Accomplishments

Gross domestic product per capita has increased nearly fivefold since 2002, with an annual growth rate of about 9%.

Exported goods from Afghanistan reached US\$1.5 billion.

Afghan dried fruits are exported to 43 countries in Asia, Europe and America.

Exports of Saffron in the first nine months of 2012 increased by roughly 200 kilograms (or 14%) over the same period in 2011 to around 1,600 kilograms. There was also an increase of more than 2,000 tons in exports of onions, potatoes, tomatoes, celery, and other vegetables.



Photo courtesy of Bakhtar News

H.E. President Karzai, H.E. Foreign Minister Rassoul, key delegation visit the United States

H.E. President Karzai made a 3-day visit to the United States from January 11th, along with H.E. Dr. Zalmay Rassoul, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a delegation of key officials. The visit was organized in order to coordinate cooperation with one of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's key allies in preparation for the next stage of the nation's peace and development initiatives.

During his visit, H.E. President Karzai met with a number of important figures, chiefly H.E. President Barack Obama as well as H.E. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, other Cabinet officials, members of Congress, and other related parties. H.E. President Karzai also spoke at a conference at Georgetown University.

The visit provided an excellent opportunity to take stock of the development and vibrancy

that Afghans and the international community have together created within the nation. H.E. President Karzai in his speech at Georgetown mentioned Japan as another key ally as well in these achievements. Mentioning that it is easy to have misconceptions due to commonly portrayed images of the nation, H.E. the President stated, "with all the phones ringing there, with all the television channels there, with all the media there, with all the hustle and bustle of life, and the young people going to education and studying and working and making life move forward, the wheel go forward, I would give you a different perspective. I would say Afghanistan is definitely moving in the right direction: 2014 will be a good year for us, and the years after will be even better."

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H.E. also added, “ladies and gentlemen, there is a country in Afghanistan. Just like here in America. Just like in the rest of the world. There are weddings and wedding halls. There is music. There are cars honking. There are buses. There are donkey-driven carts. There are – there is life. There is society. This society is as lively and moving forward as any other society. And it is this that I would like you to remember when you think of Afghanistan: a country of 5,000 years’ history, at least; a country that has produced thinkers, philosophers, poets; a country that has had a good past; a country like all other countries, has also suffered in its history. And I can tell you that the most recent period of the suffering of the Afghan history is behind us. A new period is beginning – has already begun – and that new period will be consolidated with 2014 coming.”

Ambassador Fatimie presents credentials to H.E. President Aquino of the Republic of the Philippines, meets key officials

Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie on January 10th presented his credentials as non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines to H.E. President Benigno S. Aquino III in a ceremony at the Malacañan Palace. A video of the ceremony can be seen on the palace’s official YouTube channel.

On the following day, the Ambassador Fatimie was also honored to attend a New Years reception organized at the palace for Ambassadors and representatives of the international community. On this auspicious opportunity, Ambassador Fatimie expressed to H.E. President Aquino warmest wishes, on behalf of H.E. President Hamid Karzai and the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Ambassador conveyed deepest gratitude for the partnership that the Republic of the Philippines has extended to Afghani-

stan’s peace and development.

Ambassador Fatimie arrived in the Republic of the Philippines on January 8th. In addition to meeting with H.E. President Aquino, he has been holding meetings with a number of key government officials. Chief among these were H.E. Mr. Albert Del Rosario, Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and H.E. Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Maria Theresa P. Lazaro. Ambassador Fatimie renewed to H.E. the Undersecretary deepest appreciation for the great friendship extended to Afghanistan by the Republic of the Philippines. The two vowed to create even closer linkages between the Ministry and the Embassy, and talked about such issues of mutual interest as the opportunity for minerals and natural resources that Afghanistan presents.

Educational institute for carpet production, business planned

Afghan Carpet Producers and Export-



ers Association is planning to set up an educational institute of carpet weaving. The institute would help to preserve the tradition, the skill of practitioners, and allow for some standardization of techniques. Subjects taught would include production of raw materials, carpet planning, weaving, painting, and business.

Literacy rate increasing quickly

Literacy is increasing greatly within the nation, due to efforts to educate both adults and youth. Currently roughly 35% of the population is literate, but this is on track to increase to 55% in 10 years and 80% in 20. In Balkh province alone, some 20,000 individuals become literate yearly, this past year the number was around 23,000.

Midwife training continues

The training of midwives is continuing around the nation in order to continue to increase the safety of the child-birthing process. In Parwan province, for example, around 60 midwives from Parwan, Panjshir and Kapisa provinces graduated from a 26-month program midwifery education school earlier this month. The graduates will work in health facilities of their respective communities.

Electricity extending, diversifying

Afghanistan's wide, sunlit deserts and other terrain may have the "possibility of creating solar parks with the capacity to produce 150 MW of energy," according to Sharifullah Mohammadi, head of the solar power company Zularistan. The Ministry of Energy and Water acknowledges a much larger potential of over 100,000 MW of solar energy.

In Kandahar, which is said to have 320 days of sunshine a year, Kandahar University has begun to transfer its power system from a diesel fuel system to solar power. With assistance from First Solar of Arizona, USA and the United States, a total of 900 solar panels will be installed, adding to the smaller number already in use, to create an eventual 170 kilowatts of electricity, enough likely to contribute to the local community. Installation will hopefully be completed within a year. Kandahar University also hosts the first energy department at any institute in the nation. The program focuses on "optimizing Kandahar's energy potential." Vice Chancellor and Lead Engineer Abdul Tawab has said he hopes the program and the solar energy use will serve as "an example for other universities and the rest of the country."

The Ministry of Energy and Water is pursuing a plan to increase wind power within the nation. Currently tests on feasibility and approach are being conducted in cooperation with Germany in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Samangan, and Parwan. At present, two wind-run turbines are being used in Paktika and Panjshir provinces respectively.

A new initiative will in 30 months develop a network in Kunduz and Baghlan which will provide electrical access to a total of more than 41,000 households. Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), a government entity, will oversee the construction and manage the power plant after rehabilitation is completed. The project will also be supported by MAAMAAR Company and the Asian Development Bank.

Railway station, customs house under construction

On January 5th, construction began on a railway station and new customs house building in the Hisar Shahi area along the Jalalabad-Torkham highway. The customs house will be constructed on a 1000-acre plot and the railway station, which will serve to connect Hisar Shahi to Peshawar, will be built on a 500-acre plot.

Local women's business group begins operations

The Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Industry has started a program to get bring together local businesswomen to encourage cooperation towards increased business achievement and production levels. The group, called Balkh Women Agricultural Production and Process, elected has elected Mrs. Qandigul Jan Amaki as its President.

Pictured below, Kandahar University



Exports of key agricultural items increase

Exports of Saffron in the first nine months of 2012 increased by roughly 200 kilograms over the same period in 2011 to around 1,600 kilograms. Saffron from Herat and Ghazni have in particular been praised worldwide, according to the Afghanistan Raisin, Fruits and Vegetable Promotion Agency.

The same period also saw an increase of more than 2,000 tons in exports of onions, potatoes, tomatoes, celery, and other vegetables.

Regarding dried fruits, 43 nations received Afghan exports in this category last year.

Overall, it has been reported that Afghan exports in 2012 totaled some US\$1.5 billion.

Investment incentives offered for foreign organizations

In order to make investment easier for foreign companies in Afghanistan's increasingly opportune environment, the government has announced that companies that invest US\$1 million or more in 2013 will enjoy tax exemptions for 10 years and will receive free land to establish their businesses.

National soccer team begins preparation for Asian Cup

(photo below courtesy of Tolo News)

The 16-member national soccer team held a 10-day training session in Kabul on Wednesday to begin early preparations for the 2014 Asian Football Federation Challenge Cup. Similar trainings will be held before the event.

Afghanistan's division, group C, is said to be very strong with also Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Laos in the division.

Upcoming Events

Buknyo Daigaku festival
February 23, 2012
Bunkyo Daigaku University

Bunkyo Daigaku in Chigasaki, Kanagawa prefecture will host an event related to Afghanistan.

Activities will include a presentation on Afghanistan by Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie and Afghan food sales.

For more information and updates, check Bunkyo Daigaku's homepage.



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