



April, 2013



Afghan News

Latest News

Select Economic Indicators

As we approach the transformation decade, Afghanistan grows increasingly financially self-sufficient

Taxes and customs raised \$1.64 billion last financial year, 14 times more than 10 years ago.

The government can now pay over 50% of its recurrent costs such as salaries.

Afghanistan's tax to GDP ratio is now above 11% - more than our neighbor's 9%.

Figures are improving beyond this as well. This year, taxes from mining alone are expected to reach \$2.5 billion.



Ghazni declared Center of Islamic Civilization H.E. President Karzai sends commemorating message

As of earlier this month, Ghazni has been named the "Center of Islamic Civilization." This designation comes from a decision made by participants at the 6th Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) conference of cultural ministers if Islamic countries held in 2007 in Libya.

Ghazni has a long and storied history and is mentioned in early Islamic writings. It has been known throughout history as a city of culture and learning. From this seat of human greatness flowed poetry, science, and many other forms of knowledge that influenced the greater world. Of the 44 designated historical monuments in this city, of note are the tomb of Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavi and the Citadel.

A festival and dedication ceremony were held on April 13th to mark the official designation that was bestowed upon the city.

H.E. President Hamid Karzai released a message to commemorate this auspicious event. Noting Ghazni's great significance in the Islamic world and beyond, H.E. stated that he is proud that through this designation this "asset would continue to [be] intro-

duced to coming generations." The president also thanked the ministry for information and culture, Ghazni's local administration, ISECO and all those played a role in this historic event.

H.E. Foreign Minister Rassoul addresses NATO Foreign Ministerial meeting in Brussels

On April 23rd, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) organized a Foreign Ministerial meeting in Brussels, Belgium. The meeting was arranged in order to speak on a number of key world developments, prominently including the Afghanistan security process.

H.E. Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmay Rassoul addressed the participants, offering sincere gratitude for the noble efforts of NATO and its member states in supporting the spread of peace and security in Afghanistan. Speaking on the approach of 2014, in which, in the words of H.E., the Afghan National Security Forces will reach "successful completion ... in assuming security responsibilities across

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Afghanistan.” H.E. cited that now “Afghan forces are directly responsible for the security and defense of nearly 90 percent of the population.”

With these facts in mind, H.E. stated that “nearly two years into the Transition, we’re now at a stage where we can confidently claim the strategic as well as tactical success of this process,” and mentioned the significance that this will have on “the success of the next round of national elections in 2014.” H.E. Foreign Minister Rassoul also pointed to great strides in other areas, such as “strengthen[ing] the rule of law.”

Even with the great progress that has been made, H.E. made special note of the importance of an enduring Afghanistan-NATO partnership, which will work beyond 2014 to lasting peace and security in Afghanistan, the region, and the greater world.

As we consolidate the success of the ongoing transition process and look forward to its by the end of 2014, we in Afghanistan are looking forward to elevating and maturing our long-term security and defense cooperation with our international allies for years to come.

Ambassador Fatimie attends garden event hosted by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress

On April 18th, Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie had the honor to attend an annual function hosted by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress at the Akasaka Imperial Gardens. This event serves to allow the diplomatic community in Japan and Japanese dig-

nitaries to strengthen further relations with Their Majesties.

Ambassador Dr. Fatimie and the Ambassador took this most special of opportunities to convey to Their Majesties the Emperor and the Empress, on behalf of the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, heartfelt gratitude for Their most noble, effect-generating support to Afghanistan’s peace and development. Ambassador Fatimie has the utmost respect for Their Majesties, both for personal accomplishments and for embodying the noble spirit of the Japanese people, and is therefore humbled by the friendship that Their Majesties have extended to Afghanistan.

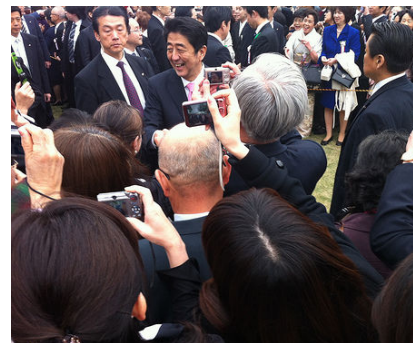
Ambassador Fatimie was also able to interact with and express further the sincerest appreciation of the Afghan people and government to a number of key people, including H.E. Mr. Akira Amari, Minister of Economic Revitalization and the holder of many key government portfolios; Hon. Representative Kawamura Takeo; H.E. Ambassador Christian Masset of France; H.E. Ambassador Tom D. Kijiner of the Republic of the Marshall Islands; and H.E. Ambassador Doan Xuan Hung of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; among other important and laudable guests.

Ambassador Fatimie attends H.E. Prime Minister Abe-hosted cherry blossom party

Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie had the distinct honor of attending a cherry blossom party hosted by H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at

Shinjuku Gardens on April 20th.

With the Japanese tradition of cherry blossoms symbolizing the start of things new paralleling the spring start of the Afghan New Year, the event was very symbolic as a start of another year of ever-increasingly friendly Afghan-Japanese relations.



The event brought together Their Excellencies the heads of the diplomatic missions in Japan and a number of other key dignitaries. Ambassador Dr. Fatimie had the pleasure of interacting with a number of fellow attendees.

New schools opened throughout the nation

Five schools were inaugurated with Japanese assistance in Khwaja Boghra and Panjsad Family localities of Kabul’s Khairkhana neighborhood. In total this amounts to 120 classrooms, serving 12,500 students. A new primary school building was also inaugurated in Kabul’s Meanjou village on April 1st with the assistance of the



French organization Mother For Peace France Organization. The building occupies some 500 square meters. This building addresses the problem of classroom shortages that the school previously faced. Foundation stones were laid this month at two other school buildings in Kabul that will be built from now, one in Arya Town and the second for Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Girls High School. These two schools will serve another 1,500 students in total.

In Dara-i-Ali, Maroof and Sabz Dara areas of Bamiyan's Yakawlang district new buildings have been built for four schools, specifically for two high schools, one boys' middle school, and one girls' school. In total these four schools will mean that 50 new classrooms are opened, serving 1,500 students. Three of these buildings were constructed with the support of Japan, though it was not revealed which ones; the fourth was supported by an Italian private backer.

In Balkh province's Sholgar district, a new two-story, 16-classroom building was inaugurated for Ahmad Khazroya high school. 1,600 children attend the school.

Sitara Kindergarten was opened in a 2-room building in Mazari-Sharif this past month as well.

A primary school in the Loisar of Qadis district of Badghis province was reopened after three years. There are plans to enrol over 500 students.

In Saripul's Sancharak district, Fereshqan Girls' High School inaugurated a new building. This will allow for education to be provided in total for over 10,000 students.

In Kandahar, the Panjwai district of Adjimzai village opened a new school, Adjimzai school on April 13th. The school

provides education to some 60 children. District Governor Haji Faizal Mohammad in particular hailed the local police for their kind support that led to the opening of the school.

World Health Day marked

The Ministry of Public Health of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on Sunday observed World Health Day (is this the official name?). This year's theme calls for a focus on high blood pressure, seeking to raise awareness of its causes, consequences, and ways to prevent high blood pressure and related complications. A ceremony to mark the occasion was attended by H.E. Dr. Suraya Dalil, Minister of Public Health; H.E. Mrs. Amena Safi Afzali, Minister for Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled; Dr. Naqibullah Fayeq, Chairman of the Health Committee of the House of Representatives; Dr. Ahmad Shadoul, Representative of the World Health Organization for Afghanistan, and a number of other officials.

A number of persons from the media were awarded for their awareness-raising activities regarding health issues.

Latest bridge to increase commuting ease

Construction work on a 45-meter bridge has been initiated in Kabul to ease traffic congestion. The bridge would take 11 months to complete. Six new bridges have already been built within Kabul over the past three years in the areas of Mirwais Maidan, Sherdarwaza, Asmai Watt, Paghman, and Pul-i-Mahmud Khan.

Business gains remain inspirational

An investment fair was organized in Herat earlier this month to showcase domestic products. According to reports, nearly 40,000 visitors attended the event. It was reported that local factory owners through the fair signed multiple million-Afghani contracts. It is said that of particular interest to international customers were shoes, carpets, food products, marble products, and motorcycles.

Work to begin on 6 major mines in next two months

The ministry of mines has received interest from several international companies from Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and African nations regarding investment in domestic natural resources. H.E. Minister Wahidullah Shahrani has said that project tenders are being made available for bidding and within the next two months contracts look to be signed. The projects, according to the minister, include, "two blocks in Afghan-Tajik zone in northern Balkh province of Afghanistan, gold and copper mine of Zaragshan in Moqor district of Ghazni province, gold mine in Raghistan district of Badakhshan province, Balkhab copper mine in Sar-e-Pul province and Shaida copper mine located partly in Pashtun Zarghoon and partly in Adraskan districts of Herat province." These projects will bring billions of dollars into the economy. According to H.E., "The share of the mines ministry including fuel and gas will reach \$4 billion by 2024 and the contribution of other natural resources towards the economy of country ... will form 45-50% of the economy of the country."

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Poultry farming attaining success in Balkh

Poultry farming in Balkh province is enjoying good success. According to Mr. Hajji Muhammad, chairman of the local poultry farms association, there are currently 120 such farms in the area and the industry currently employs nearly 6,000 people. It has been reported that poultry farming has had a 20-year history in the area.

mal care, and will receive training in greenhouse development, vegetable processing, horticulture, forage production, and business. More than 169,500 rural households in Kabul, Parwan, and Logar provinces will benefit.

The project is being supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

was one of three foreign Embassies featured.

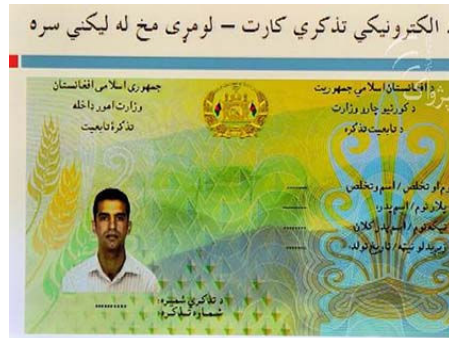


In particular, the program showed the video podcast series that the Embassy has been producing. In this episode, they were informing the Japanese public about Afghan music.

Work on AISA compound launched

Construction work on a 3-story building for the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) was launched in Khost city on April 10th. The agency has been operating from a marketplace in Khost City since 2007. The agency will aim to use its new facilities to further increase investment in greater Khost province.

New ID cards being issued



Kabul residents started receiving new electronic ID cards this month. This will soon be initiated in other provinces as well in the lead up to the 2014 presidential elections.

Women, resettled peoples to be given greater capacity in agriculture

Work is being done to improve agriculture and livestock productivity over the next 6 years by building the capacity of community organizations and local government entities. The main focus will be on assisting resettled people and households headed by women; it will also work to provide smaller scale farmers with better access to markets. In order to do this, women employed in the dairy sector will be given technical assistance in such areas as hygiene and young ani-

Embassy featured on NHK's Kaigai Network

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was featured on NHK, Japan's national media, on April 21st. NHK's program "Kaigai Network" focused on the media created by Embassies within Japan; the Afghan mission



Those interested in the Embassy's social media activities are invited to Like the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Tokyo's Facebook page. A very active page, it describes the activities of the Embassy as well as Afghan history, culture, and natural beauty. We welcome our readers to join in the conversations online.

<http://www.facebook.com/afghanembassyjp>