



May, 2013



Afghan News

Latest News

Select Afghan Media Indicators

In recognition of World Press Day this month

150 radio stations active

70 television channels

Around 2,000 printed non-governmental publications



H.E. President Karzai Inaugurates Qasaba Housing Project

H.E. President Hamid Karzai on May 17th inaugurated the Qasaba housing project in Khwajah Rawash of Kabul city. In a speech at the event, H.E. the President hailed the project as “another step for welfare and betterment of the lives of our people,” and expressed praise and gratitude for cooperation to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development.

In total, 111 five-story buildings will be constructed over three years for a combined 3,333 apartments. The apartments are to be donated to the poor and homeless. The complex will be equipped with such public facilities as a mosque, health clinic, kindergarten, and park. The project will also create employment opportunities for some 3,000 workers.

H.E. Foreign Minister Dr. Rassoul Introduces H.E. Deputy Minister Ahmadi



H.E. Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmai Rassoul on May 15th introduced H.E. Mr. Ershad Ahmadi as Deputy Minister of Political Affairs. H.E. Mr. Ahmadi succeeds Mr. Jawed Ludin, whose distinguished performance spanned more than two years. H.E. Minister Rassoul took the occasion to offer appreciation for former Deputy Minister Ludin’s valuable service, saying “his efforts, creativity,

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patience, and wisdom played a significant role in achieving the targets of our government. Mr. Ludin served his country in a very sensitive and important period of time.”

Mr. Ershad Ahmadi previously served as the Chief of Programs for office of the president, Advisor to the H.E. President Hamid Karzai, Deputy Head of the High Office of the Oversight and Anti-Corruption, Charge d’ Affaires of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Canada, and Director General of the Fifth Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In his remarks Mr. Ershad Ahmadi said, “My appointment as the Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs poses a unique and specific challenge and that is the expectation of the young generation of my country.”

Ambassador Fatimie attends event hosted by Hon. Representative Nikai, meets with H.E. Prime Minister Abe



May 7, 2013: Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie attended a reception hosted by Hon. Representative Toshihiro Nikai (pictured above, shaking hands with the Ambassador), a member of the Afghan-Japanese Parliamentary Friendship League. The event brought together an estimated more than 3,000 members of the Liberal Democratic Party, supporters, and friends of this respected politician and ally of peace.

Prominent among the guests in attendance was H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Ambassador Dr. Fatimie was afforded the great honor of speaking with H.E., expressing deepest gratitude for the crucial facilitation of life-bettering development that Japan has extended, calling particular attention to the role that H.E. has played both now and in the past. H.E. the Prime Minister graciously reacted positively to the remarks

and conveyed best wishes to H.E. President Hamid Karzai.

Ambassador Dr. Fatimie was extremely fortunate to meet with Chancellor Kenshiro Matsunami of Nippon Sport Science University and Mrs. Matsunami, close personal friends and friends to all Afghan people. Mr. Matsunami was characteristically kind and cordial. Ambassador Dr. Fatimie had the honor to reiterate sincerest appreciation for the invaluable role played by Mr. Matsunami and his distinguished wife. Another key friend met was Mr. Dan Harada, a man of great insight and vision. Ambassador Dr. Fatimie expressed best regards to this gentleman.

Prominent among other key guests met by Ambassador Dr. Fatimie were Hon. Councillor Satsuki Katayama; Hon. Councillor Seichi Eto; Hon. Representative Arata Takebe; Hon. Representative Moto Hayashi; Mr. Kusaka, the secretary to Hon. Councillor Yasuhiro Oe; and renowned artist Koji Kinuka..

Ambassador Fatimie greets Governor Kuroiwa of Kanagawa



May 16, 2013: Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie received a warm welcome from Hon. Governor Yuji Kuroiwa of Kanagawa Prefecture upon his visit to the latter’s office. Mr. Jason Pratt, Public Affairs Officer at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was also in attendance. Ambassador Fatimie has made it a priority to further strengthen the bonds between Afghanistan and the prefectures of Japan. Kanagawa holds significance within this initiative.

Ambassador Dr. Fatimie first of all expressed, on behalf of the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, deepest gratitude for the generous and effect-generating cooperation extended by Japan to Afghanistan’s

development and peace process. Within this, the Ambassador expressed that the people of Kanagawa’s kind efforts were also crucial in the overall Japanese and international efforts that have contributed to real achievements. Later, the Ambassador would add that with great leaders such as leaders like Hon. Governor Kuroiwa as friends, the future of Afghanistan’s peace and development would be without concern. The Hon. Governor in turn welcomed sincerely the Ambassador and praised the accomplishments of Afghanistan, stating that he is eager to work closely with the Afghan residents of Kanagawa to promote more friendship and mutual understanding.

With overlapping interests and goals, such as the health of their respective citizens and love of nature, the two enjoyed fruitful conversation on a number of topics. In closing, Ambassador Dr. Fatimie invited investment in Afghanistan’s natural resources by Kanagawa-based groups.

More Schools Serving More Children, Adults



The foundation stone of a primary girls’ school was laid this month in Kandawal village, Cheghcheran city center of Ghor province. The building will be constructed within a year with the assistance of Japan. Also this month, Japan vowed to over the next two years cooperate with the Afghan government to build an additional 70 new school buildings in Bamiyan, Ghor, and Daikundi provinces.

Kabul University has begun the construction of a new 3-story building for the Computer Science Faculty with the partnership of Japan and the United Nations Office for



Project Services. A ceremony was held at the school to mark the occasion, attended by H.E. Minister Obaidullah Obaid of the Ministry of Higher Education, H.E. Ambassador Hiroshi Takahashi of Japan, Kabul University Chancellor Habibullah Habib, and Deputy Chancellor Mohammad Hadi Hedayati. Currently 550 students study computer science at the university, and 30% of these are female. The school has also increased its transportation capacity through the acquisition of a team of mini buses. The buses will be used to move students between the campus and research centers.

A new education department building was inaugurated in Nuristan province on May 5th and construction work is set to begin soon for a building for Helmand University.

The first district-level agricultural institute building in Badakhshan province was inaugurated in the Baharak district with the assistance of Germany, the KfW Development Bank and its partner, and the Aga Khan Foundation. The institute will provide education to more than 500 students. The building has nine classrooms, labs, a library, a computer room, and “specialized departments for livestock, crops, and forestry,” according to Wadsam news.

A ceremony was held on the occasion, attended by Hon. Governor Dr. Shah Waliullah Adib; the head of the provincial council, Mr. Abdul Wahid Taibi; the Deputy Ambassador of the German Embassy, Mr. Oliver Owczar; and the Chief Executive Officer of the Aga Khan Foundation in Afghanistan, Mr. Akhtar Iqbal; among other key persons.

In related news, this month the World Bank agreed to support professional and vocational education in Afghanistan.

A national institute of mining is scheduled to be built with the support of India. Afghanistan is one of the most mineral rich nations in the world. India is a significant partner in the venture as it has been increasingly cooperating in the areas of mining, finance, and trade.

Health Sector Job Fair Held

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on May 11th and 12th held its initial job

fair. It aims to facilitate the placement of job seekers in available positions in health facilities throughout the nation. In particular, the focus of the fair was on recruiting recent graduates and young job seekers. More than 1170 vacant posts were announced at the fair, all of which are open to both genders.

It is said that currently more than 36,000 people are employed in the health sector, 12,800 of these are women.

SEHAT to Aid Further Afghanization of Health Sector

As part of the efforts being made to bring greater Afghan oversight to all sectors, the Afghanistan System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) program is being established with the cooperation of the World Bank. SEHAT will work to expand the scope, quality, and coverage of basic health and essential hospital services in both rural and urban areas in 22 of the 34 provinces. It will also work to build the capacity of the Ministry of Public Health.

Over five years through 2018, the program pledges to facilitate the following:

- Vaccination of 60% of children aged between 12 and 23 months for five preventable diseases
- Provision of antenatal care to 40% of pregnant women
- Provision of counseling on infant and young child feeding to 50% of pregnant and lactating women
- Achievement of full budgetary autonomy at 15 national hospitals

Development Projects Underway, Completed Nationwide

Construction will begin soon in Helmand province on the Kajaki power dam and a cotton factory. Hon. Gov. Mohammad Naeem was quoted by Pajhwok as saying that he hopes the factory will be completed in a year and ready to support employment of thousands; it will be supported by India.

Work began on May 13th to repair and gravel 13-kilometers of road stretching

from Hairatan to Kaldar district in Baghlan.

The Taloqan river in Takhar province’s Bangi district has been outfitted with a 150-meter retaining wall and 200-meter canal. The project provides protection against floods for 300 families and other irrigation benefits for nearly 4,000 families in total. The 8-month work on the projects was supported by Germany’s BMZ. (Photo courtesy of Pajhwok)

The foundation stone of a 11,000-square-meter park for women was laid in Maidan Wardak province on May 4th. A ceremony on the occasion was attended by Hon. Governor Abdul Majid Khogyani. Within the year, a park for children and a zoo will also be built in the province.

Bamiyan, Baghdis Agriculture Sectors Expanding

It has been reported that 100,000 hectares of land in Bamiyan province have been converted to agricultural use this current year, showing the growing capability of farmers and irrigation systems. While potatoes are said to be the main crop, other local products are showing excellent increases in yield, such as wheat and honey.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock will rehabilitate 200 hectares of pistachio forests in Baghdis’ Abkamari and Qadis districts. The 3-year project will involve a number of sub-projects, including improvement of irrigation to the area.

World Bank Reports Positive Economic Growth

Earlier this month, the World Bank released its latest economic update on Afghanistan, citing inspiring growth. Some of the key indicators reported are as follows.

- Real GDP increased from 7.3% in 2011 to an estimated 11.8% in 2012, largely due to an exceptional harvest and large-scale mining activities. As the mining sector grows and with the increase of oil production in Amu Darya, the GDP growth trend will continue
- Inflation decreased to 6.4%
- International reserves were increased.

Paktika Revenue Exceeding Expectations

Paktika province has been reporting expectation-exceeding revenue collections due to strong business. Last year, officials from Paktika's revenue department had had a goal of collecting 17 million afghanis, but were able to collect 44 million. This year, with a target 63 million, they have already collected 21 million in the first 4 months.

First Commercial Oil Production Beginning in July

The first commercial oil production ever in Afghanistan is expected to begin within the next two months in the Amu river basin (Amu Darya). China National Petroleum (CNPC) will be heading the project, but there will be great benefits domestically. H.E. Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani told Australia's ABC news that "the oil production will eventually supply oil domestically."

The rights to five or six more major projects, including rights to extract oil, gas, copper, gold, and iron ore, are also due to be awarded within the next month.

Afghanistan More Capable of Reprising Silk Road-Era Trade Prominence through Multi-National Train Network

H.E. President Hamid Karzai recently visited Turkmenistan as part of the Nowroz New Year celebrations. On this

important visit, H.E. signed a tripartite agreement on the construction of a railway from Turkmenistan's Atmarad, through the Imam Nazar region near to the Afghan border, and into Tajikistan with His counterparts from Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. As reported by Bakhtar news, "according to the agreement experts from the three countries [will] assess the technical, legal and financial details of the project" over the next month. Practical work on the project is expected to begin in "another four months."

The project is being hailed as a great potential facilitator for development economically and otherwise both within the three nations and regionally overall. This will be another step in restoring the Silk Road area as a world financial hub and better bring Afghan resources and manpower to the world.

Cement Packaging Plant Established

A cement packaging plant has been built in Zaranj, Nimroz Province. Independent production is likely to begin in the third quarter of the year. Afghanistan has previously needed to import large quantities of cement.

Pepsi Plant to Open in 2014

PepsiCo plans to open its first plant in Afghanistan in 2014 in a partnership with the Alokozay group. Located in the Kabul industrial zone near rival Coca-Cola, the venture looks to create roughly 3,000 jobs, both directly and indirectly.

Afghanistan Wins U-19 Asia Elite Cup Undefeated



Afghanistan's national Under-19 Cricket Team won this month's Asia Elite Cup hosted by Malaysia. The successful

showing qualifies Afghanistan to participate in the Under-19 World Cup.

The Afghan team in its undefeated campaign overcame through strong performances challengers that included the United Arab Emirates and Thailand (photo from Bakhtar).

National Soccer Team Quickly Increases in World Rankings



Afghanistan's national soccer team has shown great improvement in world rankings. In March, Afghanistan improved its ranking from 189 to 141. This month, it improved to 139. Afghan players are increasingly also playing internationally. Zohib Islam Amiri, pictured below in red, has been playing for Mumbai FC in India's I-League.

Afghanistan is also performing well in beach soccer. The first Afghan ever has been signed to play pro beach soccer in Brazil, Hazrat Gul Baran.

Afghan Victorious at Asian Snooker Championships

The 29th amateur Asian snooker championship was held on May 3rd with 32 representatives of roughly 15 nations competing. Saleh Mohammad won the tournament, the first Afghan ever to do so, beating 7 opponents before defeating Syria's Omar al Kojah 7-2 in the final match.

Mohammad operates a snooker hall in Kabul.

Royal Philharmonic Award Bestowed on Dr. Sarmast

On May 14th in London, Dr. Ahmad Naser Sarmast was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Award. The UK-based Royal Philharmonic Award is a music award recognizing musical visionaries.

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Dr. Ahmad Naser Sarmast is a Research Fellow at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia and the Founder and Director of Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM). He has supported young musicians in a number of locations around the world in efforts to diversify music internationally. According to Bakhtar news, "the Afghanistan National Institute of Music is the first institution for the education and nurturing of gifted young Afghan musicians."

Mughal Art, Culture Exhibition



Opened

On May 13th, an exhibition on the art and culture of the Mughal Empire was opened in the Queen Castle of Bagh-i Babur (Babur's Garden) in Kabul. Paintings and pictures displaying the achievements of the Mughal Empire and the lifestyle of its rulers were displayed. The exhibition was supported by the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Agha Khan Foundation, the Norwegian Embassy, and the British Library. (Photo courtesy of 3rd Eye)

Digging in Narinj Tapa Begins

Archeological excavation began on May 4th in Narinj Tapa in Shuhadi Salihin, Kabul city under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and Culture and with the supported of the French em-



bassy. The one-month excavation comes after finding 47 ancient relics at the site last year; these previously found items are now at the national museum.

First Female Afghan Air Force Pilot Graduates in 30 years

The air force in its continuing capacity building is also reflecting Afghanistan's dedication to gender equality. 2nd Lieutenant Niloofar Rahmani recently graduated within a class of 9 to become the first female Afghan pilot to be trained inside the country in decades. She will serve as an inspiration to other aspiring women. Having now finished the undergraduate pilot training, she will now enter secondary training to become a specialist in certain types of aviation.

Modern Music Festival Held

This month, the Sound Central Festival's third annual music event was held in Kabul. Music artists performed in front of a live audience of hundreds at a time. The festival was also streamed live worldwide on the Internet. Over 30 music acts performed over 4 days, including District Unknown, rapper Ramika, Ariana Delawari, and Kabul-based expat rockers White City. The event featured one day of only female artists.

Lion of Kabul Recruited for 'Clean and Green' Campaign

A new "clean and green" campaign is underway in Kabul municipality to promote ecology and cleanliness in the city. The mascot of the campaign, Shir Sultan the lion, has been visiting schools as part of the promotion, distributing coloring books and other materials. Shir Sultan is popular with schoolchildren. He has been asking children to become friends of Kabul, which requires the children to be positive agents of change. They are taught hygienic habits and asked to assist civic authorities to keep the city clean and green, according to BBC news. The BBC also adds that "last year alone, Shir Sultan was directly introduced to more than 25,000 children."

Amir Ali Shir Nawae Shrine Reconstructed

This month, an official ceremony was held in Herat to mark the reconstruction of the shrine to famous ninth century poet and scholar Amir Ali Shir Nawae. The ceremony, which was attended by Hon. Governor Daud Shah Saba and the advisor of the Ministry of Information and Culture Jalal Nurani. In his speech, Mr. Nurani reaffirmed that the Ministry attaches great importance to the reconstruction of historical monuments.

Many regard Nawae as one of Central Asia's most important and groundbreaking literary figures. Growing up in Herat, in northwestern Afghanistan, Nawae was one of the first great poets to write in the Uzbek language.