



August, 2012



Afghan News

Latest News

Upcoming events

At the following events, the Embassy will set up a booth where it will have interactive cultural activities and sell Afghan products.

October 27—28, 2012
“International Friendship Festival: SEKAI FUREAI MATSURI”
Showa Memorial Park,
Tachikawa, Tokyo

November 9—10, 2012
“Minato City Fair of Manufacturing, Commerce, and Tourism”
Tokyo Midtown

Inside this issue:

Latest News Pg.1-5



Independence Day marked on August 19th

Afghan Independence Day was celebrated on August 19th. To mark the important occasion, H.E. President Hamid Karzai hosted a ceremony in Kabul, where He was joined by a number of officials. The ceremony involved H.E. placing a wreath at the Independence Minaret to honor those martyred for the noble cause, which is housed at the Defense Ministry. H.E. the President congratulated the people and expressed his best wishes for a lasting peace and prosperity for Afghanistan. “At the end of the ceremony, President Karzai also visited a photo exhibition of the kings, ghazis, Mujahidan and national heroes of the country and recalled their sacrifices that brought honor and pride to Afghanistan,” according to Office of the President’s official web site.

In Japan, the special day was marked by the publishing in the Japan Times of three special articles by Ambassador Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie; Third Secretary Parwana Paikan; and

Mr. Hiroyuki Ishige, chairman and CEO of JETRO, respectively. Each of these articles are reprinted in this newsletter.

Mutually supportive relationship grows stronger

By Ambassador Fatimie

Today on Afghan National Day, it is my pleasure on behalf of H.E. President Hamid Karzai, the Government, and the people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, to convey my deepest respects to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the people and Government of Japan.

While in a modern sense 2011 marks our 92nd National Day, our nation’s history extends thousands of years further. Simi-

(Continued on page 2)

larly, while this year also marks our 81st year of official diplomatic relations with Japan, our first interactions date as far back as the Silk Road era where traded goods and ideas were our first ambassadors. Over time, this linkage of commerce and cultural influence developed into people-to-people contact, deep-rooted friendship, and mutual support. Our relations reached even-greater levels of closeness following the 2001 formation of the new democratic government of Afghanistan, as Japan took an active and leading role in support of our development and peace. The number two provider of aid, Japan's US\$3.5 billion in assistance since, US\$1.67 billion of this from the 2009 pledge of US\$5 billion over 5 years, has fostered positive progress in our political, security, infrastructure, education, health, and agriculture sectors, among others. These selfless contributions deserve our deepest appreciation and will never be forgotten.

Because of our close friendship, the tragedies of March 11th greatly distressed the people of Afghanistan, who view Japanese suffering as the suffering of brothers and sisters. I would like to express my heartfelt condolences, on behalf of all Afghans, to the victims and all who continue to suffer. Considering all Japan has done for our nation, along with our legacy of helping one another, Afghanistan and Afghans considered it our duty to stand together with Japan. Starting only hours after news reached our people, overtures of support began to emerge through financial contributions from the national government and individual officials. Ordinary citizens collected what they could for the drive led by President Fatima Gaillani of the Afghan Red Crescent Society. Afghan children showed a special solidarity, gathering in support and sending drawings of encouragement. Afghan nationals in Japan, along with Embassy officials, in particular reached out to neighbors, collecting donations, bringing furnishings to evacuees from Fukushima in Ibaraki, and delivering funds to Fukushima city. While these contributions were small on a world scale, all Afghans felt honored to help as they could, and through these hardships, our nations' peoples have grown even closer.

In my time in Japan, I have come to

know the Japanese as a strong, resilient, and hardworking people. I am certain that the Tohoku region will soon rebuild and strengthen. This nation has proven that it is able to rise from hardship through its past strides in becoming a stable, beautiful nation and an economic and cultural leader. In Afghanistan's rebuilding and development, we have constantly looked at post-World War II Japan as the ultimate example and role model. Through Japan we have gained the inspiration to replace decades of destruction with progress. To cite a few examples, education is improving with 8 million children in schools - 8 times the amount 10 years ago; enrollment in higher education is increasing rapidly; and our adult literacy rate is better than it was even during the 1970s; we continue to increase the scope and effectiveness of our health sector with over 1,800 active health facilities nationwide and large reductions of infant and under-five mortality rates, as well as maternal mortality ratios; women hold a valued place in society and exercise leadership with 28% of parliamentarians and several other key government figures being women; and our freedoms, as evident in our democratic elections and our press, operating without restrictions or limitations, are an example for the region. Having overcome so much, we hope now that our successes can serve as inspiration to the people of Tohoku and Japan.

Our nation is truly fortunate to have a strong and deep friendship with Japan. I would like to join in the sentiments of

H.E. Prime Minister Naoto Kan, as he said to H.E. President Karzai last June, by declaring that I am confident that the relationship between our two nations will endure thousands of years more into the future; throughout this we will further support and inspire one another.

Re-empowerment of Women in Afghanistan

By Ms. Paikan

The London Olympics has come to a close. We in Afghanistan feel a great sense of elation that a national hero, Rohullah Nikpai, won his and Afghanistan's second ever Olympic medal at the games, a bronze in Men's Taekwondo. One of the Olympics' most inspiring stories will forever remain the unprecedented representation of female athletes, as certain nations for the first time ever sent women to compete. Our six athletes also included one of our proud sisters, Ms. Tahmina Kohistani, a sprinter. While Ms. Kohistani was unable to secure a medal, her participation, determination, and courage were inspiring. This renewed participation of women is indicative of Afghanistan.

Misconceptions hold that Afghanistan is at its core a nation and a people determined to keep women down. Historically and contemporarily this is not true. These opinions are shaped by lack of insight and by projecting the

(Continued on page 3)



H.E. President Karzai and high-ranking officials at a regular meeting with the Afghan Women Network to discuss ways to further improve conditions for women

policies of our backward former captors upon the victims.

Afghanistan of old was regionally a progressive nation regarding gender equality. As far back as 1923, our constitution asserted equal rights, and women were given voting rights and other basic rights earlier than contemporaries in nearby states. Women were represented throughout society, with women in the 1970s outnumbering men at Kabul University.

When the Taliban regime instilled their primitive brand of oppression, women's rights were among the worst casualties. Women were denied education, the right to work, were confined to the home without a male relative as an escort, and were stripped of many other freedoms. In my case, I was more fortunate than others. Raised in a family with a mother who was involved in supporting women, a very cooperative father, and four determined sisters, I was able to continue my studies until the Taliban's influence reached our home area in the north, Mazar-i-Sharif. Even once our ability to attend school in the open was compromised, we continued to study subjects such as English in secret, never allowing our spirits to be crushed.

Once Afghans were liberated through joint domestic and international action, I was able to take up formal education once more, first graduating from University in Kabul and later pursuing higher education in Japan. As of April this year, I was given the distinct honor of being named the first female diplomat at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Tokyo since our nation's re-emergence.

My story, while only a small example, is proof of the determination of Afghan women in the face of hardship and of our nation's sincere dedication to gender equality. This is proven through the rise of women to positions in parliament, to the level of Ambassador, Governor, Mayor, and General, as well as in those women who succeed in all realms of everyday life. To echo the sentiments of Ambassador Fatimie, the investments pledged at the Tokyo Conference are truly justified, as the example of women show.

A huge step forward for economic relations between our countries

By Chairman Hiroyuki Ishige



I would like to express my sincere congratulations on the 93rd anniversary of the Independence Day of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Taking its role in promoting trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world, this year JETRO has supported the first participation of an Afghan company in FOODEX JAPAN 2012, an international food and beverage exhibition. The company had several lively business talks and this occasion marked a huge step forward for us in fostering cooperation with Afghanistan.

Considering Japan's own experience in post-war reconstruction, I believe expansion of trade will assume a significant role in the economic restoration of Afghanistan as well. Though the country is still facing many challenges towards this, including stable security, vitalization of the private sector and human resource development, I earnestly hope that the people of Afghanistan will work together with the international community to overcome them. I am also hopeful that further activation of the private sector will lead to the expansion of economic relations between our countries. For our part, we at JETRO will also continue devoting ourselves towards this goal.

H.E. President Karzai, H.E. Foreign Minister Rassoul take part in Organization of Islamic Cooperation Summit, related meetings

The fourth extraordinary summit of the

Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah August 14-15 at the initiative of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia.

In H.E. President Hamid Karzai's address to the attending dignitaries, He highlighted the negative image Islam has unfairly been given due to the actions of those who do not properly represent the religion: "it is unjust to degrade a great religion and civilization and to ignore the way of life of over one and half billion peace-loving Muslims because of the actions committed by just a handful of terrorists. This will not only hurt the feelings of the entire Muslims, but would further fuel the fire that terrorists have flamed to spread hostility and strike fear and terror." H.E. the President continued by rallying his compatriots to work towards overcoming this scourge and rectifying the image: "In this context, mainly, it is in no doubt the responsibility and duty of the Muslim countries and of the OIC to work to promote the true image of Islam and to disseminate its humanitarian message."

H.E. Foreign Minister Zalmay Rassoul represented Afghanistan at a preparatory meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OIC. The meeting focused on promoting solidarity within the Muslim Ummah in preparation and discussed the ongoing situation in Syria, Mali, Palestine and the persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar. H.E. Dr. Rassoul voiced Afghanistan's approval of the respective resolutions on the situation in the four countries and the draft of a final communiqué for the summit meeting.

H.E. Foreign Minister Rassoul also took the opportunity to express gratitude for the positively impactful support the OIC members have provided in Afghanistan, stating, "For the last 10 years, Afghanistan supported by the international community and our brothers and sisters in OIC, has come a long way. We have made significant progress in our achievements to create opportunities for the wellbeing of the Afghan people." Furthermore, to see even greater results, H.E. urged all OIC member countries to provide practical support to the Afghan peace process.

Food production receives Japanese support

In a ceremony at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, the Japanese and UN/FAO -supported “Programme for Increase of Agricultural Production by the Improvement of Productivity (Phase III)” and related documentation were signed into effect by Livestock; H.E Deputy Minister Abdul Ghani Ghoriani, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, H.E. Ambassador Reichihiro Takahashi; Mr. Yoshikazu Yamada, the Resident Representative of JICA’s Afghanistan Office; and Dr. Ousmane Guindo, FAO Representative in Afghanistan. Through the program, Japan will supply wheat seed, assorted vegetable seeds and pulses, with fertilizers to farmers in Saripul, Bamiyan, Ghor, and Ningarhar provinces. UN/FAO will provide technical support. More than 80,000 families are projected to benefit from increased yields as a result.

Development progresses, largest solar energy plant planned

Following the push to create responsible new energy sources, the nation’s largest solar energy plant will be built in Bamiyan with the assistance of New Zealand. The plant will create 1.05 megawatts of energy, providing power for up to 2,500 homes, businesses, and government buildings. (Source: Good News Afghanistan)

In Ghazni city, a power project has been

in functional development for some time with good success. Work for extending the project in Ghazni city and to adjoining areas began earlier this month. In addition to this, with Ghazni to be the culture capital of Islamic world in 2013, reconstruction of five historical monuments in the city have as of this point been completed, with 10 more projects almost finished, and another 13 projects underway, with all to be finished in time for 2013.

Taking personal action in the nation’s development, H.E. President Hamid Karzai met with some deputies and government officials in charge of reconstruction in Samangan to discuss various issues. One topic discussed was the construction of a road leading towards the Dara Souf mine, facilitated by the Ministry of Public Works, which will benefit both the mining sector and the local people.

Inspiring stories made at London Olympics

One of six athletes representing the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at the London Olympics, Rohullah Nikpai won a bronze medal in Men’s Taekwondo. Nikpai lost one match in the tournament, but earned a second shot, having a total of three victories. This is Afghanistan’s second ever Olympic medal, the previous also won by Nikpai, at the 2008 Beijing Games.

Nikpai, a hero both to upcoming athletes in the nation and to the general public



who can view his victories as signs of progress, has led to a taekwondo boom in Afghanistan with roughly 25,000 practitioners in hundreds of clubs.

The London Olympics served as a platform for inspiration in Afghanistan as all six athletes gave their best efforts and put their hearts into the spirit of competition and international brotherhood. One of the many success stories was that of Tahmina Kohistani, who proudly represented Afghan women. While not able to medal, she ran a personal best in the 100 meters. Kohistani now plans to make sports clubs for female aspirants. Nesar Bahawi, who was also favored as a potential medalist in Taekwondo, was unable to secure a medal in the bronze medal match, but he had been fighting injured. These injuries required him to go to the hospital after the match, nonetheless, his bravery and spirit pushed him through the final competition.

H.E. President Hamid Karzai telephoned the athletes in London the final days of the Olympics London Friday to congratulate Nikpai and his compatriots. His sentiments echoed those of the entire nation: elation and gratitude.

Nesar Ahmad Bahawi carrying Afghanistan’s flag at the opening ceremony of London Olympics (From Global Voices)

New Mining opportunities open

In the latest in opportunities for investing in Afghanistan’s rich resources, four sites have been put up for bidding in recent weeks: gold opportunities in Badakhshan, copper and gold in Zarkashan, and copper in both Balkhab and Shaida. The Ministry of Mines will award the winner of the bidding process of each site with an exploration licence, which could lead to an exploration license.





Universities to be equipped with fiber optic cables, connected to international institutions

A project is to be undertaken jointly by the Ministries of Telecommunication & IT and Higher Education to install all Afghan Universities with fiber optic cable systems. This work will help, among other things, to build connections between Afghan and international institutions of higher learning, both facilitating exchanges and increased research opportunities for Afghan students.

The first phase of the project will begin at institutions dealing in educational issues, such as Kandahar University, Nangarhar University, Balkh University, and Kabul Medical University.

843 historical relics returned

Hundreds of historical relics were returned to Afghanistan this month with the cooperation of the United Kingdom. The artifacts had been looted from the national museum and other parts of the country in past years. They include twenty pieces of rare items such as Buddha statues and ivory. They belong to Islamic, bronze, Greco-Bacteria and Kushanid eras in the first and second century A.D. and are related to the ancient zone of Bagram.

In 2009, Britain also aided in the return of about 1500 historical relics to the national museum of Afghanistan and, at the latest handover ceremony, the British Government vowed its continued support.

H.E. Foreign Minister Dr. Zalmay Rasoul asserted that the finding and returning of these relics to Afghanistan are a matter of pride for all Afghans.

(photo courtesy of Reuters)

Foundation stone of blood bank laid

A new one-story, fully equipped blood bank is to be built in Kabul within a year with the assistance of France.

The project dates back to the 2008 completion of the Master Plan for the period of 2009—2014 put together by then Minister of Public Health and now Ambassador to Japan Dr. Sayed M. Amin Fatimie. The plan calls for establishing blood banks in Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Jalalabad. In total, the French Government pledged US\$10 million in support.

The foundation stone was laid early this month by H.E. Minister of Public Health Dr. Saraya Dalil and the French Ambassador to Afghanistan, H.E. Bernard Bajolet.

Embassy of Afghanistan in Tokyo

2-2-1 Azabudai,
Minato ward, Tokyo, 106-0041

Tel: 03-5574-7611
Fax: 03-5574-0195

Website
www.afghanembassyjp.org



Contact Us

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding this newsletter or the Embassy, please send an e-mail to the embassy's Public Affairs Officer, Jason Pratt:

pratt@afghanembassyjp.org