



Dear readers

Freedom of media and freedom of speech are the most important achievements of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The latest media law is considered the most democratic law in the region. As stated in this law, all citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan can start to work in media; of course their professional status would be considered. On April 5th, 2010, the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic republic of Afghanistan held a national seminar called "Media, Challenges, and Solutions" in presence of ministers, parliamentarians, senior government officials, journalists, and the civil society members in Kabul. Participants in the seminar discussed the positive effects of media in ending a war, preventing violence, combating against terrorism, and bringing peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Throughout the last nine years, media has significantly developed in a large scale, and it has had some very positive and considerable changes in its system. At the moment, there are 14 TV channels which actively work in Kabul. Moreover, 11 other channels are queuing to start their work in the near future. On the other hand, there are about thirty five radio stations in Kabul and several non-governmental radio stations in other provinces.

Although there are no precise statistics on how many newspapers and magazines that are published, about 150 newspaper and magazines are published in the country, two thirds of which is governmental. According to statistics, around 10,000 people are working in media. After radio stations, television channels are more popular in terms of accessibility. According to the Ministry of Water and Energy, approximately twenty percent of people have access to electricity; therefore, the same percentages of people have access to television channels. In 1388, nearly 300 megawatt electricity was imported into Afghanistan; this has doubled the percentage of people who have access to electricity and thus television channels.

Printed media as magazines and newspapers have less audience than radio stations and television channels. This is because of their low circulation, high concentration in Kabul only, and low literacy rate in the country. For instance, the total number of newspapers typically is not more than 50,000 copies, which is not enough. In 1388, two of the most well-known newspapers started their publication simultaneously in Kabul as well as two other provinces; this is an absolutely new experience and a big, positive change in journalism and mass media in Afghanistan.

Manizha Bakhtari,

Celebration of Afghan-Norwegian Friendship Day at Vinderen Primary School

Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari was invited as one of the main speakers by the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, on the occasion of Afghan-Norwegian friendship day at Vinderen Primary School.

For over a decade Norwegian Schools had a special relationship with schools in Afghanistan. Letter exchange, fundraising, and more knowledge about Afghanistan had been a part of this relationship.

This is the fourth year Vinderen Primary School and Gul Dara Girls school in Afghanistan are friendship schools, thanks to contributions from Norwegian donors. At the Afghan-Norwegian friendship day students from Vinderen Primary School organized a fundraising market where they sold Afghan food and handmade accessories to raise money for their friendship school in Afghanistan.



Photo: Afghanistan Embassy

Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari was among the panelists in addition to State Secretary Ingrid Fiskaa and Asne Seierstad a Norwegian freelance journalist and the author behind the "Bookseller of Kabul". First, Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari thanked the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee and Vinderen Primary School for organizing such an event and presented her gratitude to the Norwegian government and people for their generous contribution towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Ambassador Bakhtari also held a brief speech on friendship and solidarity between Vinderen primary School and Gul dara girls' school. The event was followed by Åsne Seierstad and State Secretary Ingrid Fiskaa's speeches and at the end of the program Ingrid Fiskaa answered some questions asked by the curious students from Vinderen Primary School.

Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation Announces Remarkable Progress in 2009



The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development of Afghanistan has announced that more than seventy percent of the ongoing projects have been completed during the last six months. The projects have also been equipped to serve under public welfare schemes after their completion.

Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development of Afghanistan, Jarullah Mansoori confirmed the above announcement in his six-month summary of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, stating that seventy percent of 2,104 ongoing projects were accomplished during the last six months of 2009.

In a conference Jarullah Mansoori told the media, that the projects would benefit 721,000 people across Afghanistan.

The projects included the construction of irrigation channels, well-digging, 16 dams, clearing water reservoirs and irrigation systems, construction of 596 kilometers of roads, supporting walls measuring 7000 meters, 1,223 meters both small and large bridges, and hydro power

stations capable of generating 1,000 kilo watt of electricity with 47,000meter of wire and so on.

Other welfare projects mentioned by Minister Jarullah Mansoori were the distribution of more than 3,000 glasses of generating power from solar energy, the establishment of 54 social centers and 15 water mills.

In addition, 576 projects on work-for-food program are also in progress. He also added that 69,000 metric tons of food was provided to the people who were involved in the projects.

Work-for-food projects include construction of roads in villages, dikes, providing pure drinkable water and the digging of wells. Last year 11,457 projects were completed with a budget of 12.5 billion Afghani.

Farmers Obtains Training in North of Afghanistan

Afghanistan Farmers are suffering due to unprofessionalism in their occupation, therefore



United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding a project to train more or less 1900 Agriculturalists and farmers in the northern province of Samangan.

The project provides training in new methods of growing and irrigating wheat crop. The program started two months ago by the International

Relief & Development (IRD) in coordination with Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Directorate, and was completed on April 7th 2010.



Photo: Aljazeera.net

Officials from International Relief & Development (IRD) said farmers from all over Samangan province were taught how to use the techniques for soil preparations, the use of chemical and animal manure and seed selection during the two months of training. According to the officials the training courses were categorized into three phases.

The first phase of the training was completed on Apr 7th 2010 and the second and third phases included training for struggling against pests, plant diseases and about marketing for agricultural products in future.

The principle of this program was to educate farmers to be self-sufficient in growing wheat in a professional way. Furthermore according to (IRD) officials 22,000 other farmers were trained by the organization in northern Balkh, Jawzjan, Sari-Pul and Faryab provinces. Farmers are also demanding further training from the Directorate of Agriculture

Feature Story Of The Month:

Celebration of Afghan-Norwegian Friendship Day at Vinderen Primary School

Afghanistan sign Tripartite Agreement with Norway



A tripartite agreement between Norway, Afghanistan and UNHCR was signed by Justice Minister Knut Storberget and Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Abdul Rahim in Kabul on Sunday April 11.

The agreement was signed as a result of the meetings and consultations during Minister Abdul Rahim's visit to Norway while the actual signing of the agreement took place when the Norwegian Justice Minister Knut Storberget visited Kabul the following week. The signing of the agreement in Kabul means that the original agreement from 2005 is extended, and sets the framework for an orderly return process.

This is an important part of efforts to establish care centers for minor asylum seekers in Afghanistan.

I have always believed that it is important that they get a good start in life when they return, rather than staying illegally in Norway, "Justice Minister Knut Storberget said after the signing ceremony at the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation.

Afghan and Norwegian authorities have agreed that voluntary return is the best solution for those who do not have permission to stay in Norway, and that it is important

to encourage and motivate as many people as possible to choose voluntary and assisted return. At present Norway offers a wide re-integration fund to Afghans returning. We will together with the Afghan authorities assess whether this support can be targeted better, and adapted to particular vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors, "said Justice Minister Knut Storberget.

Norwegian Government funds 108 schools in Faryab

Norwegian Minister of Justice in a meeting with Abdul Haq Shafaq, the Governor of Faryab province announced that the Norwegian government is prepared to build additional schools in Faryab. The Norwegian government has already funded 80 schools in Faryab.



In the meeting Abdul Haq Shafaq mentioned some of the challenges in Faryab and appealed for more cooperation from the Norwegian government in the sector of reconstruction, subsequently the Norwegian Minister of Justice which was accompanied by the Norwegian Ambassador Kaare R. Aas in Afghanistan pledged their continued commitment in the field of reconstruction and announced that Norwegian cooperation will continue and their next projects would include further rebuilding of schools, male and female prisons, water supply projects and strengthening the police force in Faryab province.

At the end Norwegian justice minister visited the new prison which is under construction, a project funded by the Norwegian government.

Sport Proficiency in Afghanistan



Afghanistan's national cricket team won the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) title and are enjoying the title as the champions of the tournament. In the final match of (ACC) at the Hubara stadium in Kuwait almost 4000 people attended to watch the final match of Asian Cricket Council (ACC) between Afghanistan and Nepal.

Both teams played well, but Afghanistan's bowlers and fielders really pushed themselves in order to guarantee a victory for Afghanistan. Raees Ahmadzai won the man of the match title in the final of (ACC) tournament, and said to the media that Afghan Cricket team got the hunger for victory, for glory, for proof of their superiority to the world. Now it's the ICC World Twenty20 that Afghan team is looking forward to prove their superiority in it. Afghanistan's National Karate team participated in the 2010 Jam-i-Fajr International Karate Tournament which was held in Iran. The team performed exceptionally well. In general they won 8 medals – four gold, one silver and three bronze. Combating sports like taekwondo, Wushu, kick boxing and Wrestling are very much accepted amongst both men and women in Afghanistan. Afghan national teams have done very well in international competitions. Afghan kick boxers in Asian Open Kickboxing Championships won 8 medals. In the 2010 South Asian Games Afghan combating teams came home with 29 medals which proved the proficiency of sports in Afghanistan.

New Afghan Defense University in Kabul



A cornerstone laying ceremony for the new Afghan Defense University headquarters and the new site of the National Military Academy of Afghanistan was held in Qargha on April 6th.

The site goes back in time and has been of military significance as it was used as a Soviet logistics center and as Ahmad Shah Massoud's stronghold during the Soviet occupation. Most recently it has been functioning as the air defense site for Kabul. Almost two years have been spent on demining the 1,500 acres of land before the construction could begin.

Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak, Gen. Besmullah Khan, Afghan National Army Chief of Staff laid down the first bricks on what will soon be the ADU headquarters building.

It is said that the estimated date of completion will be in June 2011. The campus will accommodate the headquarters, classrooms, dining facility, library and a medical clinic. In the second phase of construction the ADU site will also house a noncommissioned officer school, Air War College and Command and Staff College.

"We are starting something today which will help our country. It is the wish and ambition of all our people to have peace and stability," said Wardak.

Wardak said "Today we laid the cornerstone for a new university. This university will teach the students how to defend the country and nothing else. In the past we have had great military leaders. This university will allow us a fresh start to build up strong military leaders again."



The National Military Academy of Afghanistan is modeled after the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and is a four year school designed to educate officers for the ANA and Afghan National Army Air Corp. After construction is completed, the ADU will support more than 171,000 ANA personnel.

Afghan Youth Congress against Drugs, conducted in Kabul

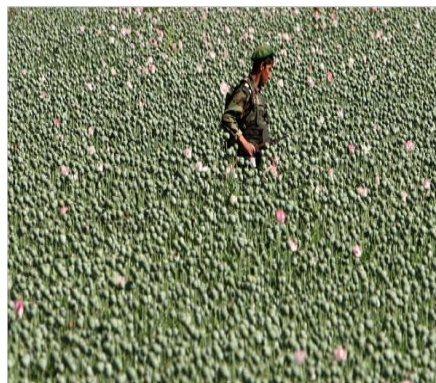


PHOTO: Carlotta Gall

The congress known as "Drug-Free Afghanistan" was sponsored by the United State Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), in partnership with the Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) and Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC), from Monday, 5th April until Thursday 8th April 2010. The congress coordinator gathered

around 90 participants including 35 women from 32 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. 10 international students from South and Central Asian countries participated in the congress, which brought together provincial delegates for a series of public information workshops and leadership trainings.

At the end of the Congress, delegates drafted and signed to stay drug-free, united behind the goal of a drug-free Afghanistan, also pledging to serve their communities and provinces.



Sayed Mahkdoom Rahin, Minister of Information and Culture recommended the students to re-establish the culture and pride in Afghanistan. He said "We used to be pioneers, known for our culture, for mathematics and science. Now we are known for drug trafficking and production" he added "Only the youth can crack this dilemma."

At the end Ministry of Counter Narcotics Zarar Ahmad Moqbel and INL Director Drew Quinn, thanked the students for their participation and contribution the Drug - Free - Afghanistan, congress.

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