



Dear Readers

Afghan leadership and Afghan ownership is the slogan of the government and people of Afghanistan. The London Conference was indeed an emphasis on this slogan as well as the cooperation and support of the International Community. Fortunately, the results of the conference were very positive and full of importance for our government and people.

The Afghan forces are determined to gradually take the full responsibility of military operations. In 2-3 years, almost all the security operations should be conducted by Afghan forces. Moreover, in 5 years, Afghan security forces should be able to take over the leadership and decision making process.

In order to achieve the above goal, Afghan national army, police, and security forces should be promoted and developed in all areas. In five years, the number of Afghan army will reach to three hundred thousand. To defend the territorial integrity and maintain the security, Afghan security forces have to be well equipped and trained. In the present situation, Afghan government is unable to fight terrorism and bring stability in Afghanistan without the help and support of International Community. Despite the fact that Afghanistan can not defeat terrorism without the help of International Community but Afghanistan should be independent in decisions making.

We welcome the approach of Norwegian government towards Afghanistan, which was addressed by Minister Foreign Affairs Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre in Norwegian parliament. It shows Norwegian political and financial support towards the government and people of Afghanistan. In past 8 years, the Nordic countries have supported Afghanistan in different aspects and specially, the new democracy in our country with strong dedication and commitment. On the other hand, the decisions and perspectives of the Nordic countries indicate their durable support and cooperation. Certainly, with the cooperation and support of the International Community, Afghans can be successful in strengthening its government and national institutions, reconstruction of the country and in fighting against the terrorism.

Ambassador
Manizha Bakhtari

Dr. Zalmay Rassoul assumes office as Foreign Minister



Dr. Zalmay Rassoul was appointed as the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in January 2010.

Prior to his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Rassoul served as the National Security Advisor to the President. Dr. Rassoul has also held the position of Minister of Civil Aviation and was confirmed by the Cabinet in March 2002. Dr. Rassoul was born in Kabul, Afghanistan and attended Istiqlal French High School

Where he graduated as the valedictorian. Subsequently, he traveled to France to study on a scholarship at the Paris Medical School and received his M.D. in 1973.

Dr. Rassoul is fluent in Dari, Pashto, French, English, and Italian and has a working knowledge of Arabic. He has over 30 publications in European and American medical journals and is a member of the American Society of Nephrology.

Ambassador Bakhtari visits Denmark and Iceland



During her two day visit to Copenhagen on the 14th and 15th of February, Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari presented her credentials to Queen Margrethe II. Ambassador Bakhtari was officially accredited by the Queen Regnant on February 15th, 2010. Ambassador Bakhtari also met with officials from the Danish foreign ministry and Afghans living in Denmark. After the ceremony at the Danish Palace the Ambassador held a press conference for the Danish media regarding the general situation in Afghanistan and the latest military operation (moshtarak) by Afghan Security Forces and NATO in the southern province of Helmand. In addition to presenting her credentials in Denmark, Ambassador Bakhtari continued her journey to Iceland. Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari was officially accredited by the President of Iceland, H.E. Mr. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson during an official ceremony at Bessastadir on February 23rd 2010. During her visit to Iceland Ambassador Bakhtari also met with officials from the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1000 families in Faryab got access to electricity



As long as the electricity is available, no one thinks much about it. The importance is realized when the power goes out. Whether it's during the day or at night, electricity keeps our lives in order. It affects our business, our schedule and even our entertainment.

According to Radio Balkh (local radio in Balkh province) 1000 families in Faryab got access to electricity. This electricity supply is the result of two powersupply projects that have been completed in Pashtunkot district of Faryab province.

Decrease in violence and abuse against women and children



Photo: Mats Lignell / Save the children

According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission there has been a 13 per cent decrease in the number of cases of violence against women and a 30 per cent decrease in child abuse cases in 2009. These statistics are mainly from the Northern regions of Afghanistan.

More Schools Open in Southern Afghanistan



Education is the key that allows people to move up in the world, seek better jobs, and ultimately succeed fully in life. Education is very important, and no one should be deprived of it any where in the world. Officials from Afghanistan's Ministry of Education and UN agency reported that over the past year, dozens of schools have reopened in the southern province of Helmand. General insecurity and Taliban attacks had forced many of the schools to close. The Ministry officials said that they worked both with local leaders (religious and tribal elders), and with the Taliban to let the schools re-open and remain free from attacks.

President Karzai: Afghan geological reserves worth a trillion dollars



Afghan President Hamid Karzai told reporters that Afghanistan is sitting on mineral and petroleum reserves worth an estimated one trillion dollars.

President Karzai further stated that Afghanistan could become one of the richest nations if these resources are adequately tapped. President Karzai said this is based on a survey being carried out by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), which is due to be completed in a couple of months. In 2007, Chinese Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) signed a three-billion-dollar contract with the Afghan government to develop the Aynak copper mine, which is one of the world's biggest copper mines. Information for this news was provided by goodafghannews.com.

New Kuchi Hospital Inaugurated



Dr. Suraya Daleel, Acting Minister of Public Health, inaugurated a well-equipped, 30-bed hospital in the Puli-Charkhi area of Kabul. The hospital will offer health facilities for more than 120,000 Kuchis. Kuchis are a nomadic people in Afghanistan living under challenging circumstances. The land to build the hospital on was donated by Haji Janat Gul Khan, a well known Kuchi leader. Numerous Kuchi leaders were present for the inauguration, and they thanked the Ministry's efforts in getting the hospital built.

Feature Story Of The Month:

Ministry of interior affairs of Afghanistan will increase the number of female police officers to 5000 by 2011.

Norwegian Foreign Minister addresses the Norwegian Parliament on Afghanistan



On February 9th, Norwegian Foreign Minister addressed the Storting on the situation in Afghanistan and Norway's civilian and military engagement in the country.

The Foreign Minister stated that there was a broad common platform for Norway's policy on Afghanistan due to the frequent addresses to the Storting and the parliamentary debates.

This common platform had been of benefit to Norway and to the military and civilian personnel serving in Afghanistan. The definite support for the government's policy on Afghanistan had also enabled the Norwegian authorities to state their views clearly and to demonstrate Norway's commitment internationally, in Afghanistan and within the UN and NATO.

Foreign Minister Gahr Støre's address to the Storting was followed by a debate a week after.

The debate in the Storting confirmed what was stated by the minister himself regarding a national consensus on the civilian and military engagement in Afghanistan by all political parties in Norway.

Sweden continues commitment towards Afghanistan



Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Karl Bildt presented the Government's Statement of Foreign Policy in Parliament. The statement is commonly known as the Foreign Policy Statement and the presentation is followed by a debate in the Parliament. The Foreign Policy Statement outlines the direction of the Government's foreign policy in the coming year.

The main challenges for Sweden and the EU in the area of foreign policy also included the Swedish civilian and military efforts in Afghanistan, where the goal for the Swedish engagement was according to the statement of Foreign Policy to intensify Sweden's development cooperation in Afghanistan and promote a strengthened international civilian operation in the country.

Support grows for Swedish troops in Afghanistan



Synovate interviewed 1,000 Swedes and asked: "Are you for or against Sweden's participation in the UN's military operation in Afghanistan?" According to the poll, 48 percent are now in favour of Sweden's participation in the UN operation in Afghanistan, with those against dropping to 26 percent. When SVT Rapport/Synovate conducted a similar survey at the end of October, 34 percent of Swedes were in favour of the troops deployment, while 37 percent were against. The new survey has been carried out following the extensive coverage given to the killing of 28-year-old Captain Johan Palmlov and 31-year-old Lieutenant Gunnar Andersson near Mazar-e Sharif last Sunday.

"I think the very tragic events we have witnessed have deepened the feeling among the Swedish people over both the seriousness and the necessity for our deployment," Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt told the SVT Rapport news programme on Tuesday evening.

The new poll indicates that even among Left Party voters, the only parliamentary party openly opposed to the Afghanistan operation, support for the troops involvement has increased dramatically. In October, only 18 percent of Left Party voters were in favour of the operation but in the new poll 42 percent backed it; although 43 percent remained opposed.

Among voters for the centre-right parties, support has increased - from 42 to 63 percent.

The only voter group which has not changed position on the issue are those backing the Green Party, with 27 percent in favour and 45 percent against - the same figures as in the previous poll.

Ministry of Interior affairs of Afghanistan increases number of female police officers to 5000 by 2011



Photo:BBC

During a graduation ceremony of 570 police officers from the Police Academy on 03/02/2010, Mr. Hanif Atmar, minister of Interior Affairs said: "We will raise the number of female police officers to 5000 by 2011".

According to "Rahi Nijat" Mohammad Hanif Atmar said: "These 570 graduated police officers are very important in our country, because they will be appointed in management and headship positions of police department in Afghanistan in a very near future".

Among 570 graduated police officers, seven of them were female officers, who were added to 700 police officers already serving in police department of Afghanistan.

Gen. Abdul Khaliq, educational president of Police Academy said: "The numbers of graduated female police officers are very low." He added: "Police department requires attracting more female officers, to be able to execute the necessities of our society." He also mentioned: "It is only possible when women have enough knowledge about the police department." It is worthy to be mentioned that since 2003, the Police Academy graduated 2350 police officers including 148 female officers.

In the meantime, the ministry of defense increases its efforts to attract women to join the army. Mohammad Ebrahim Ahmadzy, recruitment deputy officer of Afghanistan's defense ministry, stated in a news conference that the ministry of defense has specific arrangements intended for women to join the army.

He added: "Female volunteers aged between 18 to 25 years, who have completed high school, will be trained for three months. Meanwhile they will be paid five thousands Afghanis every month. Those volunteers, who are less educated and are aged between 18 to 35 years, will also get three months' training and will be qualified lieutenants.

At the end he added: "Illiterate women can also join the training course for three months. After completing the training course, which is going to be taught by teachers from foreign countries like USA, Germany, and Turkey, they will be employed in deferent departments in the ministry of defense."

The outcome of London conference



On 28th January 2010, an international conference on Afghanistan was held in London, where members of the international community discussed the further progress in the development of Afghanistan. The conference was hosted by the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the government of Afghanistan.

The key objectives of the London conference were to draft plans to hand over security responsibilities from International Security Assistance Forces to Afghan forces, and to lure Taliban members to give up violence and accept a democratic Afghanistan. Therefore foreign ministers and senior representatives from more than 70 countries and international organizations came together in London.

The participants in the conference agreed with the government of Afghanistan to develop the plan of transition of security from ISAF to Afghan forces, province by province in the next three years. In addition it was agreed by the participants of the conference to increase the number of Afghan National Army to 171,000, and the Afghan National Police forces to 134,000 by the end of 2011.

The participants of the conference supported the Afghan national peace and reintegration plan, including financial support for the peace and reintegration trust fund, an offer of economical alternatives to those who renounce violence, cut links with Al Qaeda and terrorism, and accept to live in a democratic Afghanistan based on the Afghan constitution.

The conference participants supported the objective of the government of Afghanistan, which requires donor countries to increase the proportion of development aid delivered through the government of Afghanistan to 50% in the next two years. The international community reassured their commitment to the government of Afghanistan, until the government of Afghanistan would be able to take the responsibilities itself.

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