



NYHETS BREV

Dear readers,

I am proud to present mine and my colleague's congratulations to the people of Afghanistan on the occasion of the 91st anniversary of Afghanistan's independence.

91 years ago, the people of Afghanistan could raise the flag of independent after a struggle that was won because of their love for freedom, and because they had the assistance of god. King Amanullah announced Afghanistan independent from Great Britain, and opened a new chapter in the political life of the country.

The people of Afghanistan had struggled for a century to gain freedom and independence, and the victory was the result of their efforts. The British finally gave in to the bravery and courage of the people and left Afghanistan on 28th Asad 1289.

Every country has its days of celebration which is a part of the cultural and historical values of a nation, and therefore considered highly important. The Independence Day, without any doubt, is one of those days for Afghanistan.

Freedom is something that makes humanity and individual independence meaningful, and tells the world that the residents of a certain geographical area are to choose their own destiny. Once again, I would like to congratulate this auspicious occasion. I wish for peace, prosperity and success for the people and the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Manizha Bakhtari
Ambassador

Seminar and Exhibition arranged by the Embassy of Afghanistan



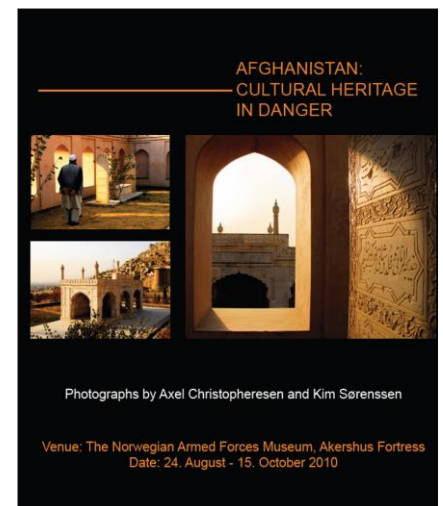
The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Norwegian Atlantic Committee on the 24th of August hosted the seminar *Afghanistan: Past and Present* and opened a photo exhibition on Afghanistan and its cultural heritage.

The seminar and vernissage was opened by the Ambassador of Afghanistan to the Nordic countries by highlighting how three decades of war has destroyed the cultural heritage of Afghanistan and by elaborating on the importance of reconstruction and maintenance of a nation's cultural heritage. One of two photographers of the exhibition, Kim Sørensen, spoke on the background of the project, and on how they had experienced working the project.

The welcoming speeches were followed by a discussion on the situation in Afghanistan. The seminar was chaired by Bjørn Hansen, a former TV-journalist and correspondent for NRK. Dr. Astri Suhrke, Senior Researcher at Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) spoke on Afghanistan and the lessons that could be drawn from the past. Dr. Kristian Berg Harpviken, Director of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), shared his thoughts on the Kabul Conference and the way ahead, and emphasized the symbolic importance of holding the conference in Afghanistan.

Gjermund Eide, former National Contingency Commander, elaborated on the Norwegian contribution in Afghanistan and on his experiences from Afghanistan.

The seminar was followed by a vernissage of the Photo exhibition, *Afghanistan, Cultural Heritage in Danger*. The exhibition can be viewed at the Norwegian Defense Museum until October 15th.



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Japan is Reconstructing the Kabul Airport Taxiway



Photo: CNN

According to Afghan authorities the reconstruction of Kabul Airport Taxiway will be initiated next month. The Japanese Government will fund the cost of \$36 million. Japan is also planning to install a solar energy power plant at Kabul airport that will meet the airport electricity requirements. This project will cost extra \$7 million.

The reconstruction and modernization of the taxiway in Kabul Airport will be very effective for Afghanistan's airlines and aviation companies, as well as for foreign airlines that travel to Afghanistan, since it will prevent the delay in flights.

Afghanistan builds 1680 km gas pipeline



Photo: Hydrocarbons industry

Officials from Ministry of Mine and Industries have stated that an agreement for the extension of a gas pipeline from Central-Asia to South-Asia through Afghanistan is soon to be signed. The technical studies of a new pipeline project starting from Turkmenistan, and extending to Pakistan and India will be

discussed in the 10th joint conference among Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan.

The construction of this extensive pipe line will besides granting huge taxes to the Afghan government also provide job opportunities for thousands of Afghans.

A farm service centre for women officially inaugurated in Kabul



Photo: UNIFEM

On 16 August 2010, a farm service center modified particularly for Afghan women farmers was officially opened for business in Kabul. Six other farm service centers already exist in Afghanistan. This project was particular setup to specifically meet the needs of Afghan women farmers.

According to a press release issued by the United States Agency for International Development the "Farm Service Centers offer high quality products such as seed, fertilizer, animal feed, tools, machinery, and greenhouse supplies. In addition, the store functions as an outlet for other female head of household enterprises, such as jams, pickles, honey, and handicrafts more successful". Afghanistan's Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock, Mohammad Asif Rahimi said:

"Farm Service Centers build value chains that have enormous importance to participating famers and their families. From ensuring the quality inputs, to strengthening co-operatives, to building links with businesses and markets, an FSC is a valuable resource that makes farmers and farm communities more successful".

Journalism center for women opened in Afghanistan

The first women's journalism center was inaugurated in Afghanistan's western province of Herat this month. The center's objective is to educate female journalists and to help them find employment in the growing media industry in Afghanistan. The center provides support and encouragement, and a place to learn and develop journalism skills professionally.

Discovery of oil field in northern-Afghanistan



Photo: Scott Andrews

Afghanistan Officials publicly announced that they have discovered a field with an estimated 1.8 billion barrels of oil in northern Afghanistan, Afghan and Western media reported on 11 August 2010. The discovery is specifically between the provinces of Balkh and Jowzjan. The survey was conducted by Afghan and international geologists

Faryab United Football Team attends the Norway Cup



Faryab United Football Team with the support of the Ministry of Defense of Norway and the Norwegian PRT for the second year in a row were able to participate in the world's largest youth football tournament, Norway Cup 2010. According to the organizers of Norway Cup, this year 30000 players from 54 Nations of the world in 1380 teams participated in Norway cup 2010. The tournament started on 1st August and ended on 7th August 2010.

This year the Afghan team from Faryab won several victories. In the matches within its group the team was able to win all four games of the first round in addition to winning several matches in the 2nd round as well.

Before the matches the Norwegian Defense Minister, Grete Faremo, met the football team, and stated that the participation by the Afghan team will create increased consciousness around the ongoing military operations in Afghanistan.

Manizha Bakhtari, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Nordic countries hosted a dinner reception in the honor of the young Afghan football players, where she congratulated the players for their excellent efforts.

Afghan cultural event in Finland



Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari attended a seminar about Afghanistan and opened two exhibitions in Tampere, Finland. The Culture and Museum Services of the City of Tampere, the Finnish Defense Forces, the Peace Research Institute (TAPRI), the Embassy of Norway in Finland, NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, Akateeminen Kirjakauppa and Afghanistan Cultural Association of Nokia organized a four day cultural event to promote Afghan culture and handicrafts on 17-21 of August 2010. Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari, delivered a welcoming speech at the seminar "Light and Shadows under the Afghan Sky", and opened the exhibition "A Nation Stays Alive When its Culture Stays Alive".

Four new Blackhawk helicopters arrived in PRT Meymaneh



Photo: Norwegian Armed forces

PRT Meymaneh has received the support of five American Blackhawk helicopters that will be used for medical services. This means improved capacity and shorter response time.

From Saturday August 21st the new emergency response will be 15 minutes at day and 30, a fifty percent reduction. With the American support the security of the soldiers and the services they offer is improved. "It's a win-win situation," the Commander of the Norwegian Aeromedical Detachment (NAD), Lieutenant Colonel Rolf Folland says.

Norway provides support to improve education system in Afghanistan



Photo: Capt. Stacie N. Shafran, US Air Force

Norway makes a contribution of \$36.7 million dollars to support education system in Afghanistan. The memorandum was signed between the Afghanistan Education Minister Farooq Wardak and the Norwegian Ambassador Afghanistan on 25 August 2010. Approximately 40 percent of the amount contributed by the Norwegian government will be spent on construction of 50 school buildings in Faryab Province, where the Norwegian PRT is located. The remaining amount will be injected to the education system in Afghanistan in order to develop the system. The Ministry of Education expresses their gratitude to all the countries that are taking part in the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan, including the kingdom of Norway for their generous supports in Afghanistan's educational system.

The US targets the birthplace of the Taliban



Photo: Associate Press

The US is preparing for an offensive in Zhari, a district west of Kandahar, which is where the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar founded the movement in 1994. It is a significant and iconic area for the Taliban. Lt. Col. Peter N. Benchoff call the fight for Zhari the next step — Phase 3 — of a wider campaign to pacify Kandahar, the country's second largest city, and surrounding countryside. The success in Kandahar is believed to be the initial step towards an overall victory, given that the Taliban's power base is rooted in this region.

New guidelines for Afghan security transition



Photo: UK Forces Media Ops.

Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander in Afghanistan has developed new guidelines for a gradual handing over of security duties to Afghan forces. The guidelines envision an acceleration of the training received by the Afghan security forces, permitting the allied forces to depart in a pace that would allow Afghan police and soldiers to successfully take over.

The guidelines were designed to set the conditions for fulfilling President Obama's pledge to begin reducing the American military presence by July 2011. The new road-map towards long-term security transition represents a reorientation of the counterinsurgency strategy carried out. This initiative is viewed as the most significant effort by Petraeus to put his stamp on the mission since taking over last month.

Armadillo and With a Mandate to Kill creates debate



Photo: Scanpix

The Danish documentary *Armadillo* has created debate in the Danish press and public. The documentary by Janus Metz's follows a UK-Danish base in Afghanistan, and the actions of the soldiers based there. This month the documentary was released in Norway and has created debate about the Norwegian contribution in Afghanistan and the moral of Norwegian soldiers.

The Norwegian Defense Minister, Grete Faremo, argues that the documentary is important for democracy, as it is creating an important debate. It is open about the nature of warfare which is brutal, however, it does give a good fundament for discussing what values and attitude that is need as a soldier, she adds.

Recently the book *With a Mandate to kill* was released and has created renewed debate about Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan. The book gives an unvarnished presentation of daily life for sharpshooters in Afghanistan. Among other things an incident where a 16-year old boy was killed is described.

The important aspect for the soldiers that have written the book is to share the reflections some of them have had after an international operation for Norway, one of the writers tells *Aftenposten*.

He continues by saying that they are not critical to the Norwegian operation and the Armed forces, but that the Norwegian people and politicians must have the courage to take the debate.

The sharpshooters add that it is important to contribute in Afghanistan, and to finish the work the international community has started. The road towards the goal will be demanding, but if NATO and its allies leave the Afghans now, the country will immediately be back to the situation before 2001, where Taliban and other warlords ravages the country and brings suffering upon the civilians, the soldier claims.

The Norwegian Armed Forces states that the book may be a breach of professional secrecy. What consequences this can lead to for the writers is still unclear. However, other says that it is important that soldiers share their experiences from the mission in Afghanistan, and it is a democratic right to tell their story.

NYHETSREVY - August 2010
 Monthly Newsletter of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Oslo, accredited to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland

Public Relations Department
 Embassy of Afghanistan, Oslo
 Kronprinsens gate 17
 0244 OSLO

Website: www.afghanistanembassy.no
 For contact or submission:
public.relations@afghanistanembassy.no