



NYHETS BREV

Dear readers,

The International conference on Afghanistan in Kabul which was opened by president Karzai and co-chaired by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Foreign Minister Zalmay Rassoul, remarked honors for the people of Afghanistan.

The International conference on Afghanistan, hosted more than 70 foreign ministers and heads of International institutions discussing a renewed commitment by the Afghan government to the Afghan people, and a renewed commitment by the international community to Afghanistan, The high-level participation of governments and international organizations illustrated the confidence in the future of Afghanistan.

The conference was an historic step in leading Afghanistan towards the principles of effective partnership with its international partners, furthermore, in improving security and regional cooperation, good governance, rule of law and human rights. The Kabul Conference was an important step towards economic and social development in our country and in the process of bringing peace to Afghanistan, through reconciliation and reintegration of combatants, counter-narcotics initiatives and in supporting Afghan ownership and Afghan leadership. Fulfilling the Communiqué of this conference, which enjoyed the full support of all participants, is our priority. The government of Afghanistan has determined several measures to go forward with.

Manizha Bakhtari
Ambassador

International conference on Afghanistan in Kabul



Photo: AFP/Scanpix

On July 20th, 2010, the Government of Afghanistan together with the United Nations brought together representatives of more than 70 partner countries, international and regional organizations and financial institutions at the Kabul Conference. The Conference was envisioned as a renewed commitment to the Afghan people, and marked the culmination of several months of intensive study and policy debate on Government priorities implemented through national programs, to support a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan

The Kabul Conference was a critical stepping stone in the *Kabul Process* of transition to full Afghan leadership and responsibility, building on previous international commitments including the London Conference and outreach activities of the Afghan Government (in particular the Consultative Peace Jirga of 2-4 June 2010). The Government presented an Afghan-led plan with measurable benchmarks, as well as a detailed National Priority Program that tighter represented the prioritized requirements of the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy* (ANDS).

As written in the official statement released after the Conference: "The broad and high level participation of governments and international organizations in Kabul is a sign of confidence in the future of Afghanistan and a message of hope and commitment to the people of the country. Appreciating this concrete manifestation of ongoing support, the Afghan Government vows to fulfill its commitments".

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More Girls joining sports in Balkh



Photo: UNICEF Afghanistan

In the past 2 years there has been an increase in sports clubs for girls and there are now 10 clubs in the capital of Mazar-i-Sharif. The club that Maryam, a 15 years old afghan girl who has won a medal in Tae Kwon Do, attends was built 5 years ago and now offers 80 girls the opportunity to develop their athletic skills. According to the Head of the Olympic Committee in Balkh, Muhammad Ibrahim Osmani, the past two years has seen a large increase in the number of girls participating in sports. Osmani states that approximately 1,000 girls are now playing a variety of sports in different clubs in the city, including taekwondo, volleyball, bodybuilding, and chess.

New Power Station costing 300 million USD finalized in Kabul



The United States has funded a new power station worth 300 million USD. Officials from Afghanistan's Ministry of Water and Energy announced that construction on a new 105 megawatts power station has been completed.

The new station will be used in emergency conditions when technical problems occur in the imported electricity system in Kabul. The capital city has about 400 extra megawatts of power, and there are plans to transmit it to other provinces, including those in the south of the country.

The new station is situated in the village of Tarakhel which is located in the south-western part of Deh Sabz district of Kabul province. The station is managed by Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), which operates and manages electric power generation, import, transmission, and distribution throughout Afghanistan on a commercial basis.

200 firms interested in Afghan mining sector



Photo: BBC

Afghanistan's Mines Minister, Wahidullah Shahrani, claims that nearly 200 international firms have shown their interest in investing in Afghanistan's mines, especially in the Hajjguk iron ore deposit.

Shahrani held meetings with a number of international firms in London as he travelled last week to inform them about the mines, which are estimated to be worth 1-3 trillion dollars. Shahrani is planning to tender the Afghan-Tajik oil block in early 2011 and the smaller Kashquri oil block and Shiberghan gas block in September.

World Bank to fund rail link feasibility study

According to Federal Minister for railways, Ghulam Ahmed Bilour, the World Bank will provide 1.5 million USD for a feasibility study of a rail link between Peshawar and Jalalabad. Last week, the neighbors signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the construction of the rail track on the conclusion of two-days of transit trade talks in Islamabad.

Afghan Girls football team in Germany



Photo: Afghanpaper.com

On July 14th 2010, the Afghan girl's football team left Afghanistan to participate in a football tournament in Berlin. During their stay in Germany the football team played against Germany, Zambia, Paraguay, and Austria. The Afghan girl's lost three matches of the tournament but won against Austria by 4-0.

At the end of the tournament the Participating teams received awards from the Governor of Berlin. After a standing ovation and clapped for almost three minutes, Zahra Mahmodi, thanked the organizer of the tournament on behalf of the Afghan girls' football team. Mahmodi said that it is was not important whether they had won or lost, the main point for the team was rather that they had been given the opportunity to participate.

Finland and Denmark to support Afghanistan's parliamentary election in September



Photo: Danish Foreign Ministry

Finland has granted 250,000 Euros to support the organization of Afghanistan's upcoming parliamentary elections on September 18, 2010. The purpose is to contribute to a successful electoral process through the UNDP Electoral Fund. The funds granted will be conducive to the development of good administration, which is one of the main goals set for Finland's development cooperation with Afghanistan.

On June 15th Denmark, together with Germany, signed an agreement of USD 2.8 million with the *Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan* (FEFA). Under the agreement FEFA will provide 400 long-term observers and 6,600 short term observers to observe the parliamentary election on September 18th. Denmark and Germany will also support the practical and logistical conduct of the election through contributions to UNDP ELECT.

Increasing interest in documentaries from Afghanistan

The interest for Afghanistan among Norwegian broadcasting channels has boomed. After nine years of engagement in the country, several TV-shows and documentaries are in the making.

Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), the largest media organization in Norway, has followed the Norwegian contingency in Afghanistan since spring. A documentary about the Norwegian air ambulance-contribution in Meymaneh is being produced for Viasat Broadcasting, and TV2 is already working on a similar project.



Photo: NRK

According to Kjetil Eide, Communication Advisor for the Norwegian Armed Forces, this will give insight into the Norwegian soldiers' reality in Afghanistan and stimulate the Afghanistan-debate in a constructive manner.

The Danish documentary "Armadillo" which follows the Danish contingency 6 months in Afghanistan provoked strong reactions in Denmark. The documentary won a prize in Cannes and is now seen by 100.000 Danes at the Danish cinema.

Sweden adopts strategy for Afghanistan engagement



REGERINGSKANSLIET

On July 8th the Swedish Government adopted a strategy to support the international engagement in Afghanistan. The strategy establishes goals and guidelines on how to fulfill the UN-mandate that is supported by the EU and ISAF.

It aims not only to enhance stability and security in Afghanistan, but also to create the fundamentals for democracy and human rights, and to strengthen the country's ability to improve the living standards for its population.

Norwegian and Swedish Foreign Ministers visits Afghanistan



Photo: Steinar Schetne/Scanpix

The Norwegian Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, attended the Kabul Conference, and visited Norwegian troops in northern-Afghanistan. Støre stated that the Kabul Conference is vital, as it represented yet another step towards afghan ownership and leadership in the provision of security and development.

Norway is one of the largest contributors to civilian reconstruction with a donation of approximately 750 million NOK annually, with main emphasis on education, good governance and development in the provinces.

The Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, arrived on July 20th in Kabul to attend the Conference. The location of the conference sends an important signal about afghan ownership and allows for a more active engagement from wider parts of the afghan society. "We are not in Afghanistan to win a war - we are in Afghanistan to help building peace", the Swedish FM writes in an article in *Svenska Dagbladet*.

Medal ceremony for returned soldiers



Photo: Håkon Mosvold Larsen / Scanpix

The 17th Norwegian contribution to National Support Elements (NSE) in Afghanistan has returned to Norway. In that occasion a medal ceremony was conducted at Akershus fortress on July 22nd. Minister of Justice and Police, Knut Storberget, attended the ceremony and spoke on the importance of their contribution in Afghanistan. The Afghan ambassador, Manizha Bakhtari, attended the ceremony to honor the returned soldiers.

Gen. David Petraeus takes over in Afghanistan



Photo: VG nett

General David Petraeus replaced General Stanley McChrystal as Commander of US forces in Afghanistan (USFOR-A) on July 4th. The change of command was prompted by McChrystal's comments about the Obama Administration and its policies during an interview with the Rolling Stone Magazine.

Gen. Petraeus has for the past years commanded the United Central Command (CENTCOM), where he was responsible for US operations in 20 countries including the Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The General is known for his accomplishments in Iraq where he bent what looked like failure toward an acceptable measure of success. According to the Wall Street Journal, Gen. Petraeus has decided to revise the entire strategy in Afghanistan, and intends to draw on many of the same tactics he implemented to turn around the war in Iraq – which his predecessor, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, introduced in Afghanistan.

Gen. Petraeus will continue to focus on protecting civilians and bolstering popular support for the government, and is expected to include a greater focus on how Afghanistan's security forces are being trained and how to make the Afghan people feel safe.

Gen McChrystal had planned a summer conquest of the Taliban in Kandahar to reinvigorate the battle against the Taliban, but according to the Telegraph, Gen Petraeus is changing the initial plan and is reported to believe that the operation must be a broad-ranging counter-insurgency campaign, involving more troops working with local militias.

Gen. Petraeus has called on some of the outside advisers who helped him develop the surge strategy in Iraq to make recommendations on a renewed campaign in Afghanistan, according to military officials. Those advisers include Stephen Biddle, a national-security expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, and Frederick Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, and Kimberly Kagan, who heads the Institute for the Study of War in Washington.

According to David Ignatius in Washington Post, the US mission can now expect more bottom-up experiments. "He's good at working both sides of the street – placating presidents and prime ministers while he bargains with local militia leaders.

Petraeus is also an operator – using back-channel emissaries to communicate with a wide range of players. That strategic edge has been missing in the US-Afghanistan policy, and it will become crucial next year, as we enter a likely phase of contact with the Taliban and its allies to explore a possible reconciliation deal," Ignatius adds.

Japan to provide 1 million USD for education projects



Japan agreed on Wednesday to spend one million US dollars on various development projects in Bamyan, Takhar and Kunduz provinces. Japan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Shingeyuki Hiroki, has signed contracts with the implementing officials. In Bamyan, 400 women will be imparted vocational training and a library will be set up for women, the Ambassador said. Abdul Haq Rahmati, a senior official of the Ministry of Education, stated that a teacher training institutes in the northern provinces of Takhar and Kunduz will be renovated, and workshops for teachers will be conducted to enhance their capacity. In addition, seven million of 10 million Afghan children in the provinces will be enrolled in schools.

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