

## India - Afghanistan Relations

India and Afghanistan have a strong relationship based on historical and cultural links. India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. We believe that democracy and development are the key instruments to ensure that Afghanistan becomes a source of regional stability. This has been reflected in the **Strategic Partnership Agreement**, signed between Afghanistan and India during Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to India in October 2011, which reinforced the strong, vibrant and multi-faceted relations between the two countries and at the same time formalized a framework for cooperation in various areas between the two countries: political & security cooperation; trade & economic cooperation; capacity development and education; and social, cultural, civil society & people-to-people relations. This agreement is a strong signal of our abiding commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan during this critical period of security and governance transition. The commitment is also reflected in our extensive developmental assistance programme, which now stands at around US \$2 billion, making India the 5<sup>th</sup> largest bilateral donor in Afghanistan after the US, UK, Japan and Germany. This, by any reckoning, is a substantial amount for a non-traditional donor like India.

### Bilateral Visits

There also exists a high-level political engagement with Afghanistan, which is reflected in the large number of bilateral high-level visits. There have been frequent high level visits from both sides in 2011-12, including among others, External Affairs Minister (EAM) and National Security Adviser (NSA) in January and March 2011 respectively; Prime Minister in May 2011; Special Envoy to PM to Kabul in June 2011 for a meeting of the International Contact Group; Foreign Secretary in September 2011; Minister of Law & Justice Shri Salman Khurshid on September 24, 2011 after the demise of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, and again on June 14 for the Heart of Asia Conference in Kabul, and Minister for Steel Shri Beni Prasad Verma in April 2012.

From the Afghan side high level visits to India include: President Hamid Karzai in February, 2011; Defence Minister Wardak in June, 2011; First Vice President Marshal Fahim in June 2011; a Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of the lower house of the Afghan Parliament Mr Ibrahimi to India in July, 2011; a delegation from the High Peace Council headed by its Chairman, late Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani in July 2011; Afghan NSA Mr Rangin Dadfar Spanta in August, 2011; Afghan Minister of Mines Mr Shahrani for the TAPI meeting in September, 2011; Afghan Commerce Minister Mr. Anwar ul Ahady in October 2011 for the CII, SME summit, President Karzai in October 2011, Minister of Mines and Finance Minister in January 2012 for the CII Partnership Summit in Hyderabad and Foreign Minister Zalmi Rassoul at the first Partnership Council meeting on May 1, 2012.

Lately Dr. Zalmi Rassoul, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Omar Zakhilwal, Minister of Mines, Mr. Wahidullah Shahrani, Minister of Mines and Mr. Asef Rahimi, Minister of Agriculture were in Delhi on June 28 for the **Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan**, which sought to provide

a forum for potential investors from the region and beyond to meet and explore possible cross-country company partnerships on investments in and around Afghanistan in various sectors where Afghanistan holds the promise of significant potential, opportunity and need, as a means of bringing stability and development to Afghanistan through economic means in the challenging post-2014 phase.

### **Development Partnership**

India has played an active role in the development of Afghanistan based on the understanding that social and economic development in Afghanistan is crucial to regional stability. The principal objective of India's development partnership is to assist in building indigenous Afghan capacity and institutions and to ensure that development touches all the regions of Afghanistan and encompasses all the sectors of development. India's pledged assistance to Afghanistan stands at a little under U.S. \$2 billion, making it the fifth largest bilateral donor in Afghanistan. All the projects are undertaken in partnership with the Afghan government, in consonance with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

India's programmes cover four broad areas – infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance, small and community based development projects, and education and capacity development. The 218 km road project from Zaranj to Delaram in south-western Afghanistan to facilitate movement of goods and services to the Iranian border and, onward, to the Chahbahar Port was inaugurated by the Afghan President and Indian External Affairs Minister in January 2009. India constructed the 202 kms long 220 kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and a 220/110/20 kV sub-station at Chimtala, bringing Uzbek electricity and lighting up the city of Kabul throughout the year. This project was completed in collaboration with the Afghan Government, ADB and the World Bank, with inputs from USAID and international energy firms, and is an outstanding example of regional and international cooperation in Afghanistan. The other two major infrastructure projects, the construction of the Afghan Parliament in Kabul and the construction of Salma Dam power project in Herat province, are under progress and would be completed by 2012.

Under humanitarian assistance, India supplies 100 gms of fortified, high-protein biscuits every day to each of the nearly two million school children in 33 of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan under a School Feeding Programme administered through the World Food Programme. During the visit of President Karzai to India in January 2009, India announced the gift of 250,000 metric tonnes of wheat to assist Afghanistan tide over its food shortage. The Indian Medical Missions in the five major cities are providing free medical consultations and medicines to over 30,000 Afghans every month.

An innovative scheme focussing on small and community-based development projects, with a short gestation period and having a direct impact on community life was unveiled during Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's visit to Afghanistan in August 2005. So far, 101 such projects with emphasis on local ownership and management in the field of agriculture, rural development, education, health, vocational training, and solar energy have been initiated.

In education and institution development, India is providing every year 675 long-term university scholarships, sponsored by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) for under-graduate and post-graduate studies for Afghan students in India. Similarly, another 675 annual short-term India Technical and Educational Cooperation (ITEC) training scholarships for Afghan public servants are provided in Indian technical and professional institutions. More than 20 Indian Civil Servants served as coaches and mentors under Capacity for Afghan Public Administration programme supported by UNDP and the Governments of Afghanistan and India. Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) built an India-Afghanistan Vocational Training Centre for training Afghan youth in carpentry, plumbing, welding, masonry and tailoring. Another innovative programme was executed by the well-known Indian NGO, SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), which built a Women's Vocational Training Centre in *Bagh-e-Zanana* in Kabul for training of Afghan women (War-widows and orphans) in garment making, nursery plantation, and food processing and marketing.

Capacity Building Programmes are also underway in the fields of diplomacy, media and information, civil aviation, agricultural research and education, health care and medicinal science, tourism, education, standardisation, rural development, public administration, electoral management and administration and local governance. Besides these, India is involved in reconstruction of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health and the Habibia School in Kabul. India has assisted in expansion of Afghan National TV network by providing an uplink from Kabul and downlinks in all 34 provincial capitals for promoting greater connectivity. It has also gifted around 1,000 vehicles including buses, utility vehicles and ambulances to Afghanistan.

Agriculture being the key to the development of Afghanistan, India announced at the London Conference in January 2010, 100 fellowships for Masters and Ph.D programmes for existing faculty members and another 200 for fresh graduates each year for the next five years to assist in faculty and student development in the agricultural sector. To build indigenous Afghan capacity and institutions, India also announced its strong support to the proposed Afghan National Institution Building Project of the UNDP.

In regional cooperation, Afghanistan joined SAARC at the 14th SAARC Summit held in Delhi in April 2007, opening possibilities of Afghanistan becoming a trade, transportation and energy hub linking together the countries of the region from Central to South Asia. India has also encouraged Afghanistan's efforts at capitalising on its unique geographical location at the heart of the Asian continent by supporting regional initiatives like the Istanbul process and RECCA that seek to assist in Afghanistan's development through cooperation in a various sectors of the economy.

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