

**Business and Politics in the Muslim World**

# **Afghanistan This Week**

**Report:128**

**Week: 10-16 July, 2010**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2010**

**Mohammad Amin**

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## **Political Headlines Summary**

### **Five NATO troops killed**

KABUL (PAN): Five International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) soldiers were killed in separate attacks in southern and eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, the alliance said.

### **Tehran to offer info on Afghan detainees**

KABUL (PAN): The Iranian government has agreed to provide information about the executed and death-row Afghans in the neighbouring country, a Foreign Ministry official said on Saturday.

### **Biography of new Afghan spy chief**

KABUL (PNA): Rahmatullah Nabil, who was appointed as head of the Afghan intelligence service last week, was born in central Maidan Wardak province in 1968.

### **Ministry refuses to guarantee peaceful Kabul Conference**

KABUL (PAN): The Ministry of Interior refused on Sunday to rule out a militant attack during next week's major international conference in Kabul.

### **Fewer civilian casualties this week: MoI**

KABUL (PAN): The Ministry of Interior said on Sunday that civilian deaths had fallen 21 percent this week compared to last week's figure of 43.

### **NATO backs idea of supportive force**

KABUL (PAN): NATO said on Sunday it wanted the establishment of a supportive force tasked with maintaining security in areas regular security forces could not access.

### **Six civilians killed daily in Afghan war, says report**

KABUL (PAN): At least six Afghan civilians were killed and eight others wounded daily in a mounting insurgency in the first half of the year, a rights organisation said on Monday.

### **Roadside bombs account for 80pc of deaths: MoD**

KABUL (PAN): Nearly 80 per cent of civilian and military deaths are caused by roadside bombs, a deadly weapon largely used by the Taliban to target foreign and Afghan forces, the Ministry of Defence said on Monday.

### **111 struck off parliamentary election list**

KABUL (PAN): As many as 111 candidates were disqualified from contesting the second parliamentary election in Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban regime, the poll panel said on Monday.

### **Karzai's brother seeks legal action against accusers**

KANDAHAR CITY (PAN): Ahmad Wali Karzai, the head of Kandahar's provincial council and the powerful brother of the Afghan president, is calling for those who accused him of illegally stealing government land to be prosecuted.

### **Taliban talks may harm women: HRW**

KABUL (PAN): Women's rights should be a priority in any political deal with insurgent forces in Afghanistan, an influential human rights group said on Tuesday.

### **Reconciliation not at the expense of Afghan women: US**

WASHINGTON (PAN): Reconciliation with the Taliban leaders in Afghanistan cannot be at the expense of the human rights and privileges of the women of the country, the United States said on Monday.

### **US reviews Taliban leaders' delisting request**

WASHINGTON (PAN): The US government on Monday said that it is in process of reviewing a request of Karzai's government to delist the names of 10 Taliban leaders from the UN blacklist.

### **No new request for Taliban delisting from blacklist: Omar**

KABUL (PAN): President Hamid Karzai would not make any request for the removal of 50 Taliban leaders from the UN sanctions list, his spokesman Wahid Omar said Tuesday.

### **US mission should strengthen ANA: Senators**

WASHINGTON (PAN): Two influential senators have said the sole mission of the United States should be to strengthen the Afghan National Army; which has emerged as the most respected Afghan institution in the post-Taliban era.

### **US to funnel more money through the Afghan government**

WASHINGTON (PAN): The US plans to funnel more money to Afghanistan through the government rather than the traditional route of nongovernmental groups, an official said.

### **Worsening security concerns Baghlan candidates**

PUL-I-KHUMRI (PAN): Deteriorating security in northern Baghlan province has made it impossible for a large number of parliamentary election candidates to campaign, election runners said on Wednesday.

### **Five NATO soldiers killed in south**

KABUL (PAN): Five NATO-led soldiers were killed on Wednesday in two different attacks in the increasingly volatile southern Afghanistan, taking the death toll of foreign troops to 37 so far in July, the alliance said.

### **\$3b rural, agriculture development plan unveiled**

KABUL (PAN): The minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock announced on Wednesday an ambitious programme worth \$3 billion to improve the living conditions of rural families and farmers.

### **Karzai to reveal security transition plan**

KABUL (PAN): President Hamid Karzai will present his plan for the transition of control of security from international soldiers to Afghans at the Kabul International Conference on July 20, an official said on Wednesday.

### **NSC approves creation of new local police force**

KABUL (PAN): The National Security Council (NSC), at a meeting chaired by President Hamid Karzai, on Wednesday endorsed the establishment of new local police force, the Presidential Palace said.

### **Illiteracy a major challenge to ANSF: NATO**

WASHINGTON (PAN): Widespread illiteracy is preventing Afghan's military and police from becoming a modern military security force, a top NATO official has said.

### **Community police needed in Afghanistan: Britain**

KABUL (PAN): The British envoy in Afghanistan, William Patey, on Thursday said his government supports a plan to arm locals to defend their communities against militant attacks.

### **Money leaving Afghanistan, US lawmakers told**

WASHINGTON (PAN): Huge amounts of money meant for Afghanistan's reconstruction are leaving the war-devastated country, senior Obama administration officials told lawmakers on Thursday.

### **NATO soldiers killed in bomb attack**

KABUL (PAN): Two international soldiers were killed in a roadside bomb attack in volatile southern Afghanistan, where militant-linked violence has spiked in recent months, NATO said on Friday.

## **Geo-Strategic Headlines Summary**

### **Azrah again comes under militant attack**

PUL-I-ALAM (PAN): Taliban militants have attacked the Azrah district headquarters in central Logar province for the second time in two days, injuring two police, an official said on Saturday.

### **US diplomat's Afghanistan partition suggestion condemned**

KABUL (PAN): The Afghan government and some political analysts on Saturday strongly condemned a former US diplomat's remarks in which he said a de facto partition of Afghanistan was the best option for the United States and its allies.

### **Hundreds of militants storm Barg-i-Matal**

JALALABAD (PAN): Hundreds of Taliban insurgents stormed the Barg-i-Matal district of eastern Nuristan province, officials said on Wednesday.

### **Marja security improving: Gen Mills**

WASHINGTON (PAN): There has been a steady improvement in the security situation in Marja after the Taliban were driven out from the town a few months ago, said a Helmand-based US military official.

## **Social Headlines Summary**

### **Poppy-free Logar sees sharp rise in drug addiction**

PUL-I-ALAM (PAN): Logar province in central Afghanistan was declared poppy-free five years ago, but since then the number of drug addicts has shot up.

### **Number of poppy-free provinces goes up to 23**

KABUL (PAN): Poppy cultivation has been reduced to zero in 23 provinces of Afghanistan, which accounts for more than 90 percent of the world's total opium production, an official said on Wednesday.

### **Japan to provide \$1m for education projects**

KABUL (PAN): Japan agreed on Wednesday to spend one million US dollars on various development projects in Bamyan, Takhar and Kunduz provinces.

### **Afghan students worry about security**

WASHINGTON (PAN): The post-Taliban era has given Afghans much more freedom, in particular women and girls, but many now fear for their safety more than before, visiting Afghan students feel.

## **Economical Headlines Summary**

### **World Bank to fund rail link feasibility study**

KABUL (PAN): The World Bank is interested in funding the feasibility study of a rail link between Peshawar and Jalalabad, a Pakistani minister said on Saturday.

### **Pakistan urged to sign APTTA**

KABUL (PAN): The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) on Saturday called upon Pakistan to sign the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) at Kabul conference, scheduled for July 20.

### **Rising afghani leads to price cuts**

KABUL (PAN): Increased demand for Afghan currency has seen it rise against the US dollar and Pakistani rupee leading to a reduction in price of commodities, an official said on Sunday.



## **Political Headlines**

### **Five NATO troops killed**

Pajhwok Report - Jul 10, 2010 - 17:24

KABUL (PAN): Five International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) soldiers were killed in separate attacks in southern and eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, the alliance said. Three ISAF troops died as a result of small-arms fire, an improvised explosive device (IED) strike and an insurgent assault in the east, NATO said without giving the exact locations.

Another two soldiers were killed in roadside bombings in southern Afghanistan, according to a statement from ISAF press office that did not mention the nationalities of the fallen soldiers.

A day earlier, two foreign soldiers, an Australian and a British, were killed in IED strikes in southern Afghanistan. Thursday's fatalities took place in the Chora Valley of Uruzgan and Sangin district of Helmand.

The deaths bring the total number of NATO troops killed in Afghanistan so far this year to 351. American and British service-members have borne the brunt of the fatalities. More than 100 foreign soldiers were killed in Afghanistan in June, the deadliest month for international troops.

### **Tehran to offer info on Afghan detainees**

Amanullah Iman - Jul 10, 2010 - 21:02

KABUL (PAN): The Iranian government has agreed to provide information about the executed and death-row Afghans in the neighbouring country, a Foreign Ministry official said on Saturday.

The execution of Afghans in Iran, an emotive issue which has sparked angry demonstrations and heated parliamentary debates, hit the headlines in May when a lawmaker spoke of the victims' bodies transported to western Herat province.

Addressing a news conference in Kabul on Saturday, deputy foreign minister, Aklel Ahmad Hakimi, who recently led a four-member delegation to Iran, said most of the Afghans had been executed on charges of drug trafficking.

Without revealing the exact number of Afghans sentenced to death in Iran, he said the convicts had been given the right to hire defence lawyers to plead their cases, under agreements between the two nations.

Based on those pacts, Tehran would share with Kabul information about the Afghans arrested or sentenced to death in Iran, Hakimi said. The Iranian officials pledged to give Afghan citizens more visas in the future, he added.

### **Biography of new Afghan spy chief**

x - Jul 11, 2010 - 15:16

KABUL (PNA): Rahmatullah Nabil, who was appointed as head of the Afghan intelligence service last week, was born in central Maidan Wardak province in 1968.

He completed his primary education in Kabul before being enrolled in a high school in neighbouring Pakistan. Nabil studied at a private engineering university in 1987 and attained a bachelor's degree in 1992.

The new National Directorate of Security (NDS) chief speaks Pashto, Dari and English. For three years after his graduation, he worked as a construction engineer, planner and technical advisor for Afghan non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Jalalabad and Pakistan's border city of Peshawar.

Later on, he joined the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, working as deputy director of the UN body in Afghanistan for the next eight years.

He joined the Karzai government in 2005 as deputy head of Afghanistan's Security Council and head of the presidential special guards unit.

### **Ministry refuses to guarantee peaceful Kabul Conference**

Khwaja Basir Ahmad - Jul 11, 2010 - 16:37

KABUL (PAN): The Ministry of Interior refused on Sunday to rule out a militant attack during next week's major international conference in Kabul.

Preparations have already been put in place to ensure a peaceful one-day conference, to be attended by top foreign officials, including the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, a ministry official said.

Zmaray Bashari, a spokesman for the ministry, told a news conference he could say for sure that nothing wrong would happen. However, Afghan and foreign troops would do their best to secure the July 20 event, he said.

The deputy interior minister, Gen. Munir Mangal, would personally oversee the implementation of the security plan for the Kabul Conference, he added.

Mangal was also responsible for the security of last month's peace jirga. But the venue, west of the fortified Afghan capital, became the scene of fighting between Taliban militants and security forces.

The high-profile attack led to forced resignations by the former intelligence chief, Amrullah Saleh, and interior minister, Muhammad Hanif Atmar.

Officials from the interior and defence ministries, as well as the intelligence department, are meeting daily on how to minimise the chances of security lapses, according to Bashari.

Representatives from 64 countries and international organisations will attend the event, aimed at reviewing the progress on benchmarks set by the London Conference in January.

The Afghan government will also present a development plan to the international community at the conference.

### **Fewer civilian casualties this week: MoI**

Khwaja Basir Ahmad - Jul 11, 2010 - 19:12

KABUL (PAN): The Ministry of Interior said on Sunday that civilian deaths had fallen 21 percent this week compared to last week's figure of 43.

The 34 civilians were killed in 180 incidents across the country, the interior ministry's spokesman, Zmaray Bashari, told a news conference in Kabul. Nearly 120 others were wounded in the attacks, most of them in roadside bombings.

Bashary said the data shows a 10 per cent reduction in the level insurgency in the last week compared to the week before.

Despite the optimism about dwindling violence, 23 policemen, including two officers, were also killed last week and 69 others were injured in a wave of attacks, according to the ministry's record.

Three times as many insurgents were killed than police over the past week with another 36 wounded and 140 arrested.

The spokesman praised the efforts of the Counter-Narcotics Police, who have seized nearly 18 tonnes of drugs, including six tonnes of heroin, in the last several days.

The biggest discovery was in Helmand's Dishu district, where 63 drug smugglers were killed in fighting, he said.

### **NATO backs idea of supportive force**

Amanullah Iman - Jul 11, 2010 - 20:10

KABUL (PAN): NATO said on Sunday it wanted the establishment of a supportive force tasked with maintaining security in areas regular security forces could not access.

At a news conference in Kabul, an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) official dismissed the impression that the alliance supported "tribal militias" to protect Afghan civilians.

Josef Blotz, a spokesman for the multinational force, said the programme for creating a supportive force would be implemented under the auspices of Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior.

As part of the plan, the force will ensure security in areas where the Afghan security personnel were not deployed. He said the idea would be discussed at the July 20 Kabul Conference, hoping the international community would back it.

Without going into details, the ISAF spokesman said the Afghan government would devise next week a strategy for improving the security situation, which has deteriorated in recent months.

Blotz also rejected media reports there were disagreements between President Hamid Karzai and the newly-appointed NATO commander, General David Petraeus, with regard to a US plan to help civilians fight the militants on their own.

A report in the Washington Post said on Saturday that Gen. Petraeus mulled a plan to create a tribal militia to fight Taliban in the war-torn country, an idea spurned by President Karzai.

Blotz said the new NATO commander had met Karzai eight times since he assumed charge eight days back. He believed the recent change would not affect NATO and US strategies for stabilising Afghanistan.

Interior ministry spokesman, Zmaray Bashari told Pajhwok Afghan News they would not accept any force in the name of tribal militias. However, he explained Public Safety Forces were operating in some provinces.

Bashari added the force, comprising area residents, started operations after receiving training, equipment and uniforms.

While denying Taliban fighters were getting stronger, Blotz blamed the insurgents for killing 151 civilians and wounding 313 others over the past 40 days. During the period, foreign troops killed 17 civilian and injured 25 others, he concluded.

### **Six civilians killed daily in Afghan war, says report**

Pajhwok Report - Jul 12, 2010 - 16:17

KABUL (PAN): At least six Afghan civilians were killed and eight others wounded daily in a mounting insurgency in the first half of the year, a rights organisation said on Monday.

The "alarming" figures show a slight increase of 1.3 per cent in the number of civilian casualties, compared to the same period last year, said Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM).

"At least 1,074 civilians were killed and over 1,500 injured in armed violence in the first half of this year," the mid-year report noted.

The study blamed the Taliban and other militant groups, "who showed little or no respect for the safety and protection of non-combatants," for more than 60 per cent of the deaths. Nearly 300 civilians were killed in homemade bombs, a deadly and easy weapon largely used by the Taliban to target Afghan and NATO forces, and 127 in suicide attacks.

At least 210 civilians were killed by foreign troops over the past six months. More than 100 other deaths were attributed to Afghan security forces, including government-funded militias.

The number of civilians killed by NATO forces "reduced considerably" during the period following restrictions on the use of air strikes and night raids. The additional foreign troops, according to the report, might bode ill for civilians.

The troop surge and the appointment of Gen. David Petraeus as commander of foreign troops had widely been interpreted as "the last push before exit," which emboldened the insurgents, the report added.

It had also encouraged Pakistan, Iran and other regional states to resurface and back proxies for a post-US/NATO Afghanistan, the ARM said.

### **Roadside bombs account for 80pc of deaths: MoD**

Khwaja Baseer Ahmad - Jul 12, 2010 - 11:07

KABUL (PAN): Nearly 80 per cent of civilian and military deaths are caused by roadside bombs, a deadly weapon largely used by the Taliban to target foreign and Afghan forces, the Ministry of Defence said on Monday.

To tackle the problem, the US government has pledged to donate \$3b equipment for discovering and destroying such homemade bombs, called improvised explosive devices (IED) in military jargon, a senior official of the ministry said.

The deputy head of the emergency department at the ministry, Brig. Gen. Muhammad Shafai Bahir, told a press conference, as a part of the programme, a special counter-IED training initiative had been set up in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

He added 250 soldiers and 200 policemen trained so far so had been dispatched to different parts of the country to cope with the IED threat.

"As the militants cannot get engaged in face-to-face fighting with the security forces, they prefer to plant such bombs," Bahir said.

The massive increase in roadside bomb attacks over the past three years was linked to militants' easy access to IED components. Ammonium nitrate, a common agricultural input that is also used for making IEDs, was easily available, the military official noted. A fresh report released by an Afghan rights organisation said nearly 300 civilians were killed by homemade bombs in the first half of 2010.

### **111 struck off parliamentary election list**

Khali Fitri - Jul 12, 2010 - 18:42

KABUL (PAN): As many as 111 candidates were disqualified from contesting the second parliamentary election in Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban regime, the poll panel said on Monday.

Following investigations by the Electoral Complaint Commission (ECC), 111 candidates were removed from the list, a statement from Independent Election Commission said. It added 37 of the contenders withdrew from the race, 36 were disqualified for having links to illegal armed groups, 31 after IEC investigations, while seven failed to quit government jobs.

As a result, 2,556 candidates including 406 women are left in the run for the 249 Wolesi Jirga seats up for grabs, according to the IEC figures.

### **Karzai's brother seeks legal action against accusers**

Bashir Ahmed Naadem - Jul 12, 2010 - 14:31

KANDAHAR CITY (PAN): Ahmad Wali Karzai, the head of Kandahar's provincial council and the powerful brother of the Afghan president, is calling for those who accused him of illegally stealing government land to be prosecuted.

On May 16, the 205th Atal military corps in Kandahar province published a report accusing Ahmad Wali Karzai's family of seizing 90 per cent of defence ministry land.

The report stated that the ministry had 18 properties inside and outside of Kandahar city, and that 10 of those had been seized by "powerful men".

However, the report did not identify those who had appropriated the land or in which area, but it urged the provincial council to help them to get their land back.

The next day, Ahmad Wali Karzai shut down the provincial council, demanding those accused of seizing land be named.

The council returned to work a week later when President Hamid Karzai ordered a delegation, led by the Attorney General's Office and overseen by the chief justice, to investigate all the claims of seized land.

Ahmad Wali Karzai, the president's younger half brother, has dismissed the allegations of land grabbing. And it seems he has now been vindicated as the defence ministry recently dismissed its own report.

Gen. Abdul Rahim Wardak, Afghanistan's defence minister, acknowledged that some of the ministry's land had been appropriated, but said Ahmad Wali Karzai was not behind it.

He said the delegation from the Attorney General's Office could not find any evidence to suggest Wali Karzai's involvement. Wardak said the person who made the accusations in the report would be punished.

Facing down allegations is not new to Ahmad Wali Karzai. The president's brother has been called many names over the years, from drug dealer to corrupt warlord. "Every day there is a new allegation against me, but in all I exercise patience."

According to him, any time the political situation changes in Afghanistan, the accusations against him also change.

"Politically, when there is an issue about drugs in Afghanistan, I am accused of smuggling; if there is an issue about corruption and embezzlement, I am accused of corruption; if there is an issue about security and personal armies, I am accused of that also."

Hajji Agha Lalia Dastgiry, the provincial council deputy, told Pajhwok Afghan News the report by the military corps about Ahmad Wali Karzai was politically or personally motivated.

"This is true that a lot of governmental lands have been encroached upon, but the head of the provincial council is not involved in it," he said.

The report released by the defence ministry never accused Ahmad Wali Karzai directly but suggested his relatives and tribesmen had seized the land.

The provincial head is now calling for the Attorney General's Office to prosecute those who brought the charges against him.

"As I said recently, if I have taken a foot of government land, I should be treated like any other Afghan before the law," he said.

However, he added that those who had unfairly defamed him should also be brought before the law.

Saeed Jalal Jalal, head of investigation for the Attorney General's Office, said in a press conference on June 19 that the delegation did not find any evidence that Ahmad Wali Karzai or his allies were involved in seizing land.

However, he said that warlords had been found complicit in encroachment upon 210 acres of land belonging to the 205 Atal military corps. He promised the suspects' names would be published soon.

Warlords have not only encroached on land belonging to the defence ministry, but hundreds acres of land belonging to the agriculture and customs departments in Kandahar, Zalmay Ayubi, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said.

Yousef Pashtoon, a former minister in the Rehabilitation Development, has repeatedly complained that warlords are seizing land across the country every day, but yet the government has done little about it.

In Kandahar, for example, The Family Area, land ostensibly owned by the defence ministry has been taken over by former military and jihadi commanders who have built their homes there, according to Ayubi.

Defence Minister Wardak said part of the problem was that in the past, land owned by the defence ministry used to be on the outskirts of the cities, but with the expansion of urban areas, military bases are now close to residential areas.

President Karzai recently issued a decree handing the Family Area land to the municipality, and it is expected they will build a park on it.

Karzai is also urging stronger measures to tackle land grabs by warlords.

A commission of property, evaluating governmental land seized by warlords, was formed under the supervision of the Kandahar mayor, and includes delegates from the departments of Hajj and Islamic Affairs, the municipality, justice department, police and national directorate of security.

The commission will work to clarify what property has been seized and to arrest warlords and bring them before the law, Ayubi said.

According to the spokesman, those who have seized land belonging to the customs department in northern Kandahar have already been warned to vacate the land. He said the municipality would soon reveal a list naming those who have seized government land.

Taking back property from those who have illegally appropriated it is part of an operation named "help", started two months ago which, as well as bringing peace and stability to the province is trying to establish law and order in remote areas.

### **Taliban talks may harm women: HRW**

Pajhwok Report - Jul 13, 2010 - 17:08

KABUL (PAN): Women's rights should be a priority in any political deal with insurgent forces in Afghanistan, an influential human rights group said on Tuesday.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) alleged the Afghan government and its international supporters had ignored the need to protect women in programmes aimed reintegrating the fighters.

In a 65-page report, the international rights organisation said reconciliation plans had no guarantee that women's rights would be included in potential talks with the Taliban militants.

The report "The Ten-Dollar Talib and Women's Rights: Afghan Women and the Risks of Reintegration and Reconciliation" addresses the potential challenges to women's rights posed by future government agreements with insurgents.

Malinowski, Washington director at Human Rights Watch, said: "Afghan women shouldn't have to give up their rights so the government can cut a deal with the Taliban." Women living in areas where the Taliban have regained strength have suffered intimidation, violence and even death threats, according to the report.

"As the prospect of negotiations with the Taliban draws closer, many women fear that they may also pay a heavy price for peace," the rights watchdog pointed out.

It added: "Reconciliation with the Taliban, a group synonymous with misogynous policies and the violent repression of women, raises serious concerns about the possible erosion of recently gained rights and freedoms."

A female government employee quit her job after receiving a threatening letter in February 2010, the HRW report recalled. "We Taliban warn you to stop working for the government otherwise we will take your life away..."

Malinowski said: "Afghan women are paying a heavy price in this conflict, and no one wants peace more than they do. But their rights don't have to be traded away in hasty deals. There can be peace with justice."

## **Reconciliation not at the expense of Afghan women: US**

Pajhwok Correspondent - Jul 13, 2010 - 17:39

WASHINGTON (PAN): Reconciliation with the Taliban leaders in Afghanistan cannot be at the expense of the human rights and privileges of the women of the country, the United States said on Monday.

The Obama administration, which so far has been reluctant to support the reconciliation efforts of the Karzai government, said the issue would be raised by the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, herself when she travels to Afghanistan later this month to attend the Kabul Conference.

Noting that women are fundamental to the future development of Afghanistan, the State Department spokesman, P J Crowley, told reporters that the United States has "made clear" that there are specific stipulations that anyone who wishes to reconcile has to meet. "That includes support of the Afghan constitution, including the fundamental rights for all Afghan citizens, including women, enshrined in that constitution," he said, adding that Clinton has spoken repeatedly and strongly about this.

"We don't think that any reconciliation process in Afghanistan should come at the expense of women," Crowley said in response to a question

## **US reviews Taliban leaders' delisting request**

Lalit K Jha - Jul 13, 2010 - 14:08

WASHINGTON (PAN): The US government on Monday said that it is in process of reviewing a request of Karzai's government to delist the names of 10 Taliban leaders from the UN blacklist.

The Afghan ambassador to the United Nations, Zahir Tanin, said his country last week requested to the UN Security Council to delist the names of 10 Taliban leaders.

Hopeful that the UN Security Council would soon take a positive decision in this regard, Tanin said the decision to approach the world body in this regard is part of the reconciliation efforts and the decisions made by the recently held peace jirga in Kabul.

"The United States is in the process of reviewing the status of several former members of the Taliban currently on the its called the 1267 Sanctions List," the State Department spokesman, P J Crowley told reporters at his daily news briefing.

"Most of the individuals under consideration have already reconciled with the Afghan government while a few others are allegedly deceased and, therefore, no longer warrant inclusion on the sanctions list," he said. "So we, as with other members of the Security Council, are considering the merits of delisting specific individuals," Crowley said in response to a question.

Noting that the idea to make request for delisting is a result of the peace jirga, Tanin said, the issue was again raised when a delegation of the UN Security Council visited Kabul last month.

"We presented to the 1267 committee last week a list of new 10 Taliban members that should be delisted and they are the people in our view meet the criterias that is needed for delisting," Tanin told Pajhwok Afghan News.

Refraining from revealing the names for whom the request has been made, Tanin said: "These are members of the Taliban who are not part of the terrorist activities, that are



going to be part of the peace process or are not a danger to the security of the people in the country".

### **No new request for Taliban delisting from blacklist: Omar**

Frozan Rahmani - Jul 13, 2010 - 14:28

KABUL (PAN): President Hamid Karzai would not make any request for the removal of 50 Taliban leaders from the UN sanctions list, his spokesman Wahid Omar said Tuesday.

Spurning a Western media report that Karzai planned to make such a request in a gesture to advance political reconciliation, Omar said the president had sought the delisting of 20 Taliban figures from the 1,267-person blacklist five years ago.

That presidential request was yet to be considered by the UN Security Council, Karzai's spokesman told a news conference in Kabul.

The UN has dropped five of the names from the list while another five of the 20 men had died, the spokesman added.

The fate of the remaining 10 has to be decided before a fresh appeal is submitted to the council, according to Omar, who explained the powerful UN body had been reminded of the request.

A day earlier, the Washington Post reported that President Karzai was seeking the removal of up to 50 Taliban leaders from the terror blacklist.

"The government of Afghanistan has not submitted any list of 50 names and the (Post) information is inaccurate," Omar told reporters.

He said the agreement with the UN Security Council, whose delegation recently visited Kabul, was to review the cases of the 137 Afghan individuals on the list.

In response to comments from Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik, who alleged Afghan militants carried out attacks in his country, Omar said it was "clear to everybody where terrorists come from and where their sanctuaries are."

### **US mission should strengthen ANA: Senators**

Lalit K Jha - Jul 14, 2010 - 15:41

WASHINGTON (PAN): Two influential senators have said the sole mission of the United States should be to strengthen the Afghan National Army; which has emerged as the most respected Afghan institution in the post-Taliban era.

"I believe our mission should primarily be to strengthen the Afghan security forces so that they can take on the Taliban," Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, said on Tuesday.

Levin and Senator Jack Reed, who just returned from a trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan, told reporters they were satisfied with the progress in Afghanistan. However, they noted that Pakistan needed to take more action against the Afghan Taliban, which operates from Quetta, and against the Haqqani network, which finds a safe haven in Pakistan.

"The building blocks of an Afghan policy mission are that you have an army that is respected and an opponent that is detested by the Afghan people. And so, whether or not we have progress or not will depend on whether or not we have successfully taken some

steps to build up the Afghan army, particularly, but other security forces in Afghanistan as well," Levin said.

Levin pointed to the fact that the army was on track to meet its recruitment goal, an achievement expected to be announced at the Kabul conference next week, as evidence of that progress .

The senator said the US wants the Afghan people to see their army protecting them instead of foreign troops .

Reed said the US-led international forces have regained the initiative in very critical parts of the country, particularly around the south.

"That does not mean that we have no difficult days ahead; we have very serious fighting ahead," he said .

However, they had reversed the momentum of the Taliban which looked as though it was heading to Kabul, he said. Reed was forced to correct himself after he initially referred to the Pakistani Taliban, rather than the Afghan Taliban .

While both the Senators were concerned that terrorist groups still use Pakistan as a safe haven and as a staging area for attacks into Afghanistan, they praised Islamabad for taking on militant groups in the Swat Valley.

"But what they haven't done is take on the two groups that attack into Afghanistan, the groups they have taken on are the groups and individuals that attacked Pakistani targets and well they should," Levin said.

"But they also say that they recognise that there is a threat to them when their country is used as a launching platform for terrorist attacks against others, but they have not acted on that when it comes to the Haqqani network, which is in North Waziristan and they have not done that relative to the so-called Quetta Shura, which is where the Afghan Taliban have their headquarters in Pakistan," he said.

### **US to funnel more money through the Afghan government**

Lalit K Jha - Jul 14, 2010 - 14:25

WASHINGTON (PAN): The US plans to funnel more money to Afghanistan through the government rather than the traditional route of nongovernmental groups, an official said.

Richard Holbrooke, the US special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, said that such a move would strengthen the government and also streamline the contracting process, which he said can waste about 30 per cent of aid money.

"For example, all our women's programmes in Afghanistan and Pakistan used to be done through contracts with companies, usually in the Washington area. And that didn't make any sense to me. So we phased out most of it, except for some accounting purposes, and took the money reserved for women's programmes and turned it over to the ambassadors for a fund which would be more flexible and which would eliminate the amount of money that's diverted in overheads, which was 15 to 25, 30 percent -- really very -- enormous waste of taxpayer's money," Holbrooke said.

However, he said that the NGO community was resistant to such a move. "This created somewhat of a backlash among some of the contractors, who felt they were disadvantaged," he said.

The special representative said that the goal of the Obama administration was to route at

least 50 percent of total US aid through the Afghan government.

"This goal has been a goal that we set into place the week I took this job. One of the first things I did was ask for an accounting, and it turned out that 8.8 percent of all American aid went through the government we were trying to strengthen. That made no sense," he said.

By doing so, the United States was weakening the government it was trying to strengthen. "It was one of the large number of things we inherited which we've change dramatically," he said.

### **Worsening security concerns Baghlan candidates**

Habib Rahman Sherzai - Jul 14, 2010 - 15:13

PUL-I-KHUMRI (PAN): Deteriorating security in northern Baghlan province has made it impossible for a large number of parliamentary election candidates to campaign, election runners said on Wednesday.

"The populated districts of Baghlan-i-Markazi and Dahana-i-Ghori are insecure for us to go and campaign," said a candidate, Khalil Narmgoy.

He called on the government to step up its efforts to secure the districts as there are only two more months to go until the nationwide election on September 18.

Another candidate, Mohammad Nasim Mudabir, said security in the province had worsened since the campaign period began, suggesting the militants were intent on disrupting the process.

The Taliban have intensified their attacks against government officials and local people on two main highways passing the province, he added.

Mudabir said that the Taliban no longer restricted their activities to Baghlan-i-Markazi and Dahana-i-Ghori, and are now spreading their influence in the relatively peaceful areas of Doshi and Tala-wa Barfak.

"We cannot do a good campaign without government attention to the situation," he said.

A senior provincial police official, however, denied the candidates were in danger, saying the Taliban only operated overnight. The candidates can campaign during the day, Col Sayed Zamanuddin Hussani told Pajhwok Afghan News.

He said police have insufficient weapons to ensure 24-hour security across the province, and called on the central government to provide more equipment and support to establish checkpoints in the restive areas.

### **Five NATO soldiers killed in south**

Pajhwok Report - Jul 14, 2010 - 20:18

KABUL (PAN): Five NATO-led soldiers were killed on Wednesday in two different attacks in the increasingly volatile southern Afghanistan, taking the death toll of foreign troops to 37 so far in July, the alliance said.

Four NATO soldiers were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in southern Afghanistan, where the foreign troops have launched their biggest-ever offensives to drive the Taliban from their spiritual strongholds.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said in a statement a fifth soldier was killed in a small-arms attack in the same region, a hotbed of an escalating Taliban-led insurgency.

In line with its policy, the multinational force neither disclosed the nationality of the soldiers nor the exact locations of the incidents.

A recent UN report said the Taliban had increased the use of homemade bombs by 94 per cent in the first half of 2010 in comparison to figures for the same period last year.

### **\$3b rural, agriculture development plan unveiled**

Zainab Muhammadi - Jul 14, 2010 - 18:42

KABUL (PAN): The minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock announced on Wednesday an ambitious programme worth \$3 billion to improve the living conditions of rural families and farmers.

The programme for rural development is expected to be approved by allied governments at the Kabul Conference, slated for July 20, Muhammad Asif Rahimi told a news conference in the central capital.

He said the ministries of agriculture, rural rehabilitation and development, energy and water and counternarcotics jointly devised the strategy for restoring Afghanistan's natural resources, including soil and forests, and by improving irrigation and power supply systems in the countryside.

An important component of the plan is to boost farm production and productivity with the introduction of new crops and better ways of growing traditional ones through better research, farm cooperatives and agricultural extension services.

The programme envisaged creating jobs by supporting agriculture, building roads, strengthening community development council and other local institutions, as well as assistance to Kochis, the minister said.

Rahimi added: "Rural economic problems cannot be solved by one ministry acting alone, so four ministries have formed a team to get the job done as fast as possible."

Forests and pastures would be improved and local communities enabled to make money from them in return for helping government preserve the environment, he explained.

He hoped electricity supply to rural areas would reduce the need for burning wood, and hundreds of small and medium-sized irrigation dams would conserve water and make farms more profitable.

"This plan is an historic first for Afghanistan. It is conceived and designed by the Afghan government in response to what Afghan farmers really need," he said, adding the programme had been approved President Hamid Karzai, his cabinet and senior advisors. The strategy has already been discussed with donor governments and formally approved on July, 2010 by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. He was optimistic the plan would earn donors' support.

### **Karzai to reveal security transition plan**

Khawaja Baseer Ahmad - Jul 14, 2010 - 20:13

KABUL (PAN): President Hamid Karzai will present his plan for the transition of control of security from international soldiers to Afghans at the Kabul International Conference on July 20, an official said on Wednesday.

The issue of handing control of security from NATO-led ISAF soldiers to Afghans had been discussed by Karzai, the US ISAF commander, Gen. David Petraeus and other Afghan security officials, a defence ministry spokesman said.

Although the plan was not yet finalised, it would be ready for the international meeting, spokesman for the Ministry of Defence, Gen. Zahir Azimi, told a press conference here in Kabul.

"The handover of control of security was one of the demands of Afghan people and it will be the top issue at the conference," Azimi said, however, he did not give further details.

The Kabul Conference, in which representatives of around 70 countries and international organisations would also participate, is scheduled to be held on July 20.

In the past the ministry of defence and ISAF officials had said the handover of security would be gradually completed over five years.

### **NSC approves creation of new local police force**

Pajhwok Report - Jul 14, 2010 - 20:57

KABUL (PAN): The National Security Council (NSC), at a meeting chaired by President Hamid Karzai, on Wednesday endorsed the establishment of new local police force, the Presidential Palace said.

The plan for creating the force was presented by Interior Minister Gen. Bismillah Khan Muhammadi and security advisor to the president, Muhammad Masoom Stanikzai, the palace said.

It added the plan was thoroughly discussed and the participants agreed on the creation of the police force within the framework of the Ministry of Interior.

The ministry was asked to gradually dissolve all armed forces outside its control. In areas where their presence was needed, the groups should be integrated into local police force. The two vice-presidents, the interior minister, chief of army staff, intelligence chief, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance head, the ISAF commander and the US ambassador took part in the meeting.

According to the statement, the participants asked the Ministry of Interior to prepare a detailed report on the establishment of the new local police force.

### **Illiteracy a major challenge to ANSF: NATO**

Lalit K Jha - Jul 15, 2010 - 18:34

WASHINGTON (PAN): Widespread illiteracy is preventing Afghan's military and police from becoming a modern military security force, a top NATO official has said.

The limitations that illiteracy brings include limitations to the types of training that NATO can provide, Mike Faughnan, chief of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan / Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan Education Division, told reporters here on Wednesday.

"We can't do anything more than train at the very basic levels in any of the fields that we work with," he said.

Consequently, the US and NATO have launched a campaign to educate Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Currently there are about 25,000 members of ANSF in some form of literacy training, Faughnan said. That number should grow to 50,000 by December of this year and 100,000 by July of next year.

"Our goal is to provide at least a third-grade primary literacy and numeracy skill set to every member of the ANSF that doesn't currently possess it."

ANSF personnel are taught Dari and Pashto -- the two native languages of Afghanistan. And while most opt to study their native tongue, some choose to learn a second language. Faughnan said their two biggest challenges are the sheer number of recruits who need literacy training, and incorporating that instruction into their operations at the training base.

"You know, we are in a combat area. The forces here are participating on a regular basis in operational missions. And including literacy instruction in their training, while very valuable to them, is another piece of training that they have to work in. So that creates some problems -- or some challenges, not really problems," he said.

### **Community police needed in Afghanistan: Britain**

Frozan Rahmani - Jul 15, 2010 - 11:27

KABUL (PAN): The British envoy in Afghanistan, William Patey, on Thursday said his government supports a plan to arm locals to defend their communities against militant attacks.

The vow of support comes a day after President Hamid Karzai approved an initiative to build a community police force in remote areas of the country where troops cannot access.

However, both the Afghan government and US officials have rejected claims the force was akin to local militias, saying they would be funded, uniformed and led by the Afghan Ministry of Interior.

The British ambassador said the role of a professional police force was crucial, but that such a "special force" should be led by the Afghan government.

Patey said there were no concerns the police could become a militia, as they would gradually become part of the national police force.

Despite the government initially opposing such an idea, preferring to bolster Afghan forces, Karzai eventually agreed to the initiative at a meeting in the Presidential Palace on Wednesday.

In the meantime, the British ambassador, addressing a few reporters, said his government had allocated \$2 million to support the Afghan government's reconciliation programme with the Taliban. He said he also hoped the UN would remove the names of some Taliban leaders from its sanctions list as a gesture to encourage peace talks.

### **Money leaving Afghanistan, US lawmakers told**

Lalit K Jha - Jul 16, 2010 - 13:56

WASHINGTON (PAN): Huge amounts of money meant for Afghanistan's reconstruction are leaving the war-devastated country, senior Obama administration officials told lawmakers on Thursday.

"Yes, money is leaving Afghanistan, and this has been reported to me by my investigators," the inspector-general of the United States Development Agency (USAID) said at a Congressional hearing.

Donald Gambatesa said investigations had been underway prior to the media reporting on the matter. "And this is money that's being declared as the so-called owners of it depart Afghanistan," he confirmed.

More than \$3 billion have been smuggled out of Afghanistan via Kabul's airport since 2007, recent media reports indicated, prompting legislators to know where the taxpayer dollars were going.

Nita Lowey, chairwoman of the Appropriations State and Foreign Operations subcommittee, said she had deferred consideration of the \$3.9 billion requested for foreign assistance to Afghanistan in fiscal year 2011.

Over the last eight years, the US has spent more than \$51 billion on rebuilding Afghanistan, with \$20 billion expended in the past two years alone. The subcommittee said it would not be a rubber stamp for more Afghan appropriations.

"The State Department's assessment that such activities undermine our civil-military mission and our responsibility to ensure Americans' hard-earned tax dollars are not squandered require our urgent and thorough examination," Lowey said.

However, Gambatesa insisted there had been no indication that any USAID funds were being sent out of Afghanistan. "I am saying that we have no information to show that any USAID funds are being shipped out of the country in pallets."

About reports that billions have been transported out of Afghanistan via the Kabul airport, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Maj. Gen. Arnold Fields, said: "We do not know at this time whether these dollars are from reconstruction funds or not."

However, SIGAR investigators were aggressively working with other federal agencies to determine the source of the currency, he added, explaining the lack of visibility into the movement of money and financial transactions in Afghanistan was one of many issues that put reconstruction dollars at risk.

Lowey said the committee was under no illusions about the difficulty of implementing programmes in Afghanistan, including security threats, a nascent banking system and challenges in identifying and developing credible local partners.

## **NATO soldiers killed in bomb attack**

Pajhwok Report - Jul 16, 2010 - 11:49

KABUL (PAN): Two international soldiers were killed in a roadside bomb attack in volatile southern Afghanistan, where militant-linked violence has spiked in recent months, NATO said on Friday.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) announced the deaths in a brief statement that neither disclosed the nationality of the soldiers nor the exact location of the improvised explosive device (IED) strike.

With Thursday's fatalities, the death toll of foreign troops has soared to 37 so far in July. Four NATO soldiers were killed a day earlier in a similar attack in the south, where a huge offensive is underway to drive the Taliban from their strongholds.

A recent UN report said the Taliban insurgents had increased the use of homemade bombs by 94 percent in the first half of 2010 in comparison to figures for the same period last year.

As many as 366 NATO-led troops have been killed in Afghanistan so far during the current year. The US and Britain have borne the brunt of the deaths.



## **Geo-Strategic Headlines**

### **Azrah again comes under militant attack**

Abdul Maqsood Azizi - Jul 10, 2010 - 17:53

PUL-I-ALAM (PAN): Taliban militants have attacked the Azrah district headquarters in central Logar province for the second time in two days, injuring two police, an official said on Saturday.

Two Taliban were killed and as many wounded in an hour-long fight between the attackers and police on Friday, the governor's spokesman, Din Muhammad Darvesh, said. It was the second time the district headquarters had come under attack from insurgents. The first was before dawn on Thursday, using heavy and light arms, with three Taliban killed by police in an hours-long gunbattle.

Police claimed they sustained no casualties in that attack.

Azrah police chief, Col. Bakhtyar Gul Ashrafzai, said the district headquarters' windows had been shattered.

As usual, Taliban asserted responsibility for the attack with its spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, saying four police were killed and another six wounded in the attack.

However, he only verified the injury of two Taliban fighters.

Azrah had been considered a relatively peaceful district in Logar but the recent incidents show the district is increasingly becoming a target for militants.

### **US diplomat's Afghanistan partition suggestion condemned**

Frozan Rahmani - Jul 10, 2010 - 19:23

KABUL (PAN): The Afghan government and some political analysts on Saturday strongly condemned a former US diplomat's remarks in which he said a de facto partition of Afghanistan was the best option for the United States and its allies.

Robert D Blackwill, who served as US ambassador to India, recently said the Obama administrations counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan was headed for failure and that Afghanistan's partition was the only solution.

He said that after the administrations policy review in December, the US should stop talking about timelines and exit strategies and accept that the Taliban will inevitably control most of its historic stronghold in the Pashtun south.

But Washington could ensure that north and west Afghanistan did not succumb to jihadi extremism, using US air power and Special Forces along with the Afghan army and like-minded nations.

Calling the remarks of no importance, a presidential spokesman, Ahmad Zia Siyamak Hirawi, said Afghanistan had never split even during some of its most turbulent times.

"Afghanistan has been a united country and will stay as such."

He said the war was winnable if terrorists operating outside of Afghan boundaries were constrained.

"The solution is not in partition of Afghanistan but to eliminate sanctuaries for terrorists." Some Afghan analysts said the remarks were irresponsible and against national interests.

Malik Sate, who is the head of the Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN), said Blackwill did not carry out any research into Afghanistan on which he could draw such a conclusion.

He said such remarks were not in the greater interest of Afghanistan.

Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, head of Center for Regional Studies (CRS), said the statements were tantamount to declaring war against Afghans. He said Americans should be aware of the consequences of such remarks in a country such as Afghanistan.

Blackwill suggested the country be divided into two parts -- the south and the north and west.

But Liwal said the suggestion was illogical and unachievable.

He said the diplomat should apologise to the people of Afghanistan.

Atiqullah, a resident of Kabul, said Afghanistan is one nation and no one could or should divide it.

### **Hundreds of militants storm Barg-i-Matal**

Abdul Mueed Hashimi - Jul 14, 2010 - 19:16

JALALABAD (PAN): Hundreds of Taliban insurgents stormed the Barg-i-Matal district of eastern Nuristan province, officials said on Wednesday.

Up to 700 Afghan and foreign fighters, led by two Pakistani militant commanders, Ayubi and Maulvi Saifuddin, crossed border to sneak into the town two days ago.

They overran the district headquarters Tuesday evening, Governor Jamaluddin Badr told Pajhwok Afghan News. Two policemen were killed and two others wounded in the four-hour attack, he said.

Badr asked the Ministry of Defence in Kabul to send an extra battalion of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to support the provincial security personnel.

Fearing more fighting, up to 3,000 of families have shifted from villages close to Barg-i-Matal to remote northern parts of the district from nearby villages.

ANA commandos left Barg-i-Matal a month ago, when the security forces recaptured the district from the Taliban insurgents, the governor added.

For lack of ammunition and personnel, police could not deal with the challenge, he said.

Area people are helping the security personnel in resisting the onslaught.

If more troops were not dispatched to the district, the district could fall to the rebels, the governor warned, while seeking reinforcements.

Around 400 border guards and policemen, fighting the militants in the district, needed weapons and other equipment, said the provincial police chief, Gen. Muhammad Qaseem Paiman.

He requested President Hamid Karzai and the Ministry of Defence to order more soldiers to the town as soon as possible to prevent the assailants from taking complete control of it.

Taliban captured the district on May 31 as a result of intense fighting, but the Afghan security forces, backed by foreign troops, retook it on June 2.

### **Marja security improving: Gen Mills**

Pajhwok Correspondent - Jul 16, 2010 - 15:18

WASHINGTON (PAN): There has been a steady improvement in the security situation in Marja after the Taliban were driven out from the town a few months ago, said a Helmand-based US military official.

"The insurgents claimed, when coalition forces approached, that they would die in the trenches rather than give up Marja in a very, very dear fight. Of course, we all know that fight didn't occur," he said.

Maj. Gen. Richard Mills told reporters at a Pentagon briefing through video conferencing from Helmand: "The (rebel) forces drifted away when they were taken on by the coalition forces, and we had initial success on the battlefield."

Since then, steady progress had been noted in the security situation in the Taliban stronghold, Mills said when asked about the current situation in Marja.

A 140-member emerging police force was patrolling streets, running security checkpoints, enforcing laws and fighting the insurgency, when it was called upon and attacked, he added.

The enemy was desperate, he claimed, alleging the insurgents were involved in a murder and intimidation campaign. The official said when the fighters fled Marja, there were no schools and health clinics.

"Now, as we begin to see an emerging civil government in Marja, as we begin to see a local police force take on civil responsibilities, as we see the Afghan army take on more and more of their own security responsibilities, we have some 800-plus shops in the bazaars."

Supporting the idea of a new local police force, he said it had been adapted to ensure that it met Afghan citizens' needs and desires. "I myself am in favour of it. I think that it encourages neighbourhood responsibility for its own security."

## Social Headlines

### Poppy-free Logar sees sharp rise in drug addiction

Abdul Maqsood Azizi - Jul 14, 2010 - 14:15

PUL-I-ALAM (PAN): Logar province in central Afghanistan was declared poppy-free five years ago, but since then the number of drug addicts has shot up.

In 2005, there were 9,500 addicts in Logar. In 2009, that figure was 25,000 and in the current year, it's estimated there are 27,000 addicts, according to Wadan Organization, an Afghan NGO that works primarily with drug addicts.

Drug addiction is a growing concern for all of Afghanistan, with the UN estimating there are about one million people, aged between 15 and 64, addicted to some form of drug, be it heroin, opium, hashish or tranquilisers.

In Logar, most of those addicted are in their twenties and early thirties and say they started taking drugs while working in Iran or in the opium poppy fields of Helmand and Kandahar provinces, the major opium producing regions. Although Logar no longer grows poppies, the province, just 60 kilometres south of Kabul, is on the smuggling route from the south to the capital city and drugs are widely available.

Ajmal, 22, a resident of Kutub Khel village in Baraki Barak district of the province, says he started smoking opium three years ago while working in Iran.

His roommate and friends, all took opium and so he did too. Now, he says, he cannot quit.

Hedayatullah, a resident of Muhammad Agha district, says he has been addicted to hashish and opium for past four years.

"I was the only person to provide food for my family; I was going to Helmand and Kandahar to work on poppy cultivation and became addicted there," he says.

"I cannot afford to treat myself, but I will be very happy to get support for treatment."

Wardan, the NGO, has treatment centres in Paktia, Ghazni, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Badakhshan provinces, but in Logar, it only has a consultation centre. Those needing rehabilitation or other treatment must be sent to Gardez, in neighbouring Paktia province.

Some addicts also have received treatment in Kabul, but many return to drugs again.

Zubair says he spent a month in a rehabilitation centre in Kabul, but started taking drugs again because he was jobless.

"I was unemployed. I joined friends who were taking drugs, so I also got addicted again."

Col. Meraj Uddin, manager of the Counter-Narcotics department in Logar province, agrees there has been an increase in the number of addicts in the province.

He says his department is trying to halt the flow of narcotics -- hashish, opium and heroin -- into the province, but has not been successful.

Gul Ahmad, head of Wardan, told Pajhwok Afghan News that each month 15-30 new addicts arrive at their centre in Logar.

He says all the addicts are briefed about the dangers of drug taking and how it is seen in Islam and then referred to Gardez.

The addicts spend six weeks in the rehabilitation centre in Gardez where they quickly gain weight and recover, he says. They receive free medicine, food and fresh fruit while being introduced to methods and treatments for giving up drugs.

Aziz Ahmad, a resident of Alozai village of Pul-i-Alam, says he used to use narcotics, but was able to quit after treatment.

"My condition had really deteriorated. No one in my family talked to me, even my wife left me to live with her parents."

Ahmad says he is now working as a labourer.

Dr. Muhamamd Zarif Nayebkhil, head of the public health department in Logar province, says unemployment is a big factor in the increasing number of drug addicts.

He says that if there were job opportunities in Afghanistan, the youth would not go to neighbouring countries such as Iran and Pakistan, where they are introduced to drugs.

Nayebkhil said Wadan had treated 340 addicts over the past year, but that 240 had become addicted again and sought help at the clinic.

In the shadow of a tree, Jamal, 31, a resident of Hesarak in the provincial capital, Pul-i-Alam, prepares to smoke some opium,

He says he used to smoke hashish, but for the past three years has been addicted to opium.

After he became addicted his father-in-law took his wife and three children away, he says.

"It is not possible for me to quit. If I leave it for one day, I will die," he says.

With no jobs, many addicts are forced to steal from their families or other houses to pay for their habit.

A pack of opium costs about 150 afghanis while a cigarette of hashish costs 25 afghanis, according to those who buy it.

It is not only Afghan men who take drugs; many women also become addicted but figures are harder to come by as the women often do not contact health centres and stay inside their homes.

Sabera, 32, can often be seen begging on the streets of Pul-i-Alam. Both she and her husband are addicts. "My husband is at home; his health condition is not good, I am forced to beg so I can buy opium for me and my husband."

The couple has two children, a 10-year-old son and an 8-year-old daughter. Both were taken away by their uncle who feared they too would become addicted if they stayed with their parents.

Some residents blamed police for the growing numbers of addicts; saying that if they took more action to arrest drugs dealers and smugglers, there would be fewer addicts. They also accuse some police of taking drugs and being involved in the sales of narcotics. However, Gen. Ghulam Mustafa Muhsini said police were cracking down on the dealers. He said that 148 kilograms of opium, 236 kilograms of heroin, 636 kilograms of chemicals used in producing opium and 1,423 kilograms of hashish had been seized over the past year.

While Muhsini acknowledged that some police did smoke hashish, there were very few addicted to opium. However he said an investigation would be carried out and those found to be addicted would receive treatment. .

### **Number of poppy-free provinces goes up to 23**

Abasin Zaheer - Jul 14, 2010 - 18:55

KABUL (PAN): Poppy cultivation has been reduced to zero in 23 provinces of Afghanistan, which accounts for more than 90 percent of the world's total opium production, an official said on Wednesday.

The number of poppy-free provinces, which stood at 20 in 2009, has thus seen an increase during the current year, a spokesman for the Ministry of Counternarcotics told reporters in Kabul.

Zalmay Afzali said the Afghan government was doing its bit to eliminate the scourge of illicit drugs, but the international community did not provide enough assistance for the campaign.

He said the United States of America and Britain were the two countries that aided Afghanistan's counternarcotics drive.

At the Kabul conference, scheduled for July 20, the Karzai administration would urge all participating nations to enhance their support for its efforts against the menace of narcotics.

While criticising those who branded Afghanistan as a producer of 93 percent of the world's opium, Afzali linked the high level of illicit drug production to rising demand from foreigners.

The chemicals used in manufacturing of heroin were smuggled into Afghanistan from abroad, the spokesman said, adding they would ask the United Nations to mount pressure on the countries which encouraged Afghan farmers into cultivating opium poppies.

Without naming any country, Afzali said his hand was slightly injured in an attack on his car by unidentified men near the Kabul International Airport on Wednesday morning.

"I have no personal enmity; the attackers may be members of drug mafia," he remarked. Afzali reported the incident to Kabul-based security officials.

### **Japan to provide \$1m for education projects**

Syed Abbas Sadat - Jul 14, 2010 - 20:29

KABUL (PAN): Japan agreed on Wednesday to spend one million US dollars on various development projects in Bamyan, Takhar and Kunduz provinces.

In Kabul, Japanese Ambassador to Afghanistan Shingeyuki Hiroki signed contracts with the officials who will implement the development projects.

In Bamyan, 400 women would be imparted vocational training and a library would be set up for females, the ambassador said.

Abdul Haq Rahmati, a senior official of the Ministry of Education, who was also present on the occasion, said teacher training institutes in the northern provinces of Takhar and Kunduz would be renovated.

Workshops for teachers would be conducted to enhance their capacity, a step that was more useful than the construction of buildings, Rahmati added.

While urging Japan to strengthen its focus on building the capacity of Afghan teachers, he said seven million of the 10 million Afghan children went enrolled in schools.

Head of Takhar teacher training institute, Abdul Rahman, thanked Japan for its assistance. He assured they would spend the money transparently and would be willing to be held accountable in this regard.

He added the Takhar teaching training institute had been operating over the past 32 years, but students had to leave it due to problems, particularly the lack of hostel facility.

### **Afghan students worry about security**

Lalit K Jha - Jul 15, 2010 - 18:36

WASHINGTON (PAN): The post-Taliban era has given Afghans much more freedom, in particular women and girls, but many now fear for their safety more than before, visiting Afghan students feel.

"Now (post-Taliban), it is good; girls go to school. For them it is a good opportunity to go outside," said Zora Syawash, 14, a student of Sorya High School in Kabul.

She and 11 other students from Afghanistan have just completed a three-week programme on conflict resolution in the state of Maine under the Seeds of Peace International Camp in association with the US State Department.

However, she questioned whether civilians were any safer in the country now.

"In this current situation, I do not know why, there is a bomb explosion, so many people killed. I do not think, during the Taliban regime there was any explosions. There was not any bomb blast in which civilians died. In Afghanistan, when people go outside, they just pray for their safety," Syawash said.

Speaking about the three-week programme which aims to promote friendship among youth from conflict regions, Syawash said she had learned how to co-exist with others. "I learnt the existence of peace in my life," she told a reception at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department.

As well as youth from Afghanistan, the Seeds of Peace initiative had invited teenagers from India and Pakistan.

Ramish Azadzoï from Abdul Ali Mustghani High School in Kabul said education was the solution for all the country's problems. "I have realised that the boundaries, the limitations of geography are not important. When you do things together, it will happen, it is not difficult for you," he said.

"Our conflict is related to education. As long as our people are not educated, nothing is going to change. Education is the key to all our problems," Azadzoï said.

The reception was also attended by diplomats from the three countries.

"Right now there is no more important series of countries to the United States than India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. All of you are going to be serving as important bridges between the three countries," the assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, Robert Blake, said.

## **Economical Headlines**

### **World Bank to fund rail link feasibility study**

PAN Monitor - Jul 10, 2010 - 17:13

KABUL (PAN): The World Bank is interested in funding the feasibility study of a rail link between Peshawar and Jalalabad, a Pakistani minister said on Saturday.

Ghulam Ahmed Bilour, federal minister for railways, told the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) news agency the World Bank would provide \$1.5 million for the study. Last week, the neighbours signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the construction of the rail track on the conclusion of two-day transit trade talks in Islamabad.

The MoU says: "The feasibility study is a pre-requisite for the construction of the rail link. World Bank has evinced an interest in providing \$1.5 million under a Trade and Transport Facilitation Programme (TTFP-2) loan for the feasibility study."

Pakistan would take steps for the construction of the Chaman-Spin Boldak railway track, subject to fund availability and land acquisition, Bilour added.

A working group comprising representatives from the ministries of railways, finance, economic affairs and commerce from the two countries will coordinate efforts to speed up the projects.

### **Pakistan urged to sign APTTA**

Abdul Qadir Siddique - Jul 10, 2010 - 21:05

KABUL (PAN): The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) on Saturday called upon Pakistan to sign the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) at Kabul conference, scheduled for July 20.

The agreement is originally meant to overcome the problems of traders of the neighbouring countries. A draft agreement, prepared by the Afghan government two years back, is yet to be accepted by Pakistan.

In May 2009, presidents of the two countries agreed to finalise the agreement by the end of the year, but seven sessions on the subject have failed to yield any breakthrough.

The deputy chief of ACCI, Khan Jan Alakozay, said Pakistan was reluctant to comply with some provisions of the draft agreement.

Allowing Afghan vehicles entry to key Pakistani cities, the transportation of transit goods to Afghanistan from India via Pakistan, zero tariffs on Afghan products and reforms in the documentation process are some of the contentious issue.

A further delay would be disadvantageous to both countries, he believed, warning the ACCI would ask the government to treat Pakistani traders the same way as Afghan traders were dealt with by Pakistan, if the agreement was rejected.

He called upon the international community, as well as the two countries, to ensure the



ATTA was signed during the Kabul conference.

Currently, Pakistan benefits from a 1965 accord that allows Pakistani goods' shipments to the Middle East through Afghanistan.

The Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industry believes the accord is now too old and inconsistent with the prevailing conditions. It says a new transit trade agreement is necessary to address the concerns of Afghan entrepreneurs.

### **Rising afghani leads to price cuts**

Zainab Muhammadi - Jul 11, 2010 - 13:38

KABUL (PAN): Increased demand for Afghan currency has seen it rise against the US dollar and Pakistani rupee leading to a reduction in price of commodities, an official said on Sunday.

Presently in Kabul, one US dollar is worth 45.70 afghanis while 1,000 Pakistani rupees are worth 535 afghanis. A year ago, one US dollar bought 49 afghanis and 1,000 rupees 600 afghanis.

Spokesman for the Da Afghanistan Bank, the country's central bank, Imal Hashor believes that growing demand for afghanis is the main factor behind the increased value of the currency. He said too many US dollars being poured in into the country and the increasingly vulnerable economic situation in Pakistan were also factors increasing demand for the Afghan currency.

Calling the strengthening valuation useful for a country such as Afghanistan which relies heavily on imports, Hashor said it would bring down the prices of different items in the ordinary market.

Currently, Afghanistan exports goods worth \$500 million while imports are worth \$5 billion.

Nine years earlier, around 18 billion afghanis were circulating in the market but that number now has crossed 100 billion, showing that there is an increase in demand for the Afghan currency.

According to head of Kabul Traders Union, prices of some edible items have fallen.

Fazlur Rahman said that currently, a 50-kilogram bag of flour was sold at 860 afghanis, the same amount of rice at 2,100 afghanis and a five-kilogram can of cooking oil at 240 afghanis. At the time when the US dollar bought 50 afghanis, the prices were 1,000, 250 and 3,000 afghanis respectively.

According to Hashor, over the past eight years the Afghan currency has proved that it is a stable monetary unit, something he considers a major achievement by the central bank.