



# UNDP Afghanistan Newsletter

1 May 2006

## Connecting Afghanistan to the world

A national Information and Communication Technology Council will be set up in Afghanistan following the country's first ever ICT Conference. The council will provide consultation to the government on planning and developing ICT. It will be made up of the public sector, such as relevant ministries, AISA (Afghanistan Investment and Support Agency), the private sector, including IT companies in the country and civil society organisations.

Four years ago internet, mobile phones, wireless, hi-tech communications and technology were just a dream for many people in Afghanistan.

Today the country is making enormous technological strides in communications and Afghanistan's first ever National ICT Conference, jointly organised by the Ministry of Communications and the UNDP, has put information, communications and technology on the map.

Optical fibre networks, more than a million new cell phone users, and wireless fixed telephone lines are all part of the technological leapfrogging in a country that only a few years ago had banned the internet.

Hundreds of participants at-



tended the April 25-26 conference and more than 30 national and international companies, UNDP projects and others exhibited at the Loya Jirga tent to celebrate Afghanistan's communications successes and help make links between public sector needs and private sector possibilities.

"Afghanistan has made considerable progress in the field of communications during the past four years but still much needs to be done to provide communication services to all parts of the country," Afghanistan's first Vice-President Ahmad Zai Masoud told the conference.

The UNDP's Marcia de Castro said: "ICT has been an important area for UNDP development activities worldwide and in this country."

Education Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar said: "ICT can pro-

vide equal access to education for all Afghans." Referring to the ICT conference banner of a child using a laptop he said children have a right to a laptop wherever they are studying in Afghanistan.

Dr Naderi from ANDS said: "Afghanistan needs to be connected to the world through ICT...We hope to expand the use of electricity throughout the country, then we will have the opportunity to make ICT common in rural areas. We hope people will be able to use ICT in their homes." He added that he hoped that ICT will provide further opportunities for employment.

The two-day forum showcased investment opportunities and promoted ICT awareness within the country. The conference also saw the launch of an easy-to-use online capability for registering .AF website addresses.

Four years ago, Afghanistan had only 20,000 telephone lines in the whole country. There are now 1.2 million cell phone owners. By the end of 2006, the wireless fixed telephone lines will reach 285,000, allowing not only voice, but also data exchange throughout the network, connecting hundreds of thousands of households in Afghanistan.

"We are planning to create a national optical fibre network along the major highways circling the country and also broadband connections will be made possible through links to similar networks in neighbouring countries," Afghan Minister of

The ICT project is supported by the EC, Microsoft, CISCO, France, UNDP and USAID

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Minister for Communications Amirzai Sangin addresses the conference

## Afghanistan's first ever ICT conference



Vice President Ahmad Zia Massoud (right) and Communications Minister Sangin (left)

Communications Amirzai Sangin explained. "It would address two major problems: the high cost and limited bandwidth capacity in the current satellite-based communication technology in the country," he said.

"Communications technology in Afghanistan is moving from zero to warp speed," said Tamim Samee, UNDP Project Director for ICT. "Technological advances can play a huge role in the future development of the country. It's difficult to imagine in a post conflict situation that internet technologies will be used to deliver weather forecasts online to district centres. Water availability information will be provided to each district to help farmers. Crop disease and prevention information will be updated down to the village level," said Mr. Samee.

## CNTF activated with approval of first batch of projects

The Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF), established by the UNDP to support the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to fight poppy production and the drug trade, has come to life with the approval of the first batch of projects aimed at constructing micro hydropower stations in Badakhshan province.



This water will be used to generate power

The management board of the fund, which includes representatives of the Afghan Government, major bilateral and international donors and the UNDP, gave the nod to the US \$3.2 million project, which will fund the construction of a 100 KW hydropower station in Chatta village, an 85 KW station in Sangab village and a 350 KW one in Jurm village.

Some 4000 households will benefit from the project, which aims mainly to lay the groundwork, by providing a steady power supply for the rural population so that they can develop alternative ways of earning their livelihoods based on the advantages of having electricity.

The most important contribution of the project to the counter-narcotics effort is seen as the potential of the electricity supply to enable small scale food processing facilities to be created, which in turn could allow the agricultural produce to be taken to

the market with some added value, thereby bringing more income and encouraging production of more legal crops as compared to poppy.

Other envisaged benefits include the positive impact of the running of the household, by allowing women to spend considerably less energy in cooking, washing and cleaning; increased access to information through the mass media; reduction of migration to urban centres; creation of increased business opportunities (i.e. machinery repair, welding, wood work, stone processing).

On the environmental front, the project introduces a major "renewable energy" concept thereby allowing substantial cuts in the use of wood for various daily life purposes.

It is hoped that by the end of the three year project, the micro hydropower stations will be managed by a local workforce, thereby contributing to the capacity development cause.

The construction of the hydropower stations will cost some US \$ 2.1 million with the rest of the funds being spent on training and other technical assistance lines. The local population will also make "in kind" contributions to the project implementation to the

tune of US \$140,000.

Established officially on October 29 2005, the CNTF is designed in a way that the Government of Afghanistan retains the overall responsibility for the programme, with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) as the executing entity and the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) as the programme directorate and also as one of the implementing entities. The line ministries are other implementing partners for projects funded through the CNTF. The fund supports counter narcotics related projects and activities outlined in the eight pillars of the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS), which include: Alternative Livelihoods, Building Institutions, an Information Campaign, Drug Law Enforcement, Criminal Justice, Eradication, Drug Demand Reduction and Treatment of Drug Addicts, and Regional Cooperation.

The CNTF has received contributions from Australia, New Zealand, the European Commission, and Estonia, with pledges from UK-DfID and the UK-Afghan Drug Inter-Departmental Unit. Other donors such as South Korea, USA, CIDA, and Sweden have made commitments to the fund.

## People get their say in shaping the future

The chance is now there for the people of Afghanistan to really have their say in identifying the needs of their own district and shape its future, thanks to the launch of a process to start working groups planning their district's needs.

The aim is for local groups to come up with strategic plans for long term development which can then be submitted to and considered by the respective provincial authorities and relevant ministries.

With the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the UNDP has started the process of District Development Working Groups (DDWG) as part of the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP).



*Voting for working group members*

The first pilot exercise took place in the Daman district of Kandahar on May 8-12, following the training of facilitators in Ka-

bul.

Some 100 people attended the orientation meeting in Kandahar representing the 56 communities in Daman.

Village populations select the members of a DDWG for them to make the development plans on major issues including health, education, agriculture and security.

Each working group has 15-20 members who are elected by secret ballot with the chairperson and deputy usually being highly respected and trusted members of the community.

Community Development Advisor Jess Garana said the aim is to get villages to set a goal of how they see their village in 10-15 years time. "The methodology is to look at long term priorities," he said.

Mr Garana said that most petitions to central government currently came from politicians or influential people. "So if you're strong your petition is funded, there's no looking at the broader picture. We are trying to bring a higher level of understanding for communities to have a collective voice and strength for the future," he said.

In the long term the DDWGs will empower communities and help them develop a district plan as they take their priorities to their members of parliament or the government.

Plans will then be easier to track and ne-



*Discussing the most needy issues*

gotiate and help donors in identifying projects.

For example if neighbouring districts identify a need for a school, the end result may be to build a school to serve all the districts rather than a school in each one.

The roll out of the DDWG process will continue in the Kandahar region where there are 17 districts and move on to Badakhshan.

NABDP is supported by Belgium, Canada, Italy, Japan, EC, USAID and UNHCR

## Long term commitment to support of Afghan Assembly sealed in Brussels

Well functioning legislatures are always regarded as one of the key indicators of democracy. And already Afghanistan's legislature, up and running for the first time in almost three decades, has signed off on its first major act by voting on the composition of the new Cabinet of Ministers proposed by President Hamid Karzai.

So can or should the international community start to ponder as to whether it is time to pack up and leave Afghanistan since a legislature is already in place alongside an Independent Election Commission to organize the elections for the next one?

"No" is the very loud and clear answer from Fawzia Koofi, the Deputy Speaker of the powerful Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) of the Afghan National Assembly.

"If the international community says after elections 'you have a parliament now' and

then leaves, then we will return to instability. Our democracy is a baby. To keep it alive, we as parliamentarians need to pamper it and help it grow. If democracy dies, things will be even worse for women [in Afghanistan] than they were before," she stresses in a statement prepared for delivery at the Brussels gathering of representatives of more than 100 donor organizations and legislators from around the world.

The meeting was organized jointly by the UNDP and the Belgian Ministry of Development Cooperation and the Chamber of Representatives of Belgium, in association with the International Parliamentary Union to focus on UNDP guidelines designed to boost the vital role of parliamentarians in building peace and preventing crises in fragile states around the world

Ms. Koofi says in her statement that although the establishment of the Afghan Assembly had brought under one roof factions fighting among themselves for decades, she said there was still much to do before feeling the comfort of an accomplished mission.

Thusitha Pilapitiya, the Project Manager of SEAL (Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature), UNDP's mainstream assistance scheme in support of the Afghan National Assembly, underlines that the emergence of a parliament is just the first step in empowering a legislative organ to carry out its functions. She says in order to become a full fledged representative of the population, any parliament must have communication links with all sections of society, from NGOs to academia, from marginalized groups to the movers and shakers of public opinion. Only then can the legislature establish lines of interaction with the population in order to ensure that the voice of the people can be heard, not only through the ballot box, but through their communications with their representatives in the legislature.

Ms. Pilapitiya stresses that such an approach necessitates a strategic commitment to the issue of assistance to parliaments in post-conflict countries and short-lived projects, regardless of the good intentions nurtured, could leave much to be desired.

## A donation from the heart immortalizes young Japanese woman

The dedication of a young Japanese woman to the cause of advancement and her parents' devotion to their daughter's commitment wrote a small but very memorable legend in a far away land, in Afghanistan and this legend is now inscribed on a wall.



The plaque, immortalizing the name of Eriko Ohara, the young Japanese expert who passed away during her assignment in Afghanistan, was unveiled on Sunday, April 23 2006 at a modest ceremony at the Engineering Faculty of Kabul University.

It was this very institution that Eriko was trying to help develop when she was working for the System Science Consultants (SSC) Inc. with Japanese government funding.

Her untimely passing from this world came a few months after she was diagnosed with an incurable disease during a visit to her native country in December 2003. Despite an emergency operation and all the efforts aimed at treatment, she passed away in April 2004.

Her parents, to make sure that Eriko's commitment to development in Afghanistan is not forgotten, then decided to contribute US \$8000 for the renovation of the library of the Engineering Faculty of Kabul University. Frederick Lyons, the Director of the UNDP

Country Office in Afghanistan suggested placing a memorial plaque at the university to remember Eriko, an idea accepted gratefully by her parents.

Dr. Ata Mohammad Nazar, the Dean of the Engineering Faculty, said at the ceremony that the plaque would keep Eriko's memory fresh in the minds of all people, students and staff alike.

Motohiko Kato, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Japanese Embassy, said of the donation: "It is not a big sum of money, but it comes from the great friendship and love of the family of a young Japanese lady. I see many young people here today. I must say that the future of this country is on your shoulders.... I would like you all to take on the responsibility of reconstructing your own country. And remember Ms Eriko, her strong dedication to her work and to the development of various countries."

Masami Suda, General Manager of the Equipment Department with System Science Consultants (SSC) Inc., the company Eriko worked for, told the sad story of how he unknowingly said his final goodbye to Eriko at the airport in Tokyo, never to see her again.

He then read out the message from Eriko's parents, who were preparing to mark the second anniversary of the loss of their daughter on April 27: "We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the

people concerned for giving her a great opportunity to be engaged in the project of Kabul University and for the holding of today's ceremony.

We are very proud of our daughter, Eriko and are pleased to make a report on today's ceremonial event to her on the 27th day of April. Lastly we hope and believe the project will be of great help to the friendship between the people of Afghanistan and Japan."

One hopes that in a country of frequent rocket attacks and suicide bombings, Eriko's commitment to help others and her parents' heart warming gesture will remain one of the brightest stars illuminating the road to peace and harmony.



The plaque being unveiled by Dr. Nazar and Mr. Kato

## Afghan law students put up a robust defence

International law is difficult enough at the best of times, but for a group of Afghan students to take on the world in a major competition, without all the resources of their competitors, is a remarkable achievement.

Four Afghan law students battled out complex legal arguments in a mock international court in Washington at the prestigious annual Philip C. Jessup International Law Competition which is in its 49th year.

It's the third time that Afghanistan has participated since 2004 and this year some 100 teams took part in the competition with Afghanistan coming in 80th.

The training programme for the six students (two didn't get their visas) in Afghanistan and the trip to the USA were funded by the UNDP's Justice Project.

The students had to prepare written legal submissions and oral arguments before a mock International Court of Justice.

They had to debate and argue focusing on legal issues surrounding the human rights of indigenous peoples, UN membership and problems when international states break up.

One of the law students Mohammad Asif Ehsan, who didn't get a visa for the USA, but participated in the preparation said: "Afghanistan still doesn't have proper lawyers to represent the country at the International Court of Justice. We can be the next lawyers to defend Afghanistan."

The students who participated are aged 22-25, studying in their fourth year at Kabul University's Law Faculty and will graduate this year.

Programme Officer with Human Rights and Justice at UNDP Tina Gewis, together with Toby Bonini Project Officer in the Justice Project, coached the students before the competition and accompanied them to the USA.

She said that their efforts were a great step forward considering the lack of research and library facilities on legal issues in Afghanistan that the students faced

whilst preparing for the competition.

The other obstacle for the students, according to Ms Gewis, was that they were up against English native speakers or people from mostly English education systems and as a result "their achievement was all the more remarkable" she said.



Left to right – Sanga Seddiqi, Abdul Hai Rauf, Mohammad Asif Ehsan, Ghizaal Haress, Shoaib Timory and Elhamuddin Mastan

## Successful international conference dwells on Legislative-Executive relations

"I wish you had attended the House proceedings that actively," said Prof. Sebgatullah Mujadedi to a loud burst of laughter from his audience, the membership of the Meshrano Jirga, the upper house of the Afghan National Assembly. Prof. Mujadedi, the Speaker of the Meshrano Jirga was referring to the enthusiastic participation of the Meshrano Jirga members in the three days of intense discussions around the "International Conference on Effective Legislative-Executive Relations", organized by the Afghan Assembly and UNDP's SEAL (Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature) project.

The April 15-17 Conference was inaugurated by Ameerah Haq, the UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan, who said Afghanistan was one of the countries where there has been a significant increase in the number of requests for international assistance to strengthen parliaments. She said UNDP's SEAL project was designed to address that expressed need, "making legislative assistance a core component of its governance interventions. The UNDP SEAL Project is an example of such coordinated UN response to the request for assistance from the Government of Afghanistan."

Throughout the three days of intense discussions, both in plenary sessions and in working groups, the members of the Meshrano Jirga took up an array of issues concerning their responsibilities for the oversight over the executive

branch of the state, as well as for drafting legislation that should function as a set of guidelines for the government to implement its policies.

Martin Chungong, the Director of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Division for the Promotion of Democracy, said he was very impressed with the way the members approached the proceedings during the conference. "There is intense willingness to learn, in particular on ways of curbing corruption" he said. "They are very inexperienced and a little bit confused over their role as upper house members. Yet, as far as I can see, this has the makings of an effective legislative organ" he added.

Friedhelm Maier, the Director General and Head of the Parliamentary Services echoed this excitement: "They are having very enthusiastic discussions about their roles as legislators" he said.

The conference not only provided a platform for the Meshrano Jirga members to share experiences with their peers representing legislatures from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Canada, but also allowed them to be introduced to such new concepts as "e-governance" and "development finance".

The forum was much appreciated by the intended beneficiaries. Qazi Mohammad Kabir Marzban, a member of the Mesh-

rano Jirga who also sits on the Telecommunication and Transportation Committee, complimented the guest participants from other legislatures: "They helped us in the fields of law making, budget and internet. We have received a lot of information on how Afghanistan

can be part of the international community just like other countries."

Pointing to the need for further capacity development, he said: "Since Afghanistan did not have a parliament due to three decades of war in this country, there is a need for conferences like this.



*Plenary session discussions focused on new concepts*

Since my election to the Meshrano Jirga, I have attended three conferences and now we are able to get a grip of governance affairs."

Faroq Wardak, Afghanistan's Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, effectively the conduit between the legislature and the executive, told the closing session of the conference that the government was eager to cooperate with the legislature to ensure a smooth process of governance. He stressed that the government believed that the separation of powers had to be adhered to and further consolidated.

Rounding up the results of the conference, Monjurul Kabiri, the technical advisor to the SEAL project, said the discussions had been very fruitful and that they had brought to the surface issues that needed to be addressed in the near future. He listed these issues as the improvement of the election system, a reconsideration of the issue of a party political system, improved legal-advisory services for National Assembly members and a more systematic struggle against corruption.

The SEAL project is to continue its efforts to support the Afghan national legislature to tackle these and other vital issues.



## Farewell to the Afghan Parliament!

By A.H. Monjurul Kabir

*A.H. Monjurul Kabir was  
Chief Legislative  
Adviser for the Afghan  
National Assembly*

It was a bright and sunny day when I landed in Kabul on June 22 2005 with an assignment to establish the legal regime for the Afghan Parliament that did not even exist. I was also the only adviser at that time for the newly launched UNDP initiative - Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature (SEAL). The SEAL Project is like any other traditional UNDP parliamentary support programme with a unique exception: it was mandated to establish a brand new parliament for Afghanistan. However, even with this exciting challenge, I must admit that I was quite depressed on the day I arrived, as I was whisked away from Kabul airport by UNDP's ever-smiling face at the airport Mr. Marouf, to my first guest house.

### Legislative Development

Initially I started working with the Legislative Drafting/Parliamentary Affairs Department. I still remember my first meeting in June 2005 with a very young legislative team led by its General Director Mr. Gran. However, as the interim Project Manager, I quickly expanded my horizon of interventions across the board at the secretariat.

One of the most daunting tasks I had to immediately accomplish upon my arrival was the finalisation of the draft **Rules of Procedure** for the Afghan National Assembly. It was quite a memorable experience. I sat inside the secretariat for weeks with the key parliamentary staff and facilitated the finalisation process, incorporating the conflicting good practices suggested by parliamentary experts based on different parliamentary models (British, American, French, hybrid system etc.) and trying to find an Afghan solution. One rewarding experience was my ability to influence the change in the composition of the parliamentary commission on Gender, Civil Society and Human Rights. Initially it was proposed

to be formed only with female members as it involves Gender! It is heartening to note that the Rules of Procedure has been approved by both the houses with modifications.

Supporting the parliament's administration in drafting its **Staff Regulations** was another interesting phase, which exposed me to the fledgling Afghan civil service and its specialized segment of the parliamentary staff. Now it is up to the political leadership to shape the administration in the best interests of an efficient and effective parliamentary civil service. However, it is important to maintain the continuity of staff service.

Afghanistan without security is unfortunately still a problem. I ended up supporting the process of drafting the **Security Regulations**, which is a work in progress subject to the confirmation of the political leadership. Perhaps my previous background in security sector reform honed my own understanding of security and its inter-relation with a parliamentary legal regime.

The issue of Members' **Privileges and Immunities** is also an important one. I had the opportunity to transmit a briefing document to the leadership of the Parliamentary Commission on Privileges & Immunities of both the houses. Last year, I suggested **Members' Benefits and Entitlements** to the Government of Afghanistan looking at the practices and examples of developing countries, mostly in South Asia. The financial package that has been offered here to the Honourable members is quite reasonable.

### Knowledge Management & Codification

The culture of knowledge management and codification at the workplace is somewhat missing here. However, the three day National Seminar for the 350

plus parliamentary staff from October 23-25 2005 particularly focused on this aspect. In the smaller groups, the staffers presented their experiences and lessons learnt based on their study tours and attachments with the parliaments of India, Italy, Sri Lanka, France, Denmark, Morocco, Turkey and Indonesia. They summarized and submitted their experiences, pointed out good practices and focused on applicable lessons learnt. In effect, it was also an excellent way of allowing staff who had not attended the study tours to learn from their colleagues. This is especially important in a society where the tradition is essentially oral and not necessarily written. The seminar was a major step towards the organizational development of the secretariat with the aim of building the capacity of the staffers to support the elected members of the National Assembly better.

### Capacity Building

My work on capacity building was started with an in-house capacity building programme on legislative drafting, legal research, constitutional affairs, including issues on rules of procedures and legal awareness for the staffers. During December 2005, prior to the historic inauguration, we had to be intensely involved with organizational development, inauguration rehearsal, an orientation programme, etc. Working with partners like SUNY/USAID on the orientation programme (December 10-17 2005) for the newly elected members of parliament was a great experience.

### Legislative-Executive Relations

Despite the need for strong legislatures, many legislatures across the world are overwhelmingly dominated by the executive branch. This problem is especially prevalent in emerging democracies like Afghanistan. To address this concern



*Speaker of the Meshrano Jirga  
Sibghatullah Mojadidi, Monjurul and  
Ameerah Haq, Deputy SRSG and UN  
Resident Co-ordinator*

## Farewell to the Afghan Assembly

and facilitate a smoother relationship of mutual cooperation between the two branches, my colleague Tariq and I recently coordinated the international



Monjurul speaks at the Meshrano Jirga conference

conference on Effective Legislative-Executive Relations (April 15-17). My colleagues at the SEAL Project and I were deeply impressed with the keen interests of the Afghan Senators and the members of the executive on the substantive process of learning.

### The great SEAL team

From the security guards, cleaners to the administrative staff, national officers, technical advisers and the project manager (Thusitha), SEAL is a wonderful team of committed individuals. My days in Afghanistan have been truly remarkable because of their presence and warmth. I have also gained the friendship of many. In the Country Office, Hiroko and Mashud were always ready to help. I do think that the team work was the motivating factor for the success of SEAL.

### Towards a Code of Conduct

Last but not the least, a code of conduct for both the staffers and the parliamentarians is critical to ensure work ethics and professional integrity, which will in turn build public confidence in the newest organ of the state - the National Assembly of Afghanistan. The first challenge I encountered during the National Seminar last October was when some staffers asked why the Afghan Assembly needed a code of conduct as they have Holy Scriptures like the Quran. As a Muslim it was easier for me to convince them that a code of conduct is

not a way of life, but rather a way of determining the propriety of behaviour at the workplace based on an organizational culture and mandate. I'm now working with a small group of talented officials to pursue this further.

It will take some time to formulate and most importantly, implement an acceptable code of conduct for the staffers and the members of both the houses. It is much easier to change the status of the infrastructure of a parliament, but far more difficult to influence a culture. Democracy is, indeed, a culture, a value.

### Democracy is a journey...

And the good thing is that the journey for change has begun. The ongoing parliamentary process of the confirmation of new cabinet ministers testifies to it very well. This is why I'm leaving Afghanistan with a ray of optimism. It was a great privilege to be a part of this historic pilgrimage for democracy.

Good bye Afghanistan, good bye the Afghan National Assembly. See you in....?

## Reza signs his world famous photographs to UNDP Afghanistan



Renowned Iranian born photographer Reza, who's photographed for major news magazines such as National Geographic, Time and Newsweek, as well as being a UN consultant from time to time, has signed 21 photographs which will hang on the walls of the UNDP Country Office. Reza who founded the media development NGO Aina ([www.ainaworld.org](http://www.ainaworld.org)), was in Kabul last week as Aina was the events manager for the UNDP/Ministry of Communications ICT Conference.



## CISCO Academies lay the groundwork for IT boost

UNDP's policy of cooperating with the private sector in development projects is creating a lot of synergy in many areas throughout the world. The Least Development Countries (LDC) initiative, undertaken by the UNDP and CISCO, the global hardware and software company, alongside USAID, and two more UN agencies, UNV (UN Volunteers) and the ITU (International Telecommunication Union), stands out among many others as one that contributes not only to capacity development, but also prepares the groundwork for future strides in the employment of ICT in de-

velopment work. country, almost 30% are women. "This is a remarkable achievement and we are honoured to assist women in developing the skills to earn a livelihood in Afghanistan. We trust that our continued joint efforts with UNDP will continue to equip students with the skills necessary to strengthen the IT sector in Afghanistan," says Rebecca Bender of CISCO, Manager, Strategic Partnerships.

With the official inauguration over the last three months of three new CISCO academies in Balkh, Herat and Khost, there are now six training centres throughout Afghanistan providing IT training based-on CCNA (CISCO Certified Networking Academy) curriculum.

So far 318 students have graduated from the four academies in government ministries (Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Telecommunications) and in Kabul University.

"The success of the academies in Afghanistan would not have been possible without the support and assistance of UNDP Afghanistan and CISCO is very grateful for their partnership," says Ms. Bender.

According to Hassan Adelyar and Hadi Hedayati, instructors at the CISCO Academy at Kabul University, the CCNA curriculum is designed to empower the students to acquire skills on routing protocols, switch configuration, local area networks and at the advanced stage, network administration.

Mr. Adelyar says Kabul University Regional Academy is linked to the Lebanese American University CATC (Cisco Academy Training Center) in Beirut and they hope that one day Kabul may become a regional centre, itself. Both instructors hope to see one day the realization of development of IT skills in Afghanistan at such a level that an Afghan "IT workforce" could be exported to regional countries and beyond.

### Oregon University donates books

Meanwhile, the IT thrust at Kabul University received a welcome boost through the donation of books on the subject matter by a faraway supporter.

Kabul University's Department of Computer Science renovated an Information Technology library for computer science students in 2005, but the department had few printed materials to make available for students and the faculty. In March 2006, the Network Start-up Resource Centre (NSRC) at the University of Oregon donated two shipments of technical reference books for Afghan universities, beginning with Kabul University's Department of Computer Science. Steve Huter from NSRC said: "We hope that this contribution of books will be useful for everyone at Afghan universities and libraries where they will be distributed." The donated books cover such topics as wireless technology, network security, Unix/Linux system, administration, VoIP, C++, IPv6, database design, Perl and a number of open source related books, DNS and BIND, BGP and routing, network architecture and design, and other ISP essentials. At the request of NSRC, the IT books and donated resource materials are being placed in the IT Library where they can be shared most effectively by students, professors, researchers, engineers, and technical experts.

"As part of NSRC's work for international Internet development, we try to arrange donations of technical reference books about computing and computer networking from a variety of publishers," Steve Huter explained. "Our primary work is providing technical assistance to network operators building research and education networks, and those that develop national infrastructure. We've found over the years that by making the technical reference books available in local libraries, it helps spread the knowledge more quickly and efficiently."



*Professor Tariq Meeran with books from Oregon University at the Information and Technology library at Kabul University's Department of Computer Science*

velopment work.

Thanks to this bold initiative, 49 LCDs, Afghanistan being one of them, have been provided with the opportunity of establishing "CISCO Academies" to train IT masters of the future. Under implementation in Afghanistan since 2002, the CISCO Academy project now has six training centres throughout the country, helping the creation of a new workforce required for the much hoped-for leap in development efforts involving information technology.

One particular aspect of the CISCO Academy training programmes that needs to be specifically mentioned is the emphasis on gender balancing. Of the currently enrolled 490 students of CISCO academies around the



UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

## An Image of Afghanistan

Photo: archive



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### Calendar of events for May 2006

**May 1, May 10 and May 20** DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) launch in Kapisa, Takhar and Herat respectively

**May 3-6** NPAD (National Programme for Action on Disability) Presentation of education assessment (workshop)

**May 6** NPAD Civil society task force meeting for education and disability

**May 9-12** The Afghanistan International Investment Conference & Exhibition in Kabul, focusing on three sectors agro-businesses, energy-mining and infrastructure/construction

**May 10-12** Training for staff from 9 Departments of Women's Affairs on Gender Awareness,

**May 13** Evaluation of Institutional Capacity Building

**May 13-20** Training of Trainers for National Solidarity Programme staff in Mazar-e-Sharif

**May 15** NPAD delegation to India for training

**May 15** NPAD Job placement officer workshop

**May 16** Human Development Lecture at Kabul University (to be confirmed)

**May 18-30** UN Mission for Human Security Trust Fund visiting Afghanistan

**May 22** NPAD BPDS (Basic Package of Disability Services) workshop

**May 25** ANBP (Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme) Donor Conference

ANBP meetings with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women's Affairs aimed at creating synergy (date to be confirmed)

Training of Trainers on Gender Planning for MoWA trainers (second half of the month, date to be confirmed)