

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate

## **DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS**

### **1. Tourism on the Rise in Herat: A 25% Increase in Foreign Visitors ([Tolo News, April 16](#))**

Amidst ongoing challenges in Afghanistan, Herat is emerging as a hopeful symbol of cultural resilience and economic potential. The province has seen a 25% increase in foreign tourists compared to last year, according to the Department of Information and Culture. Officials attribute this growth to improved tourism infrastructure, including international-standard hotels, enhanced security, and better guidance services at historical sites. Efforts to preserve cultural landmarks and create visitor-friendly experiences have begun to pay off — from upgraded accommodation to accessible tourist information. Tourists and hospitality managers alike note that while Herat has come a long way, further investment in transport, signage, and preservation of historic sites is vital to sustaining momentum. With its rich cultural heritage and architectural marvels, Herat holds significant potential to become a key destination in regional tourism.

### **2. Nationwide Polio Vaccination Campaign Launched ([Khaama Press, April 21](#))**

Afghanistan has launched a nationwide polio vaccination campaign aimed at vaccinating over 11 million children under the age of five. The campaign, which started on April 21, is set to run across all provinces of the country, with a target of vaccinating approximately 11.6 million children. Dr Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, confirmed that health teams will be going door-to-door to ensure every child receives the vaccine. He emphasised the importance of family cooperation, urging all parents to prepare their children for vaccination to ensure the success of the campaign. Polio remains a major health challenge in Afghanistan, one of only two countries where polio cases are still reported. Despite extensive efforts to eradicate the disease, factors such as insecurity, inaccessibility to remote areas, and resistance from some communities have hindered the progress towards a polio-free Afghanistan. The Ministry of Public Health, alongside international health organisations, continues its push for the complete eradication of polio in the country. The vaccination drive is a key part of these efforts, with the hope that these initiatives will help safeguard the future health of Afghanistan's children.

### **3. Earth Day Highlights Afghanistan's Growing Environmental Crisis** **([Hasht-e Subh Daily, April 23](#); [Khaama Press, April 23](#))**

On April 22, as the world marked Earth Day with renewed pledges for climate action, international organisations raised urgent alarms about Afghanistan's escalating environmental crisis. Facing the triple planetary threat of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, the country stands at a tipping point—one that not only threatens its natural ecosystems but also its fragile economy and social stability. In recent years, recurring droughts, severe floods, and desertification have devastated large parts of Afghanistan's western, central, and northern regions. The situation continues to worsen due to outdated infrastructure, unregulated groundwater extraction, and a dangerously overstretched agricultural economy. Environmental experts warn that economic losses now run into millions annually, with long-term consequences for food security and rural livelihoods.

Water resources expert Najibullah Sadid pointed to severe vulnerabilities in Afghanistan's hydrological systems, which have failed to keep pace with population growth and climate change. Floods alone cost the country around \$550 million each year, a figure that could spike to \$3 billion in years of extreme drought. International bodies echoed these concerns. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) called attention to the worsening "triple crisis," urging global solidarity to restore the planet's health. The European Union Delegation in Kabul underscored climate change's impact on food security and rural economies and reaffirmed its support for climate-resilient development in the region. Adding to the gravity, the World Bank ranked Afghanistan among the top five countries most vulnerable to climate change. With a 1.8°C temperature rise over the past 60 years, the nation is warming faster than the global average, leading to increased glacier loss, unpredictable rainfall, and a sharp decline in water availability. Simultaneously, over 50% of Afghanistan's forest cover has been lost in the past four decades, further accelerating ecological degradation.

### **4. Leadership Reshuffle in Key Government Posts** ([Kabul Times, April 27](#))

The Deputy Spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, Mullah Hamdullah Fitrat, announced that a series of new appointments have been made across various government departments. Notable changes include:

- Sher Mohammad Sharif, former General Director of Border Police, appointed as Governor of Zabul
- Hezollah Afghan, former Governor of Zabul, now General Director of Border Police
- Jan Mohammad Hamza, former Police Chief of Takhar, becomes Director of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock for Kabul
- Saifullah, former Intelligence Chief of Sar-e-Pul, appointed Commissioner of Hairatan Port
- Obaidullah, previously Director of Agriculture in Kabul, is now Director of the Office for Vice and Virtue in Balkh
- Hussainullah Zahid, former Commissioner of Hairatan Port, appointed District Governor of Aqcha, Jawzjan

#### **5. Taliban Bars Women from 2025 University Entrance Exam as Degrees Are Handed to Clerics ([Hasht-e Subh Daily, April 28](#))**

The Taliban have announced the 1404 Hijri Kankor University entrance exam will begin on May 27 and run until July 10, 2025, in five stages across Afghanistan. However, only male students will be allowed to participate—a continuation of the group's ongoing ban on women and girls from secondary and higher education. At the same time, the Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education has been awarding academic degrees to thousands of its affiliated clerics. In just the past month, over 2,000 men in Herat and Farah provinces have received certificates equivalent to bachelor's and master's degrees, many of them educated in religious seminaries in Pakistan. This dual-track policy—denying women access to education while legitimising religious credentials for Taliban members—has sparked widespread public concern. Critics argue it undermines both the credibility of Afghanistan's education system and the country's future. The World Bank and UNICEF warn that the ongoing ban on girls' education could cost the Afghan economy over \$7.2 billion by 2030, with over 4 million girls left behind and up to 15,000 women removed from the professional workforce, worsening poverty and dependency on aid.

#### **6. Acting Minister Stresses National Unity, Rejects Foreign Influence on 8<sup>th</sup> of Saur Anniversary ([Kabul Times, April 29](#))**



Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the 8<sup>th</sup> of Saur, Acting Minister of Information and Culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa reaffirmed the Islamic Emirate's rejection of foreign ideologies and called for unity across ethnic, linguistic, and regional lines. Khairkhwa underscored the enduring sacrifices of the Afghan people and stated that the Emirate remains committed to national service and preserving the country's religious and cultural values. Marking the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Mujahidin's victory over the Soviet-backed regime in 1992, Khairkhwa said: "We no longer have an enemy among the people, because they seek a government that will safeguard their religion and honour. All Afghans have made sacrifices—it is not unreasonable that all should have a role in governance and be recognised accordingly." He also warned of attempts by "malicious groups" to manipulate Afghan youth through the media, urging vigilance and collective responsibility to protect national identity. The 8<sup>th</sup> of Saur remains a significant date in Afghan history, symbolising the fall of communism and the continued resilience of the Afghan people in defending their sovereignty.

## **7. Key Power Projects Revived to Boost Energy Access and Industry** **(Tolo News, April 30)**

The Islamic Emirate has resumed major electricity development projects in Kandahar, Zabul, and Helmand provinces, aiming to enhance power supply for both households and the industrial sector. Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Economic Deputy of the Prime Minister, reaffirmed the government's commitment to infrastructure development, stating these projects are a cornerstone of efforts to provide essential services and promote economic growth. A central feature of the initiative is the construction of a 117-kilovolt transmission line from the Kajaki Dam to Kandahar city, alongside four substations. Officials said the long-delayed projects—initially planned under the former Republic—will now be completed within a year at a significantly reduced cost. Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum Hedayatullah Badri highlighted that domestic energy production, including water, coal, and gas resources, is crucial to meeting national needs. Similarly, Acting Minister of Communications Najibullah Haqqani described electricity as the "soul" of the economy, calling the Kajaki-to-Kandahar project a vital step forward. The Breshna Company and partner firms have fast-tracked procurement and administrative procedures under the supervision of the Economic Deputy. Officials say these energy projects will not only address chronic power shortages but also help create jobs and advance Afghanistan's path toward energy self-sufficiency.

## **8. Afghanistan Accuses UN of Delivering Expired and Substandard Aid, Calls for Transparency ([Khaama Press, April 30](#))**

Afghanistan's acting Minister of Public Health, Noorjalal Jalali, has accused the United Nations agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), of delivering expired and substandard humanitarian aid. In a press conference on April 30, Jalali highlighted significant issues with the aid provided to Afghanistan, including 6,750 metric tons of low-quality "Super Cereal" and 55 tons of expired "premix" food supplements imported by the WFP. He also criticised the UNDP for supplying 650 tuberculosis diagnostic kits that were either expired or mismatched with their documentation. Jalali described these actions as a "clear waste of aid" and called for more transparent and accountable management of humanitarian assistance. He urged the United Nations to align its aid efforts more closely with the actual needs of the Afghan population, ensuring that resources reach those in need effectively.

The allegations come amidst ongoing concerns over the state of humanitarian aid operations in Afghanistan, which have been plagued by corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiencies. Reports from the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre have revealed that aid distribution is often perceived as deeply flawed, with issues like favouritism, aid diversion, and inflated costs being commonly reported by local communities. The lack of proper oversight and coordination has exacerbated these problems, undermining the impact of international assistance. Additionally, investigations by organisations such as SIGAR and Transparency International have uncovered troubling instances of Taliban involvement in aid networks, with militants exploiting weaknesses in vetting procedures to benefit from aid resources meant for vulnerable communities. The high operational costs associated with delivering aid in Afghanistan have also been a point of contention, with experts criticising the large administrative expenses that reduce the amount of aid reaching those in need. UN agencies have yet to officially respond to these allegations.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. Alarm Grows Over Execution of Afghan Nationals Abroad (Tolo News, April 16)**

Human rights organisations are raising the alarm following the execution of three Afghan nationals in Iran and Saudi Arabia—part of a disturbing trend that shows no signs of slowing. According to the Iran Human Rights Organisation, two Afghan prisoners were executed in Iran for drug-related offences, while reports from Gulf media confirmed that a third individual, Badshah Qul Sulaimani, was executed in Saudi Arabia after allegedly being caught smuggling narcotics internally. This brings the number of Afghans executed in Iran in 2024 to at least 80, with growing concern from rights groups and political analysts about due process, transparency, and international legal obligations. Analysts are calling on the Taliban government to urgently engage in diplomatic talks for the repatriation of Afghan prisoners and to ensure that Afghan nationals abroad receive fair treatment and legal support. “Countries that claim to have friendly relations with Afghanistan must hand over Afghan prisoners rather than carry out executions,” said political analyst Sayed Ebdullah Sadiq. Others have cited bilateral agreements between Iran and Afghanistan, allegedly violated by these executions, which require that Afghan prisoners be returned to Afghanistan in a systematic and legal manner. As executions continue, international legal experts and civil society groups stress the need for greater accountability and diplomatic pressure, especially as refugee populations face growing risks in host countries.

### **2. Developments with Russia**

#### **a. Russia Lifts Ban on Taliban (Associated Press, April 17)**

In a significant policy shift, Russia’s Supreme Court on April 17 lifted a decades-old ban on Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban, removing the group from its official list of terrorist organisations. The decision, based on a request from the Prosecutor General’s Office, marks a formal change in Moscow’s legal stance toward the Taliban, who seized power in Kabul in August 2021 following the withdrawal of US and NATO forces. The Taliban had been designated a terrorist organisation by Russia since 2003, making any contact with its members a criminal offence. While symbolic, the removal of this designation offers the Taliban a diplomatic victory and

opens the door for more official engagement between the two sides. Though still unrecognised as the official government of Afghanistan, Taliban representatives have attended various forums hosted by Russia in recent years, with Moscow increasingly positioning itself as a key regional power broker. The decision comes amid growing calls from Russian officials to engage with the Taliban for the sake of regional stability. It also reflects a broader trend in Russia's foreign policy toward pragmatic engagement, especially with neighbouring countries affected by insecurity and extremism.

**b. Afghanistan to Appoint Ambassador to Russia Amid Strengthening Diplomatic Ties (The Kabul Times, April 24)**

Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has announced plans to introduce an ambassador-level diplomat to Moscow, signalling a significant step towards enhancing diplomatic relations with Russia. The announcement came during a recent meeting between Muttaqi and Zamir Kabulov, the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Afghanistan. During their discussion, the two officials focused on strengthening bilateral ties, expanding economic and trade relations, and addressing regional issues. The meeting also highlighted the progress made by Russia in removing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from its list of banned groups, a move that Muttaqi publicly appreciated. Kabulov emphasised that expanding relations with Afghanistan is crucial for Russia and announced that a special meeting would be held next May on the sidelines of the Kazan Forum to launch the Afghanistan-Russia bilateral permanent commission. This development is seen as a crucial step for Afghanistan in navigating its international relationships and expanding its diplomatic footprint, especially as the country seeks to overcome isolation and build stronger ties with key global players.

### **3. Developments with Pakistan**

**a. Talks Mark Possible Shift in TTP Policy (The Tribune Pakistan, April 17)**

Pakistan has expressed cautious optimism following renewed talks with the Afghan Taliban over the threat posed by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) met in Kabul for the first time in 15 months, amid strained ties and rising cross-border tensions. The Pakistani delegation, led by Special Envoy Muhammad Sadiq Khan, was briefed on the Taliban's "practical steps" to address



concerns about terrorist sanctuaries. While details remain undisclosed, officials noted a more serious and constructive approach from the Afghan side—a shift reportedly driven by internal economic pressures, suspended foreign aid, and sustained diplomatic pressure from Islamabad. Ambassador Sadiq described the talks as “vital”, emphasising the importance of regular engagement to reduce tensions and foster mutual understanding. In a parallel development, a 16-member Afghan trade delegation arrived in Islamabad, led by Commerce Minister Nooruddin Azizi. Their visit aims to resolve obstacles in bilateral trade, including renewing the Pak-Afghan Transit Trade Agreement. Talks on the ongoing Afghan refugee situation are also expected.

**b. High-Level Diplomatic Meeting in Kabul (Tolo News, April 19)**

On April 19, a high-level Pakistani delegation led by Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, arrived in Kabul for key talks with Afghan leadership. The delegation met separately with the Prime Minister and the Acting Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate to discuss enhancing security, political, and economic cooperation. Both sides agreed on the importance of continued high-level exchanges to strengthen bilateral relations. However, concerns were raised by Afghan officials over the treatment of Afghan migrants in Pakistan. The Islamic Emirate’s Prime Minister expressed gratitude to Pakistan for hosting Afghan nationals but condemned recent actions against migrants. Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi urged Islamabad to uphold the rights of Afghan migrants and returnees. In response, Ishaq Dar assured that Afghan nationals would not be mistreated and pledged that Pakistan would prevent any arbitrary seizures of migrant property. He also announced the reduction of customs duties on key trade items to encourage bilateral trade. Dar extended a formal invitation to Amir Khan Muttaqi to visit Pakistan, a gesture welcomed by Afghan officials. The Islamic Emirate reiterated the need for tangible progress on previously agreed commitments.

**c. Mass Deportations Leave Afghan Families Stranded (Tolo News, April 27)**

In the past month, nearly 70,000 individuals have been deported from Pakistan via the Torkham border crossing, according to local officials in Nangarhar province. Notably, some of them possessed valid legal documents but were still forced to leave. Bakht Jamal Gowhar, head of migrant transfers at Torkham, confirmed that both documented and undocumented returnees have arrived. Those with documents were referred to the UNHCR, while undocumented

individuals were directed to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The Islamic Emirate has stepped in to offer transportation and basic support. Many deportees report harsh treatment by Pakistani authorities, with some alleging police raids at night, confiscation of personal belongings, and loss of livestock and harvests. The deportations come amid heightened pressure from Pakistan's government, which recently ordered all Afghan migrants holding temporary residence cards to leave by the end of June. As families resettle under challenging conditions, the humanitarian needs at the border continue to grow.

**d. 54 Militants Killed in Cross-Border Infiltration Attempt, Says Pakistan Military (France24, April 27)**

Pakistan's military announced that 54 militants were killed overnight on 27 April while attempting to cross into the country from Afghanistan, in what is being described as one of the deadliest such incidents in recent years. According to a military statement, intelligence reports identified the militants of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The infiltration was intercepted near North Waziristan, a former TTP stronghold in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province along the Afghan border. The military suggested that the insurgents had been sent by "foreign masters" to carry out high-profile attacks within Pakistan, though it did not name any specific external actor. The statement noted that the infiltration attempt came amid heightened regional tensions, "at a time when India is levelling baseless accusations against Pakistan" following a recent deadly assault on tourists in Pahalgam.

**4. Bilateral Cooperation with Turkey (Tolo News, April 18)**

Mohammad Zubair Wadan, the acting ambassador of the Islamic Emirate in Turkey, recently met with Nuh Yilmaz, Turkey's deputy foreign minister, to strengthen diplomatic ties and enhance bilateral cooperation. Key points of discussion included the facilitation of Afghan prisoner transfers, visa issuance for Afghan nationals, and the potential formation of a joint Afghanistan-Turkey commission focused on trade, transit, and cultural collaboration. According to Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, relations between Kabul and Ankara are steadily improving, with progress underway regarding embassy-related matters. Political analysts emphasise Turkey's strategic importance, not only as a prominent Islamic nation but also due to its connections with Europe and NATO. This positioning allows Turkey to serve as a potential bridge between Afghanistan and the European Union.

## 5. Strengthening Bilateral Ties with China ([Khaama Press, April 22](#))

In a recent high-level meeting, Afghanistan and China reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations, focusing on key areas such as politics, economy, and culture. The discussions emphasised the importance of maintaining constructive and positive engagement between the neighbouring countries. Mohammad Naeem, Deputy Minister for Finance and Administration at the Taliban's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commended China's ongoing humanitarian support, particularly its aid to Afghan refugees. Naeem also welcomed China's invitations to Afghan delegations to participate in upcoming Shanghai forums, viewing these invitations as a diplomatic gesture to enhance relations. Chinese Ambassador Zhao Xing highlighted the strategic importance of Afghanistan to China, noting the shared regional interests between the two countries. He reiterated Beijing's readiness to expand joint initiatives, underlining the significance of a strong partnership with Afghanistan. Zhao Xing stated, "As a neighbouring country, China places special importance on expanding and strengthening its relations with Afghanistan." Although Afghanistan has been an observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) since 2012, its participation has been limited since the country's membership became inactive in 2021. The upcoming 25th SCO Summit, set to take place in China later this year, may provide an opportunity for Afghanistan to actively engage with the organisation once again.

## 6. Afghanistan's Economic Growth: A Mixed Outlook Amid Challenges ([Tolo News, April 24](#); [Khaama Press, April 24](#))

The World Bank has reported that Afghanistan's economy grew by 2.5% in the fiscal year 2024-2025, a figure that lags behind the country's population growth rate. While this represents some positive movement, experts are concerned that the pace is not enough to keep up with the growing demands of the population. The Ministry of Economy attributes the growth to efforts focused on increasing domestic production, job creation, and supporting the private sector while maintaining monetary stability. Spokesperson Abdul Rahman Habib emphasised that infrastructure projects were a key priority, as they are expected to help achieve long-term development goals, reduce poverty, ensure food security, and create more employment opportunities. However, economic experts have expressed concern about the sustainability of this growth. Seyar Quraishi, an economic analyst, highlighted that with population growth outpacing economic growth, per capita income is decreasing, which could negatively impact

living standards. Similarly, Qutbuddin Yaqubi noted that without further investments in the private sector and continued international aid, this growth may not be sufficient to meet Afghanistan's future needs. Earlier this year, a United Nations report indicated a 2.7% growth in Afghanistan's economy but also warned of the fragility and instability in the country's trade and public investment sectors. As Afghanistan looks ahead, balancing economic growth with the challenges of a growing population and limited external aid remains a key priority for the country's future development.

## **7. Trilateral UAP Railway Deal Nears Completion ([AzerNews, April 25](#); [The Tribune Pakistan, April 25](#))**

A landmark railway agreement between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan is set to be signed, signalling a major step forward for regional connectivity and economic integration. The proposed Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) railway project aims to establish a direct trade corridor between Central and South Asia. Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Muhammad Ishaq Dar, recently discussed the initiative with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister, Bakhtiyor Saidov, following his diplomatic visit to Kabul. Mr Dar underscored the project's transformative potential in regional trade and logistics. Once operational, the railway is expected to reduce transport time and costs and provide landlocked Central Asian nations with more efficient access to seaports via Pakistan. Both sides also reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral ties and trade cooperation. Analysts believe the UAP railway could be a strategic milestone, fostering greater economic stability and connectivity across the region.

## **8. Former Taliban Commander Pleads Guilty to Supporting Terrorism and Kidnapping of NYT Journalist ([Associated Press, April 26](#))**

In a landmark case, former Taliban commander Haji Najibullah pleaded guilty on Friday to terrorism-related charges and his role in the 2008 kidnapping of New York Times journalist David Rohde and two others. Appearing in Manhattan federal court, Najibullah admitted to providing weapons and fighters to the Taliban between 2007 and 2009, actions that directly contributed to the deaths of US soldiers. Speaking through an interpreter, he acknowledged that his support included overseeing attacks in Wardak Province using suicide bombers, IEDs, and other weapons. Najibullah, 49, also confessed to participating in the gunpoint kidnapping

of Rohde, Afghan journalist Tahir Ludin, and their driver Asadullah Mangal during an assignment to interview a Taliban leader. The group was held for more than seven months in Taliban-controlled territory in Pakistan before escaping. Najibullah admitted to creating proof-of-life videos as part of the Taliban's ransom demands. The court has scheduled Najibullah's sentencing for October 23, with federal guidelines recommending a life sentence. He was led out of the courtroom in shackles by US marshals.

## **9. Kazakhstan and Afghanistan Boost Trade and Connectivity ([The Astana Times, April 25](#); [Caspian News, April 27](#))**

Kazakhstan and Afghanistan are advancing their economic partnership through major trade agreements and infrastructure initiatives, highlighted by \$140 million in export deals signed during a business forum in Kabul. QazTrade, Kazakhstan's trade policy development centre, signed cooperation memoranda with three major Afghan institutions: the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Chamber of Industries and Mines, and the International Exhibition Center. These build on a broader economic roadmap signed in October 2024.

As part of this growing relationship, both countries signed a protocol of intent to begin construction on the Turgundi-Herat-Kandahar-Spin Boldak railway line. The agreement sets the stage for Kazakhstan's involvement in developing Afghanistan's transport infrastructure. The railway aims to improve regional connectivity between Central and South Asia and provide a direct trade route to Indian Ocean ports. Plans also include laying a fibre-optic cable along the railway line, enhancing digital infrastructure, train safety, and communications for nearby communities. The proposal includes establishing a joint railway venture between Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan under the Astana International Financial Centre's jurisdiction. Additionally, discussions were held on launching direct flights between the two countries and supplying Kazakh-made vehicles to the Afghan market. Talks also touched on training Afghan students in technical fields at Kazakh universities, reflecting a broader vision for long-term cooperation.

## **10. India-Afghanistan Talks Signal Interest in Stronger Bilateral Ties ([@HafizZiaAhmad/X, April 27](#); [Hindustan Times, April 28](#))**

Anand Prakash, recently appointed Joint Secretary of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran (PAI) Division at India's Ministry of External Affairs, met Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister



Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul for talks on political relations, trade, transit, and recent regional developments. Minister Muttaqi emphasised the importance of expanding diplomatic and economic ties, encouraging Indian investment in Afghanistan by highlighting favourable conditions for business. He also called for the easing of visa procedures, particularly for Afghan traders, students, and medical patients, to strengthen people-to-people links. Prakash reiterated India's commitment to its longstanding partnership with Afghanistan and expressed a desire to resume development projects and explore new infrastructure investments. Both sides acknowledged the need for greater official exchanges and practical cooperation across sectors. The meeting also touched on security concerns in the region. The Taliban's foreign ministry issued a rare statement condemning the 22 April terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which killed 26 tourists. The ministry extended condolences to the victims' families and stated that such incidents undermine regional stability. While the Indian side did not release a formal statement, both delegations reportedly agreed on the need to facilitate official exchanges, ease mobility, and broaden bilateral cooperation going forward.

#### **11. Muttaqi Visits Qatar for High-Level Talks ([Tolo News, April 28](#); [@MofaQatar EN/X, April 28](#); [Doha News, April 29](#))**

Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, arrived in Qatar on April 27 following an official invitation from Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. During the visit, Muttaqi met with both the prime minister and foreign minister of Qatar to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and explore avenues for strengthened bilateral cooperation. In an official statement, Qatar reaffirmed its continued support for all segments of the Afghan population. Analysts noted that Qatar's neutrality and positive track record in Afghan affairs make it a key partner for Afghanistan's diplomatic outreach and economic engagement. Former diplomat Aziz Maharaj highlighted that deeper ties with Qatar could help Afghanistan expand its international presence and reduce political isolation. Political commentators have also underscored the importance of leveraging Qatar's close ties with the United States and its strategic global positioning to foster broader international dialogue. The visit was made possible following a one-week travel exemption granted by the United Nations Security Council, permitting Muttaqi to travel from April 27 to May 4, 2025, for official meetings.

## **12. France Donates €1 Million to WFP for Aid in Afghanistan ([Hasht-e Subh Daily, April 29](#))**

The World Food Programme (WFP) has announced a generous €1 million donation from France to support its humanitarian initiatives in Afghanistan. Over the next six months, this funding will benefit more than 1,000 families through targeted assistance in education, agriculture, and food security. As part of the initiative, WFP will provide cash stipends of 6,400 Afghanis to one member of each participating family enrolled in its educational programmes, aiming to ease pressure on households struggling with food insecurity. France's Permanent Representative to the UN, Céline Jurgensen, underscored the urgency of the climate crisis in Afghanistan, which she said is "destroying farms, homes, and people's hopes." She stressed the importance of long-term support for sustainable livelihoods. WFP's Acting Country Director, Mutinta Chimuka, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to improving agricultural productivity and promoting women's empowerment through vocational training and climate-resilient infrastructure. This funding follows an earlier contribution of \$2.2 million from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), reaffirming growing international efforts to address Afghanistan's urgent humanitarian and development needs.

## **13. Baku Conference Highlights Need for Stability and Regional Engagement in Afghanistan ([Azertag, April 29](#); [Tolo News, April 29](#))**

An international conference titled 'Afghanistan: Regional Connectivity, Security and Development' was held in Azerbaijan's capital, drawing representatives from 20 countries. The event aimed to foster international coordination to prevent extremist threats and support Afghanistan's path toward peace. Azerbaijan's State Security Service chief underscored the enduring relationship between Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, rooted in trust and shared cultural ties. He reaffirmed Azerbaijan's continued support for Afghanistan's internal stability and international integration. Political experts expressed mixed views. Janat Faheem Chakari emphasised that sincere regional cooperation could help Afghanistan regain a seat in the UN General Assembly. However, Abdulsadeq Hamidzoy raised concerns about the absence of representation from the current Afghan government, questioning the effectiveness of discussions that exclude key stakeholders. The Islamic Emirate issued a formal statement in response, though details were not disclosed. The conference comes ahead of the upcoming

Moscow Security Conference (May 27–29), where Afghanistan will again feature as a topic of global strategic concern. As international focus returns to Afghanistan's stability and integration, questions remain around inclusion, representation, and the next tangible steps forward.

#### **14. OIC and Afghanistan Red Crescent Sign Agreement to Treat Children with Heart Diseases ([Khaama Press, April 30](#))**

In a significant development, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Afghanistan's Red Crescent have signed an agreement to treat 30 children suffering from heart disease, offering much-needed hope to families in Afghanistan. This initiative is part of broader efforts to address the country's pressing healthcare challenges. Afghanistan has long struggled with inadequate healthcare infrastructure, particularly when it comes to treating complex diseases like heart conditions in children. With limited resources and many families unable to afford necessary treatments, the situation has left countless vulnerable children in desperate need of medical care. Experts have expressed optimism that this partnership will provide much-needed relief. By addressing the immediate needs of these children, the collaboration between the OIC and the Red Crescent offers not just treatment, but hope for families who might otherwise be unable to access specialised healthcare.



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