

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. Telecom Firms in Afghanistan Confirm Internet Shutdown Was Ordered ([Khaama Press, October 01](#); [Reuters, October 01](#))

Telecom companies in Afghanistan have confirmed that the nationwide internet shutdown was implemented under direct orders from the country's top leadership, stating that they are merely managing the operation. The phased restrictions, which began last week, have escalated into a complete shutdown of both fibre-optic and mobile networks, severely disrupting daily life. The blackout has caused widespread consequences, including flight cancellations at Kabul airport and major disruptions in the national banking system, leaving financial transactions effectively paralysed. Millions of Afghans have lost access to communication services, while humanitarian operations dependent on digital coordination have been significantly hampered. Analysts note that the outage underscores the vulnerability of Afghanistan's infrastructure and the impact of political interference on essential services. Restoring connectivity is deemed crucial not only for humanitarian relief but also for maintaining stability and Afghanistan's engagement with the international community.

2. Afghanistan Among World's Lowest in Academic Freedom, Scholars at Risk Report Shows ([Khaama Press, October 01](#))

Afghanistan ranks among the lowest countries worldwide for academic freedom, scoring just 0.08 on the [Academic Freedom Index](#), according to the Scholars at Risk 2025 report. [The Free to Think 2025 report](#) highlights that the country's higher education system remains "completely restricted," with the Taliban enforcing ideological control and severely curtailing women's access to education. Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, Afghanistan has seen steep declines in institutional autonomy and freedom of academic and cultural expression. New restrictions also barred lecturers from travelling abroad for study or training without written approval from the Taliban leadership. In 2025, faculty purges intensified, with dismissals disproportionately affecting women, Hazaras, and other minorities. Restrictions on women's education deepened when, in December 2024, the Taliban banned women from medical studies, including nursing and midwifery, leaving Afghanistan without female medical professionals and risking worsening health outcomes. International programs offering Afghan students education abroad have also been disrupted. The Free to Think 2025 report concludes

that ideological purges, gender bans, and suppression of minority voices have effectively eliminated the remaining spaces for academic freedom in Afghanistan. Scholars at Risk warns that without urgent international support, the country's higher education system faces near-total collapse, leaving Afghan students, particularly women and minorities, with minimal opportunities to pursue education at home or abroad.

3. Fuel and Gas Prices Surge in Kabul Amid Growing Public Discontent **([Tolo News, October 03](#); [Pajhwok Afghan News, October 08](#))**

Fuel and gas prices in Kabul have climbed sharply in recent days, sparking widespread frustration among drivers and residents. According to current figures, the price of one litre of diesel has reached 77 Afghanis, petrol stands at 75 Afghanis, and each kilogram of liquefied gas now costs 53 Afghanis. Fuel vendors maintain that they are unable to adjust prices independently. Drivers, however, argue that weak market oversight is allowing unfair price manipulation. Many warn that if the upward trend continues, they may be forced to stop operating altogether. Kabul Municipality officials have confirmed the surge, attributing it to the recent ban on importing second-grade fuel. "Currently, 80-octane fuel is not being imported into Afghanistan; only 92-octane fuel is available," said municipal representative Nematullah Barakzai. Citizens are calling on the authorities to tighten market regulation, warning that unchecked pricing is burdening already struggling households and threatening livelihoods dependent on daily fuel use.

4. World Teachers' Day: Afghan Teachers Struggle Amid Low Pay and Rising Costs ([Tolo News, October 05](#); [ET Education, October 07](#))

As the world marked World Teachers' Day, educators across Afghanistan voiced frustration over low wages and worsening living conditions. Many teachers say they receive meagre salaries, live in rented accommodation, and struggle to meet basic expenses. Veteran educator Najiba, who taught for four decades before retiring, reflected nostalgically on a time when teachers held greater social standing. "During President Daoud Khan's era, teachers had a special place among the people and the government," she recalled. Others described the heavy financial pressures of modern life. Ghulam Akbar Safi, a Kabul teacher, said that more than two-thirds of his income goes toward rent. Despite these challenges, Afghan teachers continue their work with dedication. Former President Hamid Karzai on X paid tribute to their

perseverance, particularly praising women educators. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the European Union (EU) also marked the occasion, underlining that education remains essential for the country's peace and development.

5. Over 700 Families Affected as Floods Hit Three Afghan Provinces **([ANI News, October 06](#); [Tolo News, October 06](#))**

Recent heavy rainfall and flash floods have devastated parts of Kabul, Laghman, and Kapisa provinces, affecting more than 700 families and causing widespread destruction. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) reported that heavy rainfall, hailstorms, and flash floods in Kabul, Kapisa, and Laghman provinces have destroyed 18 homes, damaged five kilometres of roads, and swept away 2,400 acres of farmland. In total, 721 families have been affected. Over 1,000 acres of agricultural land and numerous fruit orchards were ruined, while 3,000 chickens were lost in a poultry farm. Recovery operations are underway, though many residents remain in urgent need of assistance. Farmers and residents across the affected areas have called for government aid to rebuild homes and restore farmlands. The Meteorological Department has warned that at least 17 provinces remain at risk of further heavy rain, strong winds, lightning, and new floods in the coming days, raising fears of additional damage in already battered regions.

6. Laghman University Students Struggle with Dormitory Shortages and Rising Rents ([Afghan Street/Facebook, October 06](#); [Tolo News, October 06](#))

Students at Laghman University are grappling with a severe shortage of dormitory space, forcing many to seek accommodation in private hostels where rents have nearly doubled in recent months. Those affected say the rising cost of living has made it increasingly difficult to focus on their studies. "We can't afford private rooms anymore. Prices that used to be around 1,000 Afghanis are now closer to 3,000," said one student, noting that most come from families already under financial strain. Others stressed that the limited capacity of the existing dormitory has left hundreds without affordable housing options. Several students have appealed to the authorities to expand university housing or provide subsidised accommodation. Local officials acknowledge the growing problem. Abdul Malik Niazi, spokesperson for the Laghman governor, said the issue has been raised with the Ministry of Higher Education, which has

promised support. “We currently house 350 students, mainly from distant provinces, and have requested additional facilities to accommodate more,” he said. Established in 2011, Laghman University currently operates six faculties and serves hundreds of students. However, without swift action to address housing shortages, many fear the financial strain could force students to abandon their studies altogether.

7. Restoration Progresses on Herat’s Historic Sites Two Years After Earthquake ([Tolo News, October 12](#))

Two years after a devastating earthquake severely damaged Herat’s historic monuments, restoration and structural reinforcement work have been largely completed on many of the city’s key sites, officials report. The Department of Information and Culture confirmed that major landmarks, including the Great Mosque, Qala-e-Ikhtiyaruddin Citadel, the minarets, and the shrine of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari, have undergone significant repairs. Cultural experts emphasised that historical sites in the city’s districts, many of which were also severely affected, still require restoration. Mohammad Siddiq Mir, a heritage specialist, highlighted that alongside the Department of Information and Culture, organisations such as the Aga Khan Foundation and Turkey’s TIKA office have been actively contributing to the restoration efforts. The Great Mosque’s minarets, which were around 90% destroyed in the earthquake, have been fully rebuilt with traditional tiling, while repairs on other sections of the mosque continue, according to Aziz Ahmad Rasouli, head of the Great Mosque Restoration Project. Herat is home to over 870 historical sites, spread across the city and its districts. The ongoing restoration work aims to safeguard the province’s rich historical heritage for future generations.

8. Residents of Kabul’s District 15 Complain of Drinking Water Shortage ([Tolo News, October 13](#); [Hasht-e-Subh Daily, October 13](#); [Kabul Times, October 14](#))

Residents of Kabul’s 15th district are facing a severe shortage of drinking water, with many forced to walk long distances or purchase water at a cost to meet their daily needs. The shortage has made everyday life increasingly difficult for local families, particularly during cold weather and peak demand times. Locals report that the water supply has become highly irregular, with

taps running only once a week in some areas. Families are struggling to access sufficient water, relying on distant sources or paying for bottled water to manage their daily requirements. Water scarcity has long been a persistent challenge in Kabul, with residents from several other districts, including the 6th and 7th, previously raising concerns over limited access to safe drinking water. The ongoing shortage underscores the pressing need for authorities to improve water supply infrastructure across the capital.

9. Third Phase of Payments to Martyrs' Families and Disabled Begins **(Tolo News, October 14)**

The Ministry of Martyrs and Persons with Disabilities has launched the third phase of financial assistance for orphans, widows, and persons with disabilities, covering the months of Mizan, Aqrab, and Qaws. Over the past four months, more than 8.19 billion Afghanis have been disbursed from a total budget of 12 billion Afghanis to beneficiaries across Kabul and other provinces. Officials emphasised transparency and oversight in the payment process. Currently, the ministry has over 6,94,000 registered beneficiaries, with digital records for more than 5,00,000 individuals. These include over 4,05,000 orphans, 1,00,000 widows, and nearly 188,500 persons with disabilities, among whom thousands are women, paralysed, or blind. In addition to direct payments, the ministry has coordinated with charitable organisations and partner agencies to provide \$10 million worth of support to 70,000 families. This assistance includes food, cash, work equipment, and other essential items such as wheelchairs, sewing machines, and motorcycles. The initiative continues the government's ongoing commitment to support vulnerable groups, following the previous two rounds of payments that reached 6,00,000 beneficiaries.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. Afghanistan and Iran Deepen Trade Cooperation Amid Rising Economic Ties ([Tolo News, October 03](#); [Tehran Times, October 04](#))

Afghanistan and Iran are intensifying efforts to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Alireza Bikdeli, Iran's acting ambassador in Kabul, told TOLONews that both countries are working to accelerate the movement of goods by better utilising existing infrastructure and transit routes. Despite US sanctions on Chabahar Port, Bikdeli assured that trade routes such as Chabahar and the Milak border crossing remain fully operational. He noted that infrastructure upgrades, including the expansion of railway links, are underway to improve the port's efficiency. On the Afghan side, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock highlighted the need to balance trade with Iran by increasing Afghan exports. Deputy Minister Sadr Azam Usmani stated, "Since our imports from Iran are high, our focus is now on boosting Afghanistan's exports. We have begun exporting meat to Iran and are working to raise exports to both Iran and Uzbekistan to a sustainable level." The growing momentum in Kabul-Tehran trade ties comes as bilateral trade volumes have surpassed 3.5 billion US dollars. However, Afghanistan's export share remains minimal, a gap both nations are now eager to close through greater cooperation and infrastructure development.

2. Collaboration Between Broadcasters Strengthens News Access for Afghans ([Amu TV, October 03](#); [Khaama Press, October 03](#); [Deutsche Welle \[Joint Press Release\], October 07](#))

A new partnership between Amu TV and Deutsche Welle (DW), announced on October 01, 2025, aims to expand access to independent journalism for Afghans both inside the country and abroad. Under the agreement, Amu TV will rebroadcast DW's flagship program *Aashti* on its free-to-air satellite channel and share DW's news, analysis, and multimedia content across its website and social media platforms. The collaboration comes amid growing restrictions on press freedom in Afghanistan. Combining DW's international expertise with Amu TV's reach among Afghan viewers ensures that millions continue to receive fact-based reporting in Dari and Pashto. Lotfullah Najafizada, CEO of Amu TV, highlighted the importance of maintaining access to accurate information for Afghans facing unprecedented challenges, while Guido Baumhauer, Managing Director at DW, reaffirmed the broadcaster's commitment to press

freedom and reaching Afghan audiences with trusted news. Media analysts see the partnership as a milestone for Afghan journalism in exile, combining local networks with international resources to ensure credible, independent reporting continues despite pressures on media inside the country.

3. Developments with Pakistan

a. **Pakistan Extends Scholarship Deadline for Afghan Students After Internet Blackout (@AmbassadorSadiq/X, October 02; Khaama Press, October 03; Tribal News Network, October 04)**

Pakistan has extended the registration deadline for Afghan students applying to the Allama Muhammad Iqbal scholarship programme until October 10, 2025, following a nationwide internet blackout in Afghanistan that disrupted the application process. The original deadline had been September 30. Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, announced the extension on X, noting that the move aims to provide Afghan students additional time to complete their applications in light of the telecommunications disruption. The Allama Iqbal scholarship programme, now in its third phase, allows hundreds of Afghan students to gain admission to Pakistani universities each year and is part of Pakistan's broader educational cooperation with Afghanistan.

b. **Pakistan Endorses Proposal for Dialogue with Afghanistan (Dawn, October 04; Tolo News, October 04)**

Pakistan's Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, has announced that the federal government has approved his proposal to initiate dialogue with Afghanistan. The move, he said, is aimed at addressing terrorism and enhancing regional security through cooperation rather than confrontation. Speaking at a National Security and War session in Peshawar, Gandapur described talks with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as the "only viable path" toward lasting peace. While Kabul has yet to comment on the development, Afghan officials have previously reiterated their desire for stability and peaceful relations with neighbouring states. Sayed Qaribullah Sadat, a political analyst, noted that Afghans would broadly support such engagement. "We share many commonalities with Pakistan and want these shared interests to continue. Whether the proposal comes from Gandapur or anyone else, Afghans will support it," he said. However, other analysts voiced caution. Najib-ur-Rahman

Shamal argued that genuine progress depends on Pakistan honouring its commitments and taking “practical steps in combating terrorism” while engaging directly with the Afghan people. Gandapur also underlined that the repatriation of Afghan refugees remains a key policy objective but stressed that the process must be conducted “with dignity and full respect” for those affected.

c. UNHCR Voices Concern Over Pakistan’s Move to De-Notify 16 Afghan Refugee Villages (UNHCR, October 08; Ariana News, October 09; Khaama Press, October 09)

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has expressed serious concern over Pakistan’s decision to de-notify 16 Afghan refugee villages across Balochistan, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, warning that the move could lead to forced evictions and deepen the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Philippa Candler, UNHCR’s representative in Pakistan, urged the government to halt the deportations and ensure that any repatriations occur voluntarily and with dignity. The Pakistani authorities have reportedly instructed Afghan nationals in the affected areas to vacate immediately, citing national security concerns. However, rights groups have denounced the decision as collective punishment and a violation of international refugee law.

d. Afghanistan-Pakistan Border Erupts in Deadly Clashes, Ceasefire Holds Tentatively (The Guardian, October 12; BBC, October 15; Al Jazeera, October 15)

The Afghanistan-Pakistan border witnessed its most intense fighting in years after the Taliban launched attacks on Pakistani military posts in retaliation for reported Pakistani airstrikes on Kabul and Kandahar. The ensuing cross-border exchange left dozens dead on both sides, including Pakistani soldiers, Taliban fighters, and Afghan civilians. The Taliban claimed to have killed 58 Pakistani troops, while Islamabad reported 23 soldiers dead and said its counterstrikes killed around 200 Taliban combatants. Neither figure could be independently verified. The clashes mark a sharp escalation in already deteriorating ties between Islamabad and Kabul. Pakistan has long accused the Afghan Taliban of sheltering militants of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), responsible for a surge of attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Kabul denies the allegations, insisting no TTP sanctuaries exist within Afghan territory. Following days of fierce exchanges, the two sides agreed to a 48-hour ceasefire on October 15, each claiming the other had requested it. Both governments pledged to pursue

“constructive dialogue” to resolve the crisis, but warned they would respond decisively to any violation. Analysts describe the border as a flashpoint for wider instability. Pakistan’s military insists it will not tolerate Afghan territory being used for terrorism, while the Taliban warns it will defend its sovereignty against further Pakistani strikes. Observers caution that even if the truce holds, the underlying mistrust, centred on Pakistan’s counterterrorism frustrations and the Taliban’s domestic insecurities, could easily reignite hostilities, fuelling yet another cycle of violence along the volatile Durand Line.

e. **Kabul Said to Reject Visa Requests from Senior Pakistani Officials; Islamabad Denies Making Any Application (Afghanistan International, October 13; Khaama Press, October 13)**

Afghan authorities reportedly turned down visa requests from Pakistan’s defence and intelligence leaders, though Islamabad denied submitting any formal applications, amid rising border tensions between the two neighbours. The reported visa requests included Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, intelligence chief Asim Malik, and two senior generals, who allegedly sought to visit Kabul for official talks. Sources say the requests were rejected following Pakistan’s recent airstrikes in Afghanistan’s Paktika province, which Kabul condemned as a violation of its airspace. Afghan officials described the move as a firm diplomatic response to repeated cross-border violations and attacks on civilian areas. A senior Pakistani government source denied that official visa applications had been submitted, describing the proposed visit as merely a “proposal.” Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry expressed concern that recent attacks were intended to destabilise border districts and strain bilateral relations.

4. Deportations of Afghan Refugees Could Help ISIS-K Recruit Vulnerable Returnees, Says Ex-UN Officials (Khaama Press, October 06)

Hans-Jakob Schindler, formerly of the UN Monitoring Committee on ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, said the risk of ISIS-K expansion is “very high,” as deported Afghans from Iran and Pakistan may feel alienated, impoverished, and abandoned. He added that the group has been attracting not only disillusioned Taliban members but also Afghans marginalised under the current regime, potentially destabilising Taliban control and threatening regional security.

Security analysts and researchers have echoed these concerns, noting that poverty and unemployment among returnees make them susceptible to extremist recruitment. Lucas Webber of the Soufan Centre highlighted that financial incentives offered by ISIS-K could appeal to desperate families. Former CIA counterterrorism official JD Maddox offered a nuanced view, suggesting that only a small minority might be ideologically vulnerable, with most challenges being economic rather than extremist in nature. He also warned that deportees' knowledge of Iran and eastern Afghanistan could inadvertently assist ISIS-K's operations. UN data indicate that over 1.2 million Afghan refugees have been deported from Iran and Pakistan so far this year, intensifying pressure on Afghanistan's struggling economy and contributing to unemployment and social unrest.

5. Amnesty Calls Afghanistan Accountability Mechanism a Landmark Step Toward Justice ([Amnesty International, October 06](#); [Khaama Press, October 06](#))

Amnesty International has welcomed the UN Human Rights Council's creation of an independent accountability mechanism for Afghanistan, calling it a historic step toward justice for victims of war and repression. Amnesty Secretary-General Agnes Callamard described the mechanism as a long-overdue path to truth, justice, and reparations, noting decades of human rights abuses under the Taliban and prior regimes, including restrictions on women and girls, arbitrary arrests, torture, and attacks on journalists and minorities. The organisation emphasised that the mechanism must be inclusive and impartial, investigating violations not only under Taliban rule but also crimes committed by insurgent groups, former Afghan authorities, and international forces. Amnesty urged UN member states to provide funding, expertise, and political support to ensure the body operates effectively and independently. The mechanism will collect and preserve evidence of serious human rights violations and international crimes, complementing the International Criminal Court in preparing future prosecutions. Human rights advocates hailed the initiative as a long-awaited effort to end Afghanistan's cycle of impunity, while stressing that sustained international backing will be essential for its success.

6. Over 100 Rights Groups Hail Spain's Tribunal as Landmark Step for Afghan Women's Justice ([Hasht-e-Subh, October 09](#); [Khaama Press, October 09](#); [Rukhshana Media, October 09](#))

Over a hundred human rights groups have lauded Spain's People's Tribunal on Women of Afghanistan as a pivotal move toward justice for victims of Taliban repression. They described the Taliban's actions as amounting to crimes against humanity and condemned the regime's institutionalised gender apartheid. Participants emphasised that the tribunal is not just symbolic but a vital mechanism to document, expose, and pursue accountability for ongoing violations, from the persecution of women and minorities to the silencing of journalists and targeting of former officials. The hearings in Madrid, which included survivors and international judges, brought to light the Taliban's systematic denial of education, healthcare, and employment to women. Advocates called it a defining moment that renews global focus on Afghan women's suffering, especially as international attention wanes. Rights groups urged Spain, the EU, and the wider international community to sustain legal proceedings against the Taliban and their supporters, ensure victim safety, and work toward formal recognition of gender apartheid as a crime under international law.

7. Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan Will Not Be Handed Over to the US, Taliban Says ([Khaama Press, October 06](#); [Sky News, October 06](#))

The Taliban has rejected US President Donald Trump's suggestion that Washington could reclaim Bagram Air Base, emphasising Afghanistan's sovereignty. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid stated that the base would remain under Afghan control and that discussions with US officials were limited to reopening diplomatic missions in Kabul and Washington. The refusal to hand over Bagram, combined with restrictive domestic policies and infrastructure disruptions, underscores Afghanistan's ongoing isolation and highlights the gap between official narratives and the lived realities of Afghan citizens.

8. Kazakhstan Eyes Investment in Afghanistan's Gold and Copper Mines ([Ariana News, October 09](#); [Tolo News, October 09](#))

Afghanistan has recently hosted high-level delegations from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, signalling renewed regional interest in the country's mining and energy sectors. The visits focused on deepening trade and infrastructure cooperation and exploring new investment opportunities. During meetings with Afghanistan's Minister of Mines and Petroleum and senior officials from the Ministry of Public Works, the Kazakh delegation expressed interest in investing in Afghanistan's gold and copper mines, expanding the national railway network,

and engaging in geological exploration. Both sides also discussed ways to enhance bilateral trade and economic collaboration. Homayoun Afghan, spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, noted that Kazakhstan's participation could help advance Afghanistan's untapped mineral wealth. Meanwhile, Public Works Ministry spokesperson Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas said a memorandum of understanding and an action plan were signed with the Kazakh side. "It was agreed to form a joint technical and financial committee to begin practical work on the Torghundi-Herat and Herat-Spin Boldak railway projects," he added.

In parallel, a Turkmen delegation held technical meetings with officials from Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), focusing on key energy initiatives. These included the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) power transmission project, the 500 kV transmission line, the Kerki-Kabul project, and electrification schemes for several northern and western districts. DABS spokesperson Mohammad Sadiq Haqqarast said the talks underscored Turkmenistan's appreciation for Afghanistan's cooperation and commitment to strengthening energy ties. Economic experts view these developments as part of Afghanistan's gradual reintegration into regional economic frameworks.

9. Afghanistan and Qatar Discuss Climate Cooperation as Drought and Water Crisis Deepen ([Khaama Press, October 09](#))

Afghanistan and Qatar have held talks to strengthen cooperation on climate and environmental issues as worsening droughts and severe water shortages threaten millions of Afghans. Matiul Haq Khalis, head of Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), met with Qatari Ambassador Mardif Ali Al-Qahtani in Kabul to discuss joint efforts on climate adaptation, natural resource preservation, and sustainable development. Both sides underscored that environmental cooperation should remain apolitical and rooted in regional solidarity. Ambassador Al-Qahtani noted ongoing discussions with Brazil and the UN mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on expanding Afghanistan's participation in international climate initiatives, including future COP forums. Khalis reaffirmed Afghanistan's commitment to the 16 global environmental treaties it has signed and stressed the need to build technical capacity for managing the country's fragile ecosystem. Officials from both countries agreed that regional partnerships will be essential in addressing Afghanistan's escalating ecological challenges, from drought and soil erosion to deforestation and water scarcity. Afghanistan's

worsening environmental crisis has been compounded by conflict, poor governance, and climate change.

10. Afghan Industry Minister Visits China for Free Zones Congress **([Alemarah English, October 08](#); [Tolo News, October 09](#); [Afghan Voice Agency, October 11](#))**

Afghanistan's Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, has travelled to China at the invitation of the Chinese government to attend the 11th International Congress of the World Free Zones Organisation. The event, held in Hainan Province from 10 to 12 October 2025, is themed 'Gateways to Global Prosperity: Trade and Sustainable Innovation.' According to the ministry, Minister Azizi is leading a high-level delegation and delivered a speech at the congress. He also held meetings with Chinese officials and ministers from other participating countries to discuss trade and investment opportunities. Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, spokesperson for the ministry, confirmed the visit, saying it reflects Afghanistan's growing engagement with global trade platforms. Economic experts in Kabul have described the trip as a valuable opportunity to deepen Afghanistan's economic and technological partnership with China. The congress brings together representatives from across the world to discuss the role of free zones in promoting trade, sustainability, and international cooperation, areas in which Kabul hopes to build long-term partnerships to revitalise its economy.

11. Developments with India

a. India Upgrades Kabul Mission to Embassy, Announces More Flights, Aid, and Projects **([Khaama Press, October 10](#); [The Hindu, October 13](#))**

India has elevated its diplomatic mission in Kabul to a full-fledged embassy, announcing new direct flights, expanded aid deliveries, and a slate of new development projects, a move signalling New Delhi's renewed engagement with Afghanistan. During the visit of Afghanistan's Interim Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar formally declared the upgrade from a "technical mission" to an "Embassy of India." The announcement was accompanied by commitments to strengthen trade, healthcare, education, and humanitarian support. Dr Jaishankar, joined by senior Indian officials including Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, highlighted India's enduring friendship with Afghanistan and unveiled plans for six new infrastructure projects pending final discussions. India will also

donate 20 ambulances, provide advanced medical equipment such as MRI and CT scan machines, and continue its collaboration with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to supply drug rehabilitation materials. Reaffirming India's long-standing commitment to the Afghan people, Dr Jaishankar said India would assist in constructing housing for forcibly repatriated Afghan refugees and maintain ongoing support for livelihood restoration. Without naming Pakistan, he stressed the importance of preserving the dignity of displaced Afghans. India also plans to increase the number of direct flights between Kabul and New Delhi, while exploring avenues for business cooperation in Afghanistan's mining sector. Educational and capacity-building programmes will be expanded, offering more scholarships and placements for Afghan students in Indian universities. On cultural ties, Dr Jaishankar praised Afghanistan's growing cricket talent and reiterated India's support for sports development. Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in water management, infrastructure maintenance, and economic connectivity. Sources in Kabul suggest that a senior Afghan delegation will soon visit India to consolidate these new agreements, marking what many observers view as a significant step in restoring regional engagement after years of diplomatic uncertainty.

b. Amir Khan Muttaqi Visits India's Historic Darul Uloom Deoband (The Wire, October 11; Tolo News, October 11)

Amir Khan Muttaqi, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, paid a visit to Darul Uloom Deoband, one of the oldest and most prestigious Islamic and academic institutions in the Indian subcontinent. He was warmly welcomed by scholars, professors, and students of the seminary. Expressing his appreciation for the hospitality, Muttaqi said the reception reflected the deep cultural and religious ties between the two nations and that "the future of India-Afghanistan relations looks very bright." Maulana Arshad Madani, head of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, highlighted the enduring academic and historical linkages between India and Afghanistan, noting, "Our connection with Afghanistan is academic and educational. They also played a role in our freedom struggle. Just as we defeated Britain, once the world's greatest power, they too defeated global powers like Russia and the United States in Afghanistan."

c. Afghanistan Women Praise Indian Reporters for Standing Up for Women's Rights (Khaama Press, October 13)

Afghan women's rights activists have commended Indian women journalists for publicly challenging Afghanistan's acting foreign minister in New Delhi, calling their actions a

significant show of cross-border solidarity. The incident began when female reporters were initially denied access to a press conference with Taliban acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. Indian authorities later arranged a new session with full participation of women journalists, who pressed questions on girls' education and women's rights in Afghanistan. Former Afghan MP Maryam Suleimankhil and lawmaker Fawzia Koofi highlighted this as an inspiring example of global sisterhood and resistance against gender discrimination. Human rights activists and Afghan journalists praised the courage displayed and hope it motivates further advocacy across borders. Since the Taliban's return in August 2021, Afghan women have faced sweeping restrictions on education, employment, and public life. The press event in India is seen as a symbolic challenge to these restrictions and a boost for regional advocacy for women's rights.

d. Afghanistan Trade with India Nears \$1 Billion (Afghanistan International, October 14; Khaama Press, October 14)

Afghanistan's trade with India has approached \$1 billion, with officials calling for simplified visa procedures and improved logistics to further strengthen bilateral economic cooperation. Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi highlighted that peace and stability in Afghanistan have created favourable conditions for investment and trade. Speaking at a meeting with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi, he urged the removal of administrative barriers and greater facilitation for Afghan exporters, noting that easier access to Indian markets could boost trade volumes significantly. Indian industry representatives welcomed renewed discussions but pointed to challenges such as visa delays and transport bottlenecks, stressing the need to streamline customs and transit procedures to prevent project delays. While Afghanistan and India have maintained long-standing economic ties, trade has declined following the 2021 political transition in Kabul. Recent engagement reflects efforts to revive stalled projects and regional supply chains.

12. Etihad Airways to Resume Direct Flights Between Abu Dhabi and Kabul (Etihad News, October 10; Afghanistan International, October 11; Tolo News, October 11)

Etihad Airways has announced that it will resume direct flights between Abu Dhabi and Kabul starting 18 December 2025, marking a significant step in the revival of Afghanistan's

international air connections. The flights will operate three times a week, on Saturdays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, with return services on the same days. Etihad's Chief Executive said that Kabul is now part of the airline's strategy to expand access to regional markets, creating new opportunities for trade, investment, and family reunions. Economic analyst Mohammad Nabi Afghan described the development as "a positive step" and highlighted the potential for establishing an air corridor to support exports, noting that cargo operations are now active. The Afghan Business Council in the UAE, representing nearly 3,00,000 Afghans living and working in the country, welcomed the announcement. Currently, Afghanistan hosts two domestic and eight international airlines, according to the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation. Spokesperson Hekmatullah Asifi confirmed that aviation services are operating in a standard manner and emphasised the resumption of flights by Air Arabia, FlyDubai, and Turkish Airlines over the past two years following the return of the Islamic Emirate to power. The restart of Etihad flights is expected to further enhance connectivity, trade, and travel links between Afghanistan and the Gulf region.

13. Islamic Emirate: Afghan-Tajik Border Secure, Receives Special Attention ([Tolo News, October 11](#); [The Caspian Post, October 12](#))

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, has reaffirmed that the country's borders are secure, with particular focus on the boundary shared with Tajikistan. His remarks came in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent statement highlighting the need to ensure the Afghan-Tajik border remains fully secure. Mujahid stated that the Islamic Emirate has prioritised the safety and stability of this border more than others. Earlier, President Putin, speaking at a press conference in Dushanbe, underlined that while Afghanistan's leadership is striving to stabilise the country, significant challenges persist. He emphasised that the Afghan-Tajik border must remain "extremely secure." In previous regional engagements, Putin acknowledged the Islamic Emirate's expressed willingness to cooperate in combating terrorism and drug trafficking, efforts that Russia supports. Commenting on the situation, military analyst Mohammad Amin Zazi urged major powers to move beyond rivalry and work collectively to address the root causes of regional instability. Political expert Sayed Ebadullah Sadeq added that Afghanistan has been working to prevent cross-border interference and the movement of terrorist groups, but that true border security requires joint efforts between both nations. Putin's renewed call for vigilance follows his earlier discussions with Tajik

President Emomali Rahmon, during which he underscored the importance of maintaining an independent and terrorism-free Afghanistan.



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