

Karzai inaugurates power project in Maimana

On November 28, the dark lives of the residents of the city of Maimana, capital of the Faryab province, were lightened, with the commissioning of the 110/20 KV power sub-station at Maimana. The inauguration was done by President Hamid Karzai in the presence of Minister for Energy and Water Ismail Khan and Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood. The sub-station will provide power for around 9,000 homes in Maimana and some of the adjoining districts.

The project has been undertaken under Government of India's assistance programme and is part of a larger project which includes three more sub-stations in Faryab province, at Faizabad, Juma Bazar and Andhkoi. The provision of sub-stations and transmission line equipment is worth \$7.8 million. The project is being supervised by the Water and Power Consultancy Services (India) Ltd. with M/s Angelique International Ltd. as the sub-contractor. The project is expected to be fully operational by March 2007.

In his address, President Karzai appreciated the assistance provided by India, which will deliver power to one of the strategic provinces in the north-west of the country, and will contribute significantly to the eco-



President Karzai addressing the gathering at the commissioning of the sub-station at Maimana. Seated on the dais are Ambassador of India, Rakesh Sood, left, and Afghan Minister of Energy and Water Ismail Khan, right.

nomie growth of the entire region.

Development of the power sector in Afghanistan has been one of India's key priorities in its assistance programme towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan. More than one-third of the total amount of \$650 million under India's assistance has been committed to the power sector. Apart from the power project in Faryab province, some of the other major power projects include construction of

the 220 KV Double Circuit Transmission Line from Pul-e-Charkhi to Kabul, rehabilitation of Salma Dam power project in Herat province and rehabilitation of the Amir Ghazi and Quargah Reservoir Dam in Kabul province.

Winters in Afghanistan are often long and severe. But for the people of Maimana, the new lighting in their homes will render the cold winter months less bleak and dark. ■

India gifts 200 mini buses for public transport

Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood handed over 200 Tata mini buses to the Minister for Transport and Civil Aviation, Nematullah Ehsan Jawid, at an impressive ceremony held at Millie Bus Depot on December 6. The project, worth \$4.3 million, was part of India's overall assistance programme for Afghanistan. In 2004, India had also handed over 400 buses for public transportation in Afghanistan, of Tata and Ashok Leyland models, worth \$13 million. At that time, the Ministry of Transport had requested India for donation of some mini buses for use in smaller towns.

Apart from the 400 buses and 200 mini buses supplied to the Ministry of Transport, 285 army application vehicles comprising army troop carriers, jeeps and ambulances of Tata and Mahindra & Mahindra models, worth \$8.5 million, were also donated to the Ministry of Defence. As many as 105 vehicles, comprising dumper trucks, tankers and earth-moving vehicles manufactured by Tata, Eicher and Bharat Earth Movers Ltd., worth \$3 million, were also provided to the Kabul Municipality during 2004-05. Along with the supply of vehicles, spare parts with a one-year warranty period as well as technical support services are also being provided by the Government of India, in cognizance of the importance of operation and maintenance for the sustainability of the projects.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Jawid praised the Government of India profusely for the assistance provided to Afghanistan. Ambassador Sood, on his part, emphasised the significance of the people-to-people relationship between the two coun-



The new mini buses being flagged off by Minister for Transport and Civil Aviation Nematullah Ehsan Jawid, centre, and Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood, right.

tries and said that it had been the endeavour of the Government of India to ameliorate the hardships of the Afghan people through its various developmental programmes in Afghanistan.

The gift of the buses is perhaps the most visible sign of India's presence in Afghanistan, with the masses using them as the most practical mode of transport. Of the total fleet of 1,200 buses with the Millie Bus Authority, half has been gifted by India, facilitating intra-city and inter-city movement of the common people. ■