

# 'Strengthened Indo-Afghan relations will be in favour of neighbouring countries'

*Afghan Foreign Minister Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta addressed a joint press conference in Kabul along with Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee on January 23. Following is the text of his statement.*

**A**s you all know, Afghanistan and India have special relations. These relations have been linked with historical similarities. India and Afghanistan have common values, political and regional similarities. India is the largest democracy in the world. A country with indulgence, a multi-cultural country and a country with sound coexistence of different cultures. Afghanistan can learn much from this positive experience of India in relations to the tradition of indulgence.

Since the overthrow of Taliban, Republic of India has played a major role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. India has contributed and pledged \$650 million in the fields of reconstruction, capacity-building, and scholarships for Afghan students, which we really appreciate. Pranab Mukherjee will elaborate on these contributions and new initiatives of the Indian government during his remarks.

In 2006, I had the chance to pay a visit to India as the FM of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and we had constructive discussions, and H.E. President Hamid Karzai, a graduate of India, paid a visit to India and received Indira Gandhi's award for peace which is a symbol of President Karzai's efforts in bringing peace in Afghanistan. We are grateful to the Indian people for the construction of Parliament's new building in Afghanistan. This building has a symbolic meaning and concept for us, because India is the largest country in the third world with a rapid development rate. The current India

has been successful in democracy, we hope that our newly-established Parliament will similarly represent our people and strengthen democracy in Afghanistan.

In our today's talks, besides strengthening bilateral regional cooperations with India, membership of Afghanistan in SAARC, we also discussed the common threats facing the region. The common stand of SAARC members in the 2006 declaration of this organisation states that terrorism is an international threat.

Since 2001, 29 MoUs and agreements have been signed, and today we witnessed the 30th MoU signed between these two countries, which mark a high quality of reciprocal relations between our countries. Nearly 300 Indian experts and laborers are working in different projects of road construction, reconstruction and energy in Afghanistan. We appreciate their efforts. Meanwhile, I would like to once more convey condolence of Afghans and Afghan government for the killing of Indian engineers by terrorists.

Strengthening of relations between these two countries will be in favour of our neigh-



Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee with Dr. Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Afghan Foreign Minister, in Kabul.



EAM and Foreign Minister of Afghanistan witnessing the signing of MoU in Cooperation in the Field of Capacity Development in Public Administration. Ameerah Haq, Deputy Special Representative of Secretary General, is at centre, second row. Front Row: Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood, extreme left, Anita Nirody, Country Director, UNDP, Afghanistan, centre, and Dr. Ahmad Mushahed, Chairman, Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission of Afghanistan, extreme right.

boring countries, and it will not sustain a loss to any country. We want to use these relations for the benefits of strengthening relations between South Asian and Central Asian countries. Afghanistan wants to function as a linking bridge among Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia and Middle East. Once more I extend my warm welcome Foreign Minister. ■

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER PRANAB MUKHERJEE IN KABUL



EAM at the handing over ceremony of Polyclinic block of IGICH with Dr. Faizullah Kakar, Acting Minister of Health, left, and Dr. Abdul Salam Jalali, President, IGICH, Kabul, right.



EAM Pranab Mukherjee at the naming ceremony of 'Indira Gandhi Street' with Mayor of Kabul Eng. Rohullah Aman.



EAM Mukherjee and the Indian Ambassador in Afghanistan Rakesh Sood at an interaction with the Indian community.