

Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meet

Conjoint with the Afghanistan Development Forum (ADF) meeting from April 29-30, was held the fifth meeting of the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB-V) in Kabul on May 1. The Indian team for ADF led by Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Rakesh Sood, also participated at the JCMB-V.

The JCMB was set up as a central mechanism between the Afghan government and international community to resolve strategic issues, ensure greater coherence of efforts and provide high-level political support for the implementation of the London Compact.

With a life span of five years until March 2011, in line with the life span of the London Compact, it succeeds the Bonn Agreement and lays out a framework for international engagement with Afghanistan through a series of benchmarks for consolidating peace, strengthening institutional and human capacities and pursuing political, economic and social development.

The JCMB structure comprising eight consultative groups based on the eight Afghanistan National Development Strategy sub-pillars (security; governance; rule of law and human rights; infrastructure; education; health; agriculture and rural development; social protection; and economic governance and private sector development), 28 working groups, 33 sub-working groups and five cross cutting thematic groups (on gender equity, counter-narcotics, regional cooperation, environment and anti-corruption), is designed to ensure wide participation in the development of the strategies, prioritisation of activities as well as a feedback on the overall approach.

The inaugural meeting of JCMB was held on April 30, 2006 in Kabul and further meetings were held on July 30, 2006 (Kabul), November 12, 2006 (Kabul) and January 31, 2007, in Berlin.

The JCMB-V meeting in Kabul found the London Compact on track with momentum in developing sectoral strategies for attaining its benchmarks and finalising the Afghanistan National Development Strategy by mid-2008.

While progress was noted in healthcare, education, community projects, microfinance, government revenue collection and the modernization of the Afghan National Army, the need was felt for accelerating work on turning initial outputs into meaningful changes.

The deteriorating security situation in



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south and south east of the country was noted as one of the main obstacles. The JCMB called on the Afghan government to draft a national anti-corruption strategy by October this year to simplify the electoral cycle within the next five months; to make efforts to implement the work plan on transitional justice launched in December last year; as also to focus more energy on implementation to ensure that the progress made becomes more evident on the ground.

It was also decided that the government recommendations for strengthening the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Group (DIAG) programme will be presented to the next JCMB meeting.

India maintained that it remained fully committed to the JCMB structures and processes. With respect to security, it fully appreciated the Afghan government's position that the challenge of insurgency, suicide attacks, bombing, poppy cultivation, cross-border security, corruption and growing dissidence among the Afghan people required both a robust regional and international political solution as well as a stronger internal military response.

At the same time, India also sensed that the palpable reality with respect to the prevailing security paradigm in Afghanistan needed to be reflected more realistically, for the stake holders to be able to come up with appropriate tactical responses to this strategic challenge — not just in terms of enforce-

ment, but also in terms of viable economic and developmental strategies. Cross border co-operation, in particular, needed to be strengthened through enhanced dialogue, greater intelligence sharing and more effective communication strategies.

Regional economic cooperation was one of the key thrust areas focused upon by India at JCMB-V. It felt that this sector, which was also an important benchmark of the London Compact as well as a strategic element of the Afghan National Development Strategy, was crucial in the reconstruction and donor-led development process of Afghanistan.

Several regional cooperation events had taken place since the Bonn Conference, including the Kabul (2005) and New Delhi (2006) Regional Economic Cooperation Conferences, which had provided a stimulus to regional integration.

Afghanistan had also been formally admitted as the eighth member of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation in April this year, which should yield significant dividends for Afghanistan, given its geo-strategic position as a central land bridge between South, Central and West Asia and China.

The future challenge would be in developing coordinated measures for the implementation of the programmes formulated in these regional processes covering cross-border terrorism, law enforcement, land transit as well as broader investment, trade and business issues.

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