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## Kabul celebrates International Students Day



Afghanistan's Minister of Communications Eng. Amirzay Sangin addressing the gathering on International Students Day at the Indian Embassy.



From right to left: Afghan Minister of Communications Eng. Amirzay Sangin, Minister of Commerce & Trade Dr. Amin Farhang, Ambassador Rakesh Sood, Deputy Minister of Higher Education Osman Baburi and Assistant Director of Cultural Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Habibyar.

**T**he auditorium of the Indian Embassy can easily hold scores of people. But its real test came on November 11, when around 300 Afghan alumni from different Indian institutions filled the big hall to capacity on the occasion of International Students Day.

Organised for the second successive year, the function was also attended by several dignitaries, including Minister of Communications Engineer Amirzay Sangin, Minister of Commerce and Trade Dr. Mir Muhammad Amin Farhang, Minister of Agriculture Obaidullah Ramin, Deputy Minister of Defence Gen. Nooristan, Deputy Minister of Finance Major Razaq Samadi and Afghan Ambassador to India Dr. Makdoom Raheen, along with the chairman of Independent Administrative Reforms & Civil Services Commission (IARSC) and senior officials from the ministries of agriculture, foreign affairs, public works, commerce and industry, higher education and education, besides Parliament and the office of the President.

The International Students Day is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. Maulana Azad, the first Minister of Education of post-Independent India, was instrumental in set-

ting up the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) — he also became its founder president. ICCR is the key governmental organisation promoting cultural relations between India and other countries. Under its scholarship programme, ICCR offers around 500 Afghan students unprecedented exposure to academic institutions in India every year.

Welcoming the enthusiastic audience for the second International Students Day, Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood said that since 2001, around 2,700 Afghan nationals have benefited from Indian scholarship and training programmes. Besides, special courses were conducted for diplomats, journalists, teachers, lawyers and doctors. To further strengthen ties between the two countries, Sood also suggested forming an alumni association to act as a platform for conducting outreach activities and seminars.

Speaking on the occasion, many Afghan dignitaries and invitees recalled their own student days and appreciated India's role in capacity building and development of human resources in Afghanistan. It reflected India's commitment to rebuilding Afghanistan, they said. Sangin praised India's role, especially in the field of technical assistance while Dr. Jalali, director of the Indira Gandhi Institute

of Child Health (IGICH), paid glowing tributes to India for its assistance in strengthening the country's medical services.

Afghan Ambassador to India Dr. Raheen termed the relations between India and Afghanistan as "special" and said that India's help in the country's education sector was demonstrative of this relationship.

Himself an alumni of the University of Pune, the First Deputy Minister of Defence, Gen. Nooristani, fondly recalled his student days and summed up the mood of the evening with a couplet:

*Ham fikr wa ham khayal  
banta hai dard-e-dil,*

*Kitne fasle ho zubanaon key darmiyan,  
Sach kya hai ya nahi hain,*

*Abhi is sawal par zari hai bahas falsafa  
dano key darmiyan*

("Let the debate among the philosophers continue on what is truth and what is not. Irrespective of distance among the languages, living and thinking together helps only to mitigate the emotional pain")

The function ended with a lively performance by 'Aryan Band', a popular Afghan music band. Aryan Band represented Afghanistan at the SAARC Band Festival from November 30 to December 1, in New Delhi. ■