

## India helps revive Afghan musical tradition, presents 19 instruments

**T**here has always been a strong interaction between the cultural traditions of India and Afghanistan. This intermingling and synthesis is reflected in the love for Indian music, art and films in Afghanistan. During the draconian rule of the Taliban, Afghanistan's rich musical legacy suffered a huge setback. The Taliban put stringent restrictions on music and art and a systematic destruction of musical instruments took place. After the dismantling of the Taliban regime, Indian films and music have regained their popularity.

As in other fields, as part of the restructuring aid, India has been contributing towards the restoration of the musical heritage of Afghanistan. This also finds reflection in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the field of media and information signed by Indian Information and Broadcasting Minister S. Jaipal Reddy and Afghan Minister for Information, Culture and Tourism Dr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen in February 2005 during Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to Delhi. One of the follow-up areas identified under the MoU has been the provision of musical instruments for Afghanistan.

In pursuance of this MoU, Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Rakesh Sood presented 19 musical instruments — Sarangi, Sarod, Harmonium, Tabla, Dholak, Sahnai, Rabab, Violin, Sitar, Pakhwaj, Dilruba, Surmandal and Metal Flute — to the Afghan Minister of Information, Culture & Tourism Dr. Raheen for the ministry's Music Training Centre in a ceremony held in the Afghan Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism on July 15.

Ambassador Sood pointed out that with years of war, the tradition of crafting musical instruments had almost vanished in Afghanistan. These instruments were manufactured in India, but this donation will stimulate a wider interest in classical music, which was an important part of the shared cultural tradition between Afghanistan and India.

India had earlier presented 216 musical instruments to the Radio and TV of Afghanistan in February 2002, 51 musical instruments — Sitar, Sarod, Tabla, Harmonium, Electric Tanpura, Sarangi, Pakhawaj, Santoor,



**Surmandal — a musical instrument — being presented by Afghan Minister of Information, Culture, Tourism & Youth Dr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen to singer Ustad Eltaf Hussain Sarahang who performed at a ceremony, where Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Rakesh Sood presented 19 musical instruments to Dr. Raheen at the Afghan Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism on July 15.**

Shehnai and sound system — to Kabul University for its faculty of Fine Arts on April 23, 2003; and a consignment of musical instruments — Digital Piano, Flute, Piccolo Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone, Trumpet, Kornet, French Horn/Cornino, Baritone, Trambon, Three Parda, Bass, Jhang Cymbal Metronome and Congo — gifted to the Ceremonial Band of the Presidential Guard of Afghanistan on June 15, 2003.

More recently, a set of 32 instruments — eight each of Rababs, Dilrubas, Tabla and Harmonium — was donated to the Aga Khan Trust for Culture on October 1, 2005, and a set of musical instruments handed over to the Ministry of Information & Culture during the visit of Pradeep Singh, Additional Secretary, Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, to Afghanistan from October 25 to 29, 2005.

The event was also marked by a ghazal presentation by Ustad Eltaf Hussain Sarahang, one of the outstanding exponents of the Patiala Gharana, who embodies in his vibrant persona a visual symbol of the synthesis of the Afghan and Indian cultural traditions. ■

## CPWD team visits Afghanistan to discuss plans for Parliament building

**D**uring the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Afghanistan, on August 28-29, 2005, he announced the building of the new Afghan Parliament complex, as part of India's developmental assistance for Afghanistan. The project is being implemented by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) — a Government of India undertaking.

In pursuance of this, a team from CPWD comprising of A. Chakrabarti, Chief Engineer, and T.K. Sinha, Chief Architect, visited Kabul from July 17 to 20 for presentation and discussions on the detailed drawings prepared for the new Parliament building and service block, based on the conceptual plans finalised earlier. The financial costs will be around \$70 million.

The CPWD team had detailed discussions with Eng. Mohammad Yousaf Pashtun, Minister for Urban Development & Housing, Dr. Jalalzada, Deputy Minister of Public Works,



**Seen in the photo from right to left: Central Public Works Department (CPWD) project director Ajay Agarwal; Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Rakesh Sood; Deputy Speaker of Afghan Parliament Fawzia Koofi (standing); Senate President Hazrat Sebghatullah Mojaddidi; and Afghan Parliament Speaker Mohammad Yunus Qanooni at a detailed presentation of the plan for the new Afghan Parliament building, on July 19.**

and the team of architects and engineers of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. A detailed presentation of the new Parliament

building and its complex was also made to Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, President, Wolesi Jirga, and Hazrat Sebghatullah Mojaddidi, Chairman, Meshrano Jirga, on July 19. Other senior officers of the Parliament Secretariat were also present at the presentation.

On the concluding discussions with Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Rakesh Sood and Eng. Mohammad Yousaf Pashtun the need for the timeframe for finalising and freezing of plans for the new building was emphasised so that the target of completion of the complex before the end of the term of the present Parliament could be achieved.

It was decided that the actual construction should commence in March 2007 after the winter season in Kabul during which no construction activity is feasible. It was also decided that before the March 2007 timeframe, all other aspects, including final architectural plans and drawings, should be finalised. ■