

AFGHANISTAN RESIDENT MISSION, ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

WORK TO START ON REBUILDING ROAD IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN

KABUL, Afghanistan (2 April 2008) – Work will start in May to rebuild a road from Mazar-i-Sharif to Dari Suf, part of a plan to reconstruct an essential north-south transport artery through central Afghanistan.

President Hamid Karzai, Cabinet ministers, and Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director Mr. Craig Steffensen inaugurated the project in a ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday for the 140 kilometer road project in Mazar-i-Sharif city in Balkh province.

The project will cost \$138 million. ADB is providing \$118 million – a \$78 million loan and \$60 million in grants, including \$20 million from the government of Japan. Work on the road is scheduled to start by mid-May. About 70 kilometers of the road is dirt, while the rest will be newly built. The project is expected to be completed by November 2010.

The Minister of Public Works H.E. Sohrab Ali Saffary said “This inauguration is another step forward in the development of Afghanistan and a fulfillment of promises made to the people of Afghanistan by their Government. The 140 kilometer north-south road corridor project will enhance economic growth and act as a bridge between the provinces of the two diverse regions of the country.”

Mr. Steffensen noted that the project would have a positive impact on security.

“The improved road will provide a vital north-south link, extending the reach of the central government to remote provinces,” he said.

The project will dramatically decrease travel times, as well as providing better access to health care, education, and other services to local residents, most of whom are impoverished.

ADB has been heavily involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan’s roads. Last year, it provided a \$176 million grant for rebuilding the last remaining section of the Ring Road between western towns of Bala Murghab and Amalick.

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development, and good governance. Established in 1966, it is owned by 67 members – 48 from the region. In 2007, it approved \$10.1 billion of loans, \$673 million of grant projects, and technical assistance amounting to \$243 million.

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