



PRESS RELEASE

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New India-Afghanistan fair promotes innovation partnership

BALKH, AFGHANISTAN – Representatives of dozens of regional businesses and assistance groups met on Tuesday at an India-Afghanistan trade fair in the northern Afghan Province of Balkh.

More than 600 participants attended the exhibition, where 24 Indian and 25 Afghan companies and individual developers showcased innovations.

The second India-Afghanistan Innovation Partnership Fair in Balkh ran for two days. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan and Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) were the main organizers.

Participants promoted new technologies and management techniques for agriculture, clean energy, education, health, mining and small and medium businesses. Organizers said the fair was tailored to bring Afghan individuals and organizations best-positioned to forge innovative, meaningful business partnerships with their Indian counterparts.

“India and Afghanistan are natural trading partners, and it makes great sense to support that relationship,” said USAID Afghanistan Mission Director William Hammink. “Innovation can be a strong foundation for powerful economic growth in both countries.”

Fair promoters said they hoped to bring together actors within Afghanistan’s “social innovation ecosystem” – meaning inventors, social-venture capitalists, angel investors, donors, service providers and corporate foundations – to stimulate innovation-led development.

“The fair’s goal is to provide greater opportunities to NGOs and private sector organizations in Afghanistan to improve the quality of life,” said BCCI Chairman Arash Younosi.

Since 2003, combined domestic and international investment in Afghanistan has sky rocketed from \$9 million to \$2 billion annually. The country’s agriculture, health, construction, mining and manufacturing sectors are absorbing the lion’s share of the investment capital, Younosi said.

“Innovative solutions have helped India increase agriculture production, educate many more people in rural India and prevent diseases, such as tuberculosis,” said diplomat Viraj Singh, India’s Deputy Chief of Mission, Afghanistan. “This innovation partnership will help Afghanistan in doing the same.”

For more information about USAID’s programs and interview requests, please contact: Senior Development, Outreach and Communications Officer Stefan Korshak (0702-626255) KabulAIDdoc@usaid.gov, <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov>

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