German Cooperation with Afghanistan

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Newly asphalted road in Balkh Province open for safer and faster traffic

Mazar-e-Sharif, 16 March 2016 - Today, 11 kilometres of rehabilitated and upgraded road between the Balkh city intersection and Bangala bridge officially opened for traffic after being handed over to the Balkh Provincial Government.

Before the roadworks, the road between Balkh and-Bangala was a dusty gravel track. It was extremely narrow passing through villages and unfit to bear much motor traffic. 100,000 inhabitants in the many villages along the road were not able to reach Mazar-e-Sharif safely or quickly. With the new improvements to the road, they now have better access to the provincial capital city. Patients can reach hospitals quicker, children can now go to schools and goods can now reach markets on time.

At the opening ceremony, Atta Mohammed Noor, Governor of Balkh Province, emphasized the technical quality of the work done. The Balkh-Bangala road will help residents in the remote districts reach hospital, schools and local markets in Mazar-e-Sharif. On behalf of Balkh province, he also expressed thanks to Afghan-German cooperation for its continuous support.

The Afghan-German cooperation representative emphasized that the completed road construction is proof that a province can plan and manage certain projects on its own using proprietary funds. He thanked the provincial department of the Ministry of Public Works for successfully negotiating project implementation with all stake-holders and thus contributing to building up the population's trust in the Afghan state. He assured that the Afghan-German cooperation programme for implementing this type of project managed on the provincial level would continue.

The costs of construction amounted to €3.32 million (over AFN 225 million) and were funded by the German government through KFW Development Bank. The project was carried out as part of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), an open and flexible programme that aims at improving the socio-economic infra-structure in Afghanistan's northern provinces and at improving the ability of local government to plan and implement projects.

The Balkh-Bangala road project was selected by the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) in accordance with the developmental priorities of Balkh province. Balkh Public Works Department directly supervised the work, in close coordination with RIDF engineers.

The construction work started in March 2013, with upgrading of the existing gravel road to an asphalt surface, construction and rehabilitation of culverts and side drainages along the existing road alignment. Since completion of the roadworks in June 2015, the road is now wider, with an improved asphalted surface and reinforced with retaining and flood protection structures. The newly rehabilitated road allows safer and faster passage for heavy traffic, significantly reducing travel time between Balkh and the village of Bangala. It directly benefits the population of Balkh district and the province capital Balkh, with easier access to markets and public services.

The RIDF is commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and funded through KfW Development Bank and implemented by Joint Venture Grontmij-GOPA-INTEGRATION, in partnership with the Afghan Ministries of Finance, Economy, Energy and Water, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Education, Public Works and various provincial institutions. It is currently implementing infrastructure projects in the provinces of Balkh, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Samangan and Takhar.

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For further information please contact: pr-unit-afghanistan@giz.de