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## New Keshim-Faizabad Road Brings Business and Prosperity

**BADAKHSHAN PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN | JUNE 20, 2012** – The scenic Keshim-to-Faizabad road was inaugurated yesterday by U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Afghan Minister of Public Works Engineer Najibullah Aoudgan, Governor of Badakhshan Shah Waliullah Adeb and other U.S. and Afghan officials.

The road, which traces sections of the Old Silk Road and is the closest national highway to the border with China, stretches 103 kilometers across the south side of the Kokcha and Keshim rivers, the Hindu Kush and Pamir mountain ranges, alluvial plains, and grassy farmlands, and connects the Keshim District to the capital, Faizabad. The road has nine bridges, more than 600 culverts, and used 260,000 tons of asphalt in its construction.

The new road has reduced the travel time between Keshim and Faizabad from approximately 7.5 to 1-1.5 hours and is now used by almost 1,600 vehicles a day, vastly facilitating travel for commercial, educational, and health care purposes in the region. The improved conditions of the road have sharply reduced operating costs, allowing goods to get to markets more quickly and thereby increasing trade opportunities in the region and facilitating a boom in petrol stations, market shops and housing construction. Because of reduced travel times, the 1,200 girls who attend Girls School Number 1 in Faizabad now have a greater chance of attending a university. Medical improvements due to the road are also evident. Patient loads have doubled in the past two years, as the road has facilitated the ability of midwives and health practitioners to reach clinics in the area, by vehicle, as opposed to by donkey or horse. The road also enables greater access to the UNICEF-sponsored hospital in Faizabad for women with at-risk pregnancies.

As Ambassador Crocker noted, the construction of this road is also intended to have a positive impact on security in the region: “The inauguration of this highway comes at an important time, for both Afghanistan and the United States. The increased security it helps facilitate will assist the Afghan National Security Forces as they takeover more responsibility across the country.”

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) undertook the reconstruction of the road in 2009 in close cooperation with Afghan Ministry of Public Works. The reconstruction was completed in September 2010. For almost two years now, the newly constructed road has been bringing considerable improvements in the lives of Badakhshan residents. ###

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