

## India, Afghanistan sign three accords, to boost trade

New Delhi: India and Afghanistan Monday deepened their political and economic [ties](#) by signing three [accords](#) on education exchange, rural development and quality control, and pushing for greater two-way trade between them.

The three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed at the Hyderabad House here Monday afternoon in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and [Afghan](#) President Hamid Karzai.

Karzai, who is accompanied by a large business delegation, also asked Indian businesses to invest in Afghanistan at a meet organised by the country's premier industrial and trade bodies.

Manmohan Singh has offered to consider extending \$50 million [line of credit](#) facility to promote trade and [investment](#) between the two countries.

Omar Zakhilwal, chief executive officer of Afghan Investment Support Agency (AISA), made a strong pitch for attracting Indian business by highlighting myriad [attractions](#) of his country as a new [hub](#) of investment.

While Afghanistan's [international trade](#) had grown to \$5 billion in 2005, India, despite its huge potential and geographic proximity, accounted for just \$200 million, he said.

Karzai will inaugurate the first-ever [Festival](#) of Afghanistan in India, which would showcase Afghan handicrafts and culture to attract Indian tourists to the picturesque country.

The MoU on cooperation in education was signed between Human Resource Minister Arjun Singh and Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, on behalf of his country's ministry of higher education.

A joint working group will be constituted to implement this accord.

The pact envisages an all-encompassing cooperation between the educational institutions of the two countries and includes exchange of research materials, publications, educational literature and teaching aids; organisation of training programmes for educational administrators and teachers; and exchange of scholars, teachers, academic, experts and students.

It also involves arrangements between institutions of higher learning for research, development of programmes between institutions of technical, vocational and higher education and mutual assistance in the fields of information technology and computer science.

The MoU on rural development, signed by Rural Development Minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Hanif Atmar, will promote technical cooperation in development and maintenance of rural connectivity and rural water supply.

It aims at generating employment through the development of rural infrastructure and nurturing sector-specific human resource development.

The MoU on cooperation on standardisation was signed between Svayam Prakash Sharma, director general of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Abdul Hai Khurasani, Charge d' Affaires of the Afghan embassy.

This accord involves enhancing and strengthening technical cooperation in the fields of standardisation, certification, testing, measurement and quality assurance systems to promote greater exchange of information and expertise between the BIS and Afghanistan National Standardisation Authority