

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind

# Daily Outlook

## AFGHANISTAN

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## Uncontrolled Poppy Cultivation

**K**hat, a civil society organization, disclosed on Sunday, August 13, 2017 that poppy has been cultivated on more than 20,000 acres of land in northern Balkh province. The organization also claimed that more than 336 tons of crops' yield have been collected. This is really alarming and it points at the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. And, as Khat believes, poppy cultivation has a direct link with insecurity and terrorism; therefore, there are possibilities that crop yield under discussion will most likely fuel insecurity and terrorism in the times to come.

As a matter of fact, poppy cultivation and narcotics have been Afghanistan's major concern and, on many occasions, the country has topped the list in this regard. Yet, the attitude and seriousness through which this problem is being tackled is miserable.

Different studies have shown that the fight against narcotics and policies in this regard have been only superficial and illusive over the past 16 years. They also reveal that the discussions held regarding policies making for elimination of narcotics production in the country remain confusing and ambiguous.

And most of people with poor economy in rural areas grow poppy due to its multi-seasonal harvests and higher income. Moreover, it is not wondering that policymakers and the international community are unaware about the facts in rural areas because they cannot go out of Kabul city, they even cannot go out of their residence.

With such scenario in hand, what can be expected of the outcome of the efforts that are being made in the name of 'fight against narcotics'? In fact, poppy cultivation and its smuggling are linked with the networks of organized crime in the country that further extends to international mafia and drug dealing and they have their strong backers in the international drug market and national authorities who appear to be guardians of the nation. But one of the most alarming and unfortunate facts is that they have their links with the terrorist networks in the country. The growing insurgency and expanding networks of terrorism suggest that the terrorists have strong financial support and currently there are many reports that disclose the fact that the terrorist networks receive most of their funding from the same source.

The situation would not be difficult to handle if it was limited only to farmers but the fact is that the farmers are not alone to benefit from the rising prices and the rise in production; rather farmers take a negligible part of it while most of the income goes to the networks that manage its filthy business. And it is not concealed from knowing minds that the terrorist networks have a lion's share in such income.

It is believed that most of the cultivation is concentrated in southern Afghan provinces, and heartland of the Taliban-led insurgency, where the government does not seem to have much control. However, as the above report depicts, poppy cultivation is spreading in other parts of the country as well.

This clearly suggests that there is connection between the poppy business and the growing insurgency. Definitely, the poppy business in Afghanistan is well-knit in the larger network of organized crime. But unfortunately, the measures that have been carried out to counter the growth of this menace have not been comprehensive and serious. It is even believed that the important figures are involved in backing this business that should, otherwise, have the responsibility to counter them. And the growing corruption and negligence of responsibility in the country does not let the government notice such realities. Though Afghanistan has been under international pressure to take notice of growing poppy cultivation, it is yet to hit the bull's eye in this regard. Moreover, there have been technical and financial assistance from the international community to help Afghanistan eradicate this evil, but most of it goes to the pockets of rampant corruption.

So, the menace of poppy cultivation is determined to influence the country in various ways. It, on one side, is making drugs available to a large number of people, who are both intentionally and unintentionally becoming addict to it and becoming responsible for giving birth to different social problems. On the other hand, it is providing the fuel for insurgency as it is bound to benefit the terrorist networks in the country that largely depend on such sources of income after losing support from elsewhere. Government authorities in this regard have to get very much serious and try to take concrete steps to make sure that the production is reduced to a considerable extent.

Destroying the crops is one of the most practical steps at the present scenario and can to a very great extent discourage the poppy cultivation but it has certain complexities with itself. For the long-lasting solution it is preferable that the government must try to facilitate the farmers and landowners the opportunity of growing alternate crops; particularly, saffron can be the best substitute crop.

Moreover, corruption, in this regard, must not be tolerated in any condition, as it is the matter that has been influencing the entire nation and would keep on influencing many generations to come.

The relevant authorities must consider their responsibilities and play their part in extracting the nation out of this evil; otherwise it would be too late to mend anything.



## Speech of H.E Muhammad Sarwar Danish, Second Vice-President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the Occasion of 70th Independence Day of the Republic of India

**Y**our Excellency Mr. Manpreet Vohra the Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, respected members of Afghanistan Cabinet and the esteemed Members of Parliament, Ambassadors and Members of Diplomatic Corps, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, hello to everyone!

It is a great pleasure to attend, on behalf of Afghan government and nation, at the 70th anniversary of independence of our friendly country of India here at its Embassy in Kabul. First of all, I want to congratulate the national day of Indian Independence to the respected government and people of India, especially to His Excellency Ram Nath Kovind, the President, His Excellency Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, and also to Ambassador Vohra; and wish more progress and welfare for the great people and country of India.

As the second most populous country of the world, biggest democracy, and one of the ten top industrial countries, India enjoys a rich civilization, culture and history and has very important political impact on regional and international developments. We in Afghanistan are honored to have very friendly ties with such a country. Bilateral ties between the two countries go back to thousands of years and since then we have had considerable commercial, cultural and scientific exchanges and numerous figures among our historical and cultural personalities make our common heritage. In recent years, especially after the fall of Taliban, these ties witnessed more expansion and the volume of Indian assistance for reconstruction of Afghanistan has been very significant. Salma Dam, as a large national project is named Afghan-India Friendship Dam to be a sign of mutual respect and friendship. Also, construction of the new building for Afghanistan Parliament and signature of Chabahar trilateral agreement among India, Afghanistan and Iran in May 2016 and India's 500 million Dollars investment for expansion of this international port are other good examples of India's good support to Afghanistan. India's educational scholarships for Afghan students is yet another effective assistance to make a better future for Afghanistan, and recent opening of the air corridor that is used to export Afghan goods to India is also a positive move towards strengthening commercial ties between the two countries. Unfortunately, terrorism has become a major regional and global challenge. Afghan government has always requested all countries in the region to help us in our fight against terrorism and has taken the first honest steps itself for such cooperation. India is also a victim of terrorism like Afghanistan and faced many damages as a result. Using this opportunity, I want to thank the Indian government because of its continuous support to us in our anti-terror fight. We also thank the international community, and most notably the United States of America, the European Union, the NATO and United Nations, and other international organizations and friendly countries that stand by the Afghan nation in fighting terrorism and support policies and development programs of the government of Afghanistan.

This is true that Afghanistan is facing an imposed war at the fore front of fight against terrorism and our security forces and civilians become victims of savage terrorist attacks, but in principle, our policy is founded on an economy-based politics and not a security-based one. Countries of the region, especially our neighbors should pay attention to this important point that our policies and politics should not be security-based. If all countries of the region, don't define our national interests based on regional integration, economic development, and expansion of commercial and economic ties and don't use each other's large geographic and economic capacities, our nations will never face lasting stability and security and cannot achieve high levels of development and economic welfare. Afghanistan was among the main centers of the famous Silk Road and using its geo-strategic location as the Heart of Asia connects East Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and South Asia

and finally connects all these four regions to Europe. Although Afghanistan is facing economic hardship, but it fortunately enjoys a very important geo-politic and geo-economic location and has enormous natural and mineral resources.

In the last two years, we have taken important steps towards regional connection through designing and implementing regional projects. I want to briefly name some of them: start of CASA 1000 project > start of TAPI gas pipeline project > opening of Aqina-Atamurad railway > opening of railway between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan > opening of railway between Iran and Afghanistan > design of railway between China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran <and> signature of trilateral agreement on Chabahar Port.

I should mention, that in this regards, one of the main problems in improvement of trade between the two important regions of Central Asia and South Asia is the issue of distance that causes high costs for transportation. This is while India is now the 5th largest consumer of energy in the world and according to projections, it is going to be the 3rd largest in 2030. Also, Pakistan's need to energy is going to multiply in the coming years. On the other hand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia have rich energy sources.

Keeping this in mind, Afghanistan offers the shortest and cheapest connection route and the best energy corridors between these two regions. According to a study by the Asian Development Bank in 2005 on the economic impacts of road corridors between Central Asia and South Asia through Afghanistan, if the 13,586 kilometers of the needed road corridors for regional trade between these two regions that includes 3,657 kilometers inside the Afghan territory is built, the regional trade will increase 160 percent and transit commerce in the whole region will increase by 111 percent. Similar to the issue of road corridors, Afghanistan is the best route for gas transportation and electric power transmission between Central Asia and South Asia. Therefore, Afghanistan has a good potential to be changed into a central market for energy through such connections. Such a market will be very important for both regions and significantly improve the economy of the whole surroundings. Therefore, we ask all the regional countries to join hands and cooperate for strengthening of regional integration that leads to regional economic improvement. As always said, doors of Afghanistan are open for all, and we welcome any positive measure or suggestions in this regards.

At the end, I want to congratulate once more the anniversary of India's independence - and using this opportunity, I want to send a message to the governments and nations of India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Anniversaries of independence of the three of our countries are very close together, namely, 14th and 15th and 19th of August. This is a beautiful and meaningful incidence. Let's make our hearts, thoughts, and politics closer together more than before. From the core of my hearts, I sincerely congratulate national independence days of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan to all these brotherly nations. There is no doubt that our happiness and sadness are interwoven in these three countries. Let's share our happiness and sadness together. We all are having a common fate. Let's take the needed steps together towards betterment and salvation of our people and towards enduring peace, stability and welfare in our region. I salute the holly souls of all those who made sacrifices for dignity, pride, freedom and independence of nations, specially the late leader of India's independence, the great Mahatma Gandhi, and also Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India after its independence.

*Long live friendship of Afghan-Indian friendship!  
Thank you for your attention!*

## A Dangerous Game of Chicken

By Yoon Young-kwan

**S**o far, the war between US President Donald Trump and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un over the latter's nuclear program has been fought only in words. But each turn of the rhetorical screw deepens the risk that, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, "jaw-jaw" could turn into "war-war." Last month, following North Korea's second intercontinental ballistic missile test of the summer, the United Nations Security Council unanimously agreed to impose new and even stricter sanctions on the tiny country. The response, reported in North Korean state-run media, was a pledge that "strategic steps accompanied by physical action will be taken mercilessly with the mobilization of all [North Korea's] national strength."

The next day, Trump went off script, asserting that further threats from North Korea would be met with "fire and fury like the world has never seen before." North Korea immediately did just that, threatening to carry out an "enveloping" strike on the US territory of Guam. Trump shot back that the US military is "locked and loaded."

And, indeed, as this exchange of rhetorical fire has unfolded, the US has reportedly been preparing revised military options for striking North Korea. More ominous, according to a confidential US intelligence report, North Korea has achieved the capability to miniaturize nuclear warheads, and may have as many as 60 bombs. The stakes are rising in Kim and Trump's game of chicken. It is unlikely that either North Korea or the US actually wants war. But, as the late English historian A.J.P. Taylor concluded, after studying eight great wars since the late eighteenth century, wars have often "sprung more from apprehension than from a lust for war or for conquest."

According to Taylor, many European wars "were started by a threatened power, which had nothing to gain by war and much to lose." If Taylor were alive to witness the current situation - characterized by fear-enhancing misperception, miscalculation, and overreaction - he would undoubtedly be feeling an alarming sense of déjà vu. The question now is: what can be done to avoid catastrophe?

For starters, both the US and North Korea will have to avoid cornering one another. During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, US President John F. Kennedy was firm in his stance that Soviet missiles would not be permitted in Cuba. But he knew better than to pursue a total American victory and a total Soviet defeat. Instead, Kennedy offered a deal that would protect Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's reputation in the eyes of Kremlin hawks: the US would withdraw its missiles from Turkey (which were superfluous already), in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. That pragmatic and courageous approach created the necessary space for the two leaders - neither of whom actually wanted a nuclear war - to retreat from the brink without losing face.

To bring today's crisis to a peaceful conclusion, Kim will have to tone down his aggression. But, for that to happen, the Trump administration needs to demonstrate clearly that its goal is not regime change, but policy change -

that is, denuclearization - in North Korea.

Unfortunately, the signals coming out of the US are still mixed. While Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's recent remarks on the crisis focused on diplomacy, CIA Director Mike Pompeo has mentioned regime change, and National Security Advisor General H.R. McMaster has raised the possibility of a preventive war.

While it is important to put pressure on Kim to bring him to the negotiating table, such pressure must be more carefully calibrated. If the US appears to be seeking regime change or a preemptive war, a panicked Kim will be more likely to lash out. The goal should be relative, not absolute, security for both sides.

To this end, it is crucial to maintain rigorous civilian control of the military. World War I broke out largely because of the militarization of the political decision-making process. By not taking national military-mobilization processes off of autopilot, European political leaders allowed for an international chain reaction to occur. Once the march to war had begun, there was not much room left for diplomacy.

Yet, far from making space for diplomacy, Trump adviser Sebastian Gorka recently told the press that, "The idea that Secretary Tillerson is going to discuss military matters is simply nonsensical." But why shouldn't America's top diplomat have significant influence over military matters? If this does not change soon, we may, as then-British Prime Minister David Lloyd George wrote of World War I, "[muddle] into war" yet again.

South Korean political leaders must also avoid being swept up by this intensifying war rhetoric. After North Korea's 2010 sinking of the Cheonan warship and bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island, the South Korean military toughened its rules of engagement. Now, South Korean military leaders are warning that if North Korea attacks again, it will face retaliation not just against the proximate source of those attacks, but against the North's command leadership. Much like Trump's threats, this policy is intended to deter North Korea, but it is more likely to fuel a rapid escalation of conflict.

China also has a key role to play. On June 10, 1994, at the peak of the first North Korean nuclear crisis, China informed Kim's father, Kim Jong-il, that it would no longer veto UN sanctions on North Korea, driving the elder Kim to adopt a less antagonistic position. China may be using a similar tactic today, as it declares publicly, via state media, that North Korea should not count on China's support in a military conflict of its own making.

Neither Trump nor Kim seems to have sufficient political capital to spearhead a shift from military threats to diplomatic solutions. Given the far-reaching risks posed by this rapidly escalating crisis, it may well be up to other stakeholders to take the lead. Will China act as the regional stabilizer it so often proclaims itself to be? President Xi Jinping is being tested in this crisis as much as Trump and Kim. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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