

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



December 05, 2015

## Dearth of Rudimentary Requirements

Though human beings require different types of needs in their lives, the needs to live alive are the most basic and important ones. These include food, cloth and shelter. Provided with these rudimentary requirements, human beings are able to pursue their other needs, objectives and goals. Fortunately, our planet earth is embellished with different sorts of resources and all these resources help human beings in acquiring their needs. Unfortunately, it is still weird to find millions of people without the basic needs in the world.

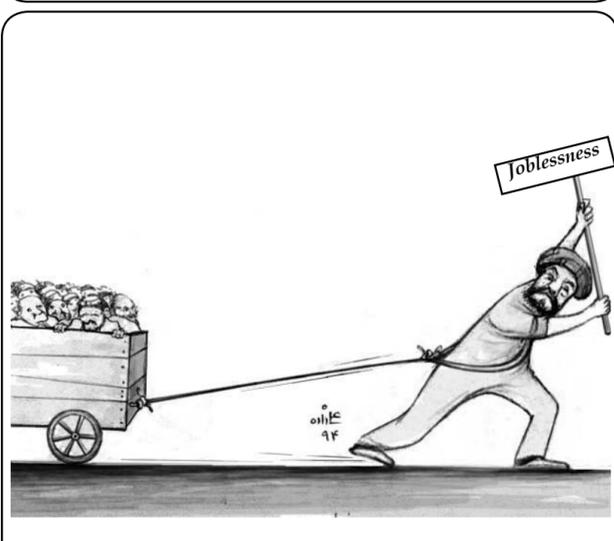
Why is it so that even after having large reservoirs of different resources human beings are not able to get even their basic requirements? Though human beings are the most prudent of all the creatures and they claim to be the best, they are not able to use these resources wisely. From the very first human beings, like all the other creatures, they have strived to find out ways of fulfilling their needs. They have travelled much in this regard and yet stand nowhere. They have formed societies and developed systems, yet they are not able to provide even the basic needs of life to the all the human beings. This is really very much pathetic.

Some of the thinkers suggest that human beings are bound by the law of nature to be so. They believe that all human beings may not be able to have their basic needs as only those among them are capable of doing so who are the fittest among them. They, in fact, strive to apply the biological theory of Charles Darwin in society - "struggle for survival, survival of the fittest." However, they forget to miss a very important point that the theory may apply for the struggle among different species with their environment, not among the members of the same specie for their personal benefits. If as specie human beings adopt the theory of evolution, they would find out ways of making human beings survive against the changing nature of their circumstances, not fighting one another to steal basic requirements. Applying the theory among the different human beings of the same society may at the end result in the extinction of the entire society.

The examples of ants and honeybees can be cited here for further explanation. They work in communities and support each other for gathering their basic requirements and afterwards use them when they need. They are always found to be working together; supporting each other in the chores that are useful for the community as a whole. They have exemplary discipline and portray the best example of collective life. They have every right to survive as 'specie' as they are the fittest as specie.

Ill-fatedly, human beings are not so. Human beings are divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. They are divided in the rich and the poor. The rich have all the requirements of lives and they enjoy all the luxuries as well while the poor suffer because of the lack of basic requirements. This is not nature that has decided such an arrangement; it is human beings themselves. The nature does not differentiate the human beings into rich and poor. The scented breeze in the nature blows for everyone without the distinction of race, community, poor and rich. The river that flows in nature provides everyone with same bewitching scene and cold water to drink. The fountains do not recognize the strata and the economic status. And even the natural calamities; like earthquakes, floods and deadly hurricanes destroys everyone equally. However, some may have developed better defense against all these calamities by the dint of their wealth, which is because of the economic system in society developed by human beings themselves, not the nature.

It is the socio-economic and political systems in the country that divide the human beings in different classes. These classes are distinguished with vivid and sharp boundaries. The differences found in these classes are gigantic and one wonders how human beings are really satisfied with so much distinctions. The examples are not difficult to find. There are millions of poor people in the world. They have not enough food to eat, no clean water to drink and no cloth to wear. The economic system developed by human beings, with the intentions to fulfill their requirements, has in fact cheated them and they are at a stage of misery. The class-based system and the vivid class disparities have neutralized the capacity of human beings to fulfill their basic requirements from the infinite resources. This has generated an imbalanced system. This imbalance has further created different sorts of evils in society. There are crimes and injustices because of the same system. Poor, because of negligence and lack of basic requirements are bound to break the law and the rich, because of their authority to mock the law and order system, break it. Poor, to quench the thirst of their children and fill their stomach with few morsels of food, break the law; while the rich, to quench their thirst for luxury and adventure, break it. This system cannot guarantee sustainability and has to change or to die one day. It is a widely accepted proverb that necessity is the mother of invention. Human necessities will compel them to design a better system - a system that would guarantee the providence of basic requirements to all the human beings on the planet earth.



## Reviving Afghan-Pak Relations

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The Afghan government is once again attempting to improve relations with Pakistan and, with Pakistan's help, revive the stalled peace efforts to bring the Taliban on negotiation table and end the bloody conflict in the country. According to reports, President Ashraf Ghani has met Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the Paris climate change summit to discuss the two country's bilateral relations and the peace process in Afghanistan. The president expressed optimism for improvement of relations between Kabul and Islamabad which could serve for as a "prelude for the resumption of peace talks with the Taliban". The President is expected to visit Pakistan in the coming days and attend the international gathering Heart of Asia on Afghanistan. The attempts to revive the peace talks are coming at a time when the war is unabatedly being waged in Afghanistan and various militant groups are operating across the country. In the post-Taliban era in Afghanistan, the Kabul-Islamabad relations have been shaped predominantly by the Afghan government's efforts to reach a peace deal with the Taliban. Afghanistan's relations with the neighboring Pakistan, who is believed to have influence over the Taliban leadership, have seen many ups and downs during past fourteen years of war and peace efforts in Afghanistan. President Karzai's administration lacked a sustainable and cohesive approach towards Pakistan's role in the Afghan peace efforts. At some points, Hamid Karzai chose to severely criticize Pakistan, accusing it of supporting the Taliban insurgency. This was while he also struggled to win Islamabad's backing for bringing the Taliban to peace negotiations. His approach, however, helped neither the peace process nor the war efforts against the insurgent groups.

Taking power in Afghanistan, the National Unity Government (NUG) did a U-turn over Afghanistan's relations with Pakistan. The relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan improved quickly but did not sustain for a long time. It was expected that NUG would resume formal peace talks with the Taliban with Pakistan's help in the process. However, the announcement of Taliban leader Mullah Omar's death led to a deep division among the Taliban leadership which culminated to split of the militant group into two bitter rival groups. The announcement of Mullah Omar's death and Mullah Mansoor's succession resulted to suspension of the peace efforts at a time when the government of Afghanistan was set to kick-start formal peace negotiations with the Taliban. With the bloody insurgent attacks during the fighting summer, the government of Afghanistan severely criticized Pakistan. This was the end of an era of improvement of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan which had the potential to kick-start formal peace talks with the Taliban. Since then, Afghan officials have continued to blame Pakistan for allowing its soil to be used by the militant groups waging the insurgency in Afghanistan. With various militant groups operating across the country, the prospect of the war efforts in the country seems to be uncertain more than

any time before. Both the Afghan and Pakistani governments assert that the war has no solution but through diplomatic means. However, the prospect for peace talks is also dim as the rival militant groups rarely seek unified agendas against the government of Afghanistan and the NATO alliance. As the President pointed to the issue, the peace talks may have a chance of success with only some of the militant groups who are willing to come to the table of negotiations, while for others, the war would inevitably continue for the years, and even decades, to come. This leaves the peace efforts open to a critical question: does any sort of peace talks which do not include all the militant groups sustain in the future?

Pakistan still is believed to have considerable influence over the main Taliban group led by Mullah Akhtar Mansoor. The country's role in the Afghan peace efforts, however, is looked into with skepticisms and disbeliefs. Afghan officials accuse Pakistan of not genuinely supporting the Afghan peace process. The recent overture by both Pakistan and President Ashraf Ghani to resume the halted improvements in relations with Pakistan shows how Afghan government sees Pakistan as an indispensable element in the peace talks with the Taliban and how important is the peace process for Pakistan as well. It is true that the peace efforts include only a part of the militant groups, Pakistan holds considerable influence over the main Taliban group. This is something the government of Afghanistan will count on the long term for reaching a peace deal with the Taliban.

The recent pause in improvement of relations between the two countries has left the peace efforts affected. The two countries have now a long path to go to restore sufficient trust and confidence for revival of the peace process in Afghanistan. The two countries need to overcome distrusts and reach a common ground over a sustainable peace process in Afghanistan. With emergence of many more militant groups in Afghanistan, reaching peace with the militant groups is difficult than ever. President Ghani's upcoming Pakistan trip provides a chance for reviving mutual confidence over the peace efforts in Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani has once again mentioned a timespan for improvement of relations between Kabul and Islamabad aimed at resuming the peace efforts. The two countries will need to reach a common ground over the peace initiative in Afghanistan that includes all important aspects of both the bilateral relations and the peace process in Afghanistan. Both sides need to refrain from blame games and focus on the task ahead. Pakistan needs to do all it can to convince the Taliban for a ceasefire. The country will be able to play a crucial role in the peace process if it manages to convince the Taliban for cease of the insurgency in Afghanistan. Every start of fighting seasons brings tensions into the relations between the two countries and directly harms the Afghan peace process. Both leaders need to ensure that wars and adverse security conditions do not severely affect the two countries' cooperation over the peace process.

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## Stopping the Child Killers

By Anita Zaidi

In far too many places around the world, the biggest child killers are caused by the smallest of organisms - the viruses, bacteria, and single cell parasites that cause diarrhea and pneumonia. Given the monumental advances that have been made in public health - both diseases are preventable and curable - this is inexcusable. It is imperative that all children, especially those most at risk, have access to life-saving health-care services.

According to UNICEF, pneumonia and diarrhea kill a full one-quarter of the 5.9 million children under the age of five who die each year. And a new report from the International Vaccine Access Center shows that nearly three-quarters of pneumonia and diarrhea deaths occur in just 15 countries. In these countries and elsewhere, such deaths are most prevalent within the poorest and most marginalized communities.

While the figures do reflect progress in recent decades, the tragedy is that the improvement could have been much larger, had governments not consistently succumbed to the temptation to focus on only one or two interventions at a time. To end child deaths from these diseases once and for all, governments must commit to scaling up simultaneously the full suite of interventions identified by the World Health Organization and UNICEF two years ago, in their integrated Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhea.

One critical - and extraordinarily cost-effective - intervention is the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, a practice that helps supports the development of a baby's immune system. As it stands, in 12 of the 15 countries suffering the most child deaths from pneumonia and diarrhea, exclusive breastfeeding rates fall short of the WHO's 50% global target.

Furthermore, governments must ensure that all children have access to life-saving vaccines. Though a vaccine for pneumococcal infection - a leading cause of pneumonia - was developed at the turn of the century, it is not included in routine immunization programs in five of the countries where pneumonia is most pervasive (Chad, China, India, Indonesia, and Somalia). This must change.

As for diarrhea, a comprehensive global study found that

moderate to severe cases are caused primarily by rotavirus, making that virus the leading killer of infants and toddlers worldwide. But, though rotavirus vaccines have been rolled out in 79 countries - a significant accomplishment - a staggering 74% of the world's infants remain unlikely to be inoculated this year. The vaccine's introduction for Indian infants next year will be a major milestone. But other Asian countries, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, have not yet decided whether to do the same.

When children contract diarrhea, they need access to the right treatments. Oral rehydration salts and zinc supplements not only drastically reduce mortality rates; they are also inexpensive to scale up. In treating pneumonia, access to antibiotics is essential.

The common denominator among these interventions is the need for sufficient well-trained health workers serving impoverished communities. Indeed, health workers are needed to guide mothers as they attempt to breastfeed - which is not always as easy as it sounds - and reinforce the importance of the practice. They are needed to deliver vaccines and treatments. And they are needed to dispense advice to families on how to protect their children from death by pneumonia, diarrhea, and other diseases, including through information about when to seek care if they do. Governments have a pivotal role to play in ensuring that the poorest and most marginalized communities have access to critical health services, by providing the right training, tools, supervision, funding, and logistical support for health workers. This - together with other critical interventions, such as the provision of clean water and effective sanitation facilities - will require a strong and sustained political commitment, one that civil society and the media, by keeping their governments accountable, can help to secure.

There are still far too many children around the world who do not have access to the essential health services they need to survive and thrive. Accelerating the discussion of proven, low-cost methods to prevent, treat, and cure pneumonia and diarrhea is critical to give all children the chance they deserve. Where you live should not determine whether you live. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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