

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



July 23, 2017

Mining Sector Faces Major Challenges

Though a ray of hope for economic stability in Afghanistan, mining sector faces major challenges and issues. These issues, if remain unsolved, can threaten the viability of the whole sector and ultimately result in its failure. Therefore, it is important that these issues should be solved as they arise so that the sector is able to flourish. However, doing so requires bold and confident steps towards betterment.

Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi, recently, expressed his concerns over descending incomes from the mining industry. He said in a statement, "Our mines are faced with many problems... Mining industry's incomes are being embezzled by powerful individuals. These incomes are national incomes and must be saved from embezzlement." This is really tragic as the sector is already facing issues regarding infrastructure and human resource development. Corruption in the sector will only invigorate the troubles. Meanwhile, it was also disclosed recently that Taliban militants in Afghanistan benefit much through illegal mining. Mining sector that can be a hope for Afghanistan and its people, is turning into a funding source for the militants, which is really very much unfortunate.

However, the attention of the government seems to be diverted towards other concerns. In fact, the whole mining sector seems to be suffering from the lack of attention by the government. The mining sector in Afghanistan, if boomed properly, can serve as a hope to boost Afghan economy to a large extent. Many years of instability and wars have influenced Afghan economy negatively.

According to certain calculations by US, Afghanistan may possess mineral deposits worth USD 1 trillion, which is really very large and includes the minerals like gold, iron ore, uranium and precious stones including emeralds. Unearthing all these mineral resources and processing them so that they are ready for use or export would definitely require large factories and a large number of human resources, which would provide the unemployed youth of the country an opportunity to avail employment.

Country's rich mine sector would ensure bolstering each and every sector of the country during the next 20 years but a proper administration is needed to protect the sector. It is really very imperative to understand that the large mineral reservoirs that remain untouched in our country can solve a large number of our problems but we are not able to avail such opportunity and mostly the way we administer it or plan to administer it is responsible for it. It is really necessary that the legislative and administrative mechanisms in the country must strive to formulate and pursue the laws and policies that are for the benefits of the country and that involve the consultations and advice from the technical and professional persons. It is an undeniable fact that the natural resources of the country have yet to be unearthed and there have not been even very basic work done in this regard. So, everything has to be started right from the very inception and that would require a lot of hard work and dedication.

Hopeful expectations in this regard have to be backed properly by determined and practical measures; otherwise intention may end up in smoke. Currently, Afghanistan has been highly dependent on international support to run its economic system. In the post withdrawal period there are possibilities that the international aid entering the country may reduce considerably. Though the international community has made promises that the support for the country may continue till 2024, the international political and economic circumstances point towards some other.

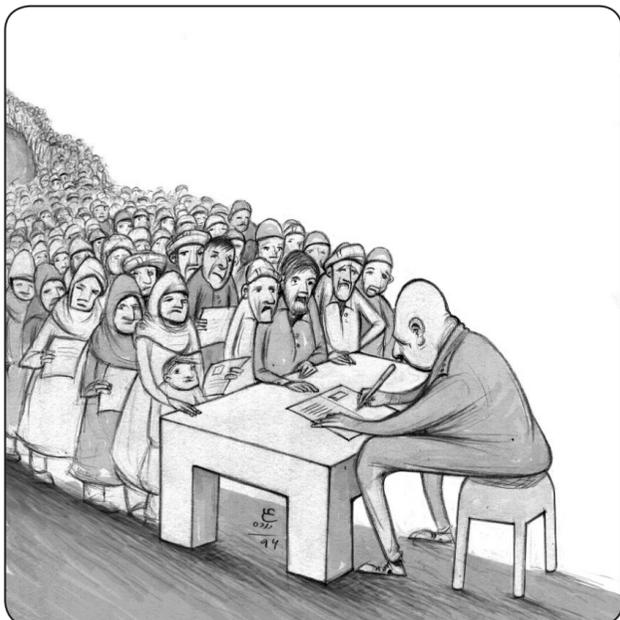
On the other hand, the security situation in the country has been going through a deteriorating trend. The terrorism seems to be rising in some of the most important parts of the country and the security situation still remains a question mark. Threatened by insecurity major projects regarding the mining sector have been postponed.

The ones that have been started are lagging behind their schedule. The international investors are losing their interest as they do not feel that their investment would bring fruit in such uncertain circumstances. In such circumstances, development of a strong mining sector seems a herculean task. The mining sector is not just about digging the minerals out of the earth. It includes a complete development of an infrastructure. It involves complicated processes, machinery and latest technology.

Definitely, generations of instability have incapacitated Afghanistan to work on these resources but at the same time it would require, at least a generation if not generations of stability to bring these resources in use. It is not impossible; neither there should be pessimism in this regard.

The important point is to remind the people of Afghanistan and most importantly the Afghan authorities to analyze the socio-political and politico-economic conditions rationally and try to comprehend the challenges appropriately.

After the challenges are understood appropriately, measures can be carried out to find out proper solution of the challenges. It is really encouraging that there are expectations from the mining sector, but these expectations must not be converted to fantasies rather they should be changed to realities through prudence and positive attitude.



Sprouting Seeds of Hope

(Short note on a trip to Bamyan and Daikundi provinces)

By: Sarwar Danish

Social and economic developments are a complicated and time-consuming process. Reaching development in its modern concept is in need of long time and certain conditions, in Afghanistan in general and central region of Hazarajat [mostly Hazara populated provinces] in particular. It is believed that three processes should be passed: First, political development in the concept of establishing a stable political system based on the rule of law and will of the people. Second, cultural development in the concept of evolution in cultural and social beliefs, mindsets and approaches. Economic development as the outcome of political and cultural developments is the third issue. These are the issues experienced in many countries with different environmental contexts. Today, there are many challenges and deep-seated obstacles before all the three aforementioned issues in Afghanistan. Likewise, development is affected by the general state in every nook and cranny of the country without exception. Similar to other provinces, deprivation and backwardness are rooted in the country's disorder in Hazarajat mainly the issues such as continuous political and cultural disruptions and protracted war and violence. The most important issues are instability in the rule of a political system which had to be responsible, based on rule of law and void of discriminatory and ethnic tendencies that are rooted in long history. Despite the evolution took place within the past one and half decade, there is still not a broad national trust based on a national understanding. Hence, we should not claim where we are and what we have done. We need to go all the steps gradually and carefully and with strong will and determination to gain development.

Apart from these general issues, if we view the realities of Hazara community in general and Bamyan and Daikundi provinces in particular, we will see a fundamental and unexpected change. I think Bamyan experienced the transition process well and very positively in the last 15 years. The seed of hope sowed in Bamyan province within the past years has grown into beautiful and gorgeous trees which will bear fruit in the near future. The people of the provincial capital and districts have reached a very good level of understanding and awareness and can well manage their own internal situation. Currently, Bamyan has come under the focus of all citizens, central government and even international institutions. The budget and development project of central government are more prominent for Bamyan than any other central regions and being implemented. As a young, hard-working and energetic provincial governor, Mr. Zahir has a great record within his two-year mission and justice suggests that everyone should appreciate his efforts.

The second issue I would like to stress regarding Bamyan is that we all, mainly the authorities of Bamyan local government and honorable Bamyan residents, should be aware that the underlying principle of comprehensive development lies in human development which relies on (higher) education and Bamyan must not be let decline in this regard.

However, the situation is a bit different in Daikundi province. First, it is a nascent province which was established 13 years ago and started from nothing. That is to say, people were completely unaware of governmental management. Therefore, the amount of budget spent in these years in the province and the projects that have been implemented, although significant, still not tangible due to the wide range of deprivation and needs. Secondly, this province is neither located on transit or trade route nor geographically connected to any of the ring roads in the country. It lacks a basic and local airport. It is also far from its nearest neighboring province of Bamyan ten hours by car and one hour and twenty minutes by helicopter. Similarly, its distance from Kabul is about one day by car and one and half hour by helicopter. It lacks all kinds of mines and resources, too.

Despite all these facts, the bud of hope is bearing fruit in this province. Nili, as newly-established city, is flourishing. The master of the urban plan has been approved for its urban issues, and urban landmarks and new and colorful local and governmental buildings are emerging from the heart of its rugged and tall cliffs and seen among the old and ancient castles. A governmental institute of higher education building has been established on one of the top hills and women's garden and their striking activities are seen on the other side. For the first time in this province, a ten-kilo meter asphalt road was inaugu-

rated which is scheduled to be completed from the Qunaj pass to the center of Punjab - Bamyan over the next three years that will be a highly significant project for this province. What is more important is that today, especially after the establishment of this province, all, including small girls and boys, teenagers and youths raise their voice as, "We are not war-monger. We are in favor of peace and reconciliation and security. First provide us book and school and second connect us to other cities of our country". These statements force tears of hope and enthusiasm in one's eyes on the one hand and introduce the will and character of those people on the other hand.

Although Daikundi lacks road, airport and electricity, it has heroines who participate in social, cultural and political activities shoulder by shoulder with men. They are also involved in trade and economic affairs and send their children - who are dressed in disheveled and messy clothes - to school. Currently, a number of school and university students of this province compete with the students of the country's major provinces. Likewise, male and female students of Daikundi province are studying in governmental and private universities at home, including Kabul, Herat, Qandahar, and Jalalabad, and abroad.

Some criticize that I had neither a significant project nor offered a package to my homeland during my trip in 20 July. But it should be noted that, while important projects were also officially launched by our various departments on this journey, the issue of inaugurating project was not in our agenda. Moreover, all government officials are not supposed to work or open project merely for their own birthplaces. On this trip, we sought to meet the people of the region on the thirteenth anniversary of the establishment of this province and invite a high-ranking government delegation, including six honorable ministers and a number of deputies and heads of departments, to the provincial capital for the first time so that more than ten key government agencies, which shoulder the responsibility of providing essential services, announce their plans in the presence of people, listen to people's words and opinions, see and touch the region's problems. In such a way, we would be able to arrange urgent priorities and the state's short and long-term plans for Daikundi in an accurate and factual way. Therefore, I wholeheartedly appreciate all provincial officials and people in the region, and all the friends who provided the groundwork for this journey and the honorable people of Daikundi province who welcomed the government's high delegation with open arms and great kindness. On the other hand, I feel extremely sad and sorry since I was not able to meet and have the guidance of personalities and active cultural and social groups, especially the great instructors and honorable religious scholars with a better chance and one-day opportunity. However, I am confident enough that the people's demands will be pursued more seriously on the basis of the evaluations took place on this trip.

By and large, I feel and touch all the deprivations of Daikundi province and the overwhelming problems in people's lives with my flesh, skin and bone. I was five when I started school with the struggle of my father in Ashterlay district of Daikundi province. I used to study nine months at school and attended the lesson of local mullah in winters. It used to be an urban school i.e. the first three years were taught there. Subsequently, it was promoted to primary, then secondary and finally high school. I studied there up to six grade and remember vividly the sweet-better memories of those days with all the details though almost 50 years have passed. Ill-fatedly, the schools were shut down with the coup of 7 Sawar [solar year] and during the jihad. Since 2002, these schools were gradually rehabilitated or re-established. Now I thank God that the people of this province, who are highly fan of knowledge and education, have taken high steps within the short period of 15 years.

I am sure that these buds of hope cultivated in the hearts and minds of these people will grow to strong, bulky and fruitful trees in the near future which will pave the ground not only for the all-round development of Daikundi province but also the country. It is also hoped that they will contribute to consolidating national unity, promote the spirit of brotherhood and equality, and build a new, prosperous and progressive Afghanistan along with other fellow citizens in other 33 provinces.

The above article written by the Second Vice President Sarwar Danish was first published in the Daily Afghanistan-e-Ma

The Gulf Crisis: A Battle of Megalomaniacs

By James M. Dorsey

In contrast to the UAE, Qatar has sought to position itself as the regional go-to go-between and mediator by maintaining relations not only with states but also a scale of Islamist, militant and rebel groups across the Middle East and northern Africa. It moreover embraced the popular Arab revolts and supported Islamist forces, with the Muslim Brotherhood in the lead that emerged as the most organized political force from the uprisings.

Qatar's support for the Brotherhood amounted to aligning itself with forces that were challenging Gulf regimes and that the UAE alongside Saudi Arabia was seeking to suppress. Qatar did so in the naive belief that it could encourage transition everywhere else without the waves of change washing up on its own shores.

Underlying the crisis in the Gulf are issues that go far beyond the place of small states in the international pecking order. The crisis shines a spotlight on key issues that governments have long sought to keep in the dark even though they complicate efforts to combat political violence, advance greater accountability and transparency, and ensure protection of basic human rights.

The crisis makes more difficult the perpetuation of the fact that the international community is unable to agree on a definition of what constitutes terrorism and basic human rights; and it also lays bare the long-muddled distinction between national security and the interests of parties in government - whether autocratic or democratically elected.

There can be little doubt that the diplomatic and economic boycott of Qatar was intended to put the idiosyncratic Gulf state on a dog leash. To do so, the two states need to ensure adherence by others to their definitions of national security and terrorism that includes non-violent groups advocating alternative systems of government they view as a threat to the survival of their regimes, as well as those calling for the respect of basic rights including freedom of the press and freedom of expression. In the case of Saudi Arabia, atheists too

are defined as terrorists.

The issue of a definition of terrorism is of course a national prerogative but it became acute in the Gulf with the visit of US President Donald J. Trump in May and his focus on combatting political violence. The crisis is in part a result of a long-standing failure of the US to get its allies in the region to agree on what constitutes terrorism and what does not.

The irony of the power struggle in the Gulf is that it involves, in more than one way, the pot blaming the kettle. The battle pits autocracies against one another. None of the protagonists advocates a more liberal system of government for its own people.

The crisis in the Gulf, beyond different strategies to build soft power as part of foreign and defense policy, is rooted in the histories of the independence of the region's states and concepts of national security that are defined by geography.

The focus on the Muslim Brotherhood is crucial to understanding the Gulf crisis because it goes to the core of the region's power dynamics. For starters, the role the Brotherhood plays in the make-up of Qatar differs fundamentally from that in other Gulf states. To understand Qatar, one has to take into account that it is a country sandwiched between two regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran, both of which it views as potential threats. It also is the only country besides the kingdom that adheres to Wahhabism even, if Qataris distinguish between its Wahhabism of the sea as opposed to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism of the land.

The Qataris looked at Saudi Arabia from the outset of independence and decided that their state would be everything that the kingdom was not. There would be no power-sharing agreement with religious scholars. In fact, Qatar until today boasts no prominent religious scholars beyond Yusuf Qaradawi, an Egyptian-born naturalized Qatari citizen.

Dr. James M. Dorsey is a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, co-director of the University of Würzburg's Institute for Fan Culture

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Moh. Reza Huwaida

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.