

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



June 13, 2015

World Day against Child Labor

June 12 is observed as the World Day against Child Labor. The day was launched by International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2002 so as to divert attentions on the imperative issue of child labor throughout the world and emphasize actions and efforts to eliminate this menace. Every year on this day the governments, NGOs, civil society organizations and media get active to highlight the plight of the child laborers and encourage governments and international organizations to take steps in this regard.

According to ILO there are around 215 million children around the world who are child laborers. They mostly work full time and do not get the opportunity to get education or play games and have some entertainment. They work in an inappropriate environment and are vulnerable to ill-treatment, crimes, violence, drug addiction and trafficking, and sexual abuse. Many of them do not get proper nutrition and medication. In short, they do not get the chance to live like children and have proper nourishment that can support them in becoming an active and positive member of the society.

World Day against Child Labor this year emphasizes on education to all children. It calls for:

- Free, compulsory and quality education for all children at least to the minimum age for admission to employment and action to reach those presently in child labor;
- New efforts to ensure that national policies on child labor and education are consistent and effective;
- Policies that ensure access to quality education and investment in the teaching profession.

Access to quality and free education can support the societies in combating the menace of child labor to a large extent. Therefore, the governments around the world must make sure to guarantee free education to as many children as possible so that they do not fall in the quagmire of child labor.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that have been suffering from economic instability and poverty to a large extent; therefore, many children fall victim to child labor, here. According to a rough calculation around 6 million children in Afghanistan into child labor and they are supporting their families economically instead of going to school. These children are not able to have access to education, either because of the financial problems or the traditional hatred of the parents for modern schooling system. The girls in this regard suffer even to more extreme levels. Moreover, the children who do not get a chance to be admitted in school are then sent out for labor so that they can prove to be a helping hand for their parents and in the process they are left at the mercy of the social evils.

Child laborers are exposed to crimes and maltreatment to a risky extent, especially the ones who are employed by shop-owners, mechanics and small firms. They are even put to violent treatment by their employers on pity matters. Further, another concerning factor regarding the plight of the children in Afghanistan is the growing number of child beggars.

Families, stricken with intense poverty, do not hesitate even to send their children for begging. Apart from that, there are professional beggars who utilize the helpless children for the begging purposes. The children are even abducted for the same purpose. The phenomenon of violence against children is multifaceted. It involves recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups.

The involvement of armed forces in this regard is really embarrassing. The recruitment that is carried out by militant groups is mostly for the purpose of carrying out suicide attacks through them, who because of their immaturity or because of the intense pressure do not understand the incentive of their actions.

There have been many incidents of suicide attacks in different parts of the country, wherein the attacker were below 16 years of age. Apart from that the children are also welcomed by the militant groups with the intention to have a cadre that they can train in accordance to their own will, within their training camps.

It is important that the menace of child labor should be tackled before it is too late. However, the situation does not seem to be getting well as the poverty seems to be strengthening its root in the country and the government is not doing enough to curb the situation. According to a statement by the president of All Afghanistan Federation of Trade Unions (AAFTU), Mohammad Liaqat Adil, "Child laborers are increasing and there are many reasons. First, the government has not done anything for them, which they must do; second, no investment took place in the country, which must be done; and the third one is the government does not pay attention to the wages of workers. All of these reason have caused the increase in child labor."

The proper nourishment of the children, their character development and their education are the most important considerations to contemplate on, if the government is really serious to safeguard the rights of the children. The same children are going to be the builders of future; their proper care should be ascertained through every possible means. Apart from the government the members of the society can also play a tremendous role in diminishing discrimination against the children, saving them from child labor, uplifting their morale and supporting them in becoming responsible members of the society.



The House of Representatives' Legal Tenure

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

With the Wolesi Jirga's tenure almost over, there are efforts underway to have the mandate of the Lower House of the parliament extended. According to reports, the leaders of the National Unity Government (NUG) along with representatives of other related agencies are set to discuss extension of the House of Representatives. The legal tenure of the Lower House of the parliament is to end in less than two weeks, while the government has failed to organize the parliamentary elections on time as envisaged by the constitution. With more than three months passing since President Ashraf Ghani established the Electoral Reform Commission to bring changes and reforms to the election bodies and the electoral procedures. However, the commission is yet to establish any reform agenda and it still remains unknown if the commission would bring any changes to Afghanistan's electoral system.

There have been growing concerns over the fate of Afghanistan's legislative branch of state and the much-awaited reforms to the electoral system in Afghanistan. Many involved parties including election monitoring organizations, political figures, government officials and activists have called on the government to end the arbitrary handling of the electoral reforms which has endangered the parliamentary elections. Reform to the electoral systems and procedures was one of the main components of an agreement mediated by US State Secretary John Kerry which led to formation of the Afghan National Unity Government. However, the leaders of the unity government have been unable of making compromises for overcoming their main differences regarding the nature of the reforms to the electoral system as well as authority and leadership of the members of the electoral reforms commission.

The leaders of the NUG have repeatedly assured that the electoral reforms would start soon and that the reforms would take place. However, the fate of the parliamentary elections is already in limbo as the legitimacy of the Wolesi Jirga would be inevitably questioned when it crosses beyond its legal term. There could be a daunting failure for the parliamentary elections if the leaders of the NUG fail to agree on a reform agenda immediately. Some sort of setbacks is already inevitable given the current conditions. There is no agreed agenda for reforms to the electoral system and there is no political will in the NUG for bringing the reforms. The international donors have already refused to provide the required funding for the parliamentary elections, objecting Afghan government's failure to implement reforms to the electoral system.

Afghanistan today is facing a multitude of challenges in security, economic and administrative areas. Adding another setback in the

state-building process would leave Afghanistan vulnerable if not derail the constitutional course of the country. There are different factors involved in the government's failure to establish a reform agenda and get preparations for the parliamentary elections. There is no firm commitment and political will from the NUG leaders to agree on a reform agenda for the electoral reforms commission. The nature of the power sharing arrangement in the national unity government has left the stakeholders of the government in unending power struggle. There have been differences not only over who should lead the commission responsible for proposing reforms but also about the nature of reforms in the electoral system, bodies and procedures.

On the other hand, the exacerbating security in the country have left the government officials preoccupied with tackling the deteriorating economic, security and day-to-day affairs of the country. On the other hand, public trust on the government for making reforms to the electoral system has been in decline. On their part, the international donors of Afghanistan, made their funding for the upcoming presidential elections conditional to the electoral reforms. Many of the involved parties including Western supporters of Afghanistan have ruled out holding the elections without the required reforms. All these factors worked in the same direction in putting the fate of the parliamentary elections in limbo with no reform plans established for the electoral reforms commission.

The parliamentary elections were meant to be a fair and sound election process so to avoid a problematic outcome such as the last year presidential elections. However, it is already clear that there would a potential setback regarding the electoral reforms and the forthcoming parliamentary elections. If there is no efficient management of the electoral politics, the setback in holding the parliamentary elections could mean political uncertainties, unconstitutionality in the political system, disruptions in legitimate governance and a crisis close to the last year protracted presidential election crisis for the country.

Any measure for the fate of the legislative branch of the government of Afghanistan will be potentially challenging. Extension of tenure of the current House is seen as a pragmatic solution for many, while from points of views of many others, such a solution is unconstitutional and illegal. On the other hand, in absence of a functioning legal branch in the country the whole state's legitimacy would be further undermined. The government must heed to the calls for bringing reforms to the electoral and holding the parliamentary elections as soon as possible.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at ahad.bahrami@gmail.com

Illiteracy Rendered Us Deprived

By Asmatyari

We inhabit in a society where the social status render the point of recognition than the rest of attributes. The remotest part of the country goes to the penniless and destitute people whose ballots does count but not their worst financial condition. The middle class get clustering in the rural part of the country and rich class lives in well equipped, appropriately administered and well facilitated urban part of the country. The part of land that encounters unequal distribution of wealth and property have toughened man earn their daily livelihood with ease and are left with only option to think of alternative way out to their endless sufferings.

Following the history of decade long bloody conflict, it is assumed the whole plot meant to push the ordinary but poor masses to endless subjugation. It is witnessed the former four decades of war have earned us nothing except countless miseries and devastation. The war destroyed economic infrastructures completely and dragged Afghanistan towards complete annulment. No significant progress has been made, albeit there have been international efforts to make Afghanistan's economy stand on its own feet, improve the living standard of people and create more job opportunities provided however the menace of corruption constantly depleted the rate of progress.

Being denied the right course and left stranding, the people chose to pursue unlawful means to acquire success -consequently the nuisance of manipulation of public resources began to escalate. Getting the right job done in a rightful means leads to desperation, unless a handsome sum of bribe or recommendation is arranged -on account of making corruption successfully make its way to all institution and public departments.

The masses constantly calling for economic relaxation, end to unemployment, better living facilities, peace, security and human rights protection are turned a deaf ear to, instead are assured of vague declaratives like, concrete measure are undertaken to bring eminent changes, committees are formed to assess the causes of terrorism and corruption, people will be given economic incentives, the country will be made a prosperous in the region. Irrespective of the aforementioned promises, not a single plan is put into action nor has any materialized within the desired course of time. The promises volatile enough, rises into the air within no time.

According to former report of World Bank estimates 36 percent of population have fallen below the poverty line. The Bank announced to support the government of national unity plans to solve this problem. The report reads Afghanistan one of the most impoverished nations in Asia and is only second to Bangladesh as Asia's poorest country. It is always eventually expected the gravity of poverty mostly wreaking the rural part of the country with urban localities not displaying a satisfactory outlook either.

When it comes to common commodities and amenities of daily use a wide disparity is found between rural and urban centers of the city. Reportedly, the poverty is most heavily concentrated in the rural areas of Afghanistan. While 90% of urban households have access to electricity, only 29% of rural households do. Additionally, 58% of urban households have access to safe water, but only 19% of rural homes do. The lowest rates of poverty occur in Afghanistan's urban areas. This state is not worse but the worst that discloses gravity of

equitable distribution of resources.

The inequitable and unfair distribution of resources has ever left the rural population underprivileged, underdeveloped and neglected. The findings of World Bank incriminate those living in rural areas have less access to education have a higher risk of living in poverty. In the meantime, the ministry of economy has started a survey to address the problems of those provinces that have more problems. I am sure these all undertakings will not go ahead of formal meetings and documentations.

We inhabit of third world do not get tired of overstating and claiming the prior most of scientific inventions by incriminating them to our ancestors. Conversely the fact is otherwise, seeing the Muslims countries with least spending on education. We have to learn it the country can never be dragged on the avenues of success unless education is prioritized. The report of WB underlies the gravest situation of education with minimal spending on this very sector. The report says that meager 36% of the poorest Afghans attend primary school, and 46% of the richest Afghans do. Additionally, 43% of boys are enrolled in primary school, while only 31% of girls are. It said that seven of out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, the female literacy rate is 1%. Even in Afghanistan's most educated province of Kabul, where the overall literacy rate is 47%, the female literacy reaches only 30%. To address the problem of dissemination of education, Afghanistan must come up with creating greater infrastructure in education sector. This only will help greater number of enrollments.

The natural nexus found between poverty and education is estimable -higher the literacy graph, greater is the economic independence of people. Occasionally the elevated level of poverty is associated with number of illiterate population. It is found greater educated population marks an upbeat increase in economical prosperity and creating enormous job opportunities -most of people get self-employed having learned wide varieties professional skills. The aforementioned statistics suggest allocation of greater resources on educational programs in Afghanistan can only bring positive signs of betterment and improvements. In order for more Afghans to be lifted out of poverty, they must have improved access to education. With better education, Afghans will have better opportunities to earn a higher income and lift themselves out of poverty.

If the government is crying of lack of revenues; can be done away with when the affairs of governance are streamlined and corruptions are restrained. The national and international financiers and donors are willing to extend their services, businesses and aids, provided the government ensures a corruption free and a transparent systems operating efficiently. The confidence installed in them, only then the government can attract the international investors -if safeguards to maltreatments are rendered. Following a transparent undertaking in governmental business, the financiers, donors and investors may actively contribute to poverty alleviation by creating job opportunities. The government is consequently held responsible to take poverty alleviating measures on a war footing by making the use of all possible steps.

Asmatyari is the permanent writer of Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at asmatyari@gmail.com

Chairman / Editor in Chief: Dr.Hussain Yasa

Vice Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Phone: +93 799 005 019/799 408 271/777 005 019

E-mail: mail@outlookafghanistan.com, outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Address: V-137, Street 6, Phase 4, Shahrak Omeed Sabz, Kabul, Afghanistan

Sub Office: Shora Road, Street 10, District 6, Kartey 3, Kabul, Afghanistan