

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



March 02, 2015

Endless Cycle of Corruption

Afghanistan stands among the poorest countries of world with more than 60 percent of its population living below or slightly above the line of poverty. The reason behind the failure to strengthen the backbone of Afghan economy is the severe security problems and deep-rooted corruption. It is anticipated the new government will work out a plan to eradicate this great menace. As the problem of security and corruption persist, there seems to be a declining chance of betterment, and people will still have to wait for actual prosperity. Afghanistan for long has been passing through war and bloodshed. The more than three decades of war have earned nothing except ruins, countless miseries and devastation for poor masses. The year's long war destroyed economic infrastructures completely and dragged Afghanistan towards annihilation. No significant progress has been made albeit elongated international efforts to revive Afghanistan's economy improve the living standard of people and create greater job opportunities provided that the menace of corruption constantly depleted the rate of progress is minimized.

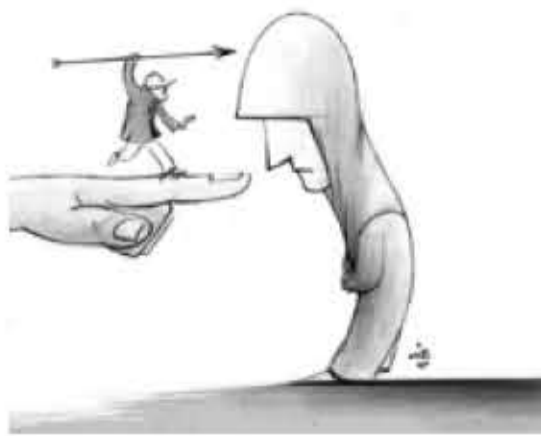
The 13-year international effort has failed to create job opportunities and millions of Afghans, today, are suffering the negative impacts of unemployment. The consistency of unemployment in the country is doing much to widen the gap between people and the government. Afghans, risking their lives, travel to other countries of the world to seek better living condition. In this way the work force of Afghanistan is utilized by other countries whilst Afghanistan itself is in dire need of reconstruction and development works. The first thing it can do is to root out corruption that seems to be aiding all sorts of crimes including insurgency.

The misuse, exploitation and maltreatment of public property, assets and a position of authority for fulfillment of an individual's cravings than collective needs and requirements, is an act of manipulation and corruption, going unchecked in our country. A number of influential personalities involved in money embezzlement from public offices, heinous crime against citizens and power misuse were given amnesty without being subjected to strict measures entailing answerability. This attitude of former government had discouraged new investments with remnants intended to downsizing and withdrawing a dire omen for progress of country needs immediate reversal by practical measures. This implies that the expanding role of government in development has placed the bureaucracy in a monopolistic position and has enhanced the opportunities for unlimited administrative misappropriation.

A similar reservation is highlighted formerly, by Integrity Watch Afghanistan, unearthing New Kabul Bank also suffering financial losses. The former Kabul Bank plunged into deep crisis after a run on deposits in 2010 when reports surfaced \$935 million had been stolen from the bank by its chief executives and stakeholders. According to investigation of head of Integrity Watch Afghanistan the government had so far recovered about a third (\$228 million) of the \$977 million stolen money has been recovered, over the past five years. The recovered money included \$179 million in cash and the rest in form of properties the government had seized from the accused. Following the case the government has sentenced to jail for five years the two former heads of the bank, founder Sher Khan Ferozi and former Chief Executive Haji Khalil Ferozi, who were convicted in the initial inquiry of taking \$810 million of the stolen money. Regrettably the head of Integrity Watch also declared the New Kabul Bank faced losses amounting to \$50 million and the losses had been on the increase.

This is a grave state of worsening affair that presses hard the already wrecked economy of Afghanistan and utter negligence of government to tackle the peril of corruption. This is an undeniable fact either government is unwilling or hapless before powerful power abusers. President Ghani had earlier avowed to re-open the inquiry into the theft from the bank, fulfilling a campaign promise to make fighting corruption a priority. Following that he has issued a presidential decree to prosecute the case but the concerned officials had done nothing till date. It's therefore the New Kabul Bank has also plunged into the depth of corruption. An identical apprehension is raised by Integrity Watch too.

Putting an end to this very issue requires committed leadership, owing to take serious and long lasting decisions against the elimination of the prevalent corruption. Seemingly, the unity government is all-encompassing government that contains every section of Afghan society; nonetheless it's frequently subjected to prolonged suspension over making critical decisions on significant issues, as witnessed at present relative to distribution of ministries. In spite of unexpected delays in cabinet formation, an end to prevalent corruption will render one of the foremost challenges for both president and chief executive. To accomplish that Mr. Ghani, who assumed the office in September, must first focus on getting a cabinet in place. However, accomplishment of significant tasks requires credible individuals hoisted for corresponding ministries, capable of ridding the departments out of calamities. Afghanistan needs a set of holistic and pragmatic reforms: firstly, focus on prevention and changing systems through changing values, creating a culture of professionalism and training; secondly, provision of adequate pay and ensuring deterrence; thirdly, identify government activities most prone to the problem of corruption and review both substantive law and administrative procedures; fourthly, enforce accountability mechanisms and learn from good practices and examples of others; fifthly, enact comprehensive anti-corruption legislation; sixthly, establish broad ownership of reforms, among others, by creating strong partnership with the civil society and the private sector; and lastly, make corruption high risk and low profit.



Afghanistan's Indispensable Attachment with Democracy

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

As we talk of the huge amount needed for the upcoming parliamentary elections, the debate about the effectiveness of democracy is also discussed on different forums. Same was the situation before and during the presidential elections and it was quite confusing for a common man as they saw that millions of dollars were spent by the election body to hold these elections. In the same way, millions more were spent by the candidates in their election campaigns and dozens of lives were lost in the process. It was the occasion when Taliban threatened to carry out massive attacks in the country and the latest statistics issued by the Ministry of Interior and our security forces, large scale military operations were launched in the country against the militants to foil their plans and hundreds of Taliban and anti-state militants were either killed or captured from almost all parts of the country. Even with all these financial and physical losses, there were large numbers of people who did not vote just because that they were not happy of any of the candidates. They were of the view that all the candidates were in the power in past as well and they did nothing for the betterment of people and taking such a massive risk to bring them into power again for no good reason was absolutely irrational and meaningless. In such circumstances, the bombastic words of democracy, democratic organs of government, importance of polls and others carried no meaning for them. That month was also the month of elections in the biggest democracy of the world, our neighboring country and loyal and old friend of Afghanistan, India. India deserves all the praise when they claim to be the biggest democracy of the world because managing such a big democracy is not easy in practice. It is the reason why, all the Indians feel extreme pride to be a part of 'the biggest democracy of the world'. But Indian elections are at the same time most lengthy and laborious. Just like our politicians and candidates, the candidates in India are also blamed of corruption, poll-rigging and many other malpractices in the elections but eyes of the world are riveted on these elections. At the same time, all the experts on Indian and international media talk in favor of these elections, ignoring the drawbacks and shortcomings. Reaching to this maturity of democracy and managing the democracy on such a grand level is not easy but except for a brief time of emergency of 1975-77, the country has always safeguarded its status of being democratic.

These were the examples from the comparatively underdeveloped or developing countries but democracy is not a clean practice even in the developed countries of the world. A common American is not much happy of the system of politics being run by the two major parties of the country in the United States. Elections in the United States are the most expensive in the world and billions of dollars are spent both by the government for the arrangements and by the presidential candidates for their election campaigns. It is no more a secret that presidential candidates get these donations from the large multinational organizations of the country and what do these business organizations get in return? It is a general perception that these organizations have strong influence on the legislation in the Congress and the more an organization donates, more it gets the influence to mold the legislation in its favor. The enormous economic bail-out plan after the economic downfall of 2008 by the Bush administration could not comfort the common public too much but it definitely provided with billions of dollars for the

banks, financial institutions and other business firms that had almost got bankrupt and it is also a sad reality that this economic disaster was also created by these business giants. In the study of political science, there has never been agreement by the political scientists to accept democracy a perfect system of government. One of the famous descriptions of democracy is given by the example of a cart which is being pulled in two opposite directions by horses and in this way, no horse is able to make any kind of journey. On the other hand, there has never been a nation to prove that democracy is the perfect system of government and political scientists also agree on it that it would never happen in future as well. But keeping aside the viewpoints and theories of political scientists, democracy has shown its performance in the arena of politics but not in the books of theory. A mere look at the different countries in the world reveals that democratic countries are the richest, most advanced in terms of science and technology, having more social liberties that promote confidence in the general public and groom the artistic faculties of common public and are adaptable to the changing time exhibiting its tendency to tackle with the uncertainties of future. In last few decades, the world underwent many changes in terms of political practices and now we are not able to divide the countries of the world into different blocs like socialists, capitalists, monarchs, military dictatorships and others. Almost all the countries are, more or less, democratic but this level of democracy also defines the present economic and social status of a country. Ranging from the purely democratic countries of the world to those where democracy is disrupted by military intervention and those where a nominal monarch tries to pressurize the democratic representatives and many others, the level of social welfare, social liberties, economic prosperity, scientific innovations and other factors of success of a country also vary. The above discussion thus proves that democracy is the only system that can meet the modern day requirements of a country. If there are malpractices and shortcomings, it is not because of democracy but because of the evil intentions of those who try to find a hole in the system and utilize it for their own aims and objectives. Along with a number of other European countries of the world, two countries namely Norway and Sweden are considered to be the most developed and public friendly countries of the world where people live their lives in the most ideal situations and the credit goes to their leaders who tried to implement and preserve democracy with its soul and body. In our country and some other Islamic countries, some people talk about an Islamic system of government as well. With my limited knowledge in this regard, I am not in position to give any opinion but Islamic government is also a kind of government when the most pious people of the country select a person among themselves who acts as the Executive Head and this group works as the Executive body. This is also a kind of democracy because here is also present a criterion of selection and they are selected from among the public. There are many Islamic experts who are of the view that democracy and the Islamic system of government share so many things in common from which we got the idea of 'Islamic democracy' which is still in its initial stages and much research is needed in this regard.

But it must also be kept in mind that democracy is based on free will and thus no power in the world reserves the rights to attack on other nations to impose democracy. Democracy needs time to mature and free-will to grow and develop and these two necessary ingredients decide upon the fate of democracy in the long run.

Muhammad Rasool Shah is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. he can be reached at muhammadrasoolshah@gmail.com

The Poor are More Vulnerable to the Ire of Severe Weather

By Hujjatullah Zia

Since the poor are highly susceptible to natural catastrophe, they seek haven with doleful façade to survive the frigid winter. Although, they are au courant with the variations of life - such as frigid winter and torrid summer - the inundation of heavy snow compounds their problems more than ever before. In another item, the freezing winter has escalated their misery and suffering and aggravated their financial plight. Hence, they find themselves behind the eight ball with the ire of nature. They are supposed to struggle tenaciously so survive the danger of natural phenomena.

The frowzy women and the children with wan faces and disheveled hair wander around Kabul streets desultorily, to find a morsel of bread. A coterie of beggars has no roof over their head to palliate their coldness or just to breathe a sigh of relief for a moment. The pittance they receive by the passersby can hardly allay their worries. The sight of an orphan child or a widow - who have lost the heads of their families during the Taliban regime or other terrorist activity - while reposing their heads on a brick and lying down on numb site, will traumatize a human being. In such a noisome plight with having a thousand and one problems, they will wish constantly that they were not ever born. Ill-fatedly, it seems that some Afghan children are born with inherent poverty and misfortune. From the very beginning, they have to abandon the idea of going to school and heading for trouble of earning bread and butter. As if they are doomed to a cruel fate at birth. Moreover, some inherit misery from their unlucky fathers - who cannot afford to send their children to school. If you walk on Kabul streets, you will see many children worried about their life struggling from break of dawn to the fall of dusk to make the ends meet. For example, if you park your vehicle somewhere in the streets, you will see children start cleaning in return for a penny. Likewise, if you stop your vehicle in a taxi stand or bus stop for passengers or commuters, you will see a child comes to you and start calling loudly to attract passengers. Then he takes 5AFs and leaves for another vehicle. Hence, these are their daily activities just to find a morsel of bread and survive the peril of misery. I remember vividly when one evening that the darkness had crept into the city. A female beggar could be seen trembling with cold, drenched in rain walking and imploring more people for charity. When she stretched out her hand to me, my emotions prompted me to ask her about her

life conditions. Even though, I was touched by the picture, nonetheless, I repressed my feelings and breathed no word. She continued wandering from shop to shop and street to street. The rain and cold gave her no mercy. Such sad stories are always being repeated around us.

This winter is so severe in mountainous regions of the country. As a result, reports say that more than 260 people have been killed in a series of avalanches triggered by heavy snowfall around the country this week. The bulk of the deaths have come in Panjsher province where at least 186 people were lost their lives. The avalanches came after days of heavy snow, which destroyed more than 100 homes in the province and blocked main roads, making it difficult for rescue workers to reach the stricken villages. The death toll was confirmed by Panjsher provincial police chief, Abdul Aziz Ghairat. Moreover, Ghairat is quoted as, "The volume of snow is really huge in districts in Panjsher. There are some districts where we do not have any news from them, the communication lines have cut off due to avalanches."

According to reports, elsewhere in Afghanistan, 36 died in the remote northeastern province of Badakhshan, five in northern Baghlan, five in Parwan and 12 in Nuristan and Kunar provinces in the east, and five in western Badghis. Six were killed in the central province of Bamiyan, four in Laghman and one in Nangarhar, both in the east - bringing the total toll to at least 260.

On Saturday, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani announced public mourning for three days in the country so as to alleviate the profound anguish of victims' families. Hope the officials' concern and the struggles of rescue team attenuate the grief of the afflicted families. Despite the billions of dollars in aid from the international community after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan remains among the world's poorest nations after decades of conflict. Rescue efforts after disasters such as avalanches and flash floods, which often hit as snows melt in the spring, are frequently hampered by lack of equipment. Poor infrastructure makes it difficult for rescue teams to reach isolated areas. Hope the reach, who live in expensive buildings far from the problems of life, move from their supine position and offer humanitarian aids to their hapless compatriots. I wish for the day that the reach and the powerful feel compassion for their poor neighbors rather than giving them a cold shoulder. Let's pray for the day that men practice humanity and revitalize moral values in the society.

Hujjat Zia is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at zia_hujjat@yahoo.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