

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



April 07, 2015

## Investments must be Encouraged

The trade exhibition, last week, in Kabul has brought positive results for the country and as the result of the event, according to Afghanistan Investment Supporting Agency (AISA), around \$2 million worth of contracts have been signed. The contractors include not only national investors but also the businessmen from United States, Turkey, India and United Arab Emirates, who visited the exhibition and some of them agreed to broker deals with Afghan companies. Most of these investors have shown interest in dry fruit, herbal oil, woodcraft, beverage, honey and fresh fruit business. If these sorts of investments are encouraged and pursued in Afghanistan, it would be of great help to its limping economy and can support in establishing reliable business environment.

The Trade Show last week represented different sectors of Afghan economy and its capability to produce alternatives for the foreign products, which have currently dominated Afghan market. It is really important that Afghan local market must flourish and the business in the country must be encouraged and supported so that Afghanistan will be able to face the economic challenges in the times to come.

At the same time there should be capital support for the new businessmen and entrepreneurs who have the capability and the enthusiasm to pursue business but do not have enough capital to do so. Banks and similar financial institutions can play a key role in this regard. They can provide loans to the investors and can thus support them in starting their businesses and assist Afghan economy in moving towards economic stability. Currently, Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan reached to an agreement with Afghanistan International Bank and Afghan Rural Finance to provide long-term loans to the investors on lenient conditions and lower interest rates. This agreement is of great importance and similar efforts to support the investors can truly enable Afghan investors pursue their businesses with motivation and ease.

Businesses play an imperative role within an economy. If within a system there are steady investments and diverse businesses, the system is on a pathway to growth and success. Since the very beginning of human society, human beings have pursued businesses so as to have their necessities satisfied. Throughout human history, businesses have had different forms and features and today have gotten to a very unconventional form. From the barter system to today's progressive era when the businesses are going on online, there has been a sequence of different practices, but the significance of the business has never been lost. The under-developed and developing countries of the world that require establishing robust economic system entail evolution and sustenance of different businesses to a great degree. The authoritative people in such societies have to make sure that the pathway to the businesses is paved properly.

There are some very vital pre-requisites for businesses and investments to grow. Amongst them stability and security play a dominant role. If different systems within a country are stable and there are not major fluctuations every now and then, the ground is said to be ready for the investors and businessmen to jump in and establish their businesses. Businessmen want consistent outcomes from their investments and they abhor seeing political and social changes disturb their businesses. The evil like insecurity also plays major role in discouraging businesses and investments. Different incidents of terrorism and killings compel the businesses to shut down, and frighten the investors to invest. The societies marked with insecurity do not have consumers going to the markets and enjoying the luxury of shopping different products.

Afghanistan is one of the same kinds of country where insecurity and uncertainty have been influencing the economic life to a large extent. Both national and international businessmen are not readily willing to invest in all the sectors and they do not see positive prospects of their businesses. As insecurity and uncertainty have been overwhelmingly influencing the country, the development in the basic infrastructure has been meager.

The doubts and uncertainties of the Afghan market have made the international investors to think thousand times before they take an initiative to start their businesses in the country. Though there are great opportunities in Afghanistan and the country is blessed with different types of mineral and other natural resources, the economic infra-structure has not been able to get enough attention.

Apart from that there are other factors as well that have been influencing the economic system of Afghanistan. The insufficient and unfavorable business laws are also one of the issues affecting Afghan economy. There have to be strong business laws governing the society and controlling the business. The laws should not only safeguard the rights of investors and businessmen but also make sure that the competition within the system is maintained on strong and fair footings. The evils like monopoly based on unfair competition must be tackled with properly and there should be strong bodies that control the prices within the markets, which at the present are non-existent and the businessmen are fixing the rates on their own.

Afghanistan needs to have strong economy so as to survive in post withdrawal era. The international aid and assistance that have been coming to the country for the last years will be diminished and Afghan economy will be tested to a large extent. The country has to start from the basic infra-structure development and have to reach to a stable economy, wherein the businesses are able to function without any fear and inconsistency

## The Wolesi Jirga's Performance under Spotlight

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

With the Wolesi Jirga set to vote on the remaining members of unity government cabinet, the long and controversial process of cabinet formation is closing to its end. According to the reports, the Lower House of the parliament has begun receiving the cabinet picks from Tuesday and will decide on their eligibility after they present their plans to the members of the parliament (Wolesi Jirga). As the cabinet nominees have started presenting their plans to the Wolesi Jirga, the Wolesi Jirga should remain committed on its obligation and decide on capability and eligibility of the nominees based on their academic and professional competencies. Obviously, the new cabinet proposal has some certain advantages as well as weaknesses. The new government is going to be comprised of mostly new faces as ministers who seem to be more committed to serving the country. Most of the new ministers have robust academic background as well as experiences of serving in the governmental positions. Despite being formed based on compromises and power sharing between the key stakeholders, the leaders of the unity government have remained committed to forming a qualified cabinet. However, there are criticisms that a number of the nominees introduced for the ministries have different academic and professional background than their ministry field. For any top managerial posts such as government ministries, potential for efficient leadership and management is the key characteristics which the nominees should own.

The Wolesi Jirga is the ultimate manifestation of national will. Therefore, its sanctity and dignity should be preserved by the Members of the Parliament (MPs). The house has been much criticized in the past over its performances and practices regarding national issues. However, there is still time for the parliament to take the right course in order to mitigate this problem. The Wolesi Jirga now must do its job right and pick the best qualified ministerial nominees. The house needs to come together and get united along the common good of Afghanistan so to be able to make the right decisions and help building an efficient and capable government cabinet. Many has lost their faith to the parliament as they believe the MPs vote not based on considering merits of the to-be-ministers but through secret dealings and corruption. The parliament needs to avoid its further defaming and humiliation by acting responsibly and voting to ministerial picks based on their merits. Corruption and biased approach has hampered the Wolesi Jirga of doing its job right in the past. And it is likely to be so in the future. If so, the house will further lose its credibility. The MPs should not lose the big picture of benefiting the country through approving the highly-qualified cabinet nominees. It needs to repair its damaged prestige and credibility. It is

enough for the MPs to remind themselves that the first and second national assemblies were far less corrupt and had far better credibility. It is time for the Wolesi Jirga to correct its course and perform based on long-term interests of Afghanistan while also serving their own legitimate interests.

The key ministry of defense was introduced to the parliament on Monday. There have been unconfirmed reports of differences between the leaders of the unity government over who should lead the top security post. However, the announcement on Monday ended the speculations of differences over the post. Despite the challenges and insufficiencies existing, the new cabinet is going to have many new faces many of whom are obviously more committed.

The formation of the unity government cabinet has been a long and exhausting process. It has exhausted the public as the economic and security situation is deteriorating. The government affairs in all ministries and departments are virtually in disarray.

Recently, a number of the provincial governors started complaining regarding their inability to do their routine duties as they serve as caretakers. The losses resulting from absence of a fully functional government are huge. According to estimates, the prolonged presidential elections cost millions of dollars for the economy declined and businesses went stagnant. Swift formation of the government cabinet will definitely help the government to bring the economy back on track and restore the business trends.

Introducing the new cabinet nominees to the Lower House of the parliament (Wolesi Jirga) last Wednesday, Vice President Sarwar Danish urged the MPs to give vote of confidence and approve the ministerial nominations. The unity government hopes to handle the sluggish economy through quick formation of the cabinet. If the Wolesi Jirga once again fails to help the government finalize the cabinet and fill the top posts, it will not be helpful for the government's administration and the country's ailing economy. Quickly resolving the problem by both the government and the Wolesi Jirga will also encourage the business community.

In conclusion, the Wolesi Jirga needs to heed the call of the nation: to consider competencies and capabilities of the proposed individuals when deciding on the ministerial picks. And it should do it on due time with further unnecessary delays. The people hope to see end of the political controversies over the formation of the new cabinet and the resulting administrative vacuum. It is time for both the parliament and the unity government leaders to realize the urgency of concluding the cabinet formation and conclude the process.

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## Afghans' Futile Election and Unmitigated Challenges

By Hujjatullah Zia

The bitter tears rolling down the cheek of an old woman, for the abduction of her son, will fill one with a deep sense of anguish. She was smoldering with burning sentiment and everything was likely to look blue. The horror and terror provoked her inner volcano to erupt the lava which has been repressed arbitrarily by cold and barbarous hands of the Taliban insurgents. She complained tearfully that her shouts fall on deaf ears. The report said that her son, who was the only bread-winner, has left his family alone with the vicissitudes of life. His family awaits and prays for his release every dawn and dusk with a gleam of hope; however, this hope wanes with each passing day.

His hapless children were weeping acrimoniously for their father's missing. They urged the government innocently to free their father from the bloody claw of the militants - who feel no iota of mercy or sense of guilt for committing inhuman acts.

The untoward incident - abduction of 31 passengers about 40 days ago - has raised public concerns and led to peaceful demonstrations in many parts of the country, however no sign of progress is seen from the government for their release. The abortive military operation launched by the government ensued, but was soon stopped for mysterious reason. The indifferent approach taken towards this act of terror has drawn public condemnation. Likewise, the apathetic attitude towards the public protests and parliamentarians' insistence for the release of the abductees, add insult to the injury.

It goes without saying that the Taliban militants are void of humanity and moral standards. They stoop so low to muddy the socio-political issues in one way or another. As a result, the main reason behind abducting 31 Hazaras seems to be fomenting sectarian tension across the country for their own political interests. Nonetheless, Afghan nation was discreet enough not to fall for their political deception. The genocide carried out by the Taliban regime yet haunts the minds of our people. They inflicted mortal wounds on our social structure and historical glories. In short, the toxic effects of the Taliban's despotic regimen on Afghans' social, political and cultural issues will hardly fade away from our history.

Afghan nation dreamt to roll a sigh of relief after the downfall of the Taliban's regime, but their dream has not come true. Our people are yet the target of violence and bloodshed. Some lose their lives or get their limbs amputated, women lose their spouses, children are orphaned, etc. in suicide bombings or terrorist acts - being carried out by the militants.

Additionally, the terrorists have wrecked havoc on the country's economy. To survive the insecurity and terrorism, many NGOs and domestic investors have left Afghanistan and transferred their money to foreign countries. Whenever the citizens feel that they would be bereft of their basic rights, especially the rights to life,

freedom and property, without having any supportive power, they will abandon the country.

After all, a myriad of Afghan citizens flock to foreign countries to survive militancy and get rid of unemployment. As a result, the refugee camps in Jakarta are bursting with Afghan citizens who intend to take refuge to Australia. Since the security situation and unemployment are deteriorated recently, the Afghans are left only with the choice of escaping the crises. If the security and economic states remain in the doldrums, people would leave the country with utter despondency to survive terrorism and gain a morsel of bread for their families. How long should Afghan nation grin and bear this catastrophe?

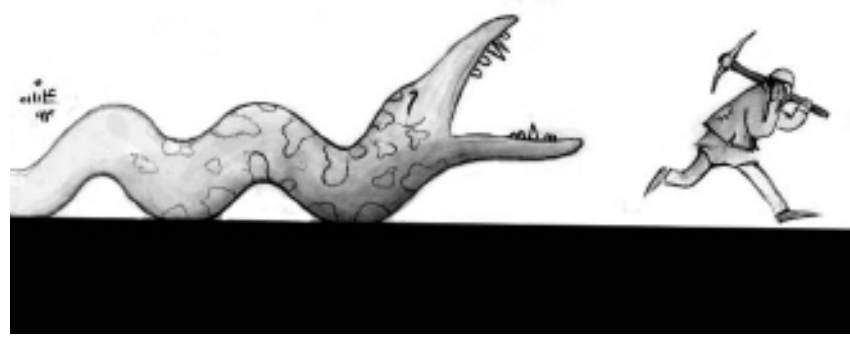
It is believed that we live under a democratic state. But this so-called democratic system is fraught with great challenges. Violating man's rights and dignity is rampant, life has no value, might is considered right, law is broken flagrantly, administrative corruption is at its acme, production of narcotic drug is on rise, nepotism is a usual phenomena and iniquity and injustice are going on relentlessly. So, this nominal democracy will not heal the wounded hearts of our nation. The idealistic discussion about democracy and constitution will be fruitless if it never be put in pragmatic frame or applied realistically. Thus, it is rightly said that 'action speaks louder than words'.

Men and women are born with natural and inalienable rights - the rights to life, liberty and estate. No one, including the government, can violate these rights without the process of law. After all, the government is supposed constitutionally to protect the rights and dignity of the citizens, provide them a peaceful and prosperous life and treat them without any discrimination. The Constitution of Afghanistan states in article 6 as, "The state shall be obligated to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and balance development of all areas of the country."

What worries Afghans is that a year has passed from the presidential election, yet the cabinet members are not formed, the challenges of terrorism, corruption, narcotic production and low economy remain unsolved. Afghans evince dissatisfaction about insecurity and unemployment.

Let us hope that the officials will carry out their responsibilities properly based on the country's constitution and "form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights."

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