

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



August 01, 2017

World Day against Trafficking in Persons

July 30 was celebrated as World Day against Trafficking in Persons or Human Trafficking in many countries around the world. The day was adopted by United Nations General Assembly in 2010, through the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Person. The main objective of the Plan was to urge governments worldwide to take coordinated and consistent measures to defeat this scourge. The Plan, in fact, calls for integrating the fight against human trafficking into the UN's broader programs in order to boost development and strengthen security worldwide. This year the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has chosen 'act to protect and assist trafficked persons' as the focus of the World Day. This topic highlights one of the most pressing issues of our time—the large mixed migration movements of refugees and migrants. The theme puts the spotlight on the significant impact of conflict and natural disasters, as well as the resultant, multiple risks of human trafficking that many people face.

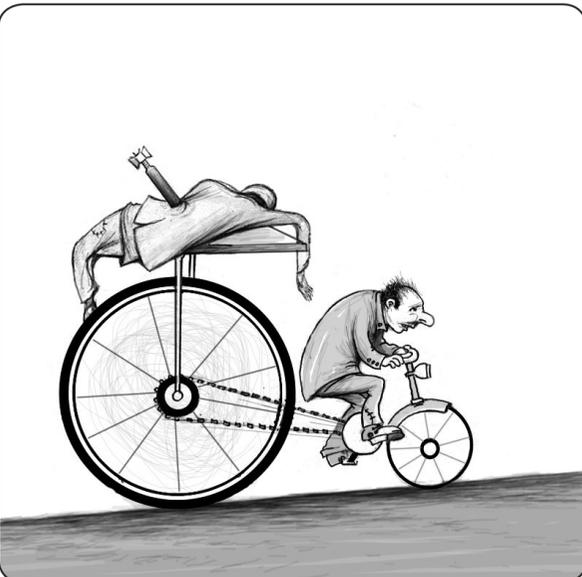
Human trafficking is, undoubtedly, a serious international issue these days. As poverty and discriminations have escalated in different parts of world, there have been increased probabilities of human trafficking. Each day hundreds of people are trafficked from one place to another for different purposes. Throughout the process, the people who are trafficked serve as a commodity that can be bought and sold whether they agree upon it or not. In most of the cases they do not even realize that they are being bought and sold. It is now a complex phenomenon and it involves different individuals and groups. The whole process actually includes these individuals and groups as various players at different locations that take the victims to their desired place. The techniques used by different individuals and groups differ from one another and they include both legal and illegal ways of transactions, travels and even crossing the borders.

Human trafficking is a trend in the countries where the standard of life is not satisfactory and people suffer because of lack of economic facilities or they are threatened by instability that has even jeopardized their lives. Feeling dissatisfied from life or threatened by danger, they develop hopes to bring about better changes in their lives and fall easy prey to human traffickers who promise with them better future, which are never turned into action.

In Afghanistan, recently it has been observed that there has been a rise in human trafficking. IOM has also noted a steady increase in young females trafficked from bordering countries in Afghanistan. Many victims are children who end up in carpet-making and brick factories, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and drug smuggling. This is really a matter of great concern. Females who are otherwise considered as the 'honor' of the society are left at the mercy of the traffickers and they ultimately end up in the houses of the 'foreigners' who can use them the way they want. Does not this situation awake the so-called, dignity, of Afghan men?

The dissatisfied, insecure and poverty stricken life has compelled the people to search for unconventional and easy ways of earning livelihood. Moreover, the series of civil wars and religious fanaticism have made the life miserable for most of the people and many have migrated out of the country, and many others are now being victimized by human trafficking. Since the downfall of Taliban the circumstances have seemed to improve but there are serious concerns after the withdrawal of international forces and return of instability. People are not sure about their futures. There are many who do not know what to do with their lives. Uncertainty prevails everywhere. There is no solace for the victims of poverty, instability and war. Families just think of finding ways of guaranteeing their survival. They send their children and even daughters out of their houses to earn some morsels of food. They do not hesitate even if they become the targets of the curse of begging, street crimes and now this monster human trafficking.

Human trafficking is really a serious crime and all the ways that strengthen the process must be checked properly through strong legal measures. The support and assistance provided through different NGOs can play a role in highlighting this issue and taking certain measures to control it, but it will not be possible to solve the problem without the involvement of the government and the people as a whole. Unfortunately, Afghan government has seemingly diverted its attentions completely towards the issue of insecurity, where it has not been able to achieve anything worthwhile. Therefore, it requires diverting attentions to some of the other major issues as well that are influencing the people to a large extent and pushing them into jeopardy. Above all, the issues like human trafficking do not only influence the individuals who are being trafficked but also their entire families; and ultimately such issues will bring bad name to the nation as whole. Therefore, the government must make all sorts of effort to nip the evil in the bud. At the same time, Afghan government must make sure that ordinary people are provided the rudimentary requirements of life and stable political and social circumstances so that they should not go for such options.



The Consequence of Sharif's Fall on Afghan-Pak Relation

By Mohammad Qasim Erfani

Pakistan's Supreme Court (SC) disqualified Nawaz Sharif in July 28 and moment after the verdict he stepped down from the seat of prime minister. Subsequently, the ruling party has appointed Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who was the petroleum minister till Friday, as interim premier. Nawaz's younger brother Shahbaz Sharif and the current chief minister of Panjab will predictably succeed him.

Last year Panama Papers, also dubbed as Panamagate, showed three of Nawaz's children – Hussain, Hasan and Maryam – owned at least three off-shore companies registered in the British Virgin Islands. Maryam Sharif played a key role in her father's favor in Pakistan's 2013 election through gaining strong support from youths despite the challenging issues posed by former cricketer and chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Now she herself has changed into a pitfall for Nawaz – who was disqualified based on Maryam's case. The future of Maryam, who was imagined to grow into a hereditary politician similar to Benazir Bhutto, is also at stake. As a Punjabi influential technocrat and PML-N's representative and leader, Nawaz came to power twice through general election but failed to accomplish his periods. As the representative of the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) – composed of Muslim League and Jammāt-e-Islami, he won the election in October 1990, but dismissed as premier by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in April 1993. Nonetheless, the SC issued decree in Nawaz's favor as he regained his seat after a month and so. With the continuation of tension, both the premier and president stepped down in July 1993. Nawaz was elected as prime minister for the second time in 1997 and his power collapsed after the bloodless coup carried out by Pervez Musharraf in October 1999. The May 2013 election marked the third victory for him, who was disqualified by SC as a result of Maryam's financial case. Now the question is that what will be the consequence of Sharif's disqualification over the Afghan-Pak relation? Pakistan bears an ideological political system which is highly unpredictable. Despite the view of Mohammad Ali Jinnah – Pakistan's founding father who established Muslim League and supported a secular system – Pakistan was constituted as an Islamic state i.e. a modern country based on Islamic tenets. Alongside religious-political movements such as Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan, Mohammad Iqbal Lahori and Abul A'la Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, played a key role in Islamizing Pakistan. The slow process of the constitution of Pakistan from 1948 to 1956 indicated the controversial discourse between Jinnah's secular government and Islamic government of Islamists which gained upper hand. In ideological administrations, the basis of analysis will be the duality of ideal and reality rather than tradition and modernity. Based on this analysis, Islamic state is considered as an ideal and utopia. On the other hand, the current realities in political system are in conflict with those ideals which will result in strengthening conflict and weakening the state.

Furthermore, it is believed that political analysts may consider issues based on the appearance such as constitution, political par-

ties, parliamentary system and other apparent features, whereas the deeper layers and realities affecting political interactions will be otherwise. In fact, Pakistan is still the legacy of feudalism and colonialism. Asif Hussein Pakistani the author of a book titled "The Islamic World from Various Political Perspectives" quotes a Pakistani Proverb which explains the internal and external forms of the political system in Pakistan. The proverb says that each elephant has two pairs of tusks one for eating and next for showing. It is believed that political parties and SC which disqualified Nawaz are the symbolic tusks (for showing) and the real tusks are veiled in secrecy. That is to say, Nawaz's brother who will be voted to be the prime minister reflects the feudal tusks.

The political administration in Pakistan is based on elite system in which only few are ruling and the majority are subject to it. Therefore, one can claim that the elites are the key players and political parties are no more than vehicles for extending the power of elites. For example, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is one of the powerful parties with the tendency of Islamic socialism which has been one of the foundations of power over the past four decades. This party is under the control of Bhutto family. For example, it was run by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and now by Bilawal Zardari Bhutto. Moreover, Muslim League, Pakistan's oldest political party, founded by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in 1906 had the lion's share in power. Since the 1990s, it was divided into two branches of Nawaz, which is known as the party of "Sharif's brothers", and Qayed Azam due to the disagreements between Nawaz Sharif and Pervez Musharraf. Asif Hussein divides Pakistani elites into three groups: the traditional elites (Mongolian period), the colonial elites (connected to the British) and the newly formed elites (the period after independence). Here, the bureaucratic elites, including Sharif's family, along with the military elites had the most political influence.

In addition, political instability and militarism have compounded the issue further for prediction. Within the seven decades of political life, Pakistan experienced consistent political instability and even the influence and authority of military. That is to say, more than 26 prime ministers were experienced i.e. one premier for two and half years. No premier had accomplished their legal period which is for five years. Pakistan has also experienced three successful military coups and several failed coups. The military regimes of General Ayoub Khan (1958-1971), General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) and General Pervez Musharraf (1999- 2008) were the product of military coups that governed the country by military rule. The military role has been prominent in Pakistan. Pakistan's ruling party regards the recent verdict by the Supreme Court on Nawaz Sharif's disqualification under the influence of the military.

To sum up, the aforementioned issues make it hard to predict the consequence of Sharif's disqualification over the Afghan-Pak relations. However, this is both an opportunity and a threat for Afghanistan. Filling this vacuum will not bring a palpable change in Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan.

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What China Can Teach America About Clean Air

By Daniel K. Gardner

Every year, more than four million people around the world die prematurely from breathing dirty air. In China alone, the number of deaths attributable to air pollution exceeds one million annually. That figure may not come as a surprise; after all, we are routinely treated to images in the media of thick, sooty smog enveloping Beijing, Shanghai, and other Chinese cities. But America's air kills, too – and it is getting a lot less attention. A 2013 MIT study estimated that poor air quality accounts for 200,000 early deaths in the United States each year, more than the number killed by car crashes and diabetes (other studies have put the number lower, closer to 100,000). Yet, while China today is aggressively tackling its air pollution problem, the US is rolling back air-quality protections in the name of economic growth – an ill-conceived strategy that will have a devastating impact on human health. Ever since the publication of Harvard's "Six Cities" study in 1993, scientists and public-health officials have been aware of the links between mortality and fine particulate matter, or PM2.5 (airborne particles with a diameter of less than 2.5 microns). When people inhale PM2.5, microscopic solids and liquid droplets of dust, dirt, organic chemicals, and metals can travel deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream. Research over the past 20 years has tied PM2.5 to a range of adverse health outcomes, including asthma, acute bronchitis, lung cancer, heart attacks, and cardiorespiratory diseases.

We know, too, where most PM2.5 comes from: power plants, heavy industry, and motor vehicles. During fossil-fuel combustion, carbon dioxide, the world's most prevalent greenhouse gas, is emitted into the air, along with particles of incompletely combusted solids and gases (mainly sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides) that react chemically in the atmosphere to form fine particulate matter. Knowing the killer pollutant and its sources, the US Environmental Protection Agency, under the 1990 Clean Air Act, issued new standards to reduce PM2.5 levels. The EPA estimates that between 1990 and 2015, the national concentration of particulate matter fell by 37%, and that in 2010, some 160,000 premature deaths were averted as a result of the regulations. In short, despite a considerable number of deaths still linked to dirty air, the US had, until this year, been heading in the right direction. Now, however, US President Donald Trump has promised to create "unbelievable prosperity" by discarding regulations intended to reduce toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants, lowering or eliminating fuel-efficiency standards for automobiles, and dismantling the EPA. He has also vowed to repeal limits on fracking, open up more public lands to coal mining, and expand oil and gas production in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans. Let's assume, for a moment, that such measures would actually produce prosperity for the entire country, and not just for the

fossil-fuel industry. What price, as a country, is the US willing to pay? How many early deaths per year are too many?

There are alternatives that don't require a zero-sum tradeoff between economic growth and human health. And, ironically, one place to look for inspiration is China.

Holding up China as a model to emulate might seem absurd. After all, its PM2.5 levels are considerably higher than in the US, and consumption of fossil fuels, especially coal, is far greater. But Chinese policymakers are taking vigorous steps to reverse course, free the country from its dependence on fossil fuels and create a future-oriented economy powered by clean energy and green technology – one that places China at the forefront of the global economy.

Today, China is the world's largest investor in renewable energy, with outlays in 2015 totaling \$103 billion, more than double US spending of \$44 billion. Of the planet's 8.1 million jobs in renewable energy, 3.5 million are in China, whereas fewer than one million are in the US. Persuaded that clean energy is good for the environment and the economy, China has committed \$367 billion through 2020 to the development of renewable power sources – a level of investment that is expected to generate 13 million jobs. China is also looking beyond its borders, by exporting the expertise it has developed in renewable energy and supporting technologies. In 2016, China invested tens of billions in renewable energy projects in Australia, Germany, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Pakistan, Vietnam, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

Likewise, to rein in pollutants from motor vehicles, China's government has made adoption of electric vehicles a high priority, setting a target of five million on the country's roads by 2020. To promote sales, buyers are exempted from sales and excise taxes (\$6,000-\$10,000 per vehicle). And, anticipating the eventual replacement of conventional motor vehicles globally, the authorities are providing generous subsidies for domestic manufacturing. Meanwhile, the Trump administration is trying to turn back the clock, by betting on the resuscitation of a dying – and deadly – fossil-fuel industry. Describing a transition to electric vehicles as a job killer, Trump has advocated ending federal subsidies that encourage domestic development, manufacture, and purchase, such as the \$7,500 federal tax credit for consumers.

China's dependence on fossil fuels has left it in a deep environmental hole, but its leaders are determined to climb out. The US, on the other hand, is literally digging its own grave. With as many as 200,000 Americans dying prematurely every year, economic hubris must not be allowed to trump the search for solutions – wherever they may be found.

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