

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



August 15, 2016

Vacuum for the Spirit of Democracy

The establishment of democratic administration in post-Taliban Afghanistan was believed to alleviate the challenges, mainly the militancy and terrorism. Afghan nation embraced democracy as their eyes sparked with hope and optimism and wished to live in a society void of horror and terror. Democracy was considered the panacea for their chronic wounds that were bleeding as a result of bloody wars lingered throughout the history. Democracy, which is simply defined "the government of the people, for the people and by the people", would let the nation to exercise their rights and liberty without barriers.

The approval of Constitution, which included the citizens' rights to life, liberty and estate and excluded discriminations and distinctions on the grounds of race, color and sex, filled Afghan nation with greater sense of hope. Citizens' "natural" and "inviolable" rights and dignity were stated in the Constitution and the government has committed itself to protect the nation's rights and liberty in the best possible way. Indeed, an ideal democratic society is a society where there are equal rights and opportunities to everyone. There must not be any discrimination against man and woman i.e. there must prevail gender equality. Men and women should get equal opportunities in every field such as in political field, economical field and so on.

A democratic nation should have its political situation stable. It is very important for maintaining democracy. Peace is maintained only through stable political condition. A party should not have monopoly in a democratic nation. There must be cooperation among every party group and work for the welfare of the nation in a united way. Corruption is discouraged. It is through political stability a nation gets pathway for its economical success.

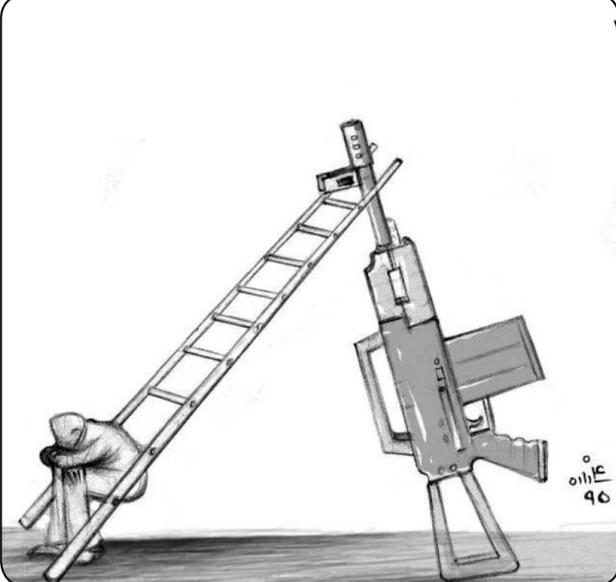
It is an undeniable fact that Afghan nation made great sacrifices and left dark days of war, violence and civil unrest to obtain democracy. Our history witnessed indescribable cruelty and harm inflicted upon Afghans under despotic regimes, mainly the Taliban's regime and millions of lives were lost to protect the rights and dignity of the nation.

The post-Taliban Afghanistan has made significant progress towards rebuilding its political system and institutions. Political participation - especially among women - is growing. Afghanistan's 2014 elections saw historic turnout, and the inauguration of President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani marked the country's first democratic transfer of power. These accomplishments are the result of work and investments by Afghans and international partners. Since 2001, Afghanistan has adopted a new constitution; organized presidential, parliamentary, and provincial council elections; established ministries to deliver services to the people and developed a vibrant media and civil society. According to The Asia Foundation's 2014 Survey of the Afghan People, more than 75 percent of Afghans rate the performance of the national government as somewhat or very good.

Afghanistan's 2014 elections saw record voter participation, including the highest female turnout in Afghanistan's history - with over 38 percent of the vote coming from women. Despite threats of violence, Afghans turned out in courageous and historic numbers to cast ballots in presidential and provincial council elections. A vibrant and independent media is critical to a healthy democracy, and according to The Asia Foundation's 2014 Survey of the Afghan People, Afghans have strong confidence in their media. Afghan civil society organizations have also emerged as vocal, persistent, and influential stakeholders. During the 2014 elections, Afghan organizations fielded twice as many observers as they did in the 2009 elections, providing independent oversight of the entire election process.

However with all the said achievements, there are many barriers before the nascent democracy and it seems to decline in one way or another. Terrorism is a major setback before democracy. The Taliban have intensified their attacks which led to the increase of civilian casualties within the two past years. Furthermore, a number of the Taliban members pledge allegiance to the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group that gained foothold in the country and aggravated the security situation. Currently, the escalated militancy, which undermines the inchoate democracy in Afghanistan, is a great cause for concerns. Moreover, a number of challenges in government's machinery also interrupt the flow of democracy.

Seemingly, there is a trust issue between the heads of the National Unity Government and sometimes this leaks out to the media. It should be noted that if a sense of mistrust arouses among the authorities, the opportunists will fish in troubled waters. Moreover, a gap between state and nation will emerge and this will lead to a tension in the country that will take its toll on the nation. To strengthen the bases of democracy and safeguard the historical sacrifices and martyrs' blood and to pay homage to the wars against invaders, the authorities will have to nurture a sense of brotherhood and unity. To bridge the gap between state and nation, the authorities, especially the unity government should seek to form a society void of violence and bloodshed in its real meaning and protect the nation's rights and liberty as they have committed themselves. The true spirit of democracy should be established in Afghanistan to decrease the challenges. For combating terrorism, a strong morale among the soldiers is needed and it is the high-ranking authorities to instill this morale through devoted services, unifying the nation and spreading a feeling of brotherhood and patriotism among the nation irrespective of their race and color.



India Celebrates 70th Independence Day: Here's the History and Significance of the Day

By Sutrishna Ghosh

India celebrates its 70th Independence Day on 15 August 2016. The country became independent from British colonialism on this day in 1947. The day is celebrated with great fervour across

every state of the country, with the capital city Delhi becoming the hub of all celebrations. India's Independence Day celebrations officially take place at the Red Fort. As the people of India gear up to celebrate the day, IBTimes UK has compiled some historical facts associated with the day and its significance.

The history of Indian Independence is laced with the struggle and sacrifice of many leaders and revolutionaries of the country.

The story of India's colonisation began with the arrival of the British East India Company to the country in the 1600s. The merchants who came to trade with India soon began to exercise military and administrative control and by 1757, they had huge swathes of the country under them. Resentment against the alien company and its unfair rule over the local populace began to grow and in 1857, the first organised revolt against it took place with a group of Indian soldiers rebelling against the British rank in the Barrackpore, Bengal unit. Referred to as the Great Struggle of 1857 (the British called it the Sepoy Mutiny), this rebellion marked a new era in India's freedom movement.

As a direct result of the rebellion, administrative control of the country passed from the East India Company to the British Crown in London. From 1858 to 1947, India was governed by London with representatives in the form of governor-generals and viceroys posted in India. However, several incidents such as the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, where more than 1,000 people were killed after General Reginald Dyer ordered troops to fire machine guns into a crowd of Indian protesters and the Bengal famine of 1943, which killed up to five million people, only went to alienate the local people from their rulers. Prominent Indian leaders and revolutionaries such as Mahat-

ma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Lala Lajpat Rai, Chandrasekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took part in the uprising against the British over different time periods, which ultimately led to India's freedom from foreign rule.

In February 1947, the then British prime minister Clement Attlee, announced that his government would grant full self-governance to British India by June 1948 at the latest.

Nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience led by leaders like Gandhi, Patel and Nehru were largely responsible for

India's independence. However, independence came with the partition of India into the dominions of India and Pakistan.

On 15 August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, raised the Indian national flag above the Lahori Gate of the Red Fort in Delhi.

Nehru delivered his famous speech - Tryst With Destiny - in which he addressed the long-drawn struggle and future that lies ahead.

"At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India

will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance"

Jawaharlal Nehru (Tryst With Destiny)

Celebrations

Although India's freedom struggle has become history today, 15 August still holds great significance in the hearts of millions of people of the country. Most Indians celebrate the national holiday with family get-togethers and by attending patriotic events.

The national flag is hoisted by the prime minister of India on the ramparts of the Red Fort, Delhi, followed by a speech. Other politicians hoist the flag in their constituencies. People fly kites to express their feeling for freedom. A national holiday is observed throughout the country with flag-hoisting ceremonies, cultural events and parades. Almost all movie channels entertain their viewers with old and new patriotic movies and classics.



The Endless Traffic Challenge in Kabul

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Kabul is the heart of political, commercial, cultural, educational and social life in Afghanistan and the fifth fastest growing city in the world. Due to Lack of adequate employment opportunities, basic utility services in remote provinces and centralized government policy constantly people moved to Kabul and other cities. But the chaotic traffic system left many in despair. The traffic jam has become a never-ending challenge that neither the authorities nor the residents of the city can resolve. The urgent vehicles such as ambulance, fire brigade and patients are hardly possible to reach their destination on time. Likewise, school students, public and private personnel also other citizens often stuck for several hours behind traffic crowds. The working vendors, carters, porters and parked vehicles - often occupy half-side of the roads in some parts - only add to this serious pressing issue. In addition, growing Noise pollution, accumulation of garbage and overall the contaminated environments has taken comfort from Kabul residents. The growing population in Kabul city, non-compliance with traffic rules, heavy machinery such as trucks and buses, lack of standard traffic infrastructure, large number of hawkers as well as the increasing number of vehicles automatically deteriorates the traffic situation. Let's not forget the omnipresent potholes, bumpy roads, and pedestrian overflow that further cause frustrations and delays. According to statistics provided by relevant authorities annually 30 to 35 thousand vehicles newly enter Kabul city while the mayor's office had estimated that there are already 700,000 vehicles on the narrow streets of Kabul, which can only accommodate about 30,000.

Traffic management is extremely poor ever since could not bring significant changes in past 15 years; they often blame one and other for the issues. It said that their contact person actively attempt to collect bribe and issue driver license. Roadside assistance such as traffic signs and facilities are rarely seen. Vehicular traffic is disorganized and must contend with numerous pedestrians, bicyclists and each other. Comparing certain ethnic residential area to others are not built equally and balanced. People always complain about discriminations which frequently lead to tremendously social hatred and angers. With congested roads and abundant pedestrian traffic vehicle accidents are a serious concern and can escalate into violent confrontations. In brief, effective steps are not taken towards traffic infrastructure and management. All people have to tolerate the pressing condition and all drivers need to drive defensively with paying close attention to their surroundings. People are extremely unsatisfied but often keep silent because of being hopeless; some drivers blame the Traffic Policy officials for charging illicit fines and asking for bribes. According to Tolo News, Kabul Traffic Police have reputed accusations of improper fines and bribery, explaining that most people aren't aware of the regulations for drivers and so they are in frequent violation. "Traffic [Police] causes us problems, they ask for a License and our cars' documents in every square, and when we show them, they make up an excuse about how your car is overloaded. Many blame high ranking

governmental authorities who block the city's roads while commuting from one side of the city to another mainly due to security concerns. When one road is blocked, the city turns into a bedlam, where all the vehicles, no matter where they are headed to, have to be on the same road. This is something that the residents of Kabul city have to tolerate, as the security situation of the high ranking government officials is a priority. Meanwhile, Traffic Police officials accuse the drivers of lacking driving etiquettes. It would not be surprising to see cars moving against traffic on one-way streets, ignoring traffic lights and driving recklessly fast. Nevertheless, with virtually no signage, few traffic lights and no lane demarcation, it is hard to hold individual drivers or Traffic Officers entirely responsible for the unruly nature of driving in Kabul. Finally, There are different kinds of challenges to Kabul, transportation system, primary pertaining to management, infrastructure, and planning of transportation system of Kabul, as far management the challenges pertain to old and obsolete traffic laws system, weak governance for implementation of traffic law and order, are the major

concern. In case of infrastructure of transportation system of Kabul, also have some challenges, like no traffic lights in the city, narrow road of Kabul city, inadequate parking, slow vehicle movement, etc. Based on these the following are some of suggestions can be proposed:

- 1- Kabul Police Traffic Department (KPTD) has to craft effective strategy for the control of all illegal, unregistered & unlicensed cars throughout Kabul city. And remove unnecessary check points/ blocks in city.
- 2- The working vendors, carters, porters and parked vehicles must be managed.
- 3- KPTD and police complained about the government employees (parliamentarians, ministers, relative of ministers, directors etc) are more frequent violators of rules. So government employees will need to cooperate, traffic police in sense to follow traffic rules.
- 4) Flyovers and subway are helpful in reduction of traffic problem, so it will be in appropriate location, because very few people use it and more people do not use due in appropriate locations and poor engineering system.
- 5) Very few cars parking in city of Kabul compel the drivers to park their cars anywhere. So it necessary for government to construct suitable cars parking in suitable places of Kabul city.
- 6) Inadequate traffic police were also one reason to control the congested traffic system of Kabul city, so there is need to hire new police for the control of congested traffic problem in Kabul city.
- 7) To rebuild as well build new traffic signals throughout city Kabul.
- 8) To facilitate the work in progress on roads network, and construct all roads in important part of the Kabul city.
- 9) Due to Lack of adequate employment opportunities, basic utility services in remote provinces, decentralized policy and further extension of Kabul city can be the most important strategy to the endless challenges.

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