

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



December 02, 2015

Rebuilding Peace Process

Afghanistan and Pakistan, after a period of stalemate, have once again agreed to promote the Afghan-led peace process with Taliban. In an important meeting, on Monday November 30, 2015 in Paris, President Ashraf Ghani and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met each other on the periphery of the UN-sponsored Climate Change Summit and resolved to act together again for peace building measures.

After the first face-to-face meeting between Afghan government and Taliban representatives in Murree, organized by Pakistan back in July, there have not been any other improvement in the talks; contrarily, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan deteriorated after it was disclosed that Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Omar was dead a couple of years ago. President Ashraf Ghani who had been favoring a peace deal with Taliban sponsored by Pakistan, was deeply infuriated and he blamed that the Pakistani authorities were not doing enough regarding the peace deal.

Now that both the countries have once again agreed to work together, it is important to see how they proceed. Pakistan Prime Minister reiterated support for an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace drive, saying Pakistan remained committed to building a stable Afghanistan, which was in the best interest of the entire region. With regard to the ongoing military offensive against terrorism in Pakistan's northwestern tribal region near the Afghanistan border, Sharif made clear that Operation Zarb-i-Azb targeted militants of all stripes, including those against the neighboring country.

However, it is pertinent to mention that Afghan leadership has always seen the commitments from the Pakistani authorities with suspicion. There have been several occasions when both the countries have come close to each other only to part with differences later on. There have to be honest and real efforts to see the dreams of peace and tranquility come true in the region.

Afghan government requires designing a comprehensive strategy regarding the peace talks with Taliban, as Afghanistan is the country that has been largely the victim. Planned and prudent actions regarding the peace efforts can support the country to come out of the quagmire of terrorism and disorder.

Afghan government has, on several instances, mentioned that the peace talks with Taliban will be based on the conditions that they accept Afghan constitution, lay down arms and respect human rights, particularly women rights; nonetheless, Taliban have never given the indication that they are ready to accept these conditions.

They, on the other hand, have given their own conditions for the peace talks; the first and foremost being the withdrawal of all the US forces from Afghanistan. However, for Afghan government it is really imperative that they make Taliban ready to accept these conditions before peace talks. Apart from Taliban, there are many factions and individuals, even in Afghan government, who believe that there must not be any precondition to peace talks as setting conditions hamper the efforts to start negotiations.

Though, peace negotiation is urgently required and there must be sincere efforts to make them successful, but following it without right conditions may prove to be fruitless for Afghanistan. Afghan constitution must always be safeguarded and there must not be any compromise in this regard. Moreover, the achievements, though not very comprehensive, regarding human rights and the rights of women must never be compromised, as well. Peace at the sake of these conditions would mean a loss, not a true peace.

It is correct that the prospects of peace and tranquility do not seem very much clear; yet, there are possibilities to start afresh from this point and reach to a somewhat reputable position in the times to come and save the nation from another age of instability and misery. There is no doubt that for its journey to stability Afghanistan would require a great deal of assistance from the regional countries and Western allies. However, the most dominant role has to be played by Afghanistan itself. Afghan authorities in contribution with Afghan people can really change the destiny and can guarantee a promising future for the generations to come; all it needs to do is to focus on certain considerations.

Sincerity and the consideration for national interest, in this regard, must be pursued with full zeal and enthusiasm. The influential individuals and factions must stand with Afghan government and support a democratic political system. They must not side with Taliban and support their type of Shariah-based system, which will lead to instability and disorder, once again.

The peace process depends largely on how Afghan authorities will deal with the circumstances ahead. At this crucial juncture when the Western allies do not have many options but to leave the country and the regional countries are very much interested in pursuing their own interests, the Afghan government does not have any other option but to be more responsible and deal with the situation on its own.

Currently there are many concerns about the Afghan government; addressing them is in its total control if other things are out of it. Afghan government can listen to the different voices in the country that are peace-loving and want a better future for Afghanistan in the form of better political system, not to the ones that are determined to take Afghanistan towards extremism and terrorism.



The Part of World Where Slavery Thrives!

By Asmatyari

We rest in satisfaction unknowingly learning the world has successfully put an end to slavery, is a deliberate illusion. The modern world claims to have ended slave trade not slavery - finds a degree of justification. The truth is that the human trafficking, sexual exploitation, child labor, forced marriage and the forced recruitment of children to use in armed conflict are some customarily accounts of slavery. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there are currently an estimated 21 million forced labor victims worldwide, creating US\$150 billion in illegal profits in the private economy each year.

Every year December 2 is commemorated as "International Day for the Abolition of Slavery" to multiply the fight against this existing menace. Contrary to the claims of factions of people in modern world having had wiped out slavery - is what ill-matches the ground realities, facts and figure whilst admitting the existence of slavery in altered form. Although we are not slaves in name, and cannot be carried to market and sold as somebody else's legal belongings, we are free only within narrow limits. For all our claims about liberation and personal autonomy, still there are few choices that we are free to make.

Slavery was a course in history, where it was favorable for the colonists to use slavery as a labor force. The decline in population of indentured servants exacerbated the situation, as time progressed; slavery became more and more imminent. Morality was not taken into consideration, because of the settlers were only viewing slavery from an economic view, rather than a humanitarian point of view.

In the 1600's, when tobacco was founded by John Rolfe, tobacco became the main source of income for most of the colonists. To the planter, slavery was the ideal form of labor that were the most beneficial to productivity of his crop. The economic prosperity of the colonies was primarily dependent on the amount of tobacco produced. The growing of tobacco needed a large amount of land, with a large stable work force. The increased demand for a large, stable work force combined with the availability of African slaves, led to the use of slavery in the colonies. During the late 17th century, the indentured servants were running away from their masters' farms, if a slave had run away from their master's farms, and then the slave would be easier to discern because of the color of his skin.

Attribute to civil right and anti-abolitionist movements, playing their parts challenging these obsolete practices by building huge restraints to curtail them to minimum. The Africans subsequently got rid of slavery and now enjoys key positions in various international organizations, and prominent states. The black skinned Barak Obama, at present is the president of United State of America, once this dream was unimaginable.

History records dominant ignorance serving a strong foundation to mental slavery, a worst form that poisoned man's free thoughts annihilated his free will and exploited his physical potency. Surveying the past accounts discloses, illiteracy served vital to pushing men to depth of manifold gloom and obscurity. Beginning from starvation and drought, slavery earned cultural orientation where economic

dependence of a man on the other played its vicious play. Man ruled by supra-religious dictates than logics warmly welcomed the modified recreation, terming it their fates to endure. Therefore, Frederick Douglass, an African-American social reformer, orator, writer and statesman, whose history is marked by anti-slavery movements, like abolitionist movement and incisive antislavery pieces, once said "Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave." Regards to emergence of rationalism associated with the virtue of knowledge and wisdom that men learn to live a life free of all artificial flawed restraints.

At present man to a non-appreciable degree enjoys liberty, freedom to practice a religion, freedom of thoughts, freedom of speech, as per provisions of universal human rights declaration. Yet there are many parts of the world where ridiculous cultural practices, customs, traditions and flawed religious interpretations, coerce man to unarguably abide by them. Afghanistan is the land where all form of modern slavery, pivoted to tangible foundations, exists.

The world over reaps the fruit of modernism whilst Afghanistan suffers servitudes, child debt bondage, women sexual harassment and other conventional slavery. Extreme poverty, lack of awareness about child rights, weak law enforcement and strong conservative traditions are among the problems which have pushed many minors - boys and girls - into situations of peonage.

In poor rural communities, child slavery and debt bondage practices are growing, but are often disguised as marriage, labor or family affairs not requiring state intervention. Selling of children and servitude - have the very characteristics of modern slavery. Even male sex recruit adolescent boys for sex and entertainment, while local authorities remain powerless in stopping the practice.

Children who experience forced marriage and servitude often suffer physical, sexual and mental violence, according to experts. Research conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission has also indicated widespread domestic violence against children and their inability to access protection services. Destitute parents sometimes also offer their young daughters as "loan brides" in order to pay off loans settle family or tribal feuds and achieve other social and economic benefits. Human rights abuses in Afghanistan are too often wrapped in euphemisms and exoticism. Drug smugglers that pay poor farmers in advance for opium production, often demand young brides when farmers fail to produce opium and lack other means to repay their loans.

The records of department of women's affairs and a local rights watchdog hundreds of cases of the selling of children, especially girls, are reported annually whilst multiple such cases left unreported. All these practices take place under the very nose of government whilst the government is blind and deaf to see and hear the pains of hapless Afghans who are left to the beasts of corrupt and unvigilant system and administration. The police, judicial system and courts are notoriously corrupt and biased one can't afford to seek justice through them. The government and corresponding institutions must wage fight against modern form of slavery that has earned firm foundation in this piece of land and bring ill-fame to us.

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Asia Pacific: Response to Climate Change

By Dr. Shamshad Akhtar

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Global leaders are gathered in Paris for the COP21 climate summit. Given Asia-Pacific's size and its contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, its voice and commitment are critical to achieving a comprehensive agreement on climate change. Many Asia Pacific countries are developing and must focus on achieving sustained economic growth and development. Of the 49 regional members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 43 have a light climate footprint, contributing only 10 per cent to global emissions. For these countries, notably the least developed countries, Pacific islands and low-lying states, vulnerability to climate-related natural disasters will grow with climate change. At the other extreme, the region is home to six of the top 10 emitters in the world - China, India, Russia, Japan, Indonesia and Iran - which account for about 43 per cent of global emissions. Of these top six Asian emitters, fossil fuel-based energy is responsible for about 80 per cent of their collective emissions, with emissions from industrial processes, agriculture and waste playing a lesser role. Mitigating the emissions of these countries requires multiple actions, key among which is a switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

Of the 183 countries that have submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 43 are from the Asia-Pacific region. Countries across the region have indicated both conditional and unconditional reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. These include economy-wide emissions targets or deviation from a business as usual (BAU) scenario to an intensity targets of emissions per unit of GDP. Many INDCs, particularly those from the developing countries, include an overall rise in emissions by 2030. While this is remarkable in its own right, they still leave a significant gap between the INDCs pledged and the cuts required to keep the temperature increase to below two degrees Celsius warming limit. This gap is close to 16 billion tonnes of CO2 reductions per annum by 2030, roughly equal to the current emissions of China, India, and Russia combined. The only way we can bridge this gap is if we collectively treat the INDCs announced as the floor to be raised by enabling countries to adopt and implement additional measures needed with technical, financial and capacity support. Despite the present gap between the INDCs and the necessary emission reductions, progress is underway in our region. This not only sets specific economies on course for a low carbon future, but will also alter the global dynamics. China's INDC, for instance, targets emissions to peak by 2030 at the latest, and for emissions intensity of GDP to decline by 60 to 65 per cent. Progress in energy efficiency, switching

to gas and the development of hydro, wind and solar energy has now begun to show results, with China's coal consumption having peaked in 2013. India proposes to reduce emissions per unit of GDP by 33 to 35 per cent, and to ensure that 40 per cent of its power generation capacity is from non-fossil sources by 2030. In support of this objective, India plans to install 60 gigawatts of wind power and 100 gigawatts of solar power capacity by 2022, a six-fold increase over the current capacity.

Changes in the energy generation mix, efficiency and conservation of energy use and developing carbon sinks through reforestation and soil carbon will be important strategies to stabilize emissions in the Asia-Pacific region. There has been some progress on all these fronts in our region, but more needs to be done. With advanced energy efficiency, the region could save 35 per cent of its energy consumption against business as usual by 2035. As the region's urban population is expected to reach 3.2 billion by 2050, there is an opportunity to pioneer low carbon cities with energy efficient buildings, innovative urban planning and efficient transportation systems. There is also a need to switch from coal to renewables and to promote cleaner coal technologies, as coal still accounts for 55 per cent of electricity generation in the Asia-Pacific. In adopting clean energy alternatives countries are also addressing the scourge of air pollution, which has emerged as a grim reality for many city dwellers across the region. While non-hydro renewables such as wind and solar currently contribute less than 2 per cent of regional electricity generation, growth has been rapid from a small base. The expected shift to renewables will be a net benefit for Asian economies. It will reduce dependence on imported fuels as the region is a net energy importer, enhance energy security and improve the balance of payments. To harness a low carbon future, the region needs to further tap its tax potential, which could be raised by 5 per cent of GDP. This would potentially mobilize \$1.5 trillion while private sector savings in the region are close to \$6 trillion.

The success of the COP21 climate summit is critical for all of us as climate change does not respect boundaries and no one can escape its effects. Country submissions for emission reduction are good starting point but remain nonbinding targets. The steep growth in energy demand in the Asia-Pacific means more will need to be done to increase the overall penetration of renewable energy in the coming decades, with collective and concerted actions critical to addressing the problem at its source. The future of our region and indeed of our planet hinges on the Asia-Pacific region mobilizing its skills and resources to find enduring solutions.

The author is an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). She is also the UN's Sherpa for the G20 and previously served as Governor of the Central Bank

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