

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



January 04, 2018

Rampant Class Disparities

The so-called development in Afghan society since the downfall of Taliban has not been even. There are different problems that suggest that development has not taken place in the real sense. Some of the most important factors that define development in the modern sense are non-existent in Afghan society. Poverty is still rampant and the class disparities have widened. The gap between the rich and the poor has been stretched to a large extent. There are millions of the people who suffer from lack of basic requirements, while only few families possess most of the wealth of the nation. At the same time social justice is not found anywhere and the inequalities and inequities are frequent.

The stratification among different strata has intensified, which is affecting the society as a whole. The wealth that has poured in the country in the last decade does not seem to have benefited the needy people of the society rather that has been accumulated by certain authoritative people who use it for their own benefits and grandeur. Though the stratification into rich and poor classes existed in Afghan society earlier as well, but it has changed its primitive shape; even in the urban regions the stratification is more like modern upper class and lower class division.

Some argue that this stratification of the society in different strata is a necessity. They believe that it is because of interaction of various strata that the society tends to function as whole - more like functional theory in sociology. However, this argument is quiet debatable. Actually the class based setup in a society is mostly the outcome of the practice of Capitalism. Capitalism, at least in theory, tends to follow justice and demands that everyone should be gifted according to his ability. Thus people with more ability can have as much as they deserve lawfully. Further, the system of Capitalism also allows the individuals to have lawful private property. The modern countries in Europe and America that are based on Capitalism can easily be observed to be having different classes in their societies.

This system seems to be working for them, but there are controversies regarding the future of the system. In fact, if this system has been working for so many countries, there are few pre-requisites that are maintained to a varying extent by these countries that have been helping the system to develop instead of facing a failure.

First, it has been made sure that justice should be maintained in its true spirit, i.e. it must not favor only the upper class; rather the upper class itself should be treated by the law and order system in the same way as the other two classes; namely, lower, middle and upper classes.

To put it in simpler terms it can be said that social stratification has not been changed to social injustice. Second, social mobility has been made very easy in such societies. Social mobility basically means movement from one social class to another.

For example, it has not been very difficult for a person taking birth in a lower class to work hard, develop the capability and move to the middle and even to upper class. There have been equal opportunities for almost all the members of the societies to excel in their lives and become rich. The reverse has been maintained as well, i.e. the people born in rich families but not working hard, have been pushed to the lower strata. Social mobility has been able to provide some oxygen for the social setup to inhale so that it must keep on living. It is also vital to note that in Afghanistan the wealth has poured in without much accountability and weak check and balance system, therefore, the stratification has led to sufferings. The upper class in Afghanistan cannot be said to be in the form as it exists in an industrialized society.

Rather, it includes the landlords, tribal heads and religious leaders. Both political and economic systems tend to revolve around these people who are in total control of entire wealth and its distribution. Further, it is also true that all these people do not seem to have the ability for what they are gifted.

They in pursuit of their own benefits have only made the opportunity of development favor themselves. The poor people of Afghanistan, who have been badly stricken by decades of wars, have only suffered the worst manifestations of poverty. There are millions who do not have the basic requirements of life and are compelled to live their lives in the remotest areas, without much support and attention. Food, cloth, shelter and other requirements like education and security are non-existent for them.

And at the same time there are people who own properties worth millions of dollars. These are all the results of an intense stratification. The poor do not seem to be having many opportunities of improvements in their lives and that means that social mobility, which can provide oxygen to a stratified society does not exist, while the social injustice is on the rise. The law and order system, instead of treating everyone alike, has served as the slave of the upper-class. The current scenario if goes unchecked can bring further misery to Afghan society.



Deadly Silence Against Air-pollution

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Both government and citizens are aware that air-pollution have reached a serious threatening level in Afghanistan but knowingly underestimate the deteriorating issue! thousands of people are suffering from health issues such as cancers, heart and respiratory diseases that air pollution brings, and in fact the danger of air-pollution became as deadly as terrorist in our country. As ranked by WHO, Mazar-e Sharif and are Kabul are graded the ninth and tenth most polluted cities in the world while Onitsha, a fast-growing city in Nigeria, got the first place in the world.

As a result, the toxic particles reached - up to 1000 mg per cubic meter - in Kabul. While, as expert says anything over 300 mg per cubic meter is considered harmful to people's health.

The blamable factors for the air pollution is the enormous amounts of smoke produced by badly maintained vehicles, factories, public baths, lack of waste management system and the use of coal for heating in winters. Improper traffic system and its inadequate and unprofessional personnel are adding fuel to the fire. There are no any appropriate engine fitness inspections or restriction for vehicles producing the cloud-like smokes.

On the other hand, the streets in Kabul represent the dirtiest streets of the world. The vehicles running on the shabby, rough and tough roads blow dust particles, waste materials and garbage which make breathing almost impossible. These roads and streets are the main sources of various kinds of deadly germs causing fatal diseases each day to hundreds of people including children and other volatile groups.

With growth of population and poverty, it seems that the problem is rapidly worsening in Afghanistan, abnormally in Kabul. Dozens of the citizens die and thousands others suffering from various types of diseases linked to polluted weather. Children exposed to heavy traffic fumes today will have smaller lungs, unhealthy brain and be more vulnerable to respiratory and heart diseases in their later years.

It means, if we ignore the issue now, we are storing up a health time-bomb for the future, guaranteeing that hospital wards will overflow of wheezing people with hearts and lungs permanently damaged just by living in cities. The vast costs to the economy of caring for an increasingly infirm older population will have to be met later.

If population density and urban disorders persist like this, then we not be able to a regain a healthy environment for living in the near future, the problem is that when a city develops in an unplanned way, the in charge authorities in this section cannot move in parallel with population density. Now, the Kabul city has around seven million populations while it doesn't have the capacity of more than one and a half million people! seventy percent of Ka-

bul city has been built in an unplanned manner with un-standardized facilities. Harmful telephonic-waves, voice pollution, lack of required greenery and more importantly the exacerbating air-pollution have turned the environment into a crisis, along with other concerns, including security, immigration and unemployment.

In winter seasons, the vast majority of people burn coal and wood to heat their homes - a move that seriously impacts the quality of air. By entering into this season, the dilemma also enters in large cities, especially Kabul covered by a layer of smoke and dust. This system of urban life which use unpurified coal for heating is not standard and neither proposed any proper alternatives to lower air pollution in the cold season.

Public hospitals and private clinics are full of patients due to air pollution during the winter. Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital (IGCH) officials say that, over 300 patients come to the hospital with respiratory diseases daily. Using low-quality fuels for warming houses in some towns and big buildings in winter is one of the main causes of polluted air. Hospital officials say most of the patients are children. According to scientists in the field of medical research, twenty percent of cancers around the world are caused by harmful gas that is exists in the space. air pollution and harmful gas in the air also bring up asthma and heart diseases, strokes, premature mortality, mental illness and neurology, and maternal problems.

In the conclusion, both the people and the government need to adopt necessary measures to overcome the deadly issue. people should pay respect to the culture of urbanization, take part in forestation and overall cooperate with government but government is more responsible to develop a comprehensive strategy using immense experience accessible in today's world.

First, the government needs to improve the urban service system which is the main cause for over than 70% of pollution in large cities. This consist of: waste management, transportation, old car control, ban on low quality fuel, control of voice pollution, standardization of telephonic-waves and so on. Secondly, government has to pave the way for purification of coal or look for alternatives as it is blamable for huge a part of pollution especially in winter seasons. The typical alternatives are gas and electricity but people cannot afford to use due to high cost. One kg gas in Kabul is 60Af while one can buy 7kg of coal by this amount. So, the tax on imports of gas need to be reduced, the distributing cost must be monitored and likewise price of electricity should decrease. lastly, the promotion of greenery and forestation is very important for healthy environment. Both individuals and government must take part in planting trees throughout the country, especially in large cities.

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Terrorism - A Bone of Contention

By Hujjatullah Zia

The relation between Washington and Islamabad has hit rock bottom following the recent statements of US President Donald Trump, who claims that Pakistan harbors militant fighters. The relation between US and Pakistan soared with the declaration of Trump's policy about Afghanistan and South Asia. The last sense of bonhomie seems to have ended between US-Pak officials. Declaring the US strategy for South Asia and Afghanistan, President Trump said, "Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence and terror". On the first day of 2018, he tweeted, "...They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" These words, which were spoken in two different times, reflect Trump's strong sense of anger regarding Pakistan as he seeks to pressure Islamabad to play a genuine role in campaigning against terrorism.

As a backlash against Trump's recent statement, Pakistan's foreign minister Khawaja Asif said that Trump sought to blame Pakistan for its failure to win the war on terror in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistan's foreign office summoned the US ambassador in Islamabad on Monday and lodged its protest against Trump's tweet. Meanwhile, Pakistani angry demonstrators burnt the US flag as a protest against his words.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attack, the US launched war on terror in Afghanistan which resulted in the collapse of the Taliban's regime; however, the Taliban's guerilla fighting continued and Afghanistan was ranked the 2nd worst country, out of 163, in terms of terrorism in the world in 2016. Both Afghan and US soldiers paid heavy sacrifices in campaigning against terrorism with sixteen years of conflicts, but the war on terror did not bear the desired result as US soldiers withdrew from Afghanistan in 2014.

Only a few number of US soldiers, who remained in the country after 2014, adopted an advisory role rather than military one.

Unlike his predecessor, Donald Trump vowed to eliminate terrorism from the surface of earth and sought to increase the number of US soldiers in Afghanistan. He believed that a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan could lead to horrible consequences and leave a vacuum that would be filled by terrorist fighters. Therefore, he was of the opinion that the Taliban will not stop violence and deemed military role a right strategy to mitigate the conflicts.

Earlier, the US also offered the Taliban to come to negotiat-

ing table. The establishment of Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and the US, was aimed to bringing the Taliban to peace table, but it stalled when Mullah Omar's successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour was killed by the US drone in Baluchistan. This issue tensed the relation between Washington and Islamabad. Although the QCG was revived in Muscat, Oman's capital, the meeting was ended without fruition. Subsequently, Donald Trump claimed that Pakistan did not play its role with bona fide intention. Trump's words came as US Vice President Mike Pence urged Pakistan, days ago, to stop harboring terrorists and target their safe havens in its soil.

However, Pakistani officials have persistently denied harboring terrorists saying that they will play their role genuinely in terms of fighting terrorism.

The blame game which has been ushered in between Washington and Islamabad and also continued between Kabul and Islamabad will deteriorate trilateral relation on the one hand, and compound the issue of terrorism on the other hand. If there is a trust issue between states, they have to discuss it frankly and persuade one another to take concrete step in eliminating terrorism.

After all, terrorism has been changed into a highly serious issue in the region, including Afghanistan. Afghans sustained heavy casualties within more than a decade and half. The two past years were the deadliest years for Afghan people as thousands of people were killed and wounded as a result of terrorist attacks and suicide bombings. Loyalists to the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that gained firm foothold in the country deteriorated the security situation and increased the number of fatalities.

To view the escalated militancy in the region, all countries have to play their role genuinely in campaigning against terrorism. Indeed, we live in the "global village" and a country's security situation will affect the regional security. In this case, if a country neglects its role, the entire region will bear the consequence.

So, all states - be it Pakistan, Afghanistan or any other countries - need to prove their sincerity in fighting terrorism for the world. It is further believed that if all states take concrete step in this regard, the ragtag networks of terrorists will not be able to win the conflict and the ongoing violence will come to an end in the near future.

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