

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

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Kabul Threatened by Pollution

The concerns regarding growing pollution in the capital Kabul are multiplying as no serious measures are in place to control it. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on Saturday, January 09, warned that unless the high level of pollution in Kabul is reduced, the health of thousands of city residents will be threatened.

It is said that as many as 3,000 people in Afghanistan lose their lives annually due to illnesses caused by poor air pollution. And, 700,000 people in Kabul have been treated for respiratory problems in local hospitals – respiratory problems caused by pollution.

This is really alarming as there are many other problems as well that are taking the lives of the poor civilians in the country. Moreover, pollution is a problem in the capital for the last some years, but no serious strategy is in place to control it. The negligence has caused the issue to reach to a threatening stage.

The air in Kabul has been announced as highly dangerous for people both by national and international authorities. National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) considers Kabul's air vulnerable and fears that it can cause eyes, lungs and skin diseases, including cancer. There are many other factors of pollution as well which require special attention and can only be avoided by following certain standards that are set by the standard authorities.

Because of the increasing air pollution within Kabul city NEPA has even suggested that the use of masks should be made frequent in order to be secure from the contamination mostly exhausted by vehicles. Kabul city is dominantly marked with the flow of a congested traffic mostly including various types of cars. Most of these cars are not registered and do not have to pass any maintenance test or quality checkup before they get within the traffic. Further, the fuel used by these cars is not of high quality. Most of the times, the fuel does not come from the petrol stations rather they are provided by the suppliers on the road sides and small shops where the petrol and diesel are kept in water buckets and tanks. They do not go through any process of purification and contain large number of harmful particle including lead.

Moreover, as there is no proper sewerage system and waste disposal system the situation is deteriorated further. Even the latrine system in the country is not up to the mark and really requires great attention in order to be environmentally safe. The issue of clean drinking water is another great concern, bothering the people to a large extent. Burning of low quality fuel in the large quantity by every sort of vehicle, and burning of wood and coal for household and other purposes add dangerous contamination in our environment continuously. All these add to the problems which have never been tackled properly both because of lack of awareness and inconsideration.

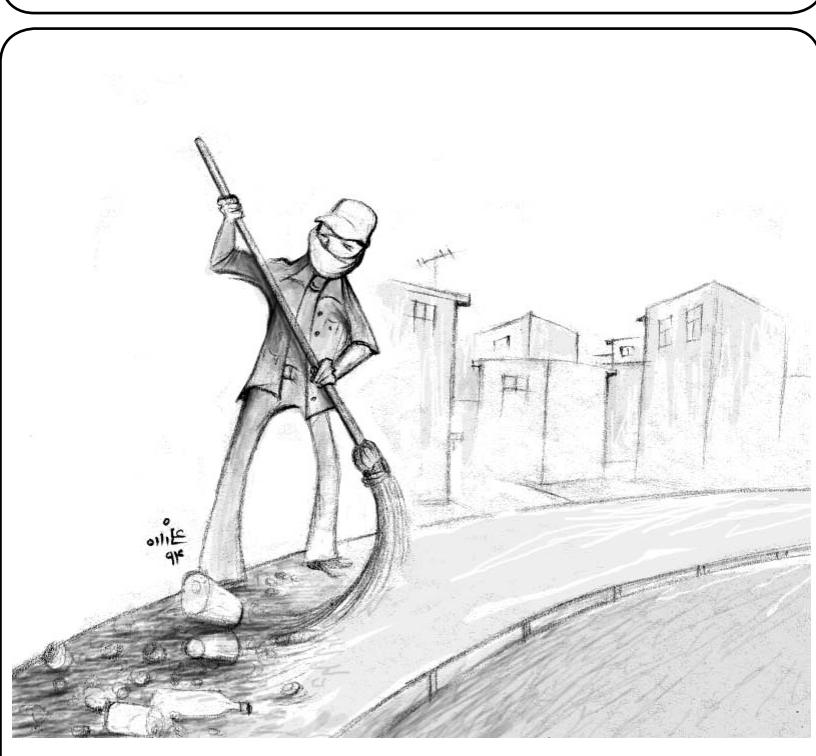
Apart from that, there is a very negligible arrangement for parks and greenery in the city. Most of the green areas of the city have not been cared for and they are becoming a part of residential and commercial buildings with the sacrifice of greenery.

Along with air pollution the land and water pollution in Afghanistan, especially in urban areas are getting serious as well. The drainage system in the urban areas is still not developed properly or it is left with serious deficiencies. The drains that carry the water containing waste material from household and other uses are not covered. Even in the capital Kabul, the drains are not covered. Rather they have become dustbins for the people. The people throw the wrappers, plastic bags, papers and other waste materials in the drains without any hesitation or humiliation.

Most of the times the drains are blocked by the excessive dirt; and the dirty water flows out of the drains on the roads, generating disgusting smell and inviting different types of insects. The same water then dries and the dirt along with the dust particles fly in the air because of the passing vehicles and the same air is inhaled by the passersby. Further, the ponds of dirty water are refuge for mosquitoes and flies and other insects. These insects are really dangerous for spreading serious epidemics. And such issues are never dealt seriously even in the most developed of the cities.

The issue of environmental pollution should be dealt appropriately both by people and government of Afghanistan before it is too late. Any program regarding environmental protection should be two-fold. First, the government must introduce laws and the mechanism to enforce them. Since, the introduction of nation's first environmental law in 2005, no remarkable development has been made in chalking out the mechanism to enforce them. Low-grade fuel should be banned all together. And extensive growth of trees should be made possible immediately.

Second, concerned authorities should facilitate thorough awareness programs, which should penetrate among the residents of the country, so that they should be fully aware of the actions they carryout in deteriorating the environment. Workshops, Advertisements, Debates, Lectures and other techniques for furthering awareness campaigns must be carried out, especially in the urban areas of the country. Further, environmental awareness literature can be included in the syllabus of the students so that they from the very beginning of their lives should adopt a very responsible way of life. Environment is a collective and natural property of all the living beings and it must be protected collectively.



Impacts of Saudi-Iran Conflict!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

The escalation of tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran has threatened the world of another conflict in the region that is already torn and shattered with conflicts and war. It started when Saudi executed 47 people including a Shia cleric, Sheikh Nimr-al-Nimr. The execution of the Sheikh was condemned by all the powers including the Saudi allies of United States and UK. It was feared that it might result in tensions in the region and deepen the divide between the Sunni and Shia population of Middle East. As feared, there were protests in a number of countries against this execution and in Tehran, protesters stormed the Saudi Embassy. After the incident, Saudi Arabian government announced to cut its ties with Iran. According to Iranian government, the attack on Saudi embassy was a natural reaction from the enraged Shia community of Iran. After a few days, a unity of six Arab nations came up with a statement, declaring the attack on Saudi embassy in Tehran as 'an act of terror.' With this, a number of countries supporting Saudi announced to cut their relations with Iran.

The escalating tensions between the two countries have given birth to fears of a direct military conflict between the two nations. According to military analysts, both the countries are not in condition to afford any such conflict at present. On one side, Saudi Arabia has the support and weapons provided by its allies. However, Iran has an edge on Saudi Arabia with its comparatively huge population and support of Russia, as has been seen in the conflict of Syria. Iran also has military edge on Saudi in the open seas, as its navy is more established and bigger in size. However, both the countries are already involved in different conflicts. If Saudi Arabia is leading the aerial attack on rebel groups of Yemen, Iran is also busy in supporting the regime of Assad in Syria. On the other hand, Saudis are also facing the internal pressure due to the falling income from its oil exports and its decision to impose taxes on its public. During the Arab spring, Saudi government averted the danger of any internal uprising by giving more and more benefits to public, to win their support for the royal family.

Political analysts criticize both Saudi and Iran the way they mis-handled the situation and allowed the situation to get worse. Before Saudis executed the Shia cleric, many countries had realized that it might increase tensions in the region and so they tried to stop Saudi Arabia from this. However, the Saudi government did not consider these problems or they intentionally ignored the warnings and executed the Sheikh. Although the Saudis have not gained much from this execution, but they have certainly jeopardized the stability and peace of the region by this small act. On the other hand, some critics also criticize the way Iranian government handled the post-execution situation of Sheikh, especially in Tehran. The government failed to stop protesters from storming into the Saudi embassy in Tehran. The public speeches and statements of government officials and influential clerics of the country added fuel to the emotions of people, resulting in clashes between protesters and police in Tehran.

In the same way, the blind following of six Arab nations to cut their ties with Iran is considered by many critics as heedless and lacking

wisdom. The decision was taken only to please Saudi Arabia and get the support of their Sunni masses. It was ignored that any such step might result in a military conflict in the region. As a response to this, Iranian government accused of Saudi-led coalition to target and bomb its embassy in Sana of Yemen. Although Saudi has denied these accusations and a general in command has ordered investigations of these accusations, the accusations have undoubtedly added fuel to the fire of conflict between the two countries.

This conflict between the two countries is not new. Both the countries cut off their relations in 1980 as well that lasted for four years and had negative impacts on the people and governments of both the countries. However, both the countries represent the two biggest blocks of population in the Muslim world and a conflict or misunderstanding between them runs deep into the masses of Sunni and Shia population. The leaders of both the countries need to understand that their small disagreement might hurt the unity and peaceful co-existence of people belonging to Sunni and Shia sects. The involvement of both the countries in the conflicts of Iraq and Syria has already widened this rift and any such heedless act might have catastrophic impacts on the region.

This conflict would also have negative impact on the war to tackle the menace of ISIS in the Middle East. If Saudi has announced the formation of a 34-nation alliance against terrorism and is a supporter of bombing of ISIS in Syria, Iran is also a key player as it has sent its physical and military support to Bashar-Al-Assad. The conflict between the two important regional powers might slow down the process to battle the evil forces of ISIS in the region. It might also affect negatively the Syrian talks that were supposed to start in January and that is going to play a major role in peaceful resolution of Syrian conflict.

The conflict might also undermine the recently achieved nuclear deal between Iran and the West. This nuclear deal is considered a milestone in the peaceful resolution of this long-standing problem but any such conflict between these two regional powers might change the route of the practical implementation of this deal in near future.

It is also the time to ignore these small differences and work on wider scale to reach and help those hundreds and thousands of people who are under the siege of warring factions in Iraq, Syria and Yemen and they are in desperate need of food and other humanitarian assistance.

Until now, the West has not taken any side, as both the sides are important, in one way or the other. If Saudi is the major and traditional ally of West, Iran is also playing its key role in the Syrian conflict.

This conflict shows again the sad reality that leadership in majority of Islamic countries lack the vision, wisdom and understanding for a calm and rational resolution of conflicts. The leadership on both the sides tried to address their shortsighted aims and ignored the long-run impacts on people and the region as a whole. The problem would remain the same until we do not establish a strong and healthy tradition of democracy in all the Islamic countries.

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Plotting The Eradication of Fractional Reserve Banking

By Dr. Faisal Ali

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

The global arena has experienced several economic cataclysms since the inception of Fractional Reserve Banking whose monopoly revolves around interest which is oppugnant to reason and justice. John Maynard Keynes contended that without the abolition of interest, unemployment cannot be eradicated. Silvio Gesell castigated interest on the basis that his sales were more often related to the price of money (i-e interest) than people's needs or the quality of his products. Gesell also launched "Stamp Script Movement" to make money a public service for a use fee but all his efforts went in vain. Commentator Willis L. Krumholz stated in The Federalist in July 2014 that we can continue these easy-money policies that cause inflation, enable excessive government spending, and engineer more bubble-fueled financial crisis, or we can allow interest rates to rise, which would surely plunge the economy back into recession.

Today, the world is in need of panaceas whose implementation can make a solid ground for interest free economy, global balance of payments and prevention of future economic collapses. The major religions of the world deplore, condemn and prohibit interest in all its forms. The sacred books of Hinduism especially the Manu Smriti categorically express sentiments for contempt of usury. The Buddhist Jatakas refers to the practitioners of interest as hypocritical ascetics. The Old Testament speaks about the proscription of interest in the books of Deuteronomy 23: 19, Leviticus 25: 36 and Exodus 22: 25. Jesus (Peace Be upon Him) is quoted in the 95th verse of Gospel of Thomas as saying "If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give (it) to one from whom you will not get it back" The Holy Quran prohibits interest in very explicit manner. The forbidding of interest in Holy Quran is mentioned in the Chapter of The Romans: verse 39, Chapter of The Family of Imran: verse 130, Chapter of The Women: verse 161 and Chapter of The Cow: verses 275-281. The prohibition of interest is also mentioned in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). The Prophet (PBUH) said "No matter how much is the increment accrued through interest, the eventual outcome is scarcity."

The Fractional Reserve Banking (FRB) became a legalized form of economic sacerdotalism at national and international level after the establishment of Bank of England in 1694 and the foundation of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in 1944. The era of this banking has affected the countries and humanity in form of national debt, money supply, buying power, business cycle, imbalance of payments, increased taxation, corruption and economic depressions. The FRB has been an incremental and instrumental tool in heaping up the external and domestic debts of various nations. The sad part of the story is the interest payments on those debts which add more to the holocaust and inferno. Pakistan paid \$1,112,892,000 USD interest on external debt in the year 2014 only. The country allocated 1.168 billion rupees for domestic debt servicing in year 2015-16. Afghanistan rewarded \$10,169,000 USD interest on external debt in 2014 according to International debt statistics of World Bank. The United States of America (USA) paid \$430.8 billion interest on national debt in 2014.

The economists must ferret out an alternative for fractional reserve banking to save the world from the maledictions of economic pandemonium. The Chicago Plan and the Chicago Plan Revisited are the glorious masterpieces for abolition of fractional reserve banking and imposition of Full Reserve Banking. The substitutes also include Islamic Banking and Constitutional Monetary System of Lincoln. Furthermore, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) should initiate interest write off programs for developing countries under a new initiative. In 1996, the IMF and World Bank sowed the seeds of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) for a group of 38 developing countries. But the new initiative should include the interest write off programs for all the developing countries because it is the interest which is feasting on the flesh and bones of developing world especially those nations that are dependent on others and in which corruption and embezzlement are rampant. As far as the recovery of loans from developing and poor countries is concerned, it can be dwarfed by galvanizing the debt-equity swap method. Hence, it is concluded that the economic salvation depends on the total elimination of fractional reserve banking.

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