

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



January 31, 2018

The Desire to Learn Must be Nourished

The desire to learn is a remarkable attribute of human beings. Since their birth, they have the desire to explore and learn, and understand their surrounding and themselves. Such particular attribute in them has incapacitated them to accumulate a wealth of knowledge that they can use in different spheres of life. Fortunately, the boundaries of knowledge are not finite, and human beings still have a great deal to learn.

Using their quality to discover more, human beings in developed countries have been able to bring about unmatched advancements in almost all the aspects of their living. Their knowledge and research are not only evident from their schools, colleges and universities, but also from their political and economic institutions. Even their daily lives show the nature of achievements they have acquired by dint of knowledge and scientific education.

Unfortunately, the people in certain countries, particularly, in the backward ones, have not been able to utilize their capacities to their utmost potentials and the result is that they are underdeveloped in different aspects of their lives. Afghanistan is also one of such countries; the people have not been able to nourish their desires to learn to their full capacities. Therefore, the need of time is to nourish the desire to learn both at individual and institutional levels.

The first institution where human beings start their learning is a family. The parents are, thus, the first teachers. It is through parents that children start learning a language and form the foundations on which they construct the building of their knowledge. Parents prepare the children for what they are going to learn in the years to come. Parents, in fact, do not install the urge for learning within the children. The urge to learn and the thirst to know are already there. The parents only require to keep that alive; or even assist in increasing that.

However, on certain occasions, the parents discourage that urge and strive to install within the minds of the children what they know themselves. They want the children to be their carbon copies; copying what they teach them. The inquisitiveness, the curiosity and keenness that are the natural gifts of the children are thus spoiled in that case and the children become habitual of getting fed by their parents instead of searching for knowledge themselves.

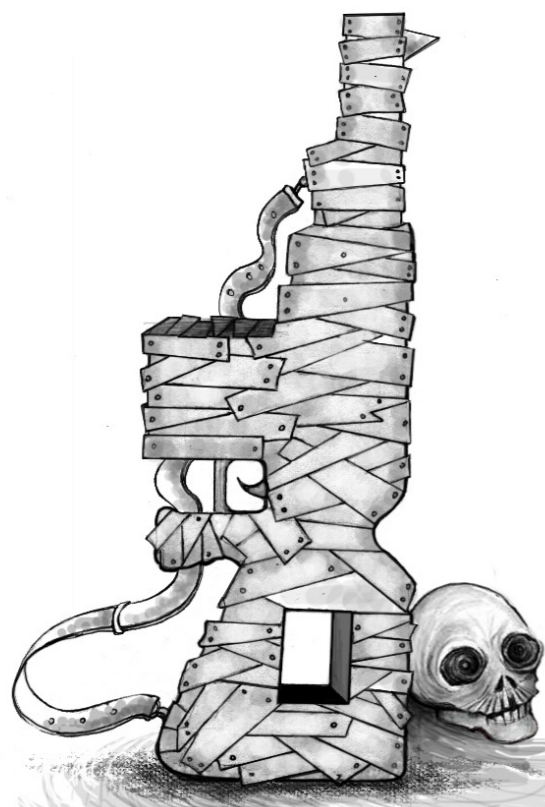
Another institution that plays a tremendous role in supporting the children to learn is school. Though schools assist children in learning to a great extent, they can also be responsible for snatching from children their precious gift – the capacity to learn. Certain schools use the methods and ways that are not at all supportive in learning; rather, they discourage children to a large extent.

The use of fear is one of the most dominant factors in such methods, and is highly responsible for killing the students' craving to learn. Moreover, in colleges and universities, research and discoveries must be appreciated and the students who are willing to bring forth new ideas and concepts must be given enough space to move forward, so that their ways for better development must not hindered.

Teachers, at the same time, must strive to keep the students' craving for learning alive instead of inculcating in them the readymade thoughts and concepts. Teachers must support the students in polishing their capacities to develop their own understanding, instead of making them repeat like parrots. They have the most important responsibility of making the students learn without losing the urge to learn more and more. They have to keep their tendency for innovation and improvement alive all the times.

We need to understand that the habit of learning keeps a person updated and ready to face the overgrowing changes of changing world. As, with each passing moment the universe is expanding and along with it the knowledge, it is essential that our people must never give up the habit of learning. At the end of each day a person must have something new that has been learnt. It is the only way that a person can remain updated and young.

For our people to keep on learning, the central concept is to consider that a person has never learnt enough. As the great philosopher Aristotle used to say, "I know that I don't know anything." It is the very basic step. The realization that a person knows that he knows not leads to true learning. On the other hand, the ones who believe that they are not ignorant and know everything, for them all the doors to learning are automatically closed. They, from the very first step, deny to open the vistas of knowledge to themselves. They are basically the blind believers who are unfortunately sure that they have enough knowledge, while on the contrary, they are the ones who need the most of it. And, they are, undoubtedly, the most ignorant of all.



Unbalanced Budgeting

By Mohammad Mahdi Shafaei

With the approval of members of the national assembly, the 377 billion Afghan budget for the next year has reached the implementation stage but there is a point in this budget that goes unnoticed almost every year and that point is the imbalance present in the budget planning of different provinces of Afghanistan.

Every year, some provinces get more budget and many other provinces remain deprived of a proper budget. The newly approved budget has a similar characteristic. Pages 82 and 81 of the budget information document that has been submitted to the Wolosi Jirga, contains a chart showing budget expenditure based on province. In the accepted budget, this chart is present for the fiscal year 1396 but it has been omitted for the year 1397 although it was present in the first draft of the document.

Out of the total budget, 219 billion Afghan, which is 57 percent of the budget, has been allocated to provinces and 140 billion Afghan, which is 43 percent of the budget, has been set for national investments. Based on this document, the highest budget, an amount of 24 billion and 979 million Afghan has been allocated to Kabul. Nangahar is the province with the second highest budget, 18 billion and 417 million Afghan. Balkh stands third with a budget of 16 billion and 407 million Afghan. Then provinces with budgets of more than 10 billion Afghan include Qandahar (16 billion and 386 million Afghan), Herat (14 billion and 525 million Afghan), Paktia (11 billion and 989 million Afghan), and finally Helmand (11 billion and 281 million Afghan) which rank 4th to 10th among provinces with highest allocated budgets respectively.

Provinces with the lowest allocated budget include Panjsher, receiving the lowest budget, an amount of 1 billion and 715 Afghan, then Nooristan ranks second with an amount of 1 billion and 911 million Afghan, Uruzgan third, with an amount of 2 billion and 12 million Afghan, Badghis fourth with an amount of 2 billion and 148 million Afghan, Zabul fifth with an amount of 2 billion and 197 million Afghan, Daikundi sixth with an amount of 2 billion and 262 million Afghan, and Samangan ranks seventh with an amount of 2 billion and 351 million Afghan. However, the current allocation of budget is arbitrary while the budget should be allocated for every province based on per capita. On pages 87 and 88, the budget has been analyzed based on provincial expenditure.

Per capita expenditure based on province has been shown on a chart (Figure 8) and the information has been made through calculations in which the population of provinces has not been given in the chart. It must be mentioned that the chart has been made in such a way that it makes it difficult for the reader to properly comprehend the data. It seems that the writers or organizers of the budget's document are properly aware of the sensitivity of the people and their representatives over this issue and therefore they have made the charts such.

According to the information in the document, the highest budget per capita has been allocated to Paktia, where everyone gets 20,973 Afghan (equivalent of \$313 USD) per person. Following Paktia, Nimroz, Qandahar, Helmand, Nooristan, Balkh and Nagahar get the highest budget per capita respectively. At the end of the figure, there are five provinces with the lowest budget per capita which are as follows: Ghazni, Ghor, Faryab, Badghis, and Sar-e-Pul. Among these, Ghazni gets the lowest expenditure per capita where the government has set an amount of 3,336 Afghan, an equivalent of \$50 USD per person.

An important point to be considered is that per capita information for the budget has been given for the provinces with the highest and lowest per capita expenditure only and exact information does not exist for all of the

provinces. The author, after observing the figure presented in the document of the budget, budgets of all the mentioned provinces in the current budget and report of the estimated population of Afghanistan by Central Statistics Office (CSO), has prepared an appropriate chart to make it for readers easier to comprehend and compare. Likewise, it must be noted that all the information in this report that is related to population, is an estimate and no accurate information exists on census. According to the announcement of the budget, the total budget relating to provinces has been estimated as 219 billion Afghan. If this amount is divided on the total number of population living in provinces (as estimated by CSO), we get an average per capita budget of around 7,350 Afghan. (Red line in the figure). In this sense, at least half of the provinces of the country, are under the line of average per capita of the budget and the per capita difference between the highest and lowest expenditure is around 6 times. Similarly, around 140 billion Afghan has been allocated to national projects which will not be spent by provinces. It is important to note that many of the national projects profit big provinces and it can hardly be observed that small and deprived provinces get big profits from national projects. Another interesting point is that Kabul province gets place as 29th in terms of per capita expenditure of the budget. As mentioned above, certainly this province benefits the most from national projects and with the consideration of this point, certainly has the first place among all provinces in terms of per capita expenditure. The government must pay attention to this issue because failure of responding to the lack of balance in budget planning for deprived provinces can have consequences. As we have observed in the past 17 years, that lack of attention to deprived territories has resulted in migration of their residents to big cities where material facilities are concentrated. Lack proper capacity in big cities has created secondary problems caused by such migration that includes lack of housing, air pollution, traffic and so on which again forces the government to spend more in order to solve these problems and this process continues in a vicious cycle. It must be kept in mind that today stepping towards economic expansion and development is much easier than the past because footsteps of other countries are before us from which we can learn and avoid their mistakes. We can learn one of the important lessons of economic expansion and development from our neighboring country, China. This country had the highest number of citizens living under the line of poverty, but by adopting correct economic policies, she has pulled above the line of poverty around 250 million of its citizens.

The current situation in Afghanistan is also such that majority of its population is rural, which can be taken into attention through proper policies and implementation of village development at a higher level and in budget planning. The government has tried to implement this goal through the introduction of "MesaqShahrwandi Program", which has provided and improved basic services as education, health services, basic infrastructures (drinking water, roads, irrigation, reproducible energy), hygiene, trash picking, and development of agricultural services. However, the budget of this ten-year program is 52.3 billion Afghan which is the equivalent of \$750 million USD, which is financed by the international community, Afghanistan and the World Bank and is implemented in three stages. Given these cases, the annual budget will be around 5 billion Afghan which is still not enough to maintain the required balance among the provinces of Afghanistan and more serious steps and appropriation of more budget is required for creating balance.

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Successive Attacks Caused Public Anger

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

In spite of being supported by international partners, Afghanistan has been facing increasing security challenges unprecedented in last 17 years. From daily occurrence such as kidnapping, armed robberies and killings to tragic massacre became rampant and ordinary. Poverty criminal kill people and burgle homes in daylight, but neither serious action taken and nor the disappointed people ask for help. In fact, Afghans are extremely suffering from the demerits of rulers who are engulfed with unimportant internal political chaos; they are not just dissatisfied from the failure of security forces but also frustrated from repeated negligence and illogical justifications. Many times government has established special committee promising to report their performance but non-has been fulfilled yet. As result, people in Afghanistan are using opium to block their pain; the pain of bloodshed, hunger, sickness, losing their sons, daughters and men.

Psychologists say that recent attacks that have ripped through the country, especially those in Kabul, have had a tremendous effect on the people psychologically. According to experts, a huge percentage of the population is extremely stressed and are feeling the effects mentally. They believe that these fights have caused even the security institutions to lose concentration. It means that when they say we cannot or government cannot (prevent attacks), it has a negative effect on them that has caused officials to lose concentration. When any event occurs the residents are largely following the news while the children, teenagers, elders, women, girls and all witness insecurity and painful events which resulted to live in fear of the next attack.

Everyone blame government and international partners for unaccountability and only condemning from behind of cement walls which does not heal people's pain. Chairman of the new national front of Afghanistan Anwar ul-Haq Ahadi on Monday reacted to the security crisis and deadly attacks in Kabul and said these incidents jeopardized the National Unity Government's (NUG) future. He blamed security and intelligence departments for their inability to prevent the string of deadly attacks that have rocked not only the capital but also the country in the past nine days. He said the NUG is responsible for the current crisis in the country. Insecurity has reached the level that no one is safe and government does not have the ability to resolve problems," said Ahadi.

In fact, the recent brutal attacks over the past several weeks not only caused public anger inside the country but also shown the world the fragile and worsening state of security in Afghanistan. Within 10 days, Kabul alone has witnessed three deadly attacks which left at least 150 dead and hundreds more wounded. Some experts link the increase in deadly attacks to Pakistan's response to the United States' new policy on Afghanistan and South Asia. However, Kabul has not been the only place to witness such deadly attacks – other provinces have also felt

the full brunt of insurgents past week. Serious attacks were also carried out in Helmand, Kandahar and Nangarhar. Last Wednesday Daesh attacked on Save the Children offices in Nangarhar, that took the lives of six people and left over 20 wounded. Following the attack, the organization suspended its activities in Afghanistan.

The Afghan government, however, warned that they will use all means available against the Taliban group in reaction to these attacks. The president's deputy spokesman Shahhussain Murtazavi said these attacks will complicate a negotiations process with the Taliban. "They have crossed the red line and now government has reached an agreement to use all options against them," said Murtazavi. Also, the Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has promised to share information with the nation regarding the government's steps to be taken in response to the recent deadly attacks. Speaking in a press conference with his Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo, President Ghani said he will share information regarding with the nation regarding the clear and serious steps to be taken in response to the recent human catastrophe. He said the Afghan nation also expect steps from their international allies in response to the recent attacks, insisting that the time has come to take specific decisions against the countries supporting and providing safe havens to the terror groups. President Ghani further added that the international community should prevent the State-sponsors of terrorism from further violations and those violating the international resolutions must be isolated. According to President Ghani, peace and stability are the main requirements of the Afghan nation and the government is obliged to achieve peace with the power of the nation and take revenge of those killed. Insisting that justice is the demand of the nation and that the government is committed to ensure justice, President Ghani slammed the Taliban group for the claiming the recent attacks, saying the group could not even ignore the orders of their bosses to refrain from claiming the barbaric attacks in a bid to save their dignity. Thus, the UN Security Council condemned the attack in central Kabul, which killed more than 100 people and called for bringing the perpetrators to justice. "The security council called the attack "Heinous" and "Despicable" and expressed condolences to the relatives of the victims and the victims and to the Afghan authorities. The members of the security council recalled that "Acts of terrorism are criminal and cannot be justified on any grounds." Members of the Security Council stressed the necessity of bringing the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these reprehensible terrorist acts to justice, and urged all states to cooperate actively with the Afghan government. Also, Trump called on US allies and friends to take on more responsibility to overcome ongoing challenges.

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