

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



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The Evil of Insecurity Persists

As Eid is approaching, the people in Afghanistan are hoping for some peace and tranquility; however, the security situation in the country is getting serious. Only a couple of days ago, 33 people were killed and 79 others wounded after the attack on police cadets' convoy in west of Kabul. According to the reports, At least two Taliban bombers ambushed five police buses, two of which were destroyed by the powerful blasts in the Haidar Ali Khan area of Paghman district -- 20 kilometres west of Kabul.

The cadets were returning from a training center in central Maidan Wardak province and were heading to the capital on leave. The first bomber targeted the bus carrying the trainee policemen and their instructors.

A second bomber attacked 20 minutes later, when policemen had arrived at the scene on the Kabul-Kandahar highway to evacuate the casualties. The Taliban claimed 150 police had been killed and dozens more wounded.

The attack is really tragic and it was condemned internationally, as well. However, the more important point is to make arrangements so that the security situation may improve and the people have a chance of finding some peace in their lives.

Police cadets have been attacked several times in Afghanistan and sometimes even in the capital Kabul. They have really given some great sacrifices; however, the important thing is that their sacrifices should bear some fruit and Afghanistan should see the sun of peace and tranquility dawn quickly.

Having a thorough look at the security situation one has no other choice but to question the real outcomes of the war against terrorism. War against terrorism is said to achieve its targets and the international forces have already ended up the war and most of them have already withdrawn their forces. The war is considered to have reached to a decisive position and the international community now thinks that Afghan forces and authorities are capable enough to take over the responsibility of the security of their country. However, the clashes between Taliban and Afghan government take place almost on daily basis and both incur casualties. Moreover, the rise of ISIS in the country is also making the situation complex and point towards a future which may not be very optimistic.

Nevertheless, there are some who are very much optimistic about the result of the ongoing transition but at the same time, it is also a fact that many concerns are yet to be dealt with. Above all, it is important to see that the war against terrorism has not reached to a decisive position as the terrorism and terrorist networks are yet to be defeated and there are great chances that they may get stronger if the war is left at this particular position. Further, the ongoing situation of peace and tranquility also suggest that there are many things to be done before the victory is considered decisive.

Keeping in mind the concerns regarding the capabilities of Afghan security forces and the strengthening terrorist networks the feared situation is quite possible. The other major issues which remain ambiguous after more than a dozen years of efforts include the prevailing instability in the country regarding the political and economic systems. Both of them stand on shaky foundations and suffer from a trend of uncontrollable and ever increasing difficulties. It is really difficult to build reliable expectations except the support of international community.

Moreover, the regional dissatisfaction and ambiguities are also increasing about the war. Afghanistan's neighboring countries do not see eye to eye with the US authorities regarding the war and it prospects and their relations with Afghanistan face fluctuations time and again. Keeping in mind the present scenario in Afghanistan and the region, it can be safely said that if this war is not termed as 'unnecessary' and 'evil', it can be termed as 'indecisive' for the time being. Definitely, there is more to be done to take this war towards conclusion. A proper conclusion of the war means defeating the enemy or reaching to some sort of agreement with the opposing forces, which at the present scenario are Taliban. Unfortunately, neither Taliban have been defeated completely, nor the reconciliation process with Taliban is on the track and heading towards a certain future. Taliban at the moment have opted for more aggression and they do not seem in a position to come to negotiation table.

There have been many sacrifices to achieve positive outcomes from the war against terrorism; these sacrifices should not go in vain and Afghanistan should be supported so that it can stand strong with dignity against disorder and terrorism. At the same time, the Afghan government and authorities must also strive to do their best in fulfilling their responsibilities and must endeavor to guide the nation towards lasting peace and tranquility. Continuous war is not in the favor of the country in any way; therefore, more efforts should be made for peaceful solution to the conflict.



Violation of Prisoners' Rights

By Hujjatullah Zia

One is free to exercise his rights to life, liberty and property without restrictions but on the basis of law. Afghanistan has accepted the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as stated in the Constitution's preamble. The UDHR underlines men's "inherent dignity" and natural and "inalienable rights" to a great extent and denies torture or "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

It is believed that men's equality in dignity and rights on the grounds of being human, irrespective of their race, sex, color or creed, is a universal principle which is accepted all around the globe, with some exceptions. One, including the prisoners, is not supposed to be degraded or tortured at all, mainly in modern law which is based on democracy. Afghanistan is also a democratic country with updated legal system. Therefore, torture and humiliating the prisoners are forbidden. The constitution states in article 29 as, "Persecution of human beings shall be forbidden. No one shall be allowed to torture or order torture, even for discovering the truth from another individual who is under investigation, arrest, detention or has been convicted to be punished. Punishment contrary to human dignity shall be prohibited."

Contrary to the law, prisoners are tortured in jails mentally and physically and, therefore, suffer from psychological harm. In other words, despite having signed the International Convention against Torture in 1985, systematic torture continues in Afghanistan's prisons.

According to statistics of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) 278 detainees out of 790 detainees were tortured in Afghan jails. The UNAMA conducted investigations during 2013 and 2014 and assessed 128 detention centers.

On December 12, 1997, by resolution 52/149, the UN General Assembly proclaimed June 26 the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, with a view to the total eradication of torture and the effective functioning of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Marking June 26, Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission said that the prisoners were being prosecuted in the jails - this act is in direct conflict with national and international laws. Ill-fatedly, the prisoners' human rights are violated in Afghanistan on a large scale. The arbitrary detention, physical and mental tortures, keeping them unaware of their legal rights and keeping them in prisons more than the legal period are the current challenges going on across the country. To put it succinctly, the judicial system is deep in the grip of corruption and law is not enforced by the book.

In addition to the miscarriage of justice, some individuals commit

crime with impunity. Although discrimination or distinction on the basis of one's social or political status is against law, the rich and the influential hardly stand trial. So, in terms of daily practices, some are considered beyond law. It is really outrageous to see that some criminals are at large while the accused and suspects are mistreated in jails.

It is self-explanatory that police, prosecutors and judges are supposed to put justice into practice so as to protect citizens' rights and dignity. However, when they themselves engage in criminal acts in the name of justice, the society will fall in the quagmire of corruption - this is the main reason behind Afghanistan's ill fame in international arena.

It is worth saying that moral values are in decline in social life, including the judicial system. In another item, since moral standards have no legal sanctions, they are widely violated. Whenever the values are on the verge of erosion in a community, people's rights and dignity will be at stake. Currently, people hardly listen to the call of their conscience and, therefore, corruption is rife in the country. Hence, the public suffer not only in prisons but also on the street, on the way to school, etc. Similarly, their rights are trampled upon, in one way or another, by different individuals and groups.

The philosophy behind imprisoning criminals is not to fill them with a sense of vengeance and hatred but to train them and revive humanity in their soul. However, torturing the prisoners will be counterproductive and make them more violent than before. In a nutshell, rather than preventing from crime and corruption, mistreating and prosecuting prisoners will increase the graph of criminal acts - which is against the philosophy of establishing law.

The government is committed to "Establish an order based on the peoples' will and democracy; form a civil society void of oppression, atrocity, discrimination as well as violence, based on rule of law, social justice, protecting integrity and human rights, and attaining peoples' freedoms and fundamental rights." So, government is the only gleam of hope for the public to respect and protect their rights based on the country's Constitution. In short, citizens' rights will be vulnerable, unless corruption is rooted out from the government's machinery.

The aforementioned challenges stymie the process of democratization and put the government's justice under question. So, the government has to enforce the law and remove corruption from judicial system so as to protect the rights and dignity of the citizens. Moreover, the human rights of prisoners must be observed according to the law and those who torture the prisoners should be brought to justice. The detention centers should be humanized.

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Captive Breeding of Endangered Snow Leopard

By Saikat Kumar Basu

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Snow leopards are an endangered species of wildlife surviving across the high altitude mountains of the South and Central Asia stretching from the mountains of Central Asia across Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian Himalayan belt in the Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal (Darjeeling), Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. It is estimated by international wildlife investigating agencies that less than 6,000 wild snow leopards are currently available along with over 500 under various captive breeding programs in several zoological gardens across the world. Hence, captive breeding program for snow leopards is an important conservation effort to protect this majestic but endangered species across South Asia. On this account the snow leopard breeding centre at the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in the Darjeeling Hills of the Eastern Himalayas of India deserves special mention.

The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park is a jewel in the crown of captive breeding approaches for endangered high altitude Himalayan fauna of India. The state of the art snow leopard breeding centre of international standard and repute at the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park is the only officially recognized snow leopard breeding centre in the entire nation. It has made significant contribution towards the captive breeding of endangered snow leopard population of India as well the entire Central, South and SE Asia. Established in 1958, it has the rare recognition of being the largest high altitude (6900 ft) zoological garden of the nation. The various endangered species successful captive breeding programs at this institute (mammals like Red Panda, Snow Leopard, Tibetan wolf, Himalayan tahr and Blue sheep; birds such as Himalayan monal, Grey peacock pheasant, Blood pheasant, Satyr tragopan and amphibians like the rare Himalayan newt) have received global attention and appreciation.

Currently the park houses one male and nine female snow leopards and recently it has acquired a two year male, named Makalu from UK to boost the captive breeding program with induction of new blood lines following international breeding directives and protocol for endangered snow leopard. Such initiatives are expected to add new dimension to the captive breeding program at the zoo and further contribute towards increasing the endangered snow leopard population of India. The zoo garden is credited to witness the successful births of 40 snow leopard cubs in the past two decades. We expect to see many more accolades added to the zoo in the coming years where it will continue to contribute towards the successful captive breeding of several endangered or critically endangered wildlife species living in the higher altitudes

of the Indian subcontinent.

If the breeding center continues to strive good in the near future; this could easily transform into a larger captive breeding centre of snow leopards catering for the entire South Asia including Afghanistan, Pakistan in addition to India. Possibly, snow leopards born in the centre could be also introduced in Afghanistan and Pakistan; as close SAARC members in participatory conservation programs like Joint Conservation Initiative (JCI). Snow leopard populations in Pakistan and Afghanistan are also in a process of steady decline due to both natural causes such as Climate Change and Global warming as well as anthropogenic pressures and hence need active conservation efforts by both Pakistan and Afghanistan governments. Although a marginal increase in snow leopard populations mostly in sparsely populated, vastly inaccessible and uninhabited mountain ranges in Afghanistan and India; Pakistan has been worst hit. Latest census data suggests that less than 200 individuals surviving in the wild in Pakistan. Hence, the snow leopard population in Pakistan can be easily considered as critically endangered. Species like snow leopards survive at the apex of the food chain in an extremely challenging ecosystem of low temperature, high annual precipitation, difficult mountain terrains often inaccessible for humans with poor prey bases. In spite of the odds and challenges posed by the ecosystems and the habitats in which they survive, the species have evolved, adapted and been successful in occupying the strata of the top predator. Hence it is absolutely important to protect such flagship species; since if this species will survive successfully being at the apex of their ecosystem; all other components if that ecosystem will also be successfully protected.

It will be important for South Asian nations sharing the SAARC platform to extend their cooperation in conservation of the local forests and wildlife through Joint Conservation Initiative (JCI) where adjoining nations support one another through funding, technology and expertise in conserving related species beyond the international boundaries for long term sustenance of the species. It is important to conserve transboundary species like snow leopards across their entire range or habitat and not be restricted to just one specific country or region. If India, Pakistan and Afghanistan could join hands in the conservation of snow leopards through the captive breeding program of Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park of Darjeeling in Eastern Himalayas that may bear fruits if success for the future conservation of this majestic high altitude predator. This could transform into a international model of international cooperation and collaboration for initiating similar global conservation efforts between adjacent countries for transboundary species.

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