

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



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Developing Afghanistan's Agriculture Sector

Revival of agriculture sector is seen as a key for economic development of Afghanistan. Presenting his 100 Day Plan, the new agriculture minister pledged to devise and implement effective programs for improvement of Afghanistan's agriculture with the aim of boosting the country's overall economy and public livelihood. Asadullah Zameer, the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, outlined his plans on agricultural matters such as increased involvement of private sector in agribusiness sector, building capacity and improvement of human resources, administrative reforms, initiatives on development of irrigation system, storage facilities, natural streams, wheat production, fruit orchards and commercial trees, preservation of forests and etc. The National Unity Government (NUG) has promised major reforms in agriculture and agribusiness sectors as part of its overall plans for boosting Afghanistan's post-NATO economy.

Afghanistan's economy is heavily relying on agriculture sector. Afghanistan's overarching development and poverty reduction plan, "Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANSA), states that "Agriculture will determine whether Afghanistan will succeed or fail." However, the country's agriculture has been devastated by decades of insecurity and civil wars. In the past over a decade, there has been a major focus on reviving the agricultural infrastructures of Afghanistan and businesses related to the sector. However, there have been tangible results along with considerable failures in the collective efforts to reconstruct the agriculture sector. The failures of the past fourteen years in agriculture is mainly highlighted by incoherent efforts and competing strategies of the international donors as well as the government of Afghanistan for improving Afghanistan's agriculture sector.

After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan's economy grew strongly at approximately 10 percent per year for around a decade, the statistical figures suggest. However, was largely based on aid assistance from the international community, investments, rapid growth in areas like cellular networks and economic activities associated with US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan. Agriculture sector had a little share of this growth. As the flow of aid and cash related to NATO war efforts reduced before 2014, Afghanistan's rate of growth fell sharply to around 2-3 percent annually. With the prospect of Afghanistan's financial stability, it is believed that the country will need to make rapid and concrete improvements in agriculture, mining, human resources and transport sectors so to be able to build a self-sufficient economy for the country.

Today, despite revived activities in industrial activities in Afghanistan, most of Afghan citizens remain depending on small scale agricultural and livestock activities. However, Afghanistan's potential for growth of agriculture and mining sectors along with its strategic location offer a promising opportunity for long-term development of the country's economy. Agriculture and agribusiness sectors can play an important role in developing the country. According to government officials, most of Afghanistan's businesses are involved with agricultural production and agribusinesses. And, in the meantime, small and medium enterprises and companies, most of which operating in agriculture sector, constitute more than 90 percent of all businesses in Afghanistan, generating a large share of the country's GDP.

Investing in agriculture will help Afghanistan in its quest for financial stability and self-sufficiency in the long run. Afghanistan will need to wean off the international funding that has propped up the country for the last fourteen years. Also, the international aid for Afghanistan's development and security funding will further decrease as the international presence is declining in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has set the upcoming decade for finding the capabilities to generate sufficient revenues and get financial independence from the international donors. However, given the challenges of insecurity and insurgency, that could be a far distant goal for the country. Afghanistan has no option but to increase domestic revenue through development of key sectors such as agriculture to reach the goal of self-sufficiency before the international donors cut off their aid money to the government of Afghanistan.

For this, the improvement of agriculture sector is one of the key areas that can pay off remarkably for the country becoming financially self-sufficient. Improving agriculture will not only help the government to increase revenue generation, but also it will help a large portion of Afghan population for higher income and more financial prosperity. According to the U.S. development agency, USAID, an estimated 75 percent of Afghanistan's 34 million people live in rural regions where agriculture is the principle means of livelihood. For these Afghan farmers, improved agriculture means better living standards and financial prosperity. Financial security and better livelihood for the ordinary Afghans in particular those residing in rural areas will also serve security and stability of the country as joblessness and unemployment directly serves the ongoing insurgency in the country.

Given the role of the agriculture sector on future prospect of Afghanistan's economy, the government should make major investments on improvement of agriculture, among other key sectors such as mineral resources. Improved infrastructural services such as transport and roads, electricity and access to markets are keys for improvement of Afghanistan's agricultural production and agribusinesses. The government needs to provide the required environment for development of agriculture sector through provision of such infrastructural services. The bottom line is that the government should avoid inconsistent policies of the past over a decade of international donors in approaching the agriculture sector development and go ahead with solid plans and programs.

The Prospect of Afghanistan's Mining Sector

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

Devastated by decades of wars and conflicts, Afghanistan needs sources of revenues for reconstruction and long-term development. However, the country is in dire need of cash and struggling to receive the required funding in form of aid from the international community for maintaining its day-to-day activities and financing its army and police forces. Developing long-term sources of revenue generation is key for the country's survival. Luckily, the country has an abundance of natural minerals and is the source of some of the best minerals and precious stones. It is believed Afghanistan's untapped natural underground resources can transform and salvage the country's economy in the long run. Development of the sector will help pro-poor economic growth by creating jobs in rural areas which have largely missed out the recent over a decade of economic boom in major cities. However, due to numerous factors, Afghanistan is far from being able to sustainably develop its mining sector to generate sufficient revenue for the country that suffices its ordinary and development budgets. One of the biggest projects in Afghanistan's mining sector is the development and extraction of Ainak's Copper mine in Logar province. Daud Shah Saba, the Minister of Mines and Petroleum, told lawmakers in the Wolesi Jirga that there has been no acceptable progress in the project's preliminary works started almost seven years ago. He labeled the progress achieved so far in the project as 'zero', saying it is not in interests of Afghanistan and he would not approve the project under previous terms. According to the minister, the Chinese contractor firm, MCC, has informed the government of Afghanistan that given the feasibility study of the project, many of the initial commitments of the company are not feasible. Before, with the feasibility and initial activities of project going on, the Chinese firm had also suggested that it was going to renegotiate many of the project's terms and conditions including the deliverables such as developing power plants and road and train networks.

The Copper mining in Logar province is assumed to generate between \$300m to \$400m in annual revenue for the government of Afghanistan. The lagging of activities of the Ainak Copper project is in fact 'the tip of the iceberg', suggesting extensive and large-scale challenges in Afghanistan's mining sector and the Afghan government's management of the sector. It is an example of failures in the government's attempts and its capability to sustainably develop the country's mines and help improving Afghanistan's economy. It was envisioned by the United States, who has been the main financial donor to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Afghanistan would be able to develop its mines in the upcoming decade to the capacity to become the country's main source of funding. However, given the prolonged war and insecurity, the objective of developing domestic sources of incomes such as the mining sector as an alternative to the international aid is in jeopardy. The constraints and challenges to Afghanistan's efforts to develop its nascent mining sector range from capacity and management to corruption, security and infrastructural services. However, security is the biggest

threat for the Afghan government's efforts to develop the country's mining sector. The Chinese contractor of the Ainak Copper project had previously attributed its unwillingness to stick to the previous terms of the agreement to the security situation affecting the project. Proving security for the project already puts a massive burden to the Afghan government. With the insurgency continuing to target development and reconstruction projects across the country, around \$30 million are allocated annually for making the project secure.

However, there are other enormous challenges and constraints that are hampering the country's efforts to extract the underground resources. The mining activities are energy intensive, especially if more sophisticated machineries are used by the extractor firms. Due to lack of infrastructural services such energy, reliable linking networks and transportation constraints, Afghanistan has not been able to develop its extracting capabilities and resources. Taking the Ainak Copper mining as an example, the contractor firm had been obliged to develop electricity plants and build roads and railways but it quickly emerged that it is failing to deliver it based on the initial terms of the agreement. On one hand, Afghanistan lacks efficient and reliable infrastructures such as energy sources and transportation networks, and on the other hand, the persisting adverse security climate is preventing investments for developing sustainable infrastructures.

Promotion of the private sector role in the businesses related to mining sector is key for creating job opportunities. There are still illegal mining across the country. And for many of the minerals and underground materials, and the mining and minerals trade remains largely informal, resulting in substantial losses to government revenue, employment opportunity and foreign exchange earnings. The costs for the private sector for mining and trading of mineral materials are high, resulting in reduced profits and low levels of investments from investors. On the other hand, export procedures and transportation are complicated and expensive. For having sustainable growth, the government of Afghanistan needs to promote formal businesses around the mining sector.

One of the key constraints is lack of clear legal framework for development and formalization of Afghanistan's mining sector. The underground mineral resources are public assets belonging to the people of Afghanistan, and there should be robust laws and regulations to ensure that decisions on extraction of the resources will be transparent. The absence of strong legal frameworks for extracting the minerals, along with other challenges and limitations, helps illegal and unsafe trading, reduces growth and undermines the government's efforts to develop sources of revenues. Therefore, the government needs to quickly overcome constraints in areas of laws and legal frameworks for the sector.

Corruption is another major obstacle to development of Afghanistan's mining sector. Some mining areas are under the control of armed groups, powerful local strongmen and corrupt officials, who raise large sums of money in benefits from the informal mining sector. The government will need to address the illegal aspect of the mining sector if it is to efficiently lead the development of the country's natural resources.

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Unless We Adopt Pragmatic Approach....

By Asmatyari

Man made scientific equipments and devices draws greater human attention owing greater precision and accuracy with minute and reliable outputs. The greater reliance of man on technology can therefore be justified. The adherents of science and rationalism are striving hard to facilitate man being with technological assistance and amenities making them more competent and ecologically fit. They extend selfless services to humanity irrespective of one's cast, creed and color taken into account.

Allah almighty with drew creating non-living beings subsequent to creation of supreme creature, a human being. Since then the responsibility shifted to the being, empowered with peculiar capabilities. Presently numerous scientific inventions added to human society depicts human being fervently executing the assigned obligations extending their selfless services to humanity. Television keeps us informed about incidences taking place around the globe with inclusion to providence of entertainment segments. Telecommunication transformed the world into global tent, making distant communication possible despite physical separation. The airplane aided travelers, reducing the length of far-flung destinies. Internet has expedited communication system along with making sufficient study materials available at a click reach. Genetic engineering and biotechnology assisted searching out products of mass privileges, making the once incurable disease curable. DNA screening and testing enabled parents to claim their own misplaced infant subsequent to proper identification. The crime investigation department finds clear clues to reach to the genuine offender or perpetrator of the crime the list continues.

Many problems in the third world countries are associated with flawed or delayed fixation of responsibilities; the culprit either escape owning the unlawful activity or keep on shifting the responsibilities from one to another stakeholder. Finally, no one is brought to book and hence justice delayed is justice denied. Particularly, when justice is to be exercised against a high profile person, then the anticipation of recovery and evenhandedness die its natural death. The reason lies in superficial than deepening understanding of undertakings that earn us virtues in fact doesn't.

Formerly, Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) put forth its finding on some lingering controversial issues. CII is a renowned council of Pakistan tasked to supervise laws complementary to Islamic teachings is formulated. The findings put forth turned down the DNA a principal proof prosecuting the culprit of a rape victim. The council stuck to the traditional four eyewitnesses, the last credible evidence serving the basis to prosecute the suspects and DNA least credible evidence. The findings publicly denounced scientific inventions challenging their traditional authority -it contradicts all canons of international law and advocate violation of fundamental human rights. The prejudices disposed off ill-matches rationality and earned them an anti-scientific disposition. The hard liners also deem polio campaign anti-Islamic. Every year polio campaign is twice launched making the children of age below five immune to the deadly virus. The vaccination move inflicts no harm to them except making lives of infinite children safe and protected. Responding to a question, I enquired from a Clergy said, "The polio vaccine contains certain chemicals that negatively affects man's dauntlessness and weakens his Islamic attachment to greater degree." I turned

speechless, at the bogus and self made flawed interpretation, ill-matching the fundamental principle of scientific disciplines and logic. Such irrational standings are found proliferating deep in our society altering the stance of numerous people from evenhanded to customary.

The system directly supporting, promoting and protecting injustices seem unlikely to extend space to talent, competence, capabilities, as an alternative recommendation, inducement and influential financial status help earning preferential societal position. Nonetheless, the whole functionaries of the flawed system escape apprehension -they are subjugated to practiced system not the constitutional provision because of despotic brought up. It is imperative that constitutional safeguard is provided to hapless citizens seeking justices over authority and power abusers.

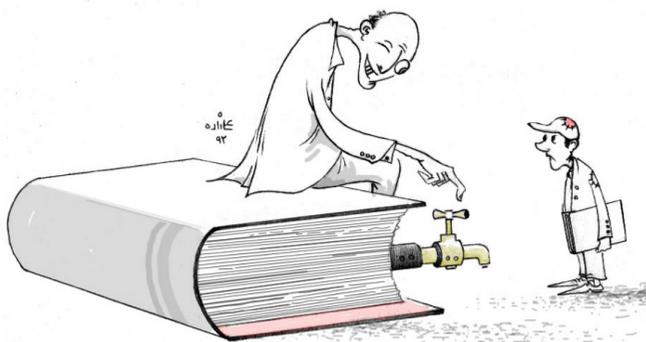
The injustices cracking the socio-political fabric of society and widen the societal divide across ethnic lines, must be curtailed. The politically under-privileged ethnic group rendered vulnerable with increasing the sense of insecurity and should be given in confidence. May the custodians of illusive slogans come forth to fight against all these social evils, injustices, biases and human rights violation? The recklessness multiplied our impediments and thoughtfulness offers a permanent a way out to it.

It is a traditional norm and customary law to consider an elders' says, a final decision to be rendered unobjectionable and undeniable, irrespective of the principles of rationalism and standard provisions of legitimate laws taken into account. The former discourse leads to insignificance, worthlessness and redundancy whilst the later leads to accomplishment, prominence and success.

The steep decline in literacy graph, lack of awareness and dominance of prejudiced practices are constantly providing foundation to substantiate the prolongation of existing miserable state of affairs, is agreeable. Nevertheless, reaching out to matchless achievements and earning unbeatable distinction requires an ideology pro-development and advancement and level-headedness to be pursued.

The right dimension of an issue has ever been hazy, complicating the determination of proper solutions. There has ever been a wide chasm between thoughtful comprehension of obligation and veneration; in contemporary Afghan society one finds verbal utility the other overshadowed by heedless incultation. Virtues, earnest faith, superior deeds and heavenly rewards, only come via repeated veneration, is widely propagated, negating the underlying worth of dutifulness. The binding principles of duties of immense significance are deemed inferior whilst religious dogma and set ritual superior. This is the state of superiority complex and the society suffering superiority complex, never rise to prominence, unless turn realistic. One of rational outlook a realistic approach demand is self-reliance via self-dependence; we are regrettably deficient in. We are truthful and sincere to our obligations and responsibilities to a degree that is laudable in disguise. We have never helped ourselves; hence none of our problems led to the ultimate solution. Neither, the political affairs are streamlined, nor the socioeconomic issues seek rightly directed. The time is advanced devoid of material gains. The distances travelled can not take us forth to an ambiguous destination.

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