

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



June 08, 2015

Government Should Meet Demands of Protesting Teachers

Education is one of the necessities of the humans and, therefore, a prime responsibility and obligation of the states and governments to impose it without any regional or class discrimination. Many states like that of ours, myopically perceive the fate of nation guided by foreign investments or donations which is unarguable fallacy. It is the right time, to realize, education economy can duly carry us along the avenues of long-lasting success. Without giving education first priority we can not keep pace with technological, innovative and scientific advancement the world has attained. The education itself is a proof to the progressiveness and development of the nations. The most developed nations in the worlds have most developed and best education systems while, the under-developed, struggling ones and one with the bad economy and global ranks have the bad education systems when compared to the developed ones.

Afghanistan making education sector a priority is reflected from its spending on education. At present the spending on education is not enough seeing the magnitude of illiteracy. The remedy is to increase the proportion of public resources going into education. If tax-to-GDP ratio cannot be increased, the state should be willing to divert resources from sectors with lower priority towards education. The donor community has been prepared to help with funds when it is not feared that domestic resources were constrained to allow for an increase in public sector expenditure on education.

On the contrary, the state of education is aggravated in this piece of land. By 2013 there were 10.5 million out of 27.5 million population attending schools in Afghanistan. About 35% of its population is unemployed and 36% live below the national poverty line, suffering from shortages of housing, clean drinking water, and electricity. On United Nations' Human Development Index Afghanistan ranks 175th with nation's GDP stands at about \$34 billion. This is far less than Japan's spending on education.

According to data available on site of ministry of education; over 5,000 schools are without usable buildings, boundary walls, safe drinking water or sanitation facilities; 90% of qualified female teachers are located in the nine major urban centers (Kabul, Herat, Nangrahar, Mazar, Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jowzjan and Faryab); no female students enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 of 412 urban and rural districts; 453 schools are still closed or have been damaged in the past two years, resulting in 300,000 students deprived of schooling; and, some 11 million adults remain illiterate.

Based on the statistics, currently Afghanistan has more than 200,000 teachers across the country, getting an average salary from 7,000 to 13,000 Afghani.

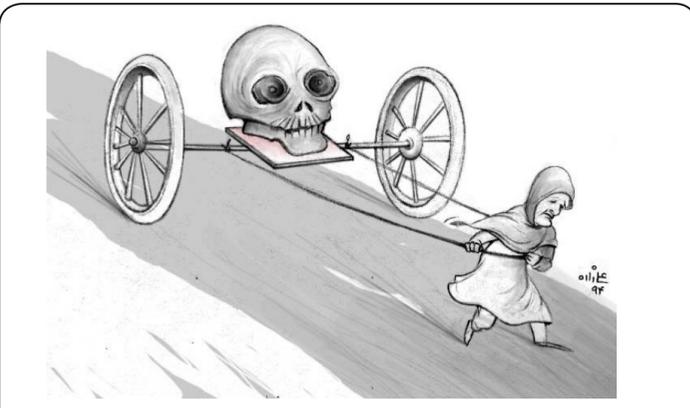
The worries do not end here, in fact the teacher equally worst affected by dysfunctional education. The information available confirms, 73% of teachers lack the minimum required qualification of grade 14 graduation and are in need of professional development; over 5,000 of Educational Institutions do not have usable buildings which has a direct impact on quality of education. This is the worst state of affairs when the incumbent government is silent on the declining effectiveness of educational system and its immediate negative effect on the holistic rise of a nation is evident.

It is irrefutably crucial; teachers are important stake holders for better upbringing of upcoming generation. If their rights are denied or delayed, then how would one expect a vital change be brought in the illiteracy stricken society? How could the dream of a matchless and outstanding country come true when the pumping organ of education sector; teachers are denied rights to fair livelihood?

Formerly, in a ceremony marking teacher's day in Kabul, Ghani promised to increase the salaries of teachers and to allot each of them a piece of land within six months – a process which has not happened. Months after the unmet promise enraged the teachers and coerced them out in the street to get their demand met. There are dozens of teachers from different parts of Kabul went on strike since last Saturday at Habibia High School. Despite the teachers' strike entering in second week, the government falling short coming up with an agreeable solution to protesting teachers, marks the underlying indifference and government's negligence.

With every advancing day, more teachers join the protest, leaving class rooms empty for the past six days. Reports suggest the strike is expected to spread to the provinces, threatening the education process in the country. The government, however, on the other hand has received mounting criticism. MPs and analysts have strongly criticized the government for what they called derailing the education process in a situation that most of Afghanistan's population is either uneducated or less educated. At these very dismal circumstances the government has to turn education sector into one of the well-funded sector, aiming to rid the country out of calamity of illiteracy.

The government must work on training, welfare and other facilities of teachers to make it a preferable and a dignified sector. The teachers should only be inducted provided they pass various stages of test and interviews. It is right time the government gets this sector streamlined well nurtured capable to compete with developing countries of the world. A nation reaches to prominence, turn unbeatable and matchless, only when greater intrepid steps are taken to eliminate illiteracy by declaring the state of educational emergency. The profound significance of education in societal ascend is established and undisputed, contrary to being failed to inspire our politicians.



The Inevitable Confrontation between Taliban and Daesh

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

There have been reports of fighting between the Taliban and the so-called Daesh, or the Islamic State group, in different parts of Afghanistan. According to Afghan officials, the clashes between the two militant groups in southern and eastern provinces have left dozens dead from both sides. Based on a report, Abdul Rahim Muslim Dost, who names himself a commander of the Islamic State group in Afghanistan, has labeled the Taliban as agents of foreign spy agencies, saying that jihad against the group has become mandatory. However, still the extent of the rifts between the two militant groups is not fully clear, and Afghan government officials express cautious remarks over the issue. Despite the apparent adverse developments in relations between the Taliban and the Islamic State group, there have been contradicting statements from government officials and other high-level political figures over the nature of relations between the two militant groups.

Initially the presence of the Syria-born militant group in Afghanistan was in a puzzling ambiguity. However, now there is a consensus that there are militant offshoots operating under the banner of the Islamic State group. A number of top-level officials have confirmed presence and activities of Daesh in Afghanistan. It is believed that disgruntled members of the Taliban have turned back to the Taliban and shifted sides as with emergence of the Islamic State group in Afghanistan, internal rifts among the Taliban have been increasing. The IS group is said to be controlling many localities in Helmand, Nangrahar, Zabul and other provinces that were previously controlled by the Taliban. The Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq is famed with ferocity, and their fame usually precedes its physical advance. But the group's approaches and tactics in their operations in Afghanistan are not fully clear as there have no major operations by the group in the country.

However, the Islamic State group clearly does not match the Taliban as the Syria-born group is struggling in finding conducive environment for their ideology in Afghanistan. There are widespread doubts over the ability of the Islamic State to be able to hold grounds in case of a real military confrontation between the two sides. In this case, there are questions over how the Islamic State group survives an opposing strong militant group such as Taliban. Perhaps this is justified by the reasoning that the two sides have so far been avoiding a full-scale clash with each other as they face the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as a common enemy. Ironically, there have been also reports of some sort of cooperation between the Islamic State militants and the Taliban fighters in the ongoing conflict in the northern part of the country particularly in Kunduz province. A local government official in Kunduz province suggested earlier that the two groups were teaming up forces in the fight against the government of Afghanistan. However, the claim has not been confirmed independently by other sources. Given the presence of many militant groups in Northern Afghanistan, it is probable that other militant groups are cooperating with

the Taliban fighters launching an offensive in the province. Despite the comments, the possibility of a full-scale cooperation between the Taliban and the Islamic State group is highly unlikely as the two groups rarely share interests in Afghanistan.

The two groups rarely share mutual interests as the Taliban sees itself the legitimate Emirate in Afghanistan while the Islamic State group sees itself a global jihadi network attempting to establish an Islamic state comprised of territories of Muslim countries. The leadership of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria has not shied from promulgating their agenda for Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries, which they call Khorasan. In fact, the Taliban sees the Islamic State group as a long-term threat to its legitimacy and credibility and even its sustainability in the long run. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is openly opposing Taliban leader Mullah Omar as Amirul-Momineen, or the commander of the faithful. The Pakistani Taliban is also allegiant to Mullah Omar. This is the fundamental difference between the two groups as to who is the rightful movement for establishing an Islamic government in Afghanistan – and Pakistan. This has created a prospect of power struggle between the two militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

On the other hand, the two groups differ in their core ideologies and approaches for establishing an Islamic establishment. The Islamic State is using ferocious tactics against not only military personnel but also civilians and minority groups in the war in Iraq and Syria while the Taliban deem the actions un-Islamic. There are horrific accounts of the IS treatment of captive women documented by the United Nations and other human rights organizations. The Islamic State group is allegedly abusing the women they have in captivity for their sexual purposes. It is believed that this is widely practiced among the Islamic State members, and therefore must be endorsed by the leadership of the Islamic State. The Taliban is fundamentally opposing the approaches of the Islamic State in sexual abuse of the women and their treatment of non-combatant people.

Despite the shared challenges for both groups, the situation on the ground seems to be changing. The two sides have been considering the ANSF as a common enemy and have been reluctant in clashing militarily. However, the hidden power struggle between the Taliban and the Islamic State seem to be coming to surface as the two sides start competing for taking grounds in the areas previously held by the Taliban. The reported clashes between the two militant groups could be the start of a wider conflict between the two sides. However, it is quite premature to predict any victory for the Islamic State on the ground as the Taliban still seem strong in controlling their areas of operation. With the apparent preparations among the Taliban for peace talks with the government of Afghanistan, a possible scenario is that more hard-line elements of the Taliban could be propelled to the ranks of the Islamic State group. This would further complicate the efforts for ending the conflict in Afghanistan and a peace settlement with all potential militant groups.

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Efforts to Dispirit Education

By Dilawar Sherzai

It is a natural phenomenon that every night concludes into a day; albeit the night is a very dark and lengthy one, it has to end in a day. Similar is the situation with human society; it has to alter; it has to evolve and it has to experience new ideas and developments. The ones who attempt to halt such changes, eventually have to surrender, as changes are unavoidable.

Education is one of the factors responsible for making these changes possible. It is education that ensures smooth evolution of the society and welcomes the new ideas and processes. The nations of the world that have given value to education and have made efforts to develop their education systems on the basis of modern and scientific systems have been able to earn astonishing growth and reputation. Simultaneously they have assimilated innumerable amenities of life for their people and have made them capable of living their lives with poise and decency.

Conversely, the nations that have resisted education have, in actual fact, jammed their own way to victory. They are the ones who, actually, themselves have knotted their feet and hands with the chains and are not able to move forward albeit they must be doing so. All together, they are the ones who have blindfolded themselves and think that there isn't anything around them to see. They are, in a nutshell, in the process of fooling their own selves.

Eventually, they are the ones who will be influenced by the negative impacts of all such behavior to a large extent. Even though they believe that they are executing some great service to their nations by keeping it uncontaminated and unpretentious from the germs of education, in effect, they are hurdling and isolating themselves and letting themselves decay instead of being active part of the real world that demands development, progression and modern education.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that are highly influenced by such people who aim to block all the ways to improvement and modernization. Blinded by religious extremism and outdated tribal values, they are always ready to oppose any sort of efforts that are devoted to spread education to the people of Afghanistan, as they know that the modern education that has been spread in the country to a certain level may encourage evolution and modern changes. In particular, they are against the modern education for the females. The destiny-makers of this society know that if the girls are given modern education, they may question about their roles in rights. They may question the prejudiced rules and regulations. They may challenge the religious dogmas and in due course challenge the Mullahs and the illiterate tribal leaders. They may change the scenario and that is what the makers of the society do not want them to do. They want them to be passive

and compliant, as in such state they would be easier to tackle and ruled over.

Taliban are among the same kind of people. They have been trying to eliminate all the efforts that are targeted at spreading girls' education in Afghanistan. They, still, live in the era that is ancient and obsolete, but they are not capable of realizing this fact. They, as a matter of fact, strive to obstruct the rising sun, which is impossible, as sun has to rise some day and show its light to the people. And, the people have to follow the light of the sun as walking in dark would never help them and show them their destination. There have been incidents when they have bombed schools, killed the guiltless students and teachers, poisoned the students and even thrown acid on the faces of innocents girls who go to school. Last couple of years witnessed so many incidents wherein many innocent school girls were poisoned in mysterious ways that even took the lives of some of them.

The same trend seems to continue in some way or the other. In Panjab district of central Bamyan province, dozens of girls were poisoned on Saturday, June 6, 2015. According to the reports more than 30 students were poisoned, and five of them were in critical condition. According to a statement of school's principal, Ghulam Nabi, ten students from the 11th and 12th grades felt severe headache in the beginning and later their number rose to 25. Security officials have not been able to find out the reason.

Earlier, as well, when such incidents took place, the officials were not able to find out the actual reason. There were only a couple of cases when they were able to reach close to actual fact; otherwise, mostly they remained clueless.

It is required from the government, especially security forces, to investigate these sorts of incidents and must make efforts to introduce concrete measures to check the situation.

Reproving the incident alone would not be adequate to dispirit such ruthless activities and would in the long run deprive the people of Afghanistan from better opportunities to get education. It is important that the government must indoctrinate within our people the worth and importance of modern education and must encourage it as much as possible. Modern education is essential for Afghan society if it has to change in true sense. Same is the case with the condition and position of women; they can only change when they are given modern education. Afghan government and the Western allies have to keep this thing in mind that they have to neutralize all the efforts that are exerted to nullify the gains regarding modern education, especially of the girls. Providing a sustainable and modern education system to the children of Afghanistan without any discrimination will be the greatest of the services to Afghanistan.

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