

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



March 07, 2018

We want Peace; But not at any Price

Government of Afghanistan in its road map for peace, suggested general amnesty for Taliban leaders and fighters, ceasefire, recognition of Taliban as political party and an office for it in Kabul, lifting sanctions on Taliban leaders and freeing prisoners of this group. These were proposed by president Ghani in Second Kabul Process conference in Kabul on 27 February 2018. Representatives from different countries and international organizations who had attended the meeting also supported peace plan by Afghan government. President Ghani in the conference said, "Kabul is ready for talks with Taliban without any pre-conditions and we are ready to review the constitution too." Other demands and complaints of Taliban would also be addressed and this group is expected to give its response and suggestion and stop attacking people in cities and other parts of the country, the President said. In the meantime Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hezb-i-Islami in interview with New York Times suggested granting local autonomy in certain regions of the country for Taliban. He says Afghan army should withdraw from the regions what he calls "secure areas". Hekmatyar told New York Times that he had talked to president Ghani about this and he supported.

Despite tens of thousands of people killed and wounded in Taliban attacks across Afghanistan and economic impacts of Taliban insurgencies for the country, Afghan government has expressed its perfect readiness for negotiation and accepting demands of the opposite side. Perhaps it is a heavy price for peace with Taliban; giving amnesty to thousands of militants who have killed innocent children, women and men; lifting sanctions on Taliban leaders who are responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, destruction of the country and blocking the way of progress and development of Afghanistan for more than one and half decade. But is it worth giving these concessions to armed rebels and do they accept? It is not yet clear and the situation seems not promising too and Taliban is yet to respond to the plan. Perhaps what Hekmatyar has said is Taliban's stance regarding Kabul's peace plan. Hekmatyar mentioned in the interview that he is in regular contact with Mullah Hebatullah Akhundzada, leader of Taliban. Peace is indeed the top-most need of Afghans as they have been suffering from war and insecurity for almost four decades. People want peace and stability; but not at any price; they have their demands and conditions and the chief points may be as follows:

- President and government of Afghanistan should know that if they couldn't succeed in war with insurgents in battlefield, they would not be able to win negotiations. Taliban will not accept peace plan if they see loose hands of Afghan soldiers. Winner of a battlefield is winner of talks at table, a strong and forceful military pressure is decisive in succeeding talks. As president Ghani in a ceremony on the National day for Afghan security forces said, "we are resolutely fighting for peace" military pressure on Taliban should not be eased, the peace proposal should not be interpreted as weakness of the government and Taliban should not consider itself winner of the battle.

- Mr. Ghani promised not to deal and compromise on achievements of the past years; democratic values, basic rights of people, human and women's rights. He should not forget these; as Taliban seems not ready to desist from its radical and violent ideology about state, and type of rule and governance.

- Taliban repeatedly called the current political system of the country Un-Islamic and it is almost clear that they want either to replace or bring fundamental changes in it and both are not acceptable for people. So constitution of the country should be reformed in accordance with wishes and views of people of Afghanistan.

- Peace process is a national project and to succeed it we need political national consensus. There are disagreements among leaders of national unity government and between governments and political parties. President Ghani should not bypass the views of his partners in the NUG and as well political parties. A strong backing for government's peace plan at national level can reinforce government's position in fighting and as well talking with opposite militants.

- The most important thing that could guarantee success of the peace road map is to open a direct channel with Taliban leaders and bring them out of control and influence of Pakistan and other supporters. As far as Taliban leaders are in grip of foreign these circles they will not be allowed to have their own agenda for peace and decide themselves. Government of Afghanistan with cooperation of its allies and friend countries like US, EU, Russia, China and Arab countries may do this. Raising political and diplomatic pressure on Pakistan may help bring Taliban to negotiation table.

- Government leaders holding peace conferences, meetings and making peace road map should not focus on their own publicity, popularity and campaign for themselves; failures of the government are more than its successes; the conferences should not be to cover incomplete tasks of the government. Government in its road map for peace should be serious and resolute; people want a strong and stable government.



Xinhua Insight: President Xi's Five Years (Part 1)

By Xinhua writers Xu Lingui, Huang Xiaoxi, Meng Na, Li Zhihui

BEIJING, March 4 (Xinhua) – The imposing Great Hall of the People, in the center of Beijing, bears witness to China's democratic politics.

In 2013, inside its magnificent auditorium, Xi Jinping was elected president of the People's Republic of China by nearly 3,000 deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC). This month when the congress convenes, deputies are expected to once again elect a president. Xi took over the presidency at a time when public concerns were common about corruption, the wealth gap and pollution. After being elected, Xi said, "In face of the mighty trend of the times and earnest expectations of the people for a better life, we cannot have the slightest complacency, or get the slightest bit slack at work." He expounded his vision of a Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation to be made true by and for the people. Five years on, China has made historic achievements. The Chinese are much more optimistic. Zheng Changzhong, a political science professor with Fudan University, said he would give the leadership a high approval rating.

"Not only did China achieve steady development, we have also created a model to advance human civilization," Zheng said. "Behind these achievements, Xi Jinping played his vital leading role as a lingxiu (charismatic leader)." Re-elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee last October, Xi said the Chinese nation, which since modern times had endured so much for so long, achieved a tremendous transformation: it has stood up, grown rich and is becoming strong.

COMING CLOSER TO CHINESE DREAM

There is no better way for the ordinary people to feel that strength than having a fuller pocket. Under Xi's leadership, the Chinese economy kept growing steadily over the past five years. The year 2017 ended on a strong footing, with an annual 6.9 percent growth rate.

The size of the economy expanded to more than 82 trillion yuan (13 trillion U.S. dollars) from 54 trillion yuan, retaining its place as the second largest in the world. China's per capita disposable income stood at 25,974 yuan last year, up 7.3 percent year-on-year in real terms. Residents saw their salaries rising steadily over the past five years. Liu He, a prominent figure in Xi's economic team, revealed at the 2018 World Economic Forum that China's middle-income population had reached 400 million and was still growing.

The poor are getting rich much faster. Experts expect the country's 282-million-strong migrant workers to become a major force to make into the middle-income group. Zou Bin, 23, is one of the young migrants who have witnessed the change over the past five years.

Zou started out young, laying bricks at a construction site in Hunan Province upon leaving high school. He took his job seriously and worked hard. In 2015, Zou was already top of his trade and represented China in a global vocational skills championship.

He also earned himself a place in the Fortune 500 firm China Construction Group, receiving higher pay and leading a team of his own. This year, Zou even made it to the Great Hall of the People as an NPC deputy. To give hard-working people like Zou what they deserve, Xi took bold reforms to grow the economy and let wealth be distributed more fairly. These were not achieved by cranking up money printers but through a series of reforms. Xi took the helm of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform. More than 1,500 reform measures have been introduced by the central authorities: supply-side structural reform to balance the economy, cutting government red tape and bureaucracy to encourage medium-and-small businesses, and the opening of free trade zones across the country. Over the past five years, 66 million urban jobs – a number comparable to the British population – were created.

To balance income, China cut perks and benefits for officials and limited state firm bosses' pay. On the other hand, workers and professionals received higher salaries, while old-age and health care pensions improved. Xi made a solemn promise on poverty reduction, with an ambition to eliminate poverty in all poor counties and regions by 2020. And the country is getting there. More than 68.5 million people had been lifted out of poverty over the past five years. That means 37,000 people escaped poverty every single day. Xi vowed that "no one should be left behind." To fulfill this mission, Party and govern-

ment officials took turns to stay in poor villages. They helped craft out individualized poverty reduction plans for every family and worked with them to achieve their goal. Jiang Fu'an was one such cadre. In 2015, Jiang, then a prefecture government auditor, arrived at a remote mountainous village in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. He walked door to door to visit each of the more than a hundred poor households. With his help, dozens of poor children got education near their home. But in 2016, before finishing his stint, Jiang collapsed on the job and died. He was just 26 years old.

The village was in grief. Jiang was remembered for sacrificing his life for a great cause. Liangshan, with its stubborn poverty, is a concern for Xi. Ahead of the 2018 Lunar New Year, he chose here for his inspection tour, visiting homes of the poor Yi ethnic villagers and pledging to "banish" the ghost of poverty. "Our socialist system is to let people of all ethnic groups live a great life," Xi said. William Jones, Washington bureau chief of the Executive Intelligence Review news magazine, said ending poverty had long been regarded a major task for humanity, but until recently was seen as a "utopian dream."

"With China, that dream is now becoming a reality," he said.

CLEANER CHINA

Xi also waged a war on pollution.

When he began the presidency, ecological degradation had become a major challenge facing humanity. Xi attended the Paris climate summit and a few months later China signed the Paris Agreement.

Beijing, plagued by persistent smog, has been at the center of the struggle since the State Council launched a national air pollution control campaign in 2013. Last year, Beijingers shelved their face masks as the number of "severely polluted" days dropped to just 23, compared with 58 in 2013. The municipal authorities said that for nine months in 2017, the PM 2.5 levels lingered around the lowest point in five years. Across the country, the average density of PM 2.5 in 338 cities was 43 micrograms per cubic meters, falling 6.5 percent year on year. Progress was also made in the protection of water and soil resources.

China also began to set up national parks. At least 10 are in trial operation. A Giant Panda National Park, spanning three provinces, is three times the size of America's Yellowstone National Park. Environmental protection features prominently in Xi's five-sphere integrated plan to promote coordinated economic, political, cultural, social and ecological advancement.

The Party's leadership over all work is vital to turning plans into action, observers said. Also "cleaner" is the public office as Xi declared war on another age-old human cancer: corruption. In 2013, Xi described corruption as an existential threat – capable of bringing down the Party and the state. And he was serious about it. The ensuing crackdown achieved spectacular success. Every corner of the system was examined, leading to punishment of more than 1.5 million officials in five years. A total of 440 centrally-administrated officials had been investigated since November 2012, according to figures in the work report of the 18th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CPC. Sun Zhengcai, a former member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and former Party chief of Chongqing, was the latest senior official to be charged for graft.

Other "tigers" brought down include Zhou Yongkang, Bo Xilai, Guo Boxiong, Xu Caihou, Ling Jihua. The campaign continued after the 19th CPC National Congress last October, with the Party's disciplinary watchdog having announced investigation into nine other senior officials – including former State Councilor Yang Jing – in a little more than 100 days since then. Corrupt low ranking officials – referred to as flies – were swatted too.

The anti-corruption drive was immensely popular. A public opinion poll showed an approval rating of a whopping 93.9 percent. To install institutional checks, Xi initiated the supervisory reform. Supervision commissions were set up at the provincial, municipal and county levels just in four months after the 19th CPC National Congress.

The reform aims to bring everyone in public office under oversight. Jiao Hongchang, a law professor at China University of Political Science and Law, said the reform will help lock power in the "cage of institutions." These moves denounce the hype of "power struggle" drummed up by people overseas attempting to smudge China's anti-corruption campaign.

Education: The most Powerful Weapon to Change World

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Nation has succeeded to change its destiny without strategic investment on education and human capital yet. In fact, education is the only powerful weapon you can use to change the world and unlock the door of freedom. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world as well as, and us enables to reach peace, prosperity and dignity. It improves the quality of lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Education raises people's productivity, creativity and also promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. And overall, it plays a very crucial role in securing social progress and reaching economic development.

According to experts, educated human capital and financial capital, as key factors, are complementary role for social and economic growth. It means, either type of capital could have been the factor limiting investment in the other type of capital.

Human capital is created initially by providing children with primary and secondary schooling. Private financing of this type of investment is not feasible for poor children. Countries that are highly developed today have a long history of providing free or highly-subsidized education to the poor. A review of their history suggests that the initial motivation for this schooling had a religious basis, but that as the public's level of education and income rose, their demand for schooling rose, and the financial support from private donors was replaced or greatly augmented with public funds. If poor countries wish to achieve high levels of national income, they need to provide public funding for the universal education of the poor, at least at the primary and secondary levels of schooling.

In the other word, economic and political powers been obtained through providing high quality education. Education is on the of top national priority of powerful and developed countries. For instance, the prestige of the teaching profession in Japan ranked 9th and 18th in public esteem, out of

82 occupations with monthly average 7500\$ salary. Elementary teachers enjoyed higher prestige than civil and mechanical engineers, and municipal department heads. Thus, Principals' prestige is higher than that of department heads of large corporations, public accountants, and authors. University professors were ranked third, below court judges and presidents of large companies, but above physicians. Germany is another example ranking the best educational system in the world with compulsory education law. Accordingly, other great countries such as Russia, Turkey, Kazakhstan and Malaysia have orderly 99.7%, 99.8, 95% and 94.6% literacy rate in the world and accordingly, the pioneer of economic growth as well.

Many developed countries, including France, Germany and Norway, have provided universal preschool programs for three and four-year-olds for decades. More recently, the UK and New Zealand have made moves to join them. East Asian countries that consistently are in top educational performance lists are rapidly gearing towards universal access for three and four-year-olds. In order to decrease the number of jails, poverty crises and end the social cycle of violence, Afghanistan has to change its mindset and learn the experience available in today's world. We must give high priority to education programs both in school and university level through national budget.

To sum up, investment in education, or human capital, is the best strategy for economic development process. If we really will to cross from long term poverty crises, we must put education at the top of national priorities. As it is the best way to reaching peace, stability and recognized as a foundation of other infrastructures; like other pioneer countries, we have to make it obligatory duty by national constitution aiming to reach zero illiteracy level in the future. Meanwhile, given that education for girls is not less important than boys; we need to eliminate the barriers and tribal illusions keep girls deprived of schooling. We must understand when a girl is educated, a small community will be educated but when a boy educated, just an individual is educated.

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