

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



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## Mineral Resources: A Big Hope for Afghanistan

Agriculture sector is what Afghan economy has been highly dependent on. Nonetheless, at least in the post-Taliban Afghanistan this sector has had no significant development. Let alone self-sufficiency, major portion of our food needs are fulfilled by imports from various countries of the world. This has made Afghanistan a highly consuming country while the local production has been very low. The condition of industrial sector is also the same. Except some factories producing beverages, Afghanistan has no major products. While on the agriculture side, Afghanistan has only one major export which is the dry fruits.

Reasons are quite clear. Government's lack of willingness to resolve issues facing farmers and factory owners still persists. There have been no efforts aimed at boosting industrial or agricultural sector through strategic short, medium or long term planning.

It is also feared that after the international forces withdraw from the country, the country would face major economic challenges. One of the biggest challenges would be to create job opportunities for Afghan people. In absence of sufficient job opportunities, it would be really very difficult to maintain peace, tranquility and order. The international community and the Afghan authorities must make sure that they create enough jobs so as to save the country from falling into instability and economic crisis.

In fact, unemployment has done great damage to Afghan society. The people who have not been employed have mostly become the part of terrorist networks or the filthy business of narcotics, or even they have become addicted to drugs. As they do not have any other work to do or any way of making both ends meet they do not have much option but to join insurgency.

Afghanistan stands among the most corrupt countries of the world and over the time this problem has become more severe causing all financial assistance go futile. If the international aid poured in Afghanistan 2001 had been properly utilized, the condition would be much better today.

Keeping in view the current economic standing of Afghanistan, one can easily say that Afghanistan in order to stand on its own feet would need a long term financial and technical support provided its government takes in time measures to remove constraints for economic development.

Currently, the Afghan economy is highly dependent on foreign financial aids. Sooner or later the international community will stop pouring its money into Afghanistan in the way it is doing today. It might set strict conditions for providing financial assistance to Afghanistan. Amid withdrawal plan of NATO troops from Afghanistan, there are concerns not only over the post-2015 security condition of Afghanistan but also it is feared that its economy will reverse. It is expected that with diminishing military and non-military role of the Western countries, fund for development and reconstruction of Afghanistan will also dry up.

At times when the economic stability of Afghanistan highly dependent on aids from international community, experts maintain and emphasize that, one sector that can change the fate of Afghanistan's economy the untapped mineral resources of this country. Studies have estimated the worth of Afghan minerals in several trillion dollars. This has changed the traditional view of Afghan economy which was majorly related to agriculture. The Afghan mineral resources are deemed to change this country's status from 'very poor' to 'rich.' This is conceived that, the mining sector will create job opportunities more than the real needs of Afghanistan. Although insecurity is considered the biggest obstacle for extraction of Afghan minerals, efforts are underway for extracting deposits located in comparatively secure provinces of Afghanistan like Bamyan.

Insecure and troubled highways and absence of rail routes form another challenge facing the extraction of mineral resources of Afghanistan. Apart from the security concerns that keep away investors from the mining sector of Afghanistan, unprofessional extraction of minerals and their smuggling to other countries have been a great national loss. Reportedly, the Afghan government is losing of millions of dollars each year because of not being able to prevent illegal transfer of precious stones to other countries.

Although the government has failed to address the hindrances in the economic sector, it is never late to start planning and acting seriously. Afghanistan has vast deposits of natural resources. For centuries, these resources have remained underutilized. Time has come to properly utilize Afghanistan's own deposits for its development and reconstruction. This is the only way economic prosperity can be achieved in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's mineral resources are the future of hope for Afghanistan and can bring this country out of the severe economic troubles it is facing today. Therefore, not only strict security should be considered to these resources but also they should be extracted in a proper, transparent and effective way.

## Peace Talks amidst Growing Restlessness

By Asmatyari

Taliban and Afghan government have been in state of war for over decade that have earned devastating casualties and irreparable harms to war torn country – the central upshot. In order to draw in the stalled peace process, a practical, agreeable and feasible approach is required – kick-starter. It is contemplated to work out a peaceful solution to ongoing conflict to put an end to the bloodshed, provided a credible mediator exercise unconditional mediation. Afghan government has always expected US or Pakistan to help them mediate peace talks with Taliban who responded to serve the call. In the bid narrowing down the gap between the warring factions, some mediation was worked out.

Formerly, the spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs disclosed a knot between Afghan government and Taliban negotiating to arrive at a common strategy to end the conflict. It added the government was ready to sit across negotiating table with the militants who were interested in a political solution to the problem, respect for the country's constitution and preservation of the achievements made since 2001; else's the government would continue to pursue military action against its armed opponents, who opposed peace parley, till they were completely vanquished.

The rumors about Taliban joining peace efforts and mainstream politics might owe a certain degree of underlined reservations, seeing the indescribable ground realities the dream might not come true. Afghanistan has been striving hard to bring the Taliban back on the table of negotiation. Till date, no concrete development is achieved devoid of hopelessness and desperation. Nevertheless, elsewhere in Qatar, perpetual backdoor efforts are underway, to restore US-Taliban congenial relation and revive bilateral confidence on some fronts, mediated by the Qatari government. It was these efforts that got Taliban remove their names of international terrorist list and renovate their political status.

The fruit of backdoor secret talks materialized to a certain degree. The latest sitting of High Peace Council and Taliban in Qatari capital, hints the same efforts. The credible reports confirmed a 20-member Afghan delegation, led by Attullah Lodin, the deputy chief of Afghanistan's High Peace Council they had held meetings with Taliban representatives, initiated by international peace initiators Pugwash.

It was the preceding year, when US began playing a mediatory role by releasing five influential Taliban leaders from the Cuban detention center, Guantanamo jail in swap for US soldier, Sgt Bowe Bergdahl who was held captive by Taliban for five years. The key Taliban released included Mullah Noorullah Noori, the then Taliban's governor for northern Balkh province, Mullah Fazl Akhund, the Taliban's deputy defense minister, Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa, the governor of western Herat province, former Taliban's deputy intelligence chief Mullah Abdul Haq Wasiq and military commander Mullah Mohammad Nabi.

The US and Qatari government made a deal that read, Taliban would remain under surveillance of the Qatari government for a period of a year, that included travel restriction. Following their non-suspicious activities they could be completely released. The period of surveillance duly ends by the end of this month. There

are deepening concerns of them who are likely to return the battle fields. Recently, the U.S. officials have too warned that three of the named individuals have been in contact with Taliban about returning to the battle field. However, the efforts were made to persuade Taliban giving up arm opposition, as a substitute were promised political role in Afghan government.

Previously it was reported by credible media that Afghan government and the Taliban were preparing to hold face-to-face talks in the following days as a result of efforts by Pakistan and other stakeholders. Taliban never relied Kabul government to be the sole authority that should be talked, to chart out the future course of action. The in-depth trust deficit found between disgruntled factions, served a dominant factor restraining this settlement. Both Pakistan and US kept their promises by inaugurating a political office of Taliban in Qatari capital Doha –the display of positive note facilitating intra-afghan talks. The encouragements to initiate talks were welcomed by US, China, Pakistan and India. In this course long ago efforts were made to arrange the talks in Kabul in an effort to show that the process is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. Earlier, it was tried to hold the talk in Kabul in order to reinforce the perception the talk is Afghan owned and led.

More or less, the peaceful resolution is the sole solution dace long conflict. It should be learnt that peace is not the absence of conflict, but the way conflict is lead to a conciliating ending. The years long war earned us not only life losses but also infrastructure losses. The harms inflicted to poverty stricken Afghanistan can not be reciprocated with endless butchery of the misled and betrayed militants and terrorists. Certainly, the segregation of militants into terrorist and insurgents might yield congenial solution –the terrorists are serving vested interest whilst insurgents for political say; the former should be dealt with iron fist while later through dialogue.

The dual approach; negotiation and operation exercised by incumbent government to seek an end to decade long bloody conflict, is justifiably agreeable. The government proposing peace talks to the conciliating splinter group amidst executing military operation in the bid to crush those challenging the writ of government, tends tolerable. Unluckily, the far stretched areas rendering beyond the approach of government are duly filled by newly emerging terrorist groups of international fames, ISIS. This group is turning another challenge for the incumbent government how to be dealt.

Nonetheless, the government falling short of widening the security net, created security vacuum which is duly filled by emerging militants of ISIS. The growing activities of ISIS in the wake of Taliban's "spring offensive" multiplied governments concerns. Earlier president Ghani admitted that the group poses a serious threat to regional security whilst terming it worse than al-Qaeda. Apparently, the targeted attacks by twin groups fortify government complications. Following multiplying security challenges and emerging terror groups –Afghans' longing for eternal peace turns nightmare, despite years of infighting that have claimed awful toll. Undeniably, purposeful, negotiations render the sole political solution to put an end to this predicament. Nevertheless, with emergence of new terror group, should the government stage talk with them too?

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## Realizing True Value of Mujahidin!

By Muhammad Rasool Shah

Eighth Saur is regarded as the national day of freedom and sovereignty, when the traces of an invader were removed from the country and power fell into the hands of Mujahedeen. Until 2007, the day was celebrated on government levels but after that, security threats deterred the undertaking of this event. However, this day is regarded as the day when the efforts of Afghan Mujahedeen against a foreign invader became fruitful. This year and a last few years, we have seen continued controversy and argument between the two factions or groups of country who talk in favor and against this day. On one side, there are those who talk in favor of this day, regarding it the most important day when the efforts of Mujahedeen ended all the traces of foreign occupation in the country. On the other hand, there are those who talk against this day and term it as one of the darkest days of our history because the following events were even more disastrous. According to this group, following the withdrawal of the soviet union a long list of genocide, torture, factional clash and civil war that finally ended in the emergence of Taliban and made country a safe-haven for different criminal and terrorist organizations. Different factions of Mujahedeen also allowed a number of international powers to fund different groups to safeguard their motives and benefits and made them fight against each other. Some regard the time before Mujahedeen safer and less destructive as there was security and safety in major cities of the country but after Mujahedeen came into power crimes against humanity spread to different parts of the country and pushed the country many decades backward. However, such remarks can be termed as true jeopardy against true Mujahedeen who fought without any greed of appreciation and only for the sake of Islam and to end the occupation of an invader.

This argument between the two groups heated up on the social networking sites and once again, we got a reason to be divided as a nation.

However bitter and harsh they maybe, both the sides must face and accept some of the realities and facts in this regard. The most important is the recognition and admiration of the sincere and dedicated efforts of Mujahedeen. Shah Muhammad is also one of those Mujahedeens who belongs to Kandahar province. He expresses his feelings in these words, 'When Soviet Union occupied our country and we stood up for Jihad, we understood and experienced the true spirit of Jihad. Wherever we went, we

noticed Mujahedeen who fought only with the spirit of freeing the country of a foreign invader and following a command of our religion. People who were with us had great characters and we took care that no one should be disturbed by our actions. We had nothing to do with any Afghan and our sole enemy was the Soviet forces. Only objective was to force them out of the country and nobody thought of any other gain. We never cared about anything; we starved, had left our families without any supporter, spent months in mountains or jungles, and suffered all the difficulties. Due to our sincere efforts, we were very successful as well. Soviet Union had all the necessary equipments and weapons but they were afraid of us. At last, we heard the good news of the withdrawal of Soviet forces. We had achieved our target and there was no reason to continue this war on the name of Jihad so we put down our guns and returned to our routine businesses. But there were also present those who thought that Soviet Union left the country but left behind those who followed their agendas and it was felt necessary by some of us to pick up our guns so that we should clean the country of all the remnants of an occupier.'

Comments against Jihad and Mujahedeen becomes extremely painful for those who lost their fathers, brothers, sons, husbands or other family members in this holy war or those who became orphans or widows and had to endure the difficulties of life without any father or husband. In the same way, it is a painful fact that an important teaching of Islam should be left for the ridicule of those who don't have even the slightest idea about the importance of this religious teaching and who never bothered to study or acquire any information in this regard.

On the other hand, the conditions after Soviet Union withdrawal were also not stable. It was also not the situation that was expected by people or the Mujahedeen. Until that time, Mujahedeen were considered a group of people with high moral values and character and who were fighting for a noble cause against all the odds. They had the respect, support and admiration of every single Afghan but after that, things started getting worse. In the years that followed 8th of Saur, our country and fellow citizens experienced a dark era of history, replete with numerous crimes. Economy and general security and progress of the country came to halt and people started praying for a savior.

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