

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



May 12, 2016

Clean Environment Depicts Higher Values

There are many issues in Afghanistan that are making the lives of the people miserable yet they are not able to get the required attention from the government authorities. It is not that the government is busy in solving some serious issues that may be hampering it from concentrating on other issues; all the issues are getting similar treatment from the government - they are being ignored. The government is not able to complete some of its most important promises that it made before the election.

Fortunately, people are getting notice of the reluctance of the government. Many people in Kabul, on Wednesday, May 11, criticized the government and particularly President Ashraf Ghani for not taking any step in cleaning the city that is getting dirtier with each passing day. Kabul city is facing serious problems of pollution, garbage and sanitation and the citizens are having grave concerns, which will multiply as the summer season has just started.

President Ghani had promised that he would turn a corrupt municipality into a clean and transparent one but that does not seem to be turning into reality as the municipality remains dormant and President Ghani remains unmoved. If the relevant authorities are not able to solve such basic issues like the management of the garbage in the country; how can they claim to solve other issues that are much larger in magnitude and require dedicated and long-term actions? It is really unfortunate to find the government authorities failing so miserably in solving some easy administrative issues and providing people even the most basic requirements of their lives.

The fact is that the officials themselves do not consider this problem really important as they mostly drive through the city in their vehicles that are equipped with air-conditioning system; therefore, they do not have to open their windows even. They are only interested in the issues that can help them in achieving some personal benefits. They have totally forgotten that their responsibility is to serve the people, not dominate them and try to become their masters.

The environment in Kabul has been announced as highly dangerous for people both by national and international authorities. National Environmental Agency considers Kabul's air vulnerable and fears that it can cause eyes, lungs and skin diseases, including cancer.

Kabul city is a valley, wherein in winter, because of thermal inversion, very small amount of pollutants, containing such dangerous gases as nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide, is able to get dispersed in the outer atmosphere, therefore, the air pollution increases and cast dangerous effects. While in summer the dust particles that mix up with drain water, dry and then fly in the air and ultimately become the 'oxygen' that the residents inhale and thus make a recipe for different diseases. Along with air pollution the land and water pollution are getting serious as well. The drainage system is still not developed properly or it is left with serious deficiencies.

The drains that carry the water containing waste material from household and other uses are not covered. Rather they have become dustbins for the people. The people throw the wrappers, plastic bags, papers and other waste materials in the drains without any hesitation or humiliation. Most of the times the drains are blocked by the excessive dirt; and the dirty water flows out of the drains on the roads, generating disgusting smell and inviting different types of insects, particularly flies and mosquitos that are responsible for different sorts of diseases. The recent rainfall in the country unveiled the true conditions of the drainage system.

During the rainfall the roads became ponds of water, where people required boats to pass from side of the road to the other. The vehicles were not able to pass through them and every day many of them could be found caught in the water and the drivers could be seen making efforts to come out of it.

The situation is really pathetic and requires serious action by the government. A nation is recognized by its environment; if it is able to maintain a clean, hygienic and peaceful environment it would be believed to have higher values and richer cultural practices. However, if it fails to keep its own surrounding dirty, and keep its own houses full of garbage, it would be identified as a sick nation. Therefore, the government requires taking immediate action to solve the issue.

Definitely, the people will have to play a great role as well. They cannot stand aside and leave everything to the government. They should come forward and take responsibility of changing their environment themselves, as much as they can.

Though they cannot solve all the problems, they can at least take initiative to solve some of them and then the government authorities may be motivated more to take action after they find the dedication of the people.

Will London Anti-Corruption Summit Decrease Corruption in Afghanistan?

By Hujjatullah Zia

Corruption poses a serious threat to Afghanistan's nation-building and development agenda. Over the years, it has increased dramatically and emerged as one of the biggest challenges facing the country's reconstruction efforts and strengthening national governance. It is an undeniable fact that corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development thereby undermining the government's ability to provide basic services, promote inequality and injustice, and discourage foreign investment. Lack of an efficient and transparent public service has alienated the poor in the villages and cities from the development process. The poor have started questioning the whole paradigm of development.

Afghans have been wrestling with corruption, which is going on in government's machinery, for many years. For instance, bribery and law of impunity for influential individuals are widely practiced in judicial system. In other words, the poorer one is the more vulnerable he will be to major penalty for a minor mistake or offence, high-ranking figures, however, are hardly penalized in the face of involving in serious crimes. Since there are many barriers ahead of anti-corruption campaign, it will never ebb if this trend continues.

It is believed that much of the corruption, in the country, takes the form of petty corruption, with clerks demanding small bribes to stamp forms or officers at checkpoints requiring truck drivers to pay to enter cities. But some are more audacious, such as selling government land for luxury housing projects, etc.

Moreover, lengthy and complicated procedures, unnecessary delays, getting unnecessary signatures in applications, papers or document and recording unnecessary letters are issues that remain in public service delivery. This process has become so difficult, intolerable, time consuming and expensive and it often causes people to give up. All these processes involve and facilitate petty corruption.

Of late, British Prime Minister David Cameron has called Nigeria and Afghanistan "possibly the two most corrupt countries in the world" even as he hailed their leaders' planned attendance at an anti-corruption summit in London. "We've got some leaders of some fantastically corrupt countries coming to Britain," Cameron is quoted as saying, apparently referring to the anti-corruption summit he is hosting today. Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and Afghanistan's President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani are both due to attend London summit alongside US Secretary of State John Kerry and the heads of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Evidence suggests that corruption pervades many of Afghanistan's key sectors and institutions. In 2012 an Asia Foundation public opinion survey of the Afghan people cited corruption as being ranked as the second biggest problem at a national level after insecurity, while Transparency International ranked Afghanistan at 172 out of 175

countries in the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Reducing corruption is a prerequisite for ensuring long-term sustainable development and stability in the country. It has become clear to policy makers that for Afghanistan to emerge as a strong and democratic state, the government has to take concrete steps to eradicate the growing corruption in public administration as a priority.

As previously mentioned, Afghanistan faces numerous daunting governance challenges which need to be addressed if long term stability in the country is to be achieved. But alongside larger-scale changes, immediate steps can and must be taken to curb the devastation caused by corruption.

First, Afghanistan must establish a new independent body to lead and coordinate the fight against corruption and ensure that it is well-resourced and its activities are truly free from political interference.

Second, the government should establish an independent judicial service commission to select, appoint and train new judges and judicial staff. The commission should be empowered to make recommendations to parliament on any existing judges who do not meet required levels of integrity.

Third, the government should appoint with the highest levels of integrity to key posts, including the Attorney General, who should have a track record of showing leadership against corruption. The government should ensure the recruitment of staff on the basis of merit and expertise. It is said that half of Afghan citizens paid a bribe, in 2012, while requesting a public service. So, it is because a number of people were most likely employed on the grounds of their relations. If major anti-corruption initiatives are to be firmly anchored in Afghanistan, there needs to be a distinct national government agency dedicated to curbing corruption. Therefore, Transparency International invites the Afghanistan government to establish an independent anti-corruption agency (ACA) with strong preventive and investigative functions. Moreover, this agency should develop mechanisms of cooperation with existing organizations involved in anti-corruption activities in order to ensure a holistic approach to its endeavors. Hopefully, Afghan leaders will take firm step to tackle this interminable issue. Responding to the recent comments by David Cameron, Cobus de Swardt, Managing Director of Transparency International said: "There is no doubt that historically, Nigeria and Afghanistan have had very high levels of corruption, and that continues to this day. But the leaders of those countries have sent strong signals that they want things to change, and the London Anti-Corruption Summit creates an opportunity for all the countries present to sign up to a new era."

It is hoped that the summit will help to mitigate the corruption not only in Afghanistan but in any other countries around the world, which are in the same boat.

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Why Renewables are Not Enough

By Ajay Mathur and Adair Turner

At the United Nations in New York on April 22, world leaders ratified the global climate agreement reached in Paris last December. One hundred ninety-five countries, ranging from richest to poorest, have now agreed to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with the goal of not exceeding 1.5°C. They have also committed to "intended nationally determined contributions" (INDCs) to limit or reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030. This is a major achievement, but it is far from sufficient.

In fact, even if all INDC targets were achieved, the world would still be heading toward eventual warming of some 2.7-3.4°C above pre-industrial levels. To keep warming well below 2°C, emissions in 2030 must be more than 30% below those envisaged in the INDCs.

This will be an enormous challenge, given the need for major strides in economic development over the same period. Before this century is over, we should seek to enable all the world's people - probably more than ten billion by then - to achieve the standards of living currently enjoyed only by the wealthiest 10%. That will require a huge increase in energy consumption. The average African, for example, today uses about one-tenth of the energy used by the average European. But by 2050, we must reduce energy-related emissions by 70% from 2010 levels, with further cuts needed to achieve net zero emissions by 2060.

Meeting those objectives will require both an improvement in energy productivity (the amount of income produced per unit of energy consumed) of at least 3% per year and the rapid decarbonization of energy supply, with the share of zero-carbon energy increasing by at least one percentage point each year.

This implies a massive acceleration of national efforts. Over the last decade, energy productivity has grown by only 0.7% annually, and the share of zero-carbon energy rose by only 0.1 percentage point per year. Moreover, even if the INDCs were fully implemented, these annual growth rates would reach only 1.8% and 0.4 percentage points, respectively.

Impressive progress is already being made in one crucial area: electricity generation. Solar power costs have fallen 80% since 2008. In some places, new supply contracts have set prices as low as \$0.06 per kilowatt hour, making solar power fully competitive with coal and natural gas.

Between now and 2030, the INDCs indicate that renewable-power capacity will grow four times faster than fossil-fuel capacity, with 70% of this new renewables investment in emerging and developing economies. That investment needs to be matched by accelerated progress in battery technology, or by other tools to match electricity demand to intermittent supply. But there is no doubt that, by mid-century, the world can build a cost-effective zero-carbon electricity system.

And yet zero-carbon power, though hugely important, is insufficient, because electricity currently accounts for only 20% of global energy

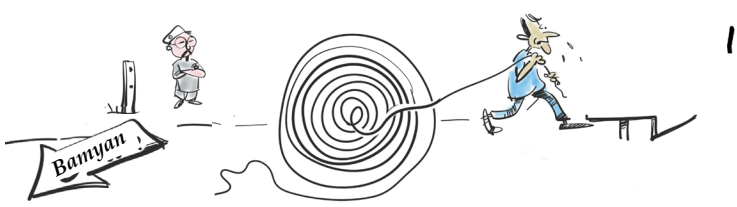
consumption. Broader changes to the global energy system are needed.

Road transport and aviation, which currently rely almost entirely on liquid fossil fuels, account for 30% of total energy consumption. Decarbonization of these activities will require either electrification or the use of hydrogen or biofuels. This is certainly feasible, but it will take time. Heating buildings is another area where major changes are needed. Here, the more widespread use of zero-carbon electricity, instead of fossil-fuel-based energy, could have a major impact. But there are also important opportunities to design and construct buildings and cities that are substantially more energy-efficient. With the world's urban population expected to increase by 2.5 billion by 2050, it is vital that we grasp them. Energy use by heavy industry energy, however, presents challenges that are often ignored. Metals, chemicals, cement, and plastics are vital building blocks of the modern economy, and involve processes that cannot be easily electrified. Decarbonization may instead require the application of carbon capture and storage technologies, while newly designed building materials could reduce demand for carbon-intensive inputs. Given these challenges, fossil fuels will undoubtedly play a role in transport and heavy industry for some time to come, even as their role in electricity generation declines. And, even in electricity generation, emerging economies' INDCs imply significant new investments in coal or gas capacity. Taken together, the INDCs suggest that coal could still account for 35% of global electricity generation in 2030. But that level of coal generation is likely to be incompatible with the below-2°C target. And, because coal- and gas-fired power stations last 50 years or more, such investments raise the risk of either locking in emission levels incompatible with the climate target, or forcing major asset write-offs. The challenge now is to find an economically sensible path that enables emerging economies to fulfill their growing energy needs, while ensuring that the world meets its climate objectives. It is technologically possible. But it will require action by many very different actors.

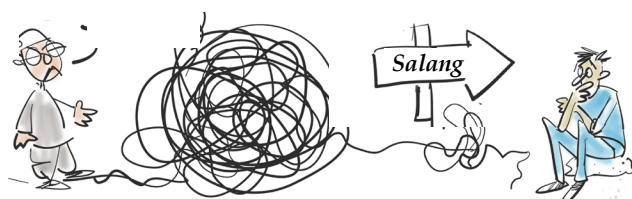
Governments have a vital role to play, but so, too, do incumbent fossil-fuel-based energy companies and new-entrant companies deploying or developing new technologies. NGOs can help to identify required policies and hold governments and companies to account. Individual consumers are also important, because their behavior shapes energy demand.

Despite their varied backgrounds, economic interests, and points of view, all of these actors must engage in an informed debate that recognizes all of the complexities of the challenge ahead. The shared objective is clear: to build a low-carbon economy that can keep global temperatures well within 2°C of pre-industrial levels, while delivering prosperity for a world of ten billion people or more. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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