

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



May 17, 2016

Demonstration in Kabul

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans marched through Kabul streets on Monday demanding the government to route a power line through Bamyan province – which has been deprived of electricity for years despite cherishing ancient and cultural monuments in its heart. Roads leading into central Kabul's commercial district were blocked to all vehicles and foot traffic by police, who used stacked shipping containers to prevent the demonstrators reaching the presidential palace. Authorities told protest organizers that the march would be confined to a specific route that would not take them near the palace.

The TUTAP power line, which would connect the energy-rich Central Asian nations of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan with Afghanistan and Pakistan, is regarded a crucial project in the electricity-starved region.

The line was originally set to pass through Bamyan but the government decided to reroute it through the mountainous Salang pass north of Kabul, saying the shorter route would expedite the project and save millions of dollars in costs. Demonstrators, however, want the earlier version of the plan that wanted to route the line through Bamyan and Wardak provinces.

The protestors chanted the slogan of "justice" and "equal development" in the peaceful demonstration. "We want the power line to cross through Bamyan, which has seen no development in 15 years. We are demanding justice, not charity."

Hazara leaders, who include senior members of the government, say the route chosen for the transmission line discriminates against their people, something Afghan President Muhammad Ashraf Ghani denies.

Bamyan is poverty stricken, though it is largely peaceful and has potential as a tourist destination. Not surprisingly, a number of people live in caves in the current century and some children abandon the idea of going to schools due to poverty. The Bamyan residents suffer from lack of electricity and water shortages. Moreover, the residents carry water on their backs or on animals from long distances. University students also wrestle with the same challenges there. They used to stage demonstrations against the Bamyan provincial governor to provide them electricity. In a nutshell, Bamyan, which lies on the Silk Road, is a historical city with historical places but suffered much, mainly during the Taliban regime. As a result, the twin Buddha statues, which were highly significant for absorbing tourists, were destroyed in March 2001, by the Taliban following a decree issued by Mullah Omar. The destruction of those historical heritages was irreparable loss to that province and a strong blow to the entire country.

Afghanistan is desperately short of power, with less than 40 percent of the population connected to the national grid, according to the World Bank. Almost 75 percent of the country's power is imported.

Afghanistan is in the grip of many challenges such as political economic and security crises. There is not a gap only between state and nation but also among the political figures in the machinery of the National Unity Government (NUG). The mass unemployment, exodus and brain-drain could not galvanize the NUG to create job opportunities or tackle the issue. Moreover, insurgency and frequent terrorist attacks take heavy toll of the nation across the country. The security situation in the country is worsening, with firm foothold of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group and Taliban's Omari Operation. Swathes of territory have fallen to the insurgents and attacks on the capital, Kabul, take place with increasing frequency.

Similarly, corruption has also plagued the country, especially the judicial system. Transparency International, which monitors corruption worldwide, said in its most recent index, published in 2015, that Afghanistan was the 166th least corrupt nation, above only North Korea and Somalia. Nigeria was in 136th place. Before attending to anti-corruption summit, which was held on Thursday, May 12, 2016, British Prime Minister David Cameron called Nigeria and Afghanistan "possibly the two most corrupt countries in the world". And while delivering speech in the summit, Ashraf Ghani was heckled by four Afghan individuals – this circulated widely in national and international media.

Regarding TUTAP project, Ghani's office released a statement saying he had worked tirelessly in recent weeks to resolve the issue through negotiations with community and protest leaders. "The important point of these dialogues was to find means and resources to provide electricity to Bamyan," it said. The statement said Ghani had appointed a 12-member team to investigate the viability of rerouting the line through Bamyan and suspended work on the project until the commission reported its findings later this month.

The peaceful demonstration, attended by men, women and children, staged for demanding justice, equal development and citizens' legal rights reflect people's political maturity. Based on the freedom of expression, every citizen has the right to voice their demands and ask the government to tackle their challenges. Constitutionally, discriminating one on the basis of his/her race, sex, color and beliefs are not acceptable and against law. Therefore, government must struggle to address the challenges in any province, be it Bamyan, Helmand or Nangarhar, and provide them not only electricity but also security and job opportunity – as it has been considered the state's duty in the Constitution. Turning a blind eye to nation's legal demands will not lessen the challenges.

Improving Governance in the Arab World

By Marwan Muasher

A recent survey of 100 Arab thought leaders conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace revealed a sweeping consensus about what underlies many of the region's problems: a lack of good governance. Indeed, those polled emphasized domestic problems resulting from that failure – authoritarianism, corruption, outdated education systems, and unemployment – over regional concerns, including the threat of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) or interference by regional heavyweights or outside powers.

This is not new information. The Arab Spring uprisings brought to the fore the inadequacy of the region's outdated social contracts in the face of current political and economic challenges. Yet Arab governments still seem not to have gotten the message.

Five years after the uprisings erupted, Arab citizens have little – in some cases, even less – voice in running their countries' affairs. Moreover, they depend on rentier economies that are unable to create enough jobs for their young, educated populations. And they face an alarming absence of the rule of law, leaving them with no assurances that they will be treated equally, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, or religion.

But poor governance today does not mean the Arab world is doomed to failure. Tunisia serves as a beacon of hope. After the 2011 revolution, it pursued a consensual, inclusive process to develop a new social contract that upholds all of its people's individual and collective rights.

While Tunisia still faces serious economic and security problems, the national dialogue that the country has undertaken is the crucial first step toward resolving them. Other Arab societies now must undertake similar dialogues, with the ultimate goal of creating economies and institutions that meet their people's needs. History has taught us that such transformational processes take time. The long-suppressed ideas and energies unleashed by events like the Arab Spring must mature before having their full effect on society.

Consider the uprisings in Europe in 1848, in which citizens protested against authoritarian, feudal systems and the lack of economic opportunity. By the end of that year, status quo forces managed to retake the reins of power, and the uprisings appeared to have been all but crushed.

But something had changed. Taboos had been broken, and during the subsequent decades, technological advances enabled the spread of new ideas. It was not long before feudalism began to

dissolve; liberal and democratic values gained traction; women secured greater rights; and economic systems emerged that could boost productivity, achieve high growth rates, and improve living standards.

A similar process is unfolding gradually in the Arab world, with citizens (especially young people) who lack trust in their governments seeking alternative sources of information and new ways to survive economically. This shift has so far gone largely unnoticed by governments, a reflection of just how disconnected they are from their own people. But it will soon be impossible to ignore.

All of this comes at a time when another important development is underway: Oil-based rentier systems are rapidly diminishing, owing to the steep decline in energy prices over the last two years. In particular, Saudi Arabia has been forced to initiate a shift toward an economic model that emphasizes investment and productivity as the main drivers of economic growth. Other countries in the region will have to follow suit and reform their economic systems, or face the wrath of their increasingly disgruntled citizens. One important element of economic-reform strategies will be technology. Already, 240 million Arabs – largely young people – have access to the Internet through mobile phones; by 2020, it is estimated that all Arab youth will be connected. Technology is facilitating the creation and sharing of knowledge, in a region that has historically lagged in this area, and technology start-ups are on the rise.

This is not to say that technology is a panacea for the region. After all, ISIS is also using technology, but in a sinister way: to spread gruesome propaganda and recruit new members. But technology can speed up the Arab world's social and economic progress, even as countries build a modern institutional framework capable of supporting it.

Nowadays, no country can evolve without developing effective and credible institutions, establishing a meaningful system of political checks and balances, and diffusing control over decision-making. These elements are vital to enable countries to offer their citizens an adequate quality of life. In time, the Arab world will have them. While the international community is focused on ISIS or Iran's destructive role in the Middle East, most Arabs are focused on improving their lives. Their governments should encourage them. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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How A Healthy Environment can Impact Our Lives?

By Ahmad Shah Karimi

Environment is a place in which people live their lives, so its cleanliness and good weather would be considered a huge advantage for people since they are busy in different walks of life and a healthy environment can insure the safety of their lives not only physically but also mentally. Besides, when the surrounding is tidy the children attitude, mindset, and brain will be outstanding. Our environment plays an important role in our health. In order to have good health, we need to have safe, clean environments to live, work and play in. Many diseases can be prevented by eliminating environment related risk-factors. By taking care of our environments, we take care of ourselves. People choose to live in urban areas so they can have a better quality of life. They want to be at the heart of economic activity, and to have more job opportunities and other social and economic advantage. However, city living brings a range of challenges. When the surrounding is not good and clean then life become hard and lots of physical and mental illnesses will rise and people will not be able to work properly. As a result, the amount of disease increases and people have to spend most of their earnings on curing and treating these dangerous diseases that are brought up by a bad and polluted environment.

Importance of a Healthy home

Homes are meant to be safe-havens that provide shelter and safety from the weather and the outside world. Having safe homes to live in protects us from injury and disease. But to keep our homes clean and free of health risks we must take good care of them. There are many things we can do to make our homes undesirable places for insects. Pests are very similar to humans in the fact that they need the same things to survive that we do: food, water and shelter. By limiting their access to these three requirements we can discourage them from settling in and around our homes. First of all, throwing away the piles of garbage into trash bin or in a lacuna is vital that unfortunately most of the time some respectable families disregard doing that. Secondly, we should make sure that all of the food including leftover is securely stored and out of reach of insects and pet animals. And finally we should eliminate sources of standing water and make sure that water sources are covered all times. By making sure that all areas of our homes are clean and tidy we are decreasing the number of places that insects might try to build their homes or nests.

Importance of Save Drinking Water

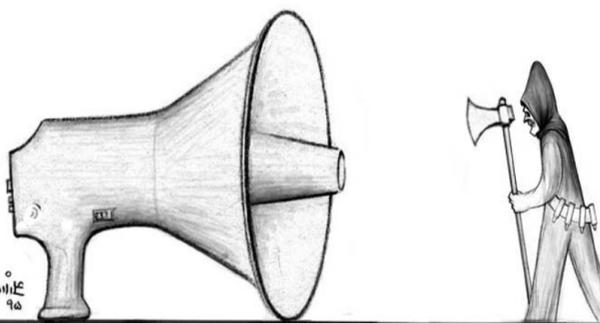
Many of us do not realize how important it is to have safe water to drink and how fortunate those who do have it. You probably assume that safe drinking water is easy to come by and that ev-

eryone has access to it. As a matter of fact it is quite the opposite, because 1.1 billion people on the earth do not have access to safe drinking water. At this point you may be wondering what is the difference between safe drinking water and unsafe drinking water is. Safe drinking water is free of harmful bacteria and viruses. These germs can sometimes make people very sick. To prevent this we have to make sure that our water is clean before we drink it. So, drinking clean water can prevent diseases and guarantee our lives in some extent. Therefore, give your best shot to use from clean water in addition, make sure your catchment tank is properly set up. It should have a good cover on it. However, boiling water at a rolling boil for at least one minute will kill any germs that may be in water.

Clean Air to Breathe

Air pollution seriously affects human health, damages our ecosystems and causes deterioration of buildings and monuments. Cleaning up our cities' air is one of the main keys to have a healthy environment. But it is not an easy task. It needs proper action to be taken not only by government but also by people themselves who sometimes do not take the responsibility to do what they can about creating a nice and scrubbed environment. The presence of too many vehicles is another major problem that make the air polluted, therefore the government must think and consider this issue seriously and make a comprehensive plan and implement it so that the air pollution decrease step by step. The number of private cars must be decreased and buses should be placed for commuting of people. By doing this, there is a possibility of having a good and clean environment which people will live in ease and will not have to stress out because of the pollution. Above all, the folks should hold them accountable for creating a healthy environment and each individual should take part for cleaning the environment from garbage and rubbish which now-a-days on the main streets of Kabul city. However, the municipality of Kabul should play an important role since it is their responsibility to do its job responsibly. Furthermore, they should provide trash bins on every main roads as well as on the corners of the streets so that people throw the garbage inside them. By doing these simple ways in no time we are going to see a flourishing environment which can bring a major change in lives of masses and most of people from other countries will be excited to pay a visit in Kabul and more opportunities will be provided for work and education because when the surrounding is quite good the students will be able to study well with a good mindset which enable them to get the most out of the lessons that they study.

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