

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



May 29, 2016

Fighting Drug Addiction

Drug addiction is one of the most alarming issues in the country and it is influencing Afghan youth to a large extent. In fact, it is giving rise to many other social evils as well. However, the measures that are being taken against this evil are not sufficient and even not pursued with dedication and honest intentions. Drug addiction, at first, victimizes the addict. The drug addict not only endangers his own health, wealth, happiness and social relations but also destroys public morale, health, safety or welfare of the family and society as a whole. The habit-forming narcotics fall mainly into two categories, the depressants and the stimulants. The former decreases mental and physical activity in varying degrees depending upon the contents of drug and its dosage, while the latter stimulates, excites and sustains the symptoms of fatigue.

The heroin addict becomes dependent upon the injections in a short duration with gradual increase in the intensity of its use. It is generally believed that the dependence on drug is favored more by regularity of administration or the dose or method of administration. The addict becomes dependent on drug as he is on food. Furthermore, so long as he receives the usual daily supply he does not apparently look as an addict. Even the intimate friends and the members of the family may not notice this habit. However, if an addict does not get the daily supply, clear symptoms known as withdrawal or distress of abstinence symptoms will appear within 10 to 12 hours. The addict would become nervous and restless and might develop acute stomach cramps and his eyes might water and nose run. Later on, he might stop eating and start vomiting frequently, lose weight and have muscular pains in the back and legs. At this stage the addict may develop shakes and at this stage if he does not get the supply he is in for mental and physical torture. The addict would go to any length to get the supply of drug to relieve the suffering of withdrawal distress. Once he gets the drug, he would appear normal again.

This physiological and psychological dependence on drugs, with the stage being set for the withdrawal syndrome, makes the addict a serious problem for himself, the family, friends, peer group, relatives and the society at large. As the tolerance of drug is developed by the addict more and more supply is taken to relieve the physiological and psychological symptoms of withdrawal distress. In this way, habit is established, which becomes very difficult to break.

And, once the addict is totally into the drugs, the miseries start visiting him frequently. Unfortunately, the misery does not remain confined to him alone. He can then transfer the same addiction to others. As, he is not committed or fails to commit to leave drugs, he may urge others to use it, particularly those who are his friends or in his company. It can be observed that mostly the addict practice the use of drugs in form of groups as the groups use may facilitate them even further.

Drug addicts can, afterwards, create many other social issues. Their family lives are disturbed and their relatives are influenced by them to a large extent. If the addicts are married and have children the repercussion may break the whole family. The wives of the addicts mostly suffer the most - they are beaten, their money is stolen and their whole lives are made a hell by their addicted husbands. Their children, on the other hand, remain without facilities and mostly grow up in the atmosphere of violence and discomfort.

Considering the influence of the drugs on the people in our society, it is imperative to design some effective measures to control the situation. Historically speaking, many efforts that were made to treat addiction in the past proved to be unsuccessful. Such efforts were mainly confined to medical and clinical treatment, or punitive measures through law and confinement of the addicts in the prisons.

It is important to design other means to solve the issue. Most importantly, the addicts should be considered as human beings and not criminals or the rejected class of population. They deserve sympathy, love and affection rather than hatred or rejection. They should be treated as patients rather than deviants for the purpose of their rehabilitation into the normal society. The solution must be perceived in the right perspective as it takes place in social situation of primary groups and its solution be sought in the social interaction.

It is very well-said that prevention is better than cure. The teenagers must be watched with great care that their needs, feelings and social requirements are met by the primary groups in a desired and acceptable manner. They may not bank on negative primary peer groups for the unmet social, economic, political and emotional needs. This is the locus of the point that interaction groups of the teenagers should be such that they produce normal and trouble free individuals.

Will the Taliban Change Direction?

By Abdul Ahad Bahrami

The Taliban managed to promptly resolve the group's leadership succession by choosing Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada as the replacement to Mullah Mansoor who was killed in a US drone strike in Pakistan. A Taliban statement said that the decision to choose Akhundzada as the group's new leader have been made unanimously by Taliban senior leaders. Mullah Yaqoub, the elder son of the Taliban's founder is appointed as deputy to the new leader along with Sirajuddin Haqqani who has already been a deputy to Taliban's demised leader. In the statement, the Taliban statement has praised Mullah Mansoor for leading the group in a difficult situation and resisting the calls for joining peace talks with the government of Afghanistan. With announcing a new leader, Taliban leaders have once again stressed on continuation of the war against foreign forces and the government of Afghanistan.

What was particular in the Taliban leadership succession is that was carried out so rapidly and only within days after the death of Mullah Mansoor. The smooth transition caught many by surprise as they expected a power struggle ensuing after Mansoor's killing over who should assume the group's leadership. Shortly after the news about Mansoor's killing spread and while the Taliban were yet to formally confirm death of their leaders, the group's senior members came together in a secret meeting to consult the situation and discuss the leadership succession for the group. Taliban's prompt decision over the group's new leadership show that the process has gone largely through consensus and without serious differences of opinions among senior members of the Quetta Shura and senior field commanders.

The announcement of the new leader by the Taliban showed that the expectations of emergence of possible divisions among the Taliban over the group's leadership succession were wrong and miscalculated. The prompt succession indicate the surprising resiliency of the Taliban senior leadership in difficult times and over crucial issues that need collective decision makings by the group's senior leaders. The Taliban have had an established decision-making procedure through the group's council of senior leaders which have been residing in Quetta during past fifteen years of the conflict in Afghanistan. This has enabled the group's senior leadership to perform highly effectively and seek consensus over leadership issues and the group's policies that can be potentially divisive in absence of an efficient decision-making mechanism. In hindsight, Mullah Mansoor's assumption of Taliban leadership now seems to be an exception: he bypassed a consensus over his leadership by the Taliban leadership council as he effectively assumed the role of leadership while hiding the death of Mullah Omar.

This provides the group a long-term capability to survive deaths of its leaders. The Taliban now seem to be back on the routine by refocusing on waging war and offensives across Afghanistan despite that the group's leader was killed in

a crucial juncture of time for the insurgency and the war efforts in Afghanistan. This is in turn a potential drawback for the efforts of the Afghan government and the United States to weaken the Taliban by targeting the group's senior leadership. With the new leader on his job to lead the insurgency, the Taliban may have managed to remain intact and easily survive the killing of their leader. Under the new leader, the Taliban may further become unified and grow stronger as the new leader is believed to less controversial than his predecessor to other senior members of the group who play key roles in day-to-day leadership of the group.

However, the new leader of the Taliban is not believed to have neither the power and influence nor the leadership skills of Mullah Mansoor over the ranks of files of the Taliban and the organization of the group's war efforts. The new leader is said to be more of a spiritual figure rather than a military commander. He may lack the skills of his predecessor which can emerge as a point of weakness for the new leadership. However, this could be compensated by the skills and experiences of his deputy Sirajuddin Haqqani who is famed for his brutality and warfare skills. Anyway, what is potentially worrying is that the Taliban have surprising resiliency in cases of losing their leaders in attacks by the Afghan government and the United States. This provides the insurgency the crucial capability to survive deaths of leaders and continue the war without being weakened by losing its key leaders.

Afghan officials and the United States have called on the new leader of the Taliban to learn from the fate of his predecessor and come to peace talks to resolve the conflict; otherwise he will face the destiny of his predecessor. It is unlikely, though, that the new leader of the Taliban be willing or have the authority and power to open a window for peace negotiations with the government of Afghanistan. He is described as a hard-line figure who will be expected to continue to lead the insurgency aimed at military gains on the battlefield. Under the new leadership, it is even less likely than past for the Taliban to change direction of the insurgency and join the peace efforts of the Afghan government and other powers. The killing of Mullah Mansoor could also be an incentive for the new leadership of the Taliban to seek revenge.

The killing of the Taliban leader would bring no difference if the Taliban persist on refusing peace offers and escalate violence. This is while many expected the death of Mullah Mansoor would bring a more moderate Taliban leader willing for entering the peace talks with the government of Afghanistan. Presently, there are no signs from the Taliban suggesting change in direction after Mullah Mansoor. The Taliban's behavior in the upcoming months will be a test for the Afghan government's four-way peace initiative. Taliban's continued refusal to peace talks will be the end of the four-nation peace initiative backed by Pakistan, China and the United States.

Abdul Ahad Bahrami is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at ahad.bahrami@gmail.com

A Proposal For Joint Conservation Initiatives (JCI) Between South and South East Asia

By Saikat Kumar Basu

The recent report on sad demise of peacocks and other birds in Myanmar calls for close cooperation in wildlife and forest conservation between adjacent nations in South and SE Asia. While peacocks are moving towards extinction in Myanmar and are already extinct in the wild in neighboring Bangladesh; they have reached exploding population levels in India. The rise in peacock populations has been so high in some states of India that they have been quite detrimental to farms and crop productions due to their elevated numbers. If there has been a mechanism in existence between the adjoining countries for translocation of one species to other countries, the conservation efforts in South and SE Asia could reach a new level and easily serve as a global model. The new government of Myanmar should work towards enhancing better conservation efforts for protecting wildlife and forests within the nation. It will be important to build awareness among the communities for educating them about the value of conserving local forests and wildlife. However, a broader collaboration with respect to wildlife and forest conservation between SAARC and ASEAN member nations could play a significant role in spear heading successful conservation efforts in South and SE Asia, a region known for its spectacular biodiversity.

Another important case that further advocates for such broader joint initiative in conservation is exemplified by the rise in tiger populations in Russia and Asian countries in the latest release of global tiger census which has been a coordinated effort of 14 tiger inhabited nations. The latest global tiger census indicated significant rise in tiger population in Asia with substantial increase in the Indian subcontinent (India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh). India has been highlighted in the report with almost 70% of global tiger population. However, it is important to mention that overall increase in tiger population has been noticed in the entire Indian sub-continent with 2226 in India, 198 in Nepal, 103 in Bhutan and 106 in Bangladesh. No data is currently available for Myanmar; with both biodiversity rich Indonesia and Malaysia showing increase in the number of tigers as 371 and 250 respectively. Thailand also has a good wild population of the Indochinese sub species of tiger with a count of 189. Thailand and Myanmar are now considered as the last two quality habitats for the Indochinese tiger sub species; while the Indian subcontinent houses the Bengal subspecies and Russia the famous and the largest Amur tigers. The number in Russia is also impressive with a count of 433.

The situation in the Vietnam is depressing with just more than five reported and in neighboring Laos it is just 2. No wild tiger reported from Cambodia in this census is alarming suggesting the species to be extinct in the wild; while China has been the home of two sub species (South China and Indochinese sub species) reported less than seven species. SE Asia and China unfortunately harbors some of the largest illegal wildlife markets promoting trade on different tiger body parts due to heavy demand in their traditional medicinal practices and tiger skin. If the tiger permanently vanishes from their natural habitat in vast regions of China and SE Asia; the loss of the top predator will be detrimental to the long term health of the local ecosystems. With severely dwindling population of the Indochinese sub species of tiger across China and SE Asia; Myanmar and Thailand could be the last refuge for wild stock repopulation for captive breeding and reintroduction across China and SE Asia in future. Hence a proactive joint conservation initiative between nations is desperately needed for strengthening conservation efforts in such biodiverse regions. Joint border management by forest and conservation staff along with border security troops or agencies along adjacent nations in SE Asia could prevent wildlife trafficking and poaching significantly. If the porous international borders are secured the wildlife trafficking transit routes will be effectively cut off and help in reduction of wildlife

trade. Intelligence sharing between countries would also help cross-border wildlife trafficking and trade units to be appropriately dismantled and uprooted from adjoining countries.

Asia is the home range of the largest member of the cat family, the tiger (*Panthera tigris*). The majestic predator roams across tropical and sub-tropical moist deciduous forests, evergreen forests, subtropical and temperate forests; as well as mangrove forests, alluvial grasslands, mountains and hills. The NE India adjoining China, Bangladesh and Myanmar represents unique ecosystems with seven states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura) all known for their extreme biodiversity and majestic forests. The region is known for several endangered species such as Asiatic elephants, one horned Indian rhinoceros, red panda, common leopard, snow leopard, clouded leopard, Thamin deer, several species of rare primates and birds to mention only a handful. Assam and Arunachal Pradesh represent premier tiger habitats in NE India; although recently a tigress was reported to be killed by local villages in Nagaland. While some experts suggest that a Bengal tigress most possibly migrated to Nagaland; others suggest it could be a rare Indochinese sub species of tiger that may have unfortunately migrated across Myanmar into Nagaland. This region is grossly under explored and may be hiding some of the rich tiger habitats of the nation. The success of tiger conservation should encourage all the states in the NE as well as other parts of India to adopt successful conservation plans like Project Tiger to protect several endemic, endangered and vulnerable species of local flora and fauna.

Two sub species of tigers reside in adjacent ecosystems: the larger Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) inhabiting the Indian subcontinent (India, Nepal, Bhutan & Bangladesh); and the smaller Indochinese tiger (*Panthera tigris corbetti*) inhabiting South China and SE Asia (Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos). Both sub species are considered endangered by IUCN. It will be quite interesting to look for any evidence of range overlap and/or wild natural hybrids occurring between Indochinese tiger X Bengal tiger in remote border areas of Indo-China and Indo-Myanmar border areas of NE India (Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram), southern Yunnan or western Myanmar? Historic data suggests that Bengal tigers were once present in parts of southern China but eventually became extinct; hence there could be possibilities of such sightings in the border areas of these three countries. It will be also interesting to identify if there are important animal migration corridors between these three countries. Comprehensive ground and aerial surveys, placing numerous camera traps, tiger scats, hair, blood and tissue sampling will be necessary for identifying these biological mysteries. If some individuals of these two tiger sub species on either side of the international border across India, China and Myanmar are tracked and monitored; valuable information could be retrieved about their corresponding ranges and if any range overlap happens across the international boundaries that could also be easily identified and recorded. Such information will be invaluable for the purpose of tiger conservation in south China, Indian subcontinent and SE Asia. A formal agreement between adjacent nations could help in exchange of wildlife data, expertise in surveying and conservation practices and help in translocation, captive breeding and reintroduction to the wild for several endangered species like the tiger. Joint coordination and cooperation in the form of Joint Conservation Management between the SAARC and ASEAN member nations could thus help extensively in the process of conservation of the majestic forests and wildlife of South and SE Asia.

Saikat Kumar Basu is a Canada and India based freelance journalist specializing in global geo-political, strategic and foreign policy issues, science & technology and environment & conservation related themes. Regularly contributes to newspapers, newsletters, bulletins, magazines and journals in Asia, Africa and the Americas.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.