

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



November 28, 2015

National Reintegration is Vital

Going through what is being called as "The End Game" in Afghanistan is becoming very tough for the International community involved in Afghanistan and led by US, or it may be that it is not yet the end of the game. Though many in international media and politics emphasize that it is now the end of the game in Afghanistan, there are indications that end is yet to come. The fear is that this emphasis should not turn out to be forcefully implemented as there are many factors that do not seem to be going towards their conclusion. If it is the end, the issues that have been creating problems should be reaching to their conclusions; however, the scenario in Afghanistan is depicting a very different picture. The issues seem to be intermingling, and the ambiguities, uncertainties and current distrust have made optimistic thinking very much difficult. It would not be inappropriate or even critical if someone says that the future is dark, the vision is non-existent and the country is heading towards disorder and disintegration.

A political solution in Afghanistan - which is really important for the integration of Afghan society - is not very close and the present attitude of Afghan government and its Western allies are further hindering the process. The reconciliation with Taliban seems to be out of track and the Afghan people do not appear to be having confidence about the outcome of the ongoing reconciliation process. The process has not reached anywhere though there have been many attempts to make it move. On many occasions Western decision makers have agreed that a lasting solution for Afghanistan is not through the war; it is political solution alone that has the hope of stability in the country, yet the measures have not been carried out appropriately in the same direction. Instead of the process being participatory and inclusive, it has been the reason of widening the gap between Afghan people and the Western allies and the current situation is making sure that this gap should keep on increasing. Moreover, the process is also widening the gap among the different ethnic groups within the Afghan society - further disintegrating the society. Though it is not possible that the reconciliation process alone may generate a sort of reintegration within Afghan society, it may, to a certain extent, prove helpful to it, provided that it is handled with prudence. However, at the same time, it must never be forgotten that the reintegration is quite a different phenomenon and require attention and devotion of its own. It is largely dependent on the political system and socio-economic environment prevalent within Afghan society.

For the reintegration of Afghan society it is necessary that all the major social and political groups within the Afghan society must start feeling a sense of attachment with the social, political and economic lives of the country.

The reintegration of the Afghan society is only possible through a separate process - it can neither be the outcome of a miracle nor the result of the ongoing reconciliation process alone. At the present scenario, even it seems improbable that the reconciliation process may reach to any sort of viable agreement with Taliban, let alone the integration of the entire nation. For reintegration to happen it is necessary to bring about some very basic structural changes within the Afghan political setup. One of the most basic of them is a true democracy within the country that has the capacity to represent different ethnic and minority groups appropriately so that heterogeneous Afghan society must be integrated within a single whole. Different ethnic and minority groups will not be integrated within the society if they are kept away from participating within the affairs of the country and the most crucial decisions of the nation. Therefore, it can be said that the reintegration process is a two-fold process. Along with making these groups the part of the ongoing reconciliation process, there have to be important political amendments within a short span of time; otherwise, neither reintegration will take place nor will reconciliation produce any fruitful outcome.

In fact, the reintegration of Afghan society is a phenomenon that is much wider than the reconciliation process. For it to happen; there has to be consistent efforts and a true democratic system assisted with socio-economic stability and cultural integration. However, it cannot be said that reconciliation process, which is narrower in scope, is totally ineffective on the Afghanistan's reintegration. Rather, at the moment, it is one of the factors that will have a very important influence on the future of reintegration process in Afghanistan but it is important that the process must be led keeping the same concept in mind. Integrating all the important factions of Afghan society within the ongoing reconciliation process will definitely result in a promising episode in the reintegration of Afghan society.



Welfare of Masses Needs Prioritization

By Asmatyari

At present state nations pursue their goals to collective progress, social wellbeing and safeguards from possible incursion. The consolidation of a state primarily pivots on the former requisites than latter, provided the universal notion of peaceful coexistence is not overruled. The role of nation states thereby is confined to provision of social services than keeping large standing army. Conversely, Afghanistan is distant yet to embrace the modern democratic norms of rule of law, pluralism, segregation of state and religion and civil liberties. A society at the behest of irrational discourse and traditional laws is bound to suffer and wander till the onset of pertinent cognition of introducing social reforms.

After passing through series of bloodsheds the world landed to owe democratic system of governance -thought out to follow consolidated remedies to some hard born wounds of the socio-economically disgruntled masses. Bunch of goodliness were associated with audacious aversion of fates of desperate, bad blooded, poverty-stricken and war ruined people. The democracy was deemed to be an agreeable substitute to the formerly practiced despotic systems -earning far reaching riches to world. The sole purpose of democratic state is to look after the welfare of its masses. Nonetheless, travelling decades of journey past the establishment of democracy, the livelihood of masses could not alter to magnitude it should have. Following the footsteps of history we find out the dos and don'ts that hindered progression most of the part of the world. The democratic practice encountered bunch of hindrances in many part of Muslim world.

Afghanistan is a nascent democratic state -getting supported by international community, has to fall in line with democratic practices by now -unfortunately lagged behind to do so. The problems pleading prioritization are elaborated below. Social reform are often gradual but understated changes to particular characteristics of society, although when a social reform does not work, a radical, aggressive social reform may take place. However, it seeks to reform policies regarding women's rights, child labor, civil rights, education systems, judicial system, institutional discretionary power, health services, housing schemes and universal suffrage.

In Afghanistan, land is often the difference between feeding one's family and destitution; the future of many families, tribes, and communities depends on their land holdings. Yet it is common for the powerful in Afghanistan to throw people off their land, often for economic development projects that serve chiefly as vehicles for fraudulent loans and financial schemes that benefit officials and their associates. According to a report published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), some 9 million Afghans - 36 per cent of the population - are believed to live in absolute poverty and a further 37 per cent live only slightly above the poverty line, despite an estimated injection of billions of dollars in previous years. Only 23 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and only 24 per cent of Afghans above the age of 15 can read and write, with much lower literacy rates among women and nomadic populations.

Another, predicament running across the social consciences un-

felt is growing child labor. The rule of land either is silent at the subject or owes subtly implemented provisions, shelved to add into the look of constitutional edifice. Notwithstanding, the children subjected endless afflictions and exploitation ranging from physical, mental abuses and tortures fails to earn the attention of guardian of law. Eliminating child labor is one of the biggest challenges for the upcoming government that needs immediate attention. Child labor not only causes damage to a child's physical and mental health, but also keep him deprive of his basic rights to education, development and freedom. Keeping the gravity of problems in consideration the government of Afghanistan must take immediate steps for alleviating the child labor on war footing. Demining women both physico-mentally inferior simply heightens their miseries and push them to the depth of negation. It is shocking to hear women ignorantly stoned to death and lashed on some unfound grounds. This is an absolute inequitable conduct and deliberate negation of their inherent potential and equal standing in the patriarchal society. A woman despite numerous discriminations dare making public appearances, serving state institutions are rendered vulnerable to harassment, offensive charges and even physical abuse from both state owned officials and non-state actors.

Institutional reforms to broaden Afghan political participation and punish corruption would be preferable, but institution building is fast slipping beyond reach. It may soon be necessary to settle for constraining favoritism at the margin by renegotiating today's political deals between Kabul and sub-national power brokers to exclude only the worst abuses.

Following constitutional, electoral reform intends to open political participation and strengthen the parliament as a check on executive excesses.

These are noble goals. But they are very ambitious, and will require more time and resources than the West now seems willing to commit. This is because formal institutions have the weaknesses of their strengths: if effective, they pose a permanent, uncontrollable threat to any official with corruption in the past or present. As such, they threaten a wide array of major figures; creating potent opposition that today's limited leverage will be hard-pressed to overcome.

Regretfully every elected leader depends on the network's leadership to deliver political support; in exchange, he empowers them with significant appointments, protects them from prosecution, and allows them to prey on the public. This is what we witnessed formerly, when cabinet members were to be picked for various slots, a great deal of favoritism and loyalty exercised to win the confidence. The result is a government of informal political deal making rather than rule-based administration by publicly accountable institutions.

It's concluded in the light of aforesaid details, an all-encompassing socio-political reforms might subside the magnitude of problems if could not eradicate them. The provision of life necessities, social security safeguards, access to law, right to vote etc. stands the primary responsibilities of the state. The government must design to improve its capacity to deliver services to its citizens -making the vision of welfare state come true.

Asmatyari is permanent writer of Daily outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at asmatyari@gmail.com

Afghanistan and Environmental challenges

By Matiullah Kamran

Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable and poorest countries in the world. The country is highly influenced by political, economic, and social factors, exacerbated by pressures of environmental and ecological risks that make it impossible to overcome undesirable conditions in the long-term.

The path to development, reconstruction, social development and economic development in Afghanistan has reached important milestones but at a cost of ignoring Afghanistan's environmental and ecosystem issues.

The environment is one of the most pervasive core components of sustainable development focusing on environment and ecological challenges which impacts in a global fashion. Environmental protection is one of the key factors to a sustainable plan of development consistent with the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In the 21st century, in the wake of climate change and global warming, today all countries, particularly those most vulnerable developing countries focus on significant energy and policies to draw attention to environment issues.

Environment as vital part of human life, one of the main pillars of sustainable development, in the most obvious terms, 'better environment' equates to a better life style, and correlated to standard of living and quality of life. Environmental protection has become central to development agendas in developed and developing countries.

The environment has direct, inter-disciplinary relationship with economic and social dimensions in a sustainable development approach, and is considered as parallel sector along with development and physical improvement of society.

The Afghan government, as part of the international community, is committed to focus on environmental issues and has signed international conventions and treaties such as Rio Convention, the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and also commit to enact environmental rules and regulations recommended by such agencies. However, so far the government is only taking gradual or incremental steps which cannot ensure protection of environmental and ecosystems as well as

sufficiently address conservation issues.

Afghanistan faces a critical environmental situation, air pollution has remained as huge challenge, climate change, deforestation, environmental degradation and rapidly increasing population with missing strategic environment assessment in development projects, lack of professional staff in National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), inadequate budget allocation, weak governance, absence of civil society. In terms of environmental activism, Afghan civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations have not been as proactive as necessary and rather have acted too slowly and reluctantly due to a variety of factors. The 'environmental' component of our national agenda and priorities is still missing, both from the government and non-governmental sectors.

Over the past 30 years both developed and developing countries have implemented and refined Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes so now they are commonplace and accepted by society in general as one way to improve environmental conditions through the development agenda. However, during this period Afghanistan has been subject to significant conflict which caused to fall behind in global trends.

In Afghanistan, there are several sets of environmental problems in addition to serious security and other social problems. It will be a big challenge to overcome and address all problems simultaneously regards with insufficient profession of human capital and financial constraints.

In general there is a shortage of professionals and experts in Afghan governmental bodies and particularly this issue is clearly apparent and acceptable in NEPA. Lack of experts, improper recoding and weak bureaucracy system, lack of coordination between related organizations, and lack of capacity building opportunity are all factors holding back the EIA progress in most development project in Afghanistan, and it will become a threat if it is not undermined in development process. NEPA must be strengthened to follow up the EIA rules and documentation process and train its provincial staff to undertake EIA procedures in development projects.

Matiullah Kamran is a freelance Afghan columnist. He can be reached at matiullah.kamran@yahoo.com

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



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