

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



October 11, 2017

No Easy Way to Achievements

Life is a continuous struggle. There are no easy earnings or achievements. In order to make an achievement in life it is necessary for an individual to have the urge and the iron will. Without having the urge and the motivation, achieving anything worthwhile would be really difficult. Motivation and iron will have enabled human beings to achieve even the impossibilities. There are myriads of examples in human history that show how human beings with their dedicated efforts have changed the course of history and made the historians wonder with astonishments. Same is true for a nation; unless a nation has the urge to do something positive it would be really difficult for society to make developments and improvements.

It is difficult to believe that water drops that are soft and liquid can make a hole in a stone, but with consistency and determination it is possible. Continuous flow of drops of water on a stone can, at last, pierce through the heart of the stone and make the impossible possible. Keeping the same example in consideration, the nations have to move and strive for the purposes that seem unachievable.

In the course of time, nations may come across difficult problems – the problems that may seem gigantic and impossible to be solved; the problems that may hamper progress and development. However, it is important that the nation should not panic and should be prepared to stand strong against them. Being subjugated by them would only result in frustration and sense of defeat.

A nation keeps on moving with the pace of time unless it realizes that there are shortcomings in its way of living and there are problems that are needed to be concentrated upon and eliminated. In fact, the very first step in eradicating a problem is realizing that the problem does exist and it has to be solved. Considering a problem something very normal and making adjustments with it is a serious error and must be avoided in any case.

The people in Afghanistan are also having the attitude of making compromises with their social and political problems.

They, instead of considering them a hurdle towards evolution of the society and designing efforts to overcome them, change themselves to go ahead with the problems untouched.

For example, one of the most serious problems that Afghan society is facing today is corruption and the tragedy is that it is getting more threatening with each passing day.

The Afghans must realize that this issue is generating disorder in almost all the spheres of life and there must be an urge to take measures to curb it. Unfortunately, the people strive to compensate with it and in the process further strengthen its roots.

The second step would be to stand strong against it and feel determined to take serious actions. Definitely, the problem of corruption seems deep-rooted and it now has the backing of many influential individuals as well; however, standing determined against it and challenging it are not impossible. It requires responsible attitude from all the members of the society.

All the individuals must say 'no' to it and take steps to eradicate it, at least, from their own lives or from their own surroundings as much as possible. Though small steps by individuals may not seem sufficient in the short run, but it can do wonders in the long run as it is the drops that make oceans.

It is believed that becoming part of an evil and not taking actions against it, in fact, means favoring the evil and supporting it to nurture further. Every person in our society just wants to live for his own personal benefit and would never concentrate on any problem that would affect society as a whole.

He thinks that isolating himself from the problem would solve the issues but, as a matter of fact, it does not. It requires him to be courageous to take the challenge.

We need to realize that we have to play an active role in the society and that is only possible when we have the feeling that there is always room for improvement and the status quo needs to be changed. We cannot be like pigeons that close their eyes when they see the cat coming towards them.

We cannot be a living nation, if we are ready to live with the problems that are destroying our society and our values. We can see them and are being influenced by their consequences; therefore, we must stand against them and strive to eradicate them. Allah almighty has given us the mind and the strength to be active members of the society and He will never change our destinations unless we ourselves strive for it. We, therefore, require being proactive and must fulfill the responsibility of a vigilant nation.



Collapse of Urban Values from the Top of Skyscrapers

By Muhammad Amin Byani

Asia is a housewife in Kabul city. She says that the skyscrapers adjacent to her house put her in trouble adding that it is hard to reach out her daily chores and may abandon her home if the same trend continues. Violating one's private sphere is not the only problem. Muhammad Zia Zamani, Deputy Director of Design and Implementation of Kabul Municipality, says that over 70 percent of Kabul city is not planned and the houses are built arbitrarily. In addition to jeopardizing life and property, there will be many other challenges for residents such as increasing population density, environmental problems, and privacy issues.

The story of Kabul city is the narration of collapse. Ancient Kabul constantly mentioned in myths, is only heard in stories. The war destroyed everything. As a result of bombardment and destruction, the city was in need of rehabilitation and development. But the city grew disproportionately and developed heterogeneously. The imported architecture and technology applied regardless of the rules of urban planning and the control of land marginalized the ancient architecture. Now residents of Kabul are alienated from their real city and feel nostalgic about the past days of Kabul.

One of the most important needs of the city is citizens' housing. Currently, Kabul hosts millions of migrants from the countryside and returnees to their homeland. Constructing tall buildings will be an appropriate solution to the problem of Kabul city.

That is, the lands will be utilized in better way, mainly in downtown and populous areas. But it should be noted that if the constructions are not planned properly, each buildings will be in the form of irregular dwelling – which is either isolated in the corner of a city or built very tall without standard. We observe tall buildings in Kabul which are built without considering the rights of neighbors or residents. Hence, the natural landscape is eroded, environmental pollution is increased, and the past traditions are left at stake.

Constructing tall buildings dates back to the beginning of the history of human civilization, but the Roman Empire for the first time began to develop Rome in vertical development of the city's multi-story building. The desire for tall buildings in Afghanistan also has a historical background; the Forty Tower Building in Yakawlang district is one of the examples dating to the period of Kushani.

Tall buildings were formed to represent an authoritarian state, sometimes were the symbol of the development and economy, and sometimes to address the essential needs of a community for housing and services.

The modern skyscrapers in the America's major cities such

as Chicago and New York and in many European cities were formed in 19th century following the industrialization and population growth for the optimal use of land. It also aimed to meet people's demand for living and working in city center and to prevent from additional costs.

For the first time, such flats were built in small number in Afghanistan as housing project during the Communist regime supported by state and the Soviet Union.

However, the past 16 years changed the feature of Kabul as hundreds of skyscrapers were built not out of social or developmental needs but to merely imitate the foreign countries. They are constructed for particular layer of society as luxury.

We confront two issues in Afghanistan: (1) Urban growth (2) Lack of resources (infrastructure, urban services, etc.). One of the issues that arises from unplanned urbanization is the problem of "urban sprawl" – which is defined as, "Uncoordinated growth: the expansion of community without concern for its consequences, in short, unplanned, incremental urban growth which is often regarded unsustainable." It is also said to be "general consensus that urban sprawl is characterized by unplanned and uneven pattern of growth, driven by multitude of processes and leading to inefficient resource utilization."

This type of development in cities is the most unsustainable and undesirable. The theory of urban sprawl is in contrast with "compact city". Compact city is an urban planning and urban design concept, which promotes relatively high residential density with mixed land uses. It is based on an efficient public transport system and has an urban layout which – according to its advocates – encourages walking and cycling, low energy consumption and reduced pollution. A large resident population provides opportunities for social interaction as well as a feeling of safety in numbers and "eyes on the street".

It is also arguably a more sustainable urban settlement type than urban sprawl. Achieving a compact city does not just mean increasing urban density per se or across all parts of the city. It means good planning to achieve an overall more compact urban form.

Now Kabul is bursting with large number of population. Constructing tall buildings will decrease the problem to a great extent. For instance, when a number of people are living in a multi-story building, it will be easy for the government to provide them with services rather than those who are living in different places far from one another. So, providing services to millions of people living in different apartments in unplanned way is next to impossible.

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Mounting Tension between Iraqi Government and KRG

By Hujjatullah Zia

The Kurdish flag on the coffin of the octogenarian former president of Iraq Jalal Talabani triggered a strong wave of protest in Iraqi media and social media. Talabani, the first non-Arab Iraqi president, died Oct. 3 at a hospital in Berlin. He was widely respected as mediator among Shia, Sunni, and Kurds. His death came after Iraq's Kurds voted 92.7 percent in favor of a split from Iraq in the September 25 referendum the legality of which was rejected by the federal government of Iraq. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Iraqi central government are on collision course. The Iraqi government has imposed sanctions on Kurdish banks and halted foreign currency transfers to the region, and a flight ban has halted all international flights from servicing the Iraqi Kurdish territory's airports.

Baghdad has demanded that the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) cancel the result of the referendum or face continued sanctions, international isolation, and possible military intervention.

The issue of formal split from Baghdad to form an autonomous Kurdish region was followed by mixed reaction from different countries, mainly the neighboring states. The US, which backed Iraqi government in combating the self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), disapproved of the referendum saying it could inflame tension in the region. Similarly, Tehran and Ankara also opposed the referendum. The presidents of Iran and Turkey say their countries will take steps to ensure that borders in the region remain unchanged following last week's independence referendum in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. "We will not accept changing borders in the region," Iranian President Hassan Rohani said in Tehran on October 4 at a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Condemning the vote, Turkey said it was "unacceptable", and has made threats to stop the supply of oil to the Kurdish region of northern Iraq.

The reaction of Russia – which signed a long-term oil contract with Iraqi Kurdistan's regional government – to the issue has been rather ambiguous. The main theme in Russian officials' statements is underlining the necessity of preserving Iraq's territorial integrity while at the same time not denouncing the Kurdish bid for independence. On Sept. 27, Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Moscow "respects the rights of Kurds but supports Iraqi unity and territorial integrity."

However, Israel is the only country that has supported

Kurdish independence. Erdogan has even threatened to halt relations with Israel over the Kurdish issue.

The United Nations has offered to help "solve the problem" between the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Region.

Calls for Kurdish independence had been going on for years, with an unofficial 2005 referendum resulting in 98% voting in favor of independence. These longstanding calls gained impetus following the Northern Iraq offensive by ISIL group during the Iraqi Civil War in which Baghdad-controlled forces abandoned some areas, which were then taken by the Peshmerga.

The recent political tension between Iraqi government and Kurdistan region and their split will put an adverse effect on Iraq's stability. At this critical juncture, Iraqi nation need unity and strength more than ever before. In other words, Shiite, Sunni, and Kurds will have to extend the spirit of brotherhood and be cautious not to pave the ground, through fomenting sectarian tension, for the resurgence of the ISIL group or their militancy.

It is believed that ISIL is still a potential threat for Iraqi nation and state and the militants will continue their terrorist acts the same as the Taliban are doing in Afghanistan. That is to say, the fall of the Taliban's regime was deemed as a death knell for the militants, but the Taliban fighters resurfaced and now carry out deadly attacks against Afghans. Iraq is in the same boat. Although the regime of Saddam Hussein was collapsed, insurgency did not end in Iraq. The gap among the three mentioned sects was the main reason behind the establishment of ISIL group which fomented sectarian violence under the mask of religion and imposed great sufferings on Iraqi nation in general and Yazidi women in particular.

For a stable Iraq, negotiation is the only viable option to end the issue. Both sides have to be united and build a strong nation. Iraqi people are still highly at the mercy of terrorist attacks and lose their lives in suicide bombings on daily basis. The split will debilitate Iraqi government and widen the gap between sects. To mitigate regional conflicts, the world must mediate talks between the two sides and resolve the issue peacefully. Otherwise, the entire region will be affected in some ways. Secondly, the split is against the Iraq's Constitution. So, all Iraqis including Kurds will have to respect the law. Constitutionally, split is illegal and Iraqi government is right to prevent from breaking the law.

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