

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



October 18, 2016

Fight against Narcotics

One of the major concerns in Afghanistan is that it has not been able to take serious steps towards solving its major problems. Problems like poppy cultivation and smuggling, corruption and insecurity have been haunting it to a large extent for many years now but still the efforts taken against these issues remain negligible. Even though there have been funding assistance as well for these issues but the amount of work done as compared to these funding and assistance is not sufficient. It is the reason that these problems still persist and keep on growing more serious by each passing day. Poppy cultivation and narcotics have been Afghanistan's major concern and on many occasions the country has topped the list in this regard. Yet, the attitude and seriousness through which this problem is being tackled is miserable.

A recent survey, financed by European Union (EU) and conducted by Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) shows that the fight against narcotics and policies in this regard have been only superficial and illusive over the past 15 years. The survey shows that the discussions held regarding policies making for elimination of narcotics production in the country remain confusing and ambiguous. And most of people with poor economy in rural areas grew poppy due to its multi seasonal harvests and higher income. The report also reveal that it is not wondering that policymakers and the international community are unaware about the facts in rural areas because they cannot go of Kabul city, they even cannot go out of their residence.

With such scenario in hand, what can be expected of the outcome of the efforts that are being made in the name of 'fight against narcotics'? In fact, poppy cultivation and its smuggling are linked with the networks of organized crime in the country that further extends to international mafia and drug dealing and they have their strong backers in the international drug market and national authorities who appear to be guardians of the nation. But one of the most alarming and unfortunate facts is that they have their links with the terrorist networks in the country. The growing insurgency and expanding networks of terrorism suggest that the terrorists have strong financial support and currently there are many reports that disclose the fact that the terrorist networks receive most of their funding from the same source.

The situation would not be difficult to handle if it was limited only to farmers but the fact is that the farmers are not alone to benefit from the rising prices and the rise in production; rather farmers take a negligible part of it while most of the income goes to the networks that manage its filthy business. And it is not concealed from knowing minds that the terrorist networks have a lion's share in such income. It is believed that most of the cultivation is concentrated in southern Afghan provinces, and heartland of the Taliban-led insurgency, where the government does not seem to have much control.

This clearly suggests that there is connection between the poppy business and the growing insurgency. Definitely, the poppy business in Afghanistan is well knit in the larger network of organized crime. But unfortunately, the measures that have been carried out to counter the growth of this menace have not been comprehensive and serious. It is even believed that the important figures are involved in backing this business that should, otherwise, have the responsibility to counter them. And the growing corruption and negligence of responsibility in the country does not let the government notice such realities. Though Afghanistan has been under international pressure to take notice of growing poppy cultivation, it is yet to hit the bull's eye in this regard. Moreover, there have been technical and financial assistance from the international community to help Afghanistan eradicate this evil, but most of it goes to the pockets of rampant corruption.

So, the menace of poppy cultivation is determined to influence the country in various ways. It, on one side, is making drugs available to a large number of people, who are both intentionally and unintentionally becoming addict to it and becoming responsible for giving birth to different social problems. On the other hand, it is providing the fuel for insurgency as it is bound to benefit the terrorist networks in the country that largely depend on such sources of income after losing support from elsewhere. Government authorities in this regard have to get very much serious and try to take concrete steps to make sure that the production is reduced to a considerable extent. Destroying the crops is one of the most practical steps at the present scenario and can to a very great extent discourage the poppy cultivation but it has certain complexities with itself.

For the long-lasting solution it is preferable that the government must try to facilitate the farmers and landowners the opportunity of growing alternate crops. Moreover, corruption, in this regard, must not be tolerated in any condition, as it the matter that has been influencing the entire nation and would keep on influencing many generations to come. The relevant authorities must consider their responsibilities and play their part in extracting the nation out of this evil; otherwise it would be too late to mend anything.



Who is Responsible?

By Hujjatullah Zia

I would say that the most fundamental challenge is security. Security actually affects all activities of life in Afghanistan. After the drawdown of the international forces in 2014, the Taliban had tested the ability of Afghan national forces to defend the country. This had created a rather difficult situation in 2015, when the Taliban insurgency was able to make headway in terms of expanding their areas of control, and also the Afghan national security and defense forces seemed to be on the defensive," these words were spoken by UN envoy to Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto.

The escalated militancy and increase in combatant and non-combatant casualties will demoralize the soldiers and fill public air with disappointment. Based on a report released by UNAMA, 1,601 civilians were killed and 3,565 wounded between January and June this year, which is an increase of four per cent in death toll compared to the first half of 2015 and the highest half-year total since 2009. Afghan civilians lose their lives in one way or another on the street, in markets, mosques and shrines (while praying or performing their religious rituals).

The appointment of Haibatullah Akhundzada as Taliban leader and emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have aggravated the security situation and inflicted heavy casualties upon Afghan civilians and soldiers. It is most likely that Haibatullah, the Taliban's radical clergy, will not succumb to pressure put for coming to negotiating table and he is a big obstacle before the peace process. He is so fundamental that refuses to appear to media – the same as Mullah Omar. Hence, it is believed that his ideology prefers war to peace and he will continue so until be doomed to his predecessor's fate. Similarly, members of the ISIL group, operating under the harsh ideology of Abu-Bakr Al-Baghdadi and gained foothold in Afghanistan, never imagine about peace talks since they nurture more fundamental mindset and practice more violently.

Being undermined in Iraq and Syria financially and militarily in recent months, the ISIL fighters will resort to stoking sectarian violence and spilling the blood of men, women and children with strong sense of revenge.

Of late, the Taliban's escalated offensives and terrorist attacks and suicide bombings carried out by warring factions create challenges before National Unity Government (NUG) and put the democracy under question. The takeover of Kunduz and soldiers' heavy fatalities in different parts of the country are dark stains on NUG.

Reportedly, around 100 Afghan police and soldiers were ambushed and killed, by the Taliban fighters, earlier this week as they tried to retreat – the heaviest losses suffered by government forces during months of fierce clashes near the capital of southern Helmand province. Afghan Taliban fighters have

pushed into some areas of Lashkargah, firing rockets at government buildings and sparking a new wave of residents fleeing the city. It is said that dozens of other security personnel surrendered during the debacle, while Taliban gunmen seized at least 22 armored Humvees, dozens of trucks, and hundreds of rifles – it was affirmed by Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi.

Afghan officials are cited saying that security forces are losing as many as 5,000 people each month through casualties and desertion, while only about 3,000 new soldiers and police are recruited over the same period – this is a highly serious challenge before the NUG. If this trend continues, the country will be left at the mercy of greater crises. The mouth-watering promises of NUG's heads, during their presidential campaigns, on one hand, and the current political and financial crises on the other hand widen the rift between state and nation.

After all, the government urges citizens not to leave the country and calls on European countries to send back Afghan refugees – those who migrated so as to get rid of insecurity and unemployment. The questions are that is Afghanistan secure for them? Will they be employed? Are there any particular plans for returnees? What about the family members of high-ranking officials living in foreign countries? The state is supposed to pave the way for them through strengthening security and fulfilling their presidential agenda rather than exerting pressure and establishing restrictive measures. The government has committed to "form a civil society void of violence and bloodshed" but people lose their lives on a large scale. In addition, a large number of people, mainly youths, suffer from unemployment and the government has no effective mechanism to tackle the issue.

Many analysts and observers are of the view that the termination of parliament's legal period more than a year ago and holding no election for third round is a flagrant violation of the Constitution. Who is responsible for violating law in this regard, nation or state? It is said that except one article of the Constitution, which states that "Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan", all the articles were violated by the state within more than a decade.

Hence, the country suffers from two major challenges namely the issues going inside government's machinery such as lack of implementation of law, corruption, competition for power, etc. and the issues coming from warring parties. Both are to be tackled urgently and the worsening trend must be stopped or else the nation will suffer severely and death toll will rise with each passing day – which might be considered a stain on the NUG and results in the loss of its international allies and their financial aid.

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Man is the Creator of his own Fortune

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

No one can do what a person himself can do for his life. Fortune of a man depends upon his own self; he can make or ruin something as he wishes. In other words, the destiny of a man lies in his own hands, and he can be successful if he only wills it. Man has been sent out to this world by God gifted with all those qualities which are indispensable for greatness. It is up to man to utilize these qualities. If he puts his whole heart into his work and makes the best use of his talents, creativity, he can become successful in life. He only courts failure, if he does not do this. A man who possesses a strong will and a firm determination finds all difficulties solved. To him there are a thousand ways open to steer clear of all dangers and snags. Such a man goes on working hard, and even if he fails he is never downcast. Failures make him all the more strong-minded and he persists in his task, till he attains the desired success. It is therefore, the man, who labors hard with a strong resolution and an unshaken will, who achieves success and makes his fortune. It is the height of folly to suppose that wealth, fame or power comes to a man by his sitting at home and only asking for it. A person must be persevering and must exert himself, if he wants to shape out his destiny. He who fails to bring strength of mind and industry to bear upon his work in life has nothing but suffering and troubles as his lot. A man cannot achieve wealth, and fortune unless he works hard and unless he has a powerful will, if follows that he is the builder of his own fortune. He can make his fortune if he wishes to do so, by being industrious and persevering. He can also bring misery and suffering upon him-self if he has not the wish to labor. It is rightly to quote a well-known story of the carpenter-boy who shows how even impossible things are made possible. A carpenter-boy was one day found hard at work in repairing a chair and polishing it. One of his neighbors who was watching him at his work, ridiculed him for his taking so much pains. The boy replied to his neighbor's ridicule by saying that there was a motive behind his action. He was polishing it so carefully because he would one day sit upon it. The neighbor laughed at his idea, but what was his surprise when he found that the boy, by dint of perseverance and strength of will, rose to be a magistrate and actually sat upon the chair which he had himself mended. The lesson behind this great story is that when a person wills something and takes the charge of his life then he becomes the person which he thought of himself. Many people think that the course of a man's life on earth is decided by fate, but this is a wrong idea. A man's future depends on his own self. If he wastes his time in idleness, or depends too much on others or loses heart in the face of difficulties, he will fail in life.

If, on the other hand, he makes proper use of his time and opportunities, and follows his aim in life with patience and perseverance, success is sure to come to him. Even ordinary abilities will bring him success if he makes good use of them. In fact, history abounds with examples of men rising to greatness from a humble beginning merely by their own exertions. On the other hand, we often come across men endowed with abilities failing in life. This is because they did not make proper use of their time and opportunities, but wasted them in idleness. Their abilities thus got rusted and hence became useless. So it is a person that makes or mar his/her life. It is mentionable that each man with his unique capabilities has the power to choose, that is the only thing that matters for achieving everything. Life is tough for those who think it is tough. There are some persons who might not want to change their job to a better one solely for the fear of adjustments they would have to make. The 'risk factor' is also the 'stopping factor'. So does it make human life stagnant? Does scientist will stop working on a miracle drug from the fear that it may not lead to perfect results? People who do not try do not usually get anywhere. Man has the inherent tendency of being manipulated by his own mind. So why not divert it into something useful. Manipulating one's own self to stay positive and be determined, to be hopeful and dream, to be brave and choose. God has given mankind the ability to desire and to long not in vain. If a man loses, it is not due to fate, it's just that he overlooked something small and significant. Even he forgot to do some important chore, or he did not work hard enough. Even a building can not stand perfectly if some bricks are not in the right place. All the intellectuals and successful people in the world are the same as others; it's only what they choose to become that made them different. Bill Cullen for example, is among the top 50 wealthiest and most successful persons of Ireland. He started from selling apples on a cart when he was a boy. But he had positive attitude, the will power and sheer determination to create his own future. He now runs his own company and is the founder of the national youth foundation of Ireland. All in all, every man reaps the results of his own actions. If he is achieve, he will be rewarded for his activity and if he is idle, he will have to suffer for his idleness. Besides, man is superior because only he can create his own destiny. He is the planner of his own future unlike any other being, this being is the greatest blessing for him. No one can think for him, no one can work for him, no one can dream for him and no one can turn those dreams into reality for him. Only he can for himself and only he can do it.

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