

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



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### Kabul Air Pollution: Causes and Socio-Economic Costs

Environmental pollution is one of the human made phenomena that has existed for centuries but only started to be significant following the industrial revolution in 19th century. When the natural environment cannot destroy an element without creating harm or damage to itself, pollution occurs. Indeed, elements involved are not produced by nature, and the destroying process can vary from a few days to thousands of years. Pollution is not a phenomenon that only exists in the industrial countries; in other words, it a critical problem both in the developed and developing countries.

#### Kabul as one of the most polluted world's cities

Air pollution is one of the biggest challenges and hazards that the people are facing in Kabul. Every day, a pall of smog and dust hangs over Kabul's streets. It clings to the face, disturbs the breathing, burns the eyes, and stains the hands of the Kabul citizens. Some health experts believe that, the biggest killer in Kabul is not the terrorist attacks, but air pollution. Air pollution causes many diseases including respiratory diseases, allergies, miscarriages, dumbness and even cancer. The findings of a research published in the Psychological Science showed that Stress and anxiety caused by living in areas with high levels of damaging particulate matter were linked to a rise in violent crimes, robbery and burglary. According to the findings of this study, air pollution not only corrupted people's health, but also could contaminate their morality. The psychological experience of air pollution could increase anxiety, which in turn people's tendency to behave unethically would increase. In terms of economic costs, air pollution costs the global economy more than \$5 trillion annually in welfare costs, with the most devastating damage occurring in the developing world, according to a World Bank report. The welfare figure incorporates a number of costs associated with air pollution like health and consumption.

#### Steps taken to fight air pollution in Kabul

On the legislative side, the Government, with the technical assistance of UNEP, has developed an environmental law with very clear articles on air pollution. According to NEPA, the use of wood and coal has dramatically decreased as a result of the legislation and related efforts, with one notable development being that most bakeries in Kabul have switched from wood to natural gas for their ovens.

#### Steps needed to be taken to fight air pollution in Kabul

In addition to the above mentioned efforts, the Government must devise better public transport and encourage the private sector to invest. Furthermore, the brick kilns and other industries within and outside the vicinity of Kabul city are very dangerous for the city's air.

The road to a cleaner, greener Kabul is not a short one, and it reflects the broader problem as Afghanistan grows. It might produce dangerous consequences if not given proper attention. Therefore, the government must develop and implement a comprehensive environmental management program to curb air pollution in Kabul and prevent further air pollution increase due to the significant rise in the number of people moving to Kabul. Among other concerns, the socio-economic costs of the air pollution are more alarming than other air pollution concerns. Last but not least, no single institution could meet the challenge alone and it requires collective efforts to manage the issue.



### AFGHANISTAN: Way Forward (Part 2)

By Mohammed Gul Sahibzada

**P**ROSPERITY: Institutional & Political: - Afghanistan has the road map and preliminary infrastructure for bringing up a political and institutional system in place. The constitution of Afghanistan, which is passed and ratified by the country's first parliament, is in place. This was the first milestone towards stability and progress. Parliaments (upper and lower houses) are in place in accordance with the constitution. So far two successful parliamentary elections have taken place whereby people across the country elected their representatives. Though shortcomings in the process still remain, but as I said, the preliminary infrastructure is in place. Judiciary is a disappointment, but the efforts of international community and civil society is focusing on this third and important pillar of state power house to bring improvement to purge it from rampant corruption. Only a clean and independent judiciary can deliver justice and bring improvement in the governing system of a country. Educational institutions have taken big strides during the last decade, with many private institutions operating in the country. Though the quality of the education needs huge improvement and attention, the fact that thousands of school-graduates have opportunities to attend Universities is a great deal of achievement. Thousands of schools have been built since the US and international community intervened in Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era. Unprecedented number of boys and girls are attending schools since last ten years - though challenges are rampant in areas where girls' education is concerned, owing to the conservative nature of Afghan society, but the fact remains that more than 7 million children - including girls and boys - are attending schools across the country. This will have very positive effect on Afghanistan's future as educated masses are the main contributors to the political and economic stability and development of a country. In addition to these, Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) are more visible in recent years. Their numbers have grown to more than 300,000 for ANA and more than 150,000 for ANP. Though there is a need to purge these two institutions from political influence, insurgents and other irregularities, the fact that Afghan Army and Afghan police exist in such a large number is encouraging. Strong political leadership and statesmanship is required to instill the spirit of unity, oneness and service for the mother land in these institutions. This will come soon as Afghanistan will witness another election early in 2014 where masses will freely elect a leadership that is much aware of the ills and short-falls of the current system. It is only proper management of resources, selfless services and sacrifice by senior government leadership that is required to bring direction and organizational stability in all the institutions mentioned above.

While main emphasis should continue to be placed on fostering democracy with focus on strengthening democratic institutions and civil society, the new Afghanistan government should set forth policies to build inclusive state institutions that should be designed around good governance, with the main objective of serving the people and to remain neutral throughout the phases of future course of events in the country. Institutions are playing defining roles in the uplift or down turn of a nation. Extractive institutions, which are the root causes of all the evils in a nation - including poverty, economic disparity, political debacle and continued misshape of a country, should be avoided at all costs. Extractive institutions are those who deprive and take away resources and opportunities from certain subset of a society to benefit the other subset of a society. Examples are North Korea, some South American nations and other undemocratic governments. Inclusive institutions are those that support democratic practices, equally distribute resources and supports talents and entrepreneurship. Example of countries where inclusive institutions were built include South Korea, North America (USA) and Japan. Therefore, the new government in Afghanistan should exercise great care to prevent institutions drifting towards serving personalities rather than serving the greater masses of the society.

Political prospect is positive as well. The constitution of Afghanistan allows political parties to register. More than 100 political parties are currently registered in Afghanistan, and most of them are active among the masses. Though Afghanistan does not have main stream political parties that can leave its scar

in general elections at this point in time, I foresee a time when main political parties will be operating in Afghan society very soon. During the last two elections, only individuals have participated in the presidential elections and parliamentary elections. No party based elections have so far been carried out. But as institutions are stabilized, educated representatives of the people take the helm of affairs in Afghanistan, improvement will follow.

As mentioned before, Afghanistan has witnessed her most stable political era during the reign of Mosaheban. But realities on the ground 70 years ago were different than those prevailing today. In those times, Afghanistan had organized tribal structure. The tribal chieftains had immense power and people of the same tribes would follow their chiefs' orders. Thus, organized and compact cluster of population existed headed by a single head or a team of elders in various regions in the country, which made it very easy for the political establishment to reach a deal with them and the central government in Kabul. During the reign of Mosaheban, Kabul government did not interfere with the centuries old traditions and cultures prevailing across the country. Afghanistan's restive areas were left to carry on daily life based on local traditional mechanism. But as the central government in Kabul became stronger, the belt of state run apparatus was extended to the most remote provinces across the country. Tribal values were slowly replaced with the central government rules and regulations. But these changes were brought slowly in order to avoid disturbances. Even though the government was much stronger during the 70s, the main political mechanisms such as Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) still reign supreme.

After the invasion of the Soviet red army of Afghanistan, and the establishment of socialist government in the country followed by fierce campaign of the Jihadi organizations against the Kabul regime and their mentor - ex-USSR army in the country - the organized tribal structure that existed before these historic events were literally obliterated. Young Afghans from different tribes became affiliated with Jihadi organizations under leaders other than their tribal chiefs. This process had slowly blurred the lines of tribal divisions and the mechanism of decision making. With the appearance of Taliban in the political scene of Afghanistan, further blows were meted out to these traditional, centuries old tribal system in the country. At present times, we cannot count on the validity of political decisions, deals and agreements under a tribal system that once existed. Therefore, the focus should be made on building the state institutions and mechanisms whereby rule of law and enforcement of state constitution across the country is achieved.

It is critically important - both for Afghans and international community - to support very competent leaders in the upcoming presidential elections. The stakes are high for both international community and Afghanistan in a sense that at this time of lack of resources due to ongoing austerity measures in Europe in particular and the recession in the whole world in general taking chance would be equal to political and diplomatic suicide in Afghanistan. We need serious changes to take place in the leadership of the country. Afghanistan needs a strong, selfless and competent leadership to bring tangible changes. A process of reconciliation should start with Afghanistan's neighbors now. Especially Pakistan and India should be convinced that Afghanistan will not be used against them in any future set up. Both countries' interests should be guaranteed. In addition, Iran and the central Asian neighbors - including Russia - should be kept in to confidence. Afghanistan cannot afford animosity with any of its neighbor. We should push the process of reconciliation. The ability of our nascent institutions is not strong enough to declare open war against any of our neighbor. Afghanistan is historically located in a region where countries neighboring Afghanistan continue to practice foreign policy akin to medieval Europe where 'thy neighbor-beggar' was the signature foreign policy. Afghans did not choose their neighbors, and have to find ways to ensure positive relations with all the neighbors plus the superpowers - including other stakeholders - in order to achieve lasting peace. Continuation of hostility and warfare is not in the interest of anyone. It will continue to bring instability in the region, economic deprivation for the people of this region and overall waste of resources - hostilities and loss of life of ordinary civilians.

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### President Ghani Meets New US Commander at Presidential Palace

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

**P**resident Mohammad Ashraf Ghani met with US General Austin Scott Miller just after he took over the command of US Forces-Afghanistan and of Operation Resolute Support from previous commander, General John "Mick" Nicholson on Sunday at a ceremony in Kabul, quoted from Ghani's office said in a statement. At the meeting, Ghani "thanked Gen Miller for taking the responsibility and wish him success," the statement read adding that Ghani and Miller both discussed priorities of the Afghan security and defence forces and also the US strategy for South Asia and Afghanistan. The change of command ceremony was held in Kabul on Sunday and attended by high-ranking officials from the Afghan government, including Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak and National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib. Other VIP guests including the head of UNAMA, Tadamichi Yamamoto, along with ambassadors and other dignitaries.

During The command change ceremony, Miller said NATO partners and Afghan partners have sacrificed much over the past 17 years - he commended all NATO commanders for the work they have done. Miller said that the world is committed that Afghanistan will never return to being a safe haven for terrorists. "The world recognizes Afghanistan cannot be a safe haven for terrorism. The world recognizes we cannot fail. I know this has been a long fight and it has been generation; for us, for the Afghan people, I understand the reason we are fighting and I know why we are here and I know terrorists seeks safe haven to export more murder, attack the innocent and threaten everybody's way of life," said Miller.

According to Miller, there are still groups in Afghanistan who want to export only murder and to inspire attacks to threaten the entire world. He said that the US and the international community will help Afghanistan to maintain pressure on these groups to ensure that they never use Afghanistan as sanctuary for their activities.

"There are groups in Afghanistan who want nothing more than to harm others. These groups thrive in ungoverned spaces, General Nicholson mentioned, the war spilled over to the rest of the world, they raise money, they recruit, they plan, they inspire attacks, we must maintain pressure on them. We must ensure terrorists can never use Afghanistan as a safe haven to threaten the world," added Miller.

Meanwhile, the Afghan government has praised the achievements of General John "Mick" Nicholson who commanded the Resolute Support Mission for two and a half years in Afghanistan. At beginning of his mission, Gen. Nicholson called the year 2017 the end of Daesh group's activities in Afghanistan and promised to bring the Taliban group to the negotiation table. However, there is less optimism among the Afghan Political Analysts for his achievements against Daesh and Taliban. Political rivalries have

caused more attention to be paid to the North. The enemies are moving forward and becoming stronger in the north, and they are not believed to end the American war," Abdul Wadod Paiman, representative of Kunduz at the Lower House said.

According to General John "Mick" Nicholson the Donald Trump strategy in Afghanistan was successful. During this during strategy, some the groups were unprecedentedly suppressed by dropping thousands of large bombs and, thus they could not maintain their occupied provinces such as Ghazni, the most strategic city of the country. Accordingly, the bed for peace talks is readier than any time before. On the other hand, the united states have put more pressure on Pakistan during his mission and the latest case was the cancellation of 300\$ million aid to Pakistan asking to stop supporting Taliban and Haqqani network.

It seemed that the air bombardment of terrorist hideouts was the greatest policy of the American four-star general. This was the first time when they used the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB), known as 'the mother of all bombs', in a military action in the province of Nangarhar, near the border with Pakistan, to destroy tunnels and members of the terrorist Islamic State. Also, For the first time in 2017, nearly four thousand bombs were thrown on terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan under Nicholson's command which the "Mother of All Bombs" on Daesh safe havens was the biggest one.

The Taliban's drug factories were also targeted by the bombs; NATO claimed to inflict millions of dollars losses to the group with destroying the factories. "Afghan security forces were highly trained and learned better fighting skills during Nicholson's mission. We appreciate his consultations and performances for the Afghan government," Ghafoor Jawid, the spokesman of Defense Ministry asserted. Thus, Afghan air forces owned Black Hawk helicopters during the two years of Nicholson's mission.

Currently there are 16,000 US troops in Afghanistan supposed for training and education tasks. The troops are also carrying out operations on the ground and are 'collaborating' in the confrontation with insurgents and terrorists. However, the combat mission of the United States and its NATO allies in this Central Asian country were formally ended 2014; thereafter Taliban revived and restressed that Afghanistan will not have peace as long as foreign occupation continues and demanded direct negotiations with the United States to end the 17-year war, after NATO's invasion in October 2001, led by Washington. For many years, The Taliban have been demanding direct talks with the government of Donald Trump, rather than the Ghani executive, whom they regard as a Washington puppet' according to their own words.

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