

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



September 19, 2016

International Day for Preservation of Ozone

September 16th was celebrated world-wide as the International Day for the Preservation of Ozone Layer. The day was first proclaimed by UN General Assembly in 1994, while commemorating the date of the signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer - 1987. The chief purpose of celebrating the Day is to spread consciousness about the depletion of Ozone Layer and, simultaneously, to highlight the different ways of preserving it.

This year the theme of the day was, 'Ozone and Climate: Restored by a World United', and it recognized the collective efforts of the parties to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol towards the restoration of the ozone layer over the past three decades and the global commitment to combat climate change.

Ozone layer is very important for the life on earth. It is a protective layer in Earth's stratosphere that functions as a shield and protects earth from the ultraviolet (UV) radiation. UV radiation is very much harmful for living tissues; therefore, without Ozone layer earth will be left open to these rays and ultimately all types of life on earth will be greatly influenced.

Unfortunately, the Ozone layer is being depleted by harmful gases present in the environmental pollution that are released by different human inventions. If proper attention is not given there are fears that the life may be extinct on earth because of rampant pollution.

There is no doubt that the scientific inventions have blessed human beings with myriads of facilities; however, the improper use of these facilities and their mismanagement has brought them some evils, as well. These evils have the capacity to disturb our environment and introduce disorder within the ecosystem that is necessary for the life to exist on the planet earth. It is really important to note that the possibility of life to exist within the known universe is limited to the planet earth alone. The distance of the earth from the sun, its temperature and other physical conditions exist in such an ordered manner that life is guaranteed here. Moreover, the dependence of living beings on one another, their interactions and their reaction and influence over the environment have certain proportional arrangement, which is termed as eco-system by the scientists. If this eco-system is disturbed in some way or the other, the life is disturbed and the contaminants that are let loose by human beings in the environment has the capacity to disturb it greatly and has the capacity to endanger existence on earth.

Though from the very inception of human beings' civilized life, pollution has been influencing human beings, nonetheless, in today's world of ours, there has been extensive increase in it. With the industrial revolution, the release of pollutants within the natural environment has kept on increasing. There are some important concerns that most of the environmental scientists believe should be pondered upon extensively.

The first one is the degradation of natural environment to the extent that can prove fatal for most of human beings. Already, the pollutants within the environment have been able to introduce different kinds of diseases in the living beings, which, if left unchecked, can go out of control. The other concern is regarding depletion of the Ozone layer and the overall warming up of the globe; this concept is known as "global warming". This concept suggests that with the increase in pollution, there will be considerable rise within the average temperature of the world that may, at maximum, result in the liquefying of the glaciers on the poles and may drown the whole world. Moreover, considerable rise in temperature may disturb the conditions of living on earth and may disrupt the eco-system and jeopardize the existence.

The need of time is to save the earth and life by adopting appropriate policies. Any effort in this regard needs to be two-dimensional. Firstly, every individual must feel his/her responsibility towards the earth and must make sure that he/she does not become a reckless being and must prove helpful for the environment. However, extensive awareness programs in this regard can be really helpful.

Secondly, there have to be efforts on national level as well. The governments in different countries can adopt strict laws regarding the safeguard of the environment and can make sure that different industries and enterprises adopt atmosphere-friendly attitude.

Some of the thinkers suggest that the issues that are raised regarding the depletion of the Ozone layer or global warming are not international issues and they are over-emphasized so that the attentions of the people should be diverted from the basic problems of the society and they become easily governable.

Such views have their importance but taking care of environment must never be neglected. There can be changes in the way the issue is treated but it cannot be neglected altogether. For example, the developed countries of the world can be made more responsible for solving the issue, while the other nations can deal with their basic issues. Moreover, there can be different ways of celebrating the days dedicated to Ozone, earth or environment. One of the ways is to celebrate these days in such a manner so as to highlight the importance of the environment and make the people realize to go against the factors that can harm it.



The Outcome of Historical Sacrifices

By Hujjatullah Zia

Establishing a nascent democratic system in Afghanistan has been a pyrrhic victory for the nation as streams of blood were spilled and the rights and liberty of the public were violated within the past regimes. Throughout the historical ups and downs, Afghans suffered outrageous acts of violence and bloodshed for revealing tendency towards freedom. The kings, with few exceptions, hampered the reformation, liberal or democratic movements and educational activities of the people and sought to keep them in dark.

Despite all despotic practices, it is believed that the seeds of democracy were sowed during the past regimes. Although the succession to the throne was either through inheritance, military coup or religious charisma in Afghanistan, one cannot deny the positive role of some emirs/kings, who cherished faith and patriotic feelings.

Emir Shir Ali Khan, who succeeded his father Emir Doost Muhammad Khan as Afghanistan's king in 1863, played a constructive role in the country. Coming to the throne at the age of 41, he had to deal with civil unrest and the conflicts between the feudal and the working class on one hand and with the British Empire - which had India under its colony and posed threat to his territory - on the other hand. After all, the tribal elders (Khans) also spearheaded sporadic attacks against the central power and there was a serious competition for gaining the throne among the multi-dynastic nation. Shir Ali's brothers, who served as provincial governors of large cities, also sought the opportunity to gain the power.

Syed Jamaluddin Afghan, who was born in Kunar in 1838, joined his regime to lead the reformation. However, the political tensions and civil unrests left no room for his thoughts and plans. He offered his reforming program to Shir Ali, who promised to implement it, and left the country based on the king's demand. Shir Ali engaged in reformation for a decade and developed the country culturally and economically. Two schools were established and the first popular magazine "Shams-al-Nahar" was initiated, military bases were founded and foreign trainers and teachers were employed for military trainings. He also alleviated the farmers' financial pressures through agricultural developments.

Shir Ali formed a cabinet in 1874 to have his ministers' suggestions in political issues. In addition, he pioneered conducting Loya Jirga (National Grand Assembly) in 1865 which was attended by 2000 representatives and tribal leaders to decide about his policy towards his brothers, Sardar Amin Khan and Muhammad Sharif Khan, who were opposed to his kingdom. He strengthened the military and established weapon-making factories in the country.

Emir had a peaceful foreign policy and sought to maintain Af-

ghanistan's territorial integrity rather than extending the realm of his kingdom. However, the British Empire continued its "forward policy" through occupying Herat and Kandahar which triggered a bloody war between Afghan nation and British forces (though they were defeated by Afghans years back and withdrew from Kabul on January 1842). Unlike his father, Emir Shir Ali Khan denied to sign any contracts with the British forces and be subject to their demands. Being overactive, the foreign intelligence spilled its venom in Afghanistan's internal issues and acted upon the "divide and rule" policy.

In spite of all the challenges, history witnessed glorious victories of Afghan nation in bloody battles against foreign colonization. Despite being deprived of very basic weapons versus the world's super powers, Afghan people fought with high morale and strong faith to protect their rights and dignity and safeguard the territorial integrity. Although they sustained great loss and made countless sacrifices, they never hesitated in defending their national values and cultural norms - these all nurtured the spirit of freedom and democracy in the country.

The ebb and flow of democracy during different regimes is an undeniable fact. For instance, as Shir Ali sowed the seeds of democracy, his son and successor Emir Muhammad Yaqob Khan repressed democratic movements and led an inglorious reign. To the unmitigated chagrin of the public, he blemished the holy war of Afghan nation and ruined the outcome of years of sacrifices.

Democracy was supported by one emir and weakened by the next. If we compare the regimes of Abdul Rahman Khan and Amanullah Khan, the first Emir reigned the country with full dictatorship and spilled the blood of large number of people in one way or another. He also discriminated the individuals on the grounds of their race, color and creed whereas Amanullah Khan upheld democratic movements, put an end to slavery and liberated the country from the chains of colonization and cruelty. Amanullah strengthened national unity and protected nation's rights and liberty in the best way. He advocated liberal mindsets and educational and cultural activities and dreamed of establishing a democratic Afghanistan. Since democratic administration is a widely accepted type of government which ensures citizens' rights and freedoms and nurtures peace and stability, the world will have to institutionalize it. Moreover, democracy, which upholds tolerance and liberal mindsets, is believed to strengthen not only national stability but also international peace. Liberalism is the intellectual basis of democracy and it puts an especial emphasis on individuals' liberty. Therefore, the state must support the inchoate democracy in the country through combating terrorism and uprooting barriers or else the national sacrifices made in this regard, throughout the history, will be faded away.

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Incessant Criticism of Ex-President on Arbitrary Attacks

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has sharply criticized new authorities giving the U.S. military greater freedom to fight Taliban insurgents, saying they were a further erosion of the country's sovereignty. Karzai, who continues to exert considerable behind-the-scenes influence on Afghan politics, also called on the Islamist militant movement to be more realistic in demands that have hampered progress in peace talks. His comments on American involvement in the war were at odds with the National Unity Government, which has welcomed U.S. political and military support. "How could the U.S. president authorize U.S. troops to launch attacks on their own in Afghanistan?" Karzai said, referring to Barack Obama's June decision to alter the rules of engagement for the American military. "Don't we have a government here? Aren't we a sovereign country?"

The new authorities, who U.S. officials say were agreed with the Afghan government, affect ground operations where U.S. troops provide support to Afghan forces as well as air combat, and Karzai has long been critical of U.S. air strikes in Afghanistan, be they by fighter jets, helicopters or drones. He would ban them altogether, even though the Afghan armed forces, struggling to contain the insurgency, say they could not cope without support from the skies and want more. The former leader's opposition reflects broader unease among Afghans who believe innocent people have been killed in air attacks targeting militants, unease that may grow with new powers granted to the U.S. military. The U.S. says its air strikes support Afghan operations and it takes extreme care to avoid civilian casualties, despite incidents such as the bombing of a Medicines Sans Frontiers hospital in Kunduz last year in which 42 people died. Calling Afghanistan the victim of a 21st century version of the "Great Game" between competing powers on the 19th century borders of British India, Karzai blamed the United States and Pakistan for "a war that is not ours".

However, he added that he wanted to reshape the partnership between Kabul and Washington, not end an alliance which brought him to power over a decade ago and still ensures billions of dollars in aid and military support each year. "I want to be allies with the United States, I want to be partners with the United States," he said. "But it must be a partnership, not a master-and-slave relationship." "We must remain the owners of this house, the United States of America, a guest."

As for the Taliban, he saw little change in tactics since the death of former leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in a U.S. drone strike in May. He appealed to the Taliban "as fellow Afghans to recognize that this is their country" and to break free of the influence of Pakistan, which despite frequent denials, is blamed by Afghanistan for supporting the insurgency. "I would call on the Taliban to be free from foreign influence - in this case Pakistan, the Pakistan intel-

ligence and military," Karzai said. He added that they had to be more realistic in their demands to make peace talks possible. "When they say that foreign forces must leave first and then we will talk, then I tell them that if they keep waiting for that, a lot of Afghan blood will be shed," he said.

Despite suspicions among some close sources to the government that he wants to destabilize president Ghani, Karzai said he expected the U.S.-backed government to serve its full five-year term. This is even though parliamentary elections and a special "loya jirga", or gathering of Afghan leaders and elders, have not materialized as scheduled within the first two years. "The government should know that no one is going to ask them to go away. We want them to complete their term, we want them to complete the five years," he said. "But the country needs a voice, the country needs to regain its confidence." To do that, he called for a loya jirga. "The loya jirga is an expression of authority of the Afghan people. Things must return to the ownership of the Afghan people," said Karzai, who has a deep network of political connections throughout the country. "It's an institution for a time of crisis and we are in crisis." The 58-year-old dismissed suggestions that such a gathering, including opponents and allies of the government, could undermine stability and weaken an administration that has struggled to overcome internal rivalries. Adding to the challenges, the Taliban have stepped up their insurgency, while thousands of young people, unable to find work, prefer to risk a perilous journey to seek a better life in Europe.

Since his presidential retirement in 2014, Karzai never disappeared from political life. He remains influential, receiving throngs of visitors, including foreign ambassadors, at his central Kabul office. Some see his vocal presence in the fringes as undermining the government. Karzai himself denied exerting pressure on the government "yet", without elaborating on what that implied. Many think Karzai is hardly blameless himself. Corruption is arguably the biggest ill tormenting Afghanistan, undermining its security forces and spurring public support for the Taliban. The corruption, while bankrolled largely by the inflow of foreign funds, was allowed to flourish under Karzai administration, and has so far proven impossible to curtail. But western corruption allegations are out of proportion, Karzai had retorted previously. Daily corruption in Afghanistan is comparable to other weak states, while large scale corruption "is a direct result of the US approach to Afghanistan, and the way they issued contracts", he had said. "NATO has been here for 14 years," he said, adding that foreign forces are fighting for the same districts as they were when they had 150,000 troops. "Are we better off? Do we have more security? No. "It means something is wrong. The way things are done, it has been in vain for us."

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