

6/26/07 BBC Monitoring S. Asia 00:00:00

BBC International Reports (South Asia)  
Copyright 2007 BBC Monitoring Service

June 26, 2007

Afghan paper blames corruption, insecurity for lack of investment

Text of article by Abbasi in Pashto entitled "Do not lie; improve yourself" by Afghan newspaper Mojahed on 23 June

An international conference by the name of Appropriate Environment for Investment was held in Kabul on 4 to 5 May.

President Hamed Karzai and Karim Agha Khan addressed the conference and the Malaysian prime minister, through his video message to the conference, promised to contribute to the growth of the private sector in Afghanistan.

This conference was held at a time when waves of insecurity are surging all around. The holding of such conferences in such a situation is considered as an effort to deceive the public opinion which is common in politics. Here, I quote an analyst to further clarify the matter: "Except causing traffic jam in Kabul and exerting negative impact on the ordinary people's life, such conferences do not have any other result, let alone the fact that they are very expensive. Whatever matters discussed in such conference are only on-the-paper plans and are by no means applicable considering the current situation of Afghanistan. Actually there are no opportunities for the growth of the private sector in the country. The government has been and is still claiming that it supports investment in the private sector. But it is an obvious fact that investors are afraid even in the presence of the security forces in Kabul since some of them have been kidnapped and others have been intimidated.

We have witnessed armed robberies in broad daylight by those wearing police uniform but none of them has yet been arrested."

In view of the above, the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency [AISA] has also expressed concerns over the status of investment in private sector adding that the level of investments in the private sector has fallen due to the volatile security situation.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Commerce complained about the AISA a few days ago and asserted that the said agency did not have any coordination with them and that such approach by the AISA had given birth to a number of problems.

The analyst added: "This conference was held at a time when the truck drivers, who bring merchandize from Pakistan, had gone on a strike to **protest** against the security forces who allegedly charged them for no reason along the way. Although the government had given promises several times to resolve their problems, but none of the promises were ever fulfilled. This shows that it is not only the armed opponents who hamper the growth of investment the security system and some individuals in the law enforcement also give rise to economic instability and frustrate investors.

On the way from Torkham to Kabul, drivers are to pay at every check post they pass. This is not the problem of the Torkham Kabul road alone. The same is happening on other roads to Kabul too." Even Kabul gates are allegedly leased out for millions of afghanis [currency] by the authorities monthly to security officers who want to work there.

In early 1990s, Zardad Fariadi [Islamic Party commander imprisoned in the UK] was charging illegal tax on transport vehicles at Strobe [east of Kabul]. Now the same tax is collected by security officers who say they share the money with high-ranking government officials.

At least Britain was fair enough to imprison Zardad on charges of human rights violations and soothed the victims of his cruelty. The Afghan government has never asked a check post officer as to why they harass ordinary people.

What the traders than do is to add the money they pay as checkpoint taxes to the price of their merchandize making the poor to bear a heavy economic burden.

It is a must for the government, which considers itself as the representative of the nation and makes various promises, to remove all these problems. Before criticizing the armed opponents of the government, government officials themselves need to improve and do not impede the investment in the private sector.

At the end, I might as well say the government should contribute to ensure stability by reconciling with all opponents and improve the administrations so that ideal conditions are paved for investment. Otherwise, nothing will change by holding conferences alone.

Source: Mojahed, Kabul, in Pashto 23 Jun 07

BBC Mon SA1 SASPol mn/es

----- INDEX REFERENCES -----

COMPANY: AUTOMOTRIZ INTERNACIONAL SA DE CV; UK

NEWS SUBJECT: (Government (1GO80))

REGION: (Afghanistan (1AF45); Western Asia (1WE54); Asia (1AS61))

Language: EN

OTHER INDEXING: (AFGHANISTAN INVESTMENT SUPPORT AGENCY; AISA; BBC MON; MINISTRY OF  
COMMERCE; UK) (Hamed Karzai; Karim Agha Khan) (AFGHANISTAN)

KEYWORDS: AFGHAN; ECONOMY 2

Word Count: 843

6/26/07 BBC-STHASIA 00:00:00

END OF DOCUMENT