

## SAARC Conference to Tackle Coronavirus



Coronavirus outbreak was first identified in Wuhan State of China and as it has turned into a global pandemic, the outbreak has become an immense challenge for countries. The virus has attracted significant attention after it caused numerous deaths in Italy. The South Asian Association for regional cooperation (SAARC), therefore, held a video conference on 15th March, 2020. The conference, which included Afghanistan and other SAARC members, was conducted to formulate a joint strategy to protect citizens of the region from Covid-19 and ideas were shared to establish coordinated efforts to tackle the outbreak. Here, we analyze efforts made by the international community to fight coronavirus, likelihood of international aids to be offered to developing countries like Afghanistan, and the possibility of implementation of recommended strategies by SAARC countries to fight Covid-19.

### Latest updates about Coronavirus outbreak

Covid-19 killed more than 3000 people after the first outbreak of the virus and caused substantial economic losses to China and all those countries which are in business with China. The virus decimated Italy in Europe and Iran in Asia. According to the latest reports, the virus has killed more than 4000 people and affect over 49,000 in Italy. Besides economic problems and pressures by the US,



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Coronavirus is another great challenge for Iran, which has killed more than 1000 people and affected thousands. As Covid-19 is rapidly spreading in numerous countries, insensitivity of the international community regarding Coronavirus in Iran can vastly affect neighboring countries.

**Accomplishments of the International community about Coronavirus**

After some comprehensive efforts and determination, China was able prevent Coronavirus from spreading in the country. Based on latest updates, number of daily infections has been decreasing significantly, which indicates China’s success against coronavirus.

On the other hand, Japan was able to produce a replica of the virus. According to their doctors, the achievement can help to control and prevent coronavirus. Whereas American experts strives to produce a vaccine to fight Covid-19.

In addition, many countries have banned all types of travels to prevent coronavirus from spreading. Lately, Pakistan closed its borders with Afghanistan and other countries as a precaution. Russia has banned all types of travels to the country. Likewise, Europeans and Arab countries have also banned travels.

To combat Coronavirus, Jack Ma, Co-founder of Alibaba online commerce company has instigated his humanitarian aids and has donated generously to countries which are suffering from the virus. Recently, his foundation donated masks and kits to Afghanistan and some other Asian countries. His efforts should motivate Afghan businessmen to assist the Afghan nation during the current crisis and expand their humanitarian efforts. The rich class needs to assist the lower class during difficulties and sufferings.

China donated masks and medical equipment to Italy and other countries and assured that the country will share its experience and achievements with other countries. In addition, Russia has also announced aids to fight Coronavirus in Italy. Such efforts can be effective to prevent coronavirus transmission.

**SAARC Conference on Coronavirus**

South Asia Association of Regional coordination (SAARC) announced its



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coordinated efforts and joint strategy to curb the spread of Covid-19 during its latest conference. Narindra Modi, Prime Minister of India, Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan and other regional leaders were among the participants of the video conference. During his speech in the conference, Ashraf Ghani stated that unplanned drive out of Afghan immigrants from Iran has become a great challenge for Afghanistan and will definitely trigger virus spread in the country. He also welcomed travel prohibitions, as it is a compulsion of the circumstances. However, necessary supplies and medicine must not be hindered.

SAARC Countries comprise around 21% of the world population. Apparently, their stance against Covid-19 and the recent video conference, where leaders of SAARC Nations shared their views and recommendation, was an important step against corona spread. Among SAARC Countries, India is technologically more advanced and its research and scientific achievements can assist countries to fight coronavirus. SAARC countries are required to not only share their experiences and discoveries, but need to pursue Prime Minister Modi's recommendation of provision of emergency fund. India announced 10 Million USD and Afghanistan and Maldives contributed 1.2 Million USD to the emergency fund. However, the fund is little, considering the covid-19 crisis. In Europe, only England has allocated 40 Billion and the US has allocated 50 Billion to combat coronavirus.

In addition to funds allocation, SAARC Nations must pressure Iran to stop Afghan immigrants' displacement. It has been reported that Afghan refugees are intentionally kept away from medical assistance services. International organizations for immigrants need to make efforts in order for a humane behavior to occur against refugees in Iran, and unplanned drive out can be prevented. This is because coronavirus has widely spread in Iran and refugees drive out can severely affect Afghanistan and surrounding countries.

In order to fight coronavirus, the Afghan government needs to attract the aids of china and other donor countries before coronavirus spread becomes severe. The political leaders are required to avoid any dissensions so that our country can be protected during the global crisis. This is because Afghanistan has been affected by the covid-19, and if precautions are not taken, Afghanistan will be decimated by the virus like Italy.



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Countries of the region and the Afghan nation must take coronavirus seriously and solemnly consider the guidance and preventive measures of medical establishments. SAARC countries should also share their experience and discoveries among each other. This is because insensitivity regarding the pandemic can rigorously affect all countries in the region and its deprived people. On the other hand, member countries must vastly expand their humanitarian aids during the crisis. According to WHO, Afghanistan lacks around 3.5 Million USD and does not possess the necessary equipment and supplies to combat Covid-19. With support of SAARC nations, WHO and other humanitarian organization should be motivated to comprehensively assist Afghanistan to avoid austere unfortunate events in the future.

Additionally, the Afghan government and the Taliban must announce a comprehensive ceasefire in order to effectively combat coronavirus, since insecurity can challenge preventive measure taken by medical groups. SAARC should play a vital role to establish ceasefire between the Taliban and the Afghan government.



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## Afghan Education; Challenges and Solutions



### Part (1): Internal Challenges

Afghanistan is among the countries with the lowest literacy level, where it experiences major problems in various aspects, including education, which has had a significant negative impact on the development of the country. Despite significant progress in the educational area, its quality remains a main challenge. Schools do not have the required facilities, equipment, and quality. However, any positive change based on science can certainly be hopeful. If we imagine only one hope in the poisoned atmosphere of the country today, it is that the children of this land today are making exponential efforts to step forward in learning and making a bright future for the country.

Even though relative progress in recent years, Afghan education is still facing major challenges, which according to the Ministry of Education, it is estimated that the country's educated population does not exceed 42%. Thus, ten million Afghan citizens are illiterate, where the majority of these people are women, especially who live rural areas. This week's analysis focuses on the internal challenges of Afghan education.

### Dimensions of Internal Challenges to the education

There are many challenges facing the country's education that are highlighted



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here. Though promises have been made by the authorities to address these challenges, and even in some cases, measures have been taken, however, the Ministry of Education has a long way forward until it fully resolves existing political and economic challenges.

### **Weakness in Basics**

Every now and then, the lag behind in education is because students in the elementary class are not properly laid the foundation for their education. While they did not understand letters, wording and numbers correctly, they were considered qualified to upgrade to a higher class. Unfortunately, in Afghanistan education, most of the teachers who do not have sufficient experience are required to attend elementary classes. Elementary classes are, indeed, the basics for students.

Besides that, other reasons that may weaken basics of the students can include: learning disabilities that the teacher does not notice them due to student congestion, lack of confidence, or hatred for a teacher for whatever reason has arisen. Repeated absence of students from school, dense curriculum that causes pupils to misunderstand the lesson, and inappropriate environments that disrupt the lesson and reluctance of elementary students results in students to encounter problems in coming lessons and, thus, not to have interest in the studies.

### **Weakness in Teaching Method**

In every country, education is one of the most important social systems. Education creates the desired changes in cognition, attitudes and ultimately the behavior of children, adolescents and young people. Provided, of course, that appropriate practices are used in the field of education and that the students receive good teaching materials in a good way. Despite the progress of the international community in terms of teaching and learning of technology, our country is still using traditional and old methods. For example, math students all write from the right but read from the left. When they reach the upper levels they realize that math has to be written from the left. According to the current norm of education, there is one teacher for every 45 students, female students are less allowed to study, due to the lack of female teachers, the number of students is increasing year by year, and currently about 60 students in every class Are taught that reaching out to so many students is beyond the reach of the teacher. And another reason that we can say that there is a shortage of time, our school curriculum is 35 minutes, during which time the teacher has to evaluate and



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repeat the previous lesson, follow up with the class, explain the new lesson and revise the problems of the students regarding the new lesson.

### **Lack of Standard Curriculum**

Lack of standard textbooks leads to a decrease in the efficiency of nurturing education and the quality of the teaching courses. The textbooks of our country appear very complex. Students who are unfamiliar with the alphabet, while the elementary first grade textbooks are only reminded of it once, no matter if the students have learned the alphabet, the sentences appear. Students who have problems in the family due to problems have not been able to get education before going to school, teachers lack time and, according to their plans, cannot rotate too much, the student is confronted with large paragraphs, which confuses students' minds and ultimately causing them to skip lessons. Or that there are themes whose learning is not necessary for schoolchildren, such as elective, patriotic, and vocational ... while the themes that matter like Arabic appear without introductions in class 7 and end in class 9 again without reaching the goal. The lack of curriculum causes the content to be increased but the quality of assimilation in students is reduced.

### **Problems of Educational System**

The education system in the world is partial when students get to read, write and get an overview of all the topics they can then pursue in terms of their interest and talent in helping them reach their desired field and passing the specialized subjects and to help them become prepared for the Kankor (University Entrance Examination). But in our country, students have to pursue the themes of all disciplines without regard to their talents, and to excel in all of them in order to achieve a high degree. Next to it are some unfinished themes, such as the Arabic that goes into class 7 and then ends up in class 9.

### **Low Capacity of Teachers**

The majority of professional teachers have left the country or are engaged in other professions due to the low salaries and lack of attention to the basic needs of teachers. Or that they have forgotten it because of the long detachment from the teaching profession and that some have just come to terms with the existing corruption and nepotism and are engaged with the sacred profession of teaching. There may be times when a student knows the teacher better and the teacher does not understand the new method. The teaching method is one of the important





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issues because what the student aims at early on is the same as the one taught by the master. Most teachers are not particularly professional in remote areas and have not been given the opportunity to continue their education. Seminars are mostly poor quality and teachers have poor abilities and this makes teachers less interested and chasing seminars. In the current situation of the country, most of the goods have increased in price several times. One of the best classes in the teachers' community are the disorganized. How can a teacher whose life is not financially stable be able to educate our children properly?

### **Lack of Parents' Cooperation**

Some parents have children who are at an average or lower level of mental performance when it comes to education, and with the cooperation, effort and determination of a very small extent, they can reach to the level of other students; hence, one of the reasons for low quality of education in our country is illiteracy of parents. As a matter of fact, children who are not familiar with elementary education cannot go along with their parents from the course of education, lessons and supervision of the students, which leads to lower quality of education.

### **Economic Problems**

Majority of school students are both working and studying due to their low levels of economy, where they do not have focus later then. Both the teachers and the students who go into the class with a restless mind, it is, then, natural that they cannot handle their tasks well.

Overall, the challenges include: academic weakness of teachers, lack of communication between parents and school, lack of writing equipment, lack of motivation, lack of familiarity with learning methods, lack of drinking water, lack of content, lack of students' interest in learning and teachers' interest in teaching, considering one student's talent and ignoring others, having a view of racial discrimination against students, lack of discipline, and lack of a punishment and award system for student and teachers and etcetera. The various deficiencies in the education of the country have made the educational system encounter hindrances and its development process to be not taken seriously.



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## Announcement

Please be informed that CSRS will change its weekly analysis to biweekly from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 with better quality and content.

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**Note:** Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

