Compensation delayed

BY G H ULAM QADIR K H AN | 3/3/2020

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| IT has been a month since the traders of North Waziristan have been protesting in front of the KP Assembly, demanding compensation for losses incurred by businesses in Mirali and Miramshah during Operation Zarb-i-Azb.  Similarly, there has been a complete lockdown of all business activity in Miramshah, with people sitting outside the Miramshah Press Club protesting. Compensating their losses was agreed to by the government earlier. In May 2018, after exhausting all venues available to them, the traders of Mirali and Miramshah protested at the National Press Club, Islamabad, demanding compensation. Their sit-in at the press club ended peacefully after assurances given by the then DG ISPR.  It has been two years since their protests, yet their demands remain unresolved. Not only this, the provincial government is oblivious to their month-long sit-in. Practically no senior politician or high-ranking of ficial has met the protesting traders to listen to their grievances and at least give them some hope that their problems will be solved. It`s pertinent to know that there is an adviser to the chief minister for the tribal districts supposedly for this purpose.  Zarb-i-Azb is the hallmark of the cleansing of terrorist dens neither owned nor operated by the people of Miramshah and Mirali.  The destruction was so brutal that not a single building was left standing. Whatever was left of the buildings was brought down and the debris cleared so that no one had any idea of how much had been destroyed. A few well-designed plazas were built in a hurry to showcase Miramshah to outsiders.  People left their shops, godowns and houses with no time to collect their valuables or stored merchandise. When they were ultimately allowed to return, after spending years in camps or rented places, there was nothing lef t to return to. People just couldn`t believe their own government could do this to them. Fearing a backlash, the government promised to compensate them for their losses and haphazard surveys started coming up.  Different committees cropped up, all conducting surveys of losses. The survey committees came up with different reports; the administration in its wisdom accepted the report of one committee, while rejecting the rest. So the claims submitted to this committee, no matter how exaggerated, were accepted while those submitted to other committees were relegated to the dustbin.  There were people, especially government servants, who weren`t claiming any relief or support from the government. They weren`t included in any list of affectees.  There were those who were principally against the Watan Card and couldn`t visitWaziristan because they didn`t have one.  Then there were those who had different temporary and permanent addresses on their CNIC. All these people were left out from submitting their claims.  At present, a large number of claims of damaged houses have been paid but not all.  The government should have compensated for the homes first and then the businesses.  Without paying for all destroyed homes, payment to businesses is creating resentment.  Strong groups like petrol pump owners have taken up their cases separately. The government has agreed to pay for all their losses whereas others are being paid only the cost of structure. When or how much will the shopkeepers be paid for their merchandise is yet to be determined. Those whose land has been encroached upon by roads or buildings were to be paid for land compensation, the rates for which have yet to be determined.  The people of Miramshah and Mirali have suffered much. Making them suffer more will be unf air and might have consequences.  The funds are there, all the provincial government has to do is act swiftly and fairly.  All cases of residences need to be disposedof at the earliest so that one issue stands settled.  Lists of shops and markets need to be shared. There should not be any discrimination regarding payment for structure and merchandise. Thepolicy should be the same for all.  The chief secretary should play a more proactive role and take a decision the moment an irritant crops up. People who are still left out or those who submitted their claims but the of fice misplaced them should be allowed to resubmit their claims.  Technology should be employed, and every owner should show coordinates of his property to determine the extent of losses. War makes the noblest of its people the meanest.  The noble ones who behave honourably and leave government aid for the poorest also need support and should get what is rightfully theirs.  Waziristan has become a major issue in no time; Khargamar is an example.  Compensation is one point on which all tribes can unite and create trouble. Zarb-iAzb is a sad memory and the sooner we close this chapter the better it will be for all.  The writer is a former bureaucrat and author of Cheegha: The Call.  gqkhan57@yahoo.com |