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Will Afghans embrace lasting peace?

By Abdul Haleem

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Two consecutive suicide attacks and series of anti-government militants-related violent incidents during Eidul-Adha -- the Muslims' largest annual festival in Afghanistan have put into questions the prospect of the ongoing peace efforts in the militancy-plagued nation.

"I personally have lost my hope to see viable peace in my country. To be frank, the suicide attacks in the first and second day of Eidul Adha in Baghlan province have shuttered my hope for better future," Abdul Aziz, 53, told Xinhua.

A relatively peaceful province Baghlan, 160 km north of Afghan capital city Kabul, had experienced bloody attacks on the first and second days of Eidul Adha, since Nov. 6 this year.

In the first attack happened on Sunday when the worshipers were coming out from a mosque in Hasantal village, 20 km north of Baghlan's provincial capital Pul-e-Khumri, a suicide bomber blew himself up leaving seven people dead and injuring 17 others, mostly civilians, according to officials.

The second suicide attack took place a day later on Monday when a man strapped explosive device blew himself up in provincial capital Pul-e-Khumri killing himself and injuring six others including five police and a civilian.

According to religious leaders, Eidul Adha is the time for reconciliation, peace, unity and strengthening brotherhood among the Muslims.

"It is the time to forgive and reconcile with your brothers, visit their houses and boost brotherhood," a prayer leader Mawlawi Habibullah said in his sermon in a Kabul mosque on Sunday.

The bloody attacks in Baghlan province occurred amid government's efforts to achieve peace through dialogue with the Taliban outfit.

Taliban elusive supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar also in his message, released on the eve of Eidul Adha, had called upon his fighters to avoid harming civilians during military operations.

"The Mujahideen (holy warriors) have to take every step to protect the lives and wealth of ordinary people in accordance with their religious responsibility," Omar who has escaped the U.S.-led military campaign over the past decade said in the message.

Attacks in Baghlan on Eidul Adha holidays, is not alone the offensive that has claimed the lives of Afghans in the war-torn country.

Over a dozen people including six civilians, six militants and three policemen have also been killed in the violent incidents particularly in roadside bombings during Eidul Adha holidays elsewhere in Afghanistan, according to officials.

Although the officials are hopeful to achieve peace through negotiation with the Taliban, ordinary Afghans are skeptical.

"Likewise the present government, the past regimes had also strove hard to achieve peace through dialogue with the armed oppositions but all in vain and the ongoing peace efforts will be ended too in fiasco," a 58 years old retired army officer and serving taxi driver Karimullah Khan said.

Expressing his view with regard to the peace efforts, the dejected Khan said "anyone ruled Kabul over the past three decades had offered talks to the armed oppositions holding sway in the countryside but none has yielded the desired outcome. The undergoing peace efforts would bear no fruit."

The war-battered but peace-thirsty Afghans have fed up with the continued militancy. However, no sign of end in the conflict is visible in the near future as Taliban leader Mullah Omar in his message on the eve of Eidul Adha repeated his resolve for the continuation of Jihad or holy war till the pull out of NATO-led troops from Afghanistan, a condition unacceptable to both the international community and the Afghan government at the moment.