**Afghanistan**

**Rough Music in Kabul**

December 30, 2019

The Nation

Taliban’s attacks are rocking Afghanistan. The last week was a bloody one as the militants had intensified their attacks against the Afghan government and its officials. The recent surge in violent attacks can be seen as a part of strategy through which the militants want to gain the upper hand in the so-called direct talks. Nevertheless, one cannot make much sense of the latest surge in violence when only a few days back news of the Taliban agreeing to a ceasefire emerged. And only today, the group has announced that they are in favour of a weeklong ceasefire with the United States (US). Many believe the truce could pave the ground for concluding a long-anticipated agreement on the drawdown of foreign troops. While some experts think that the drawdown could jumpstart inter-Afghan dialogue, but the continuation of deadly attacks makes it a distant dream. Relying on violence can only tear the ruptured social fabric of society further apart.

In recent days, especially after Trump’s decision of resumption of talks, the Taliban’s excessive reliance on force to achieve their goals can prove deadly for the group’s objectives. Trump, as President, is well known for his political somersaults. He can once again halt the talks. As soon as finalizing a draft agreement nears, the opposition at home will increase for Trump’s deal with the Taliban. He can succumb to the pressure at home. But it seems that the Taliban leadership is neither taking that into account nor considering Trump’s mercurial nature. The Taliban’s violence suggests that the group has long forgotten the advice that all other stakeholders gave them after suspension of earlier talks. The callousness of the Taliban to gain maximum leverage over the Afghan government before inter-Afghan dialogue can make the whole peace process fall apart. The sensitivity of the time necessitates that all international stakeholders, who think of Taliban crucial to any future political settlement in Afghanistan, to advice the Taliban against their over-reliance on violence.