

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



August 25, 2016

Health Sector Requires More Attention

Health sector in Afghanistan has always faced difficulties. No proper attention has been dedicated to the sector and as a result many people suffer. One of the major issues in the sector is unavailability of medicine and the quality of available medicine. There have been many cases when the quality of different medicine in the country has found to be of ordinary standard and in certain cases they have even found to be expired. Unfortunately, there is no data to show how many lives it has cost.

Encouragingly, now the government has started taking some interest in this regard. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on Tuesday said that all required medicines for the public health and security sectors would be purchased from authentic national and international companies totally costing up to \$180 million annually.

Dr. Waheed Majrooh, the Public Health Ministry spokesman, told a press conference that based on a centralized medicine supply strategy approved by the High Economic Council on August 7, from now on all the needed medicine for the ministries of public health, higher education, defence and interior would be purchased under a transparent and accountable mechanism in order to ensure good quality and pave the way for domestic production of medicines.

He said the strategy had been formed with President Ashraf Ghani's directives for better management and organisation of the medicine market and to address concerns about corruption in the pharmaceutical sector and supply of poor quality medicine.

Majrooh said an initial survey by the Public Health Ministry showed 95 percent of medicine consumed in Afghanistan were imported from Pakistan, Iran, China, Turkey, India, the United Arab Emirates and some European countries. Of the medicine, 40 to 55 percent entered Afghanistan illegally and through smuggling.

The official said \$650 million were annually spent on purchasing medicines in Afghanistan, including \$180 million by the government.

Though this would not solve the issue of the people as a whole, but it would play an important role in bringing authentic medicine within the country. Moreover to uplift the standard of health facilities as a whole, a great deal of attention and dedication is required. There are many health cases that never reach to the doctor, and many patients cannot find enough number of doctors or hospitals in different parts of the country. It is really tragic to note that the number of people dying because of treatable diseases in our country is more than the people who die because of terrorists activities. Minor diseases that could be cured easily become a matter of life and death for the people because of unavailability of proper services. Our media and our concerned authorities mostly highlight the issue of terrorism and extremism but they fail to focus more attention on the issue that is more basic and more urgent. People mostly choose to go the neighboring countries for serious health problems. This may be convenient for the ones who are financially strong and they can afford, but the ones who cannot afford going other countries remain untreated and mostly neglected. It is really tragic for them as their own country cannot provide them even their basic rights. Though there are government hospitals as well in the country, the quality of services provided by government hospitals is really very low, their number is not sufficient and they are not established in most of the remote areas; therefore, most of the people do not have access to them. On the other hand private hospitals have been established that can, in no way, be afforded by the people who do not have enough money to pay for their food.

Such a scenario is really dreadful and there should be serious efforts to deal with the situation. Short-term projects will never solve the health issues in Afghanistan. Afghan government and the supporting nations must pursue long-term strategies to handle the issue, if they want to help the people of Afghanistan.

At the same time, corruption and loose control, regarding the quality of medicine that is sold to the common people, are responsible for further debilitating the health of the people instead of supporting them during their ill health.

Previously an investigations in this regard showed that though millions of dollars had been poured into the health sector, there were many Afghans who had their nearest health center at a distance of three days and unfortunately two-thirds of pharmacies did not have professional staff. Such a scenario is really dreadful and worth special attention; moreover, only lip service would do no good to change the scenario. Therefore, the authoritative people must take necessary measures and must curb the situation as the issue is very delicate and it is related to the lives of the people. Carelessness in this regard is a type of indirect murder.



Violence will Never Breed Peace

By Hujjatullah Zia

Imposing ideology with the barrel of gun will lead to violence and bloodshed. History shows that lack of religious tolerance and warped minds resulted in great destructions and human casualties. Followers of dogmatic schools of thoughts have constantly resorted to violence to force their mindsets upon a group or nation. They claimed to have adopted the right way and deemed others wrong. Their parochial views and deep-seated mentality left no room for exercising tolerance or nurturing the spirit of brotherhood.

In addition, claiming racial superiority has also taken its toll on human societies and played destructive role throughout the history. The world has suffered carnage and massacre on the grounds of racial and religious backgrounds. Men's megalomania and ethnocentric feelings were the main reasons behind international wars and civil unrests. Yielding to their lusts and desires, men humiliated their fellows and violated their rights and liberty - which triggered bloody wars and outraged human conscience.

Currently, terrorist networks, which blackmail the entire world, have originated from radical ideology. For instance, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group, which has surpassed many warring factions, is the product of fundamental seminaries that are changed into hotbed of radicalism. Martin Luther aptly says, "Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers."

Fundamental groups resort to violence with the intention of bringing peace. The irony is that spilling the blood of innocent individuals, trampling upon their rights and liberty and creating anomy through acts of terror leads to peace. During their regime in Afghanistan, the Taliban alleged that they would establish the divine law on the surface of earth. Therefore, they massacred a large number of people who resisted their dogmatic beliefs. Now, the question is that could they bring peace?

Peace will not be obtained through violence and radical ideology will not be implanted in the minds and hearts of people with the barrel of gun. Terrorist groups will inflict casualties upon nations as ever and fill the air with fear and horror but will never have a peaceful ending. It will create heart-wrenching

stories, destroy societies, lead the world to instability and "create bitterness".

Ill-fatedly, radical ideologues have exercised violent behaviors under sacred terms such as religion, moral standards and cultural values - as kings used to rule people under the same terms in the past and deemed themselves divine caliphs. The radicals claim to establish caliphate on the surface of earth and to strengthen religious tenets or ethical code while their ideology is void of humanity and moral values. They have marginalized human values from their practical life and succumbed to evils and mean desires.

To gain peace and prosperity, a nation needs to nurture pluralistic, if not secular, view and be tolerant towards the beliefs and practices of others. A society, where the rights, liberty and dignity of the people are valued, will enjoy security. In other words, peace is obtained when a nation does not claim religious preference or racial superiority and people do not violate the rights of one another, mainly of a minority group, on the basis of their race, color and creed.

Human societies should learn from the history and bloody wars, including the World Wars which left millions dead and amputated, are to be eye-openers for the world, mainly for those who mastermind and support the terrorist networks. Since terrorist groups resist against superpowers and strong military forces and weapons, it is believed that terrorists are a vehicle, rather than ideologues, used in proxy wars. As historical wars brought nothing for human societies other than casualties and hostilities, the world needs to uphold the spirit of brotherhood to strengthen peace around the globe. The international instruments and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which were approved as a result of outrageous wars to curb violence and bloodshed, will be a panacea for the current challenges. The world has to practice upon international instruments and combat against terrorist networks, which has blackmailed the globe, to end violence. If a bona fide global operation be launched against terrorist networks especially on their safe havens, wherever they be, the instability and human casualties will be decreased to a great extent. A vacuum for the spirit of brotherhood and lack of trust among the human societies on the one hand, and increase in radicalism on the other hand are the main challenges and the main reason behind the pain and suffering of mankind. The UDHR was endorsed to alleviate from the anguish of mankind, as it claims in its preamble, but since it has been marginalized from the human societies, violence and carnage persist around the globe. Militancy will not ebb unless international instruments are revived and tolerance is practiced in collective life.

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Road to Economic Liberty

By Dr. Faisal Ali

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

"Usury is evil because the usurer seeks avariciously what has no finite limits".

(Burudian, a professor at the University of Paris in fourteenth century)

The monopolies of the Fractional Reserve Banking and Margin Trading revolve around interest which are contrary to the philanthropic objectives intended for beating the extremities of poverty and the creation of dignified channels of financial support for the down trodden with a view to achieve the lofty goal of egalitarian society in sustainable manner. The magic formula of Aristotle berated interest on the principle that it is a yield arising out of money itself, not a product of that for which money was provided. Charlemagne's laws categorically prohibited usury in 806 CE. The father of modern economics, John Maynard Keynes contended that without the abolition of interest, unemployment cannot be eradicated. Silvio Gesell castigated interest on the basis that his sales were more often related to the price of money (i-e interest) than people's needs or the quality of his products. Gesell also launched "Stamp Script Movement" to make money a public service for a use fee but all his efforts went in vain. In 1919, Gottfried Feder wrote a book "Breaking the Shackles of Interest (Brechung der Zinsknechtschaft)" about the implications of interest and wealthy bankers. His endeavors led Adolf Hitler to proclaim that the kernel of National Socialism is breaking the thralldom of interest. Margrit Kennedy, the ink-slinger about the negative consequences of interest is considered as the mother of anti-usury movement in modern times. Thomas Greco in his book "Money: Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender" says...

"The banks are continually making new loans and retiring old ones as they are repaid. In the aggregate, the debts owed to banks are increasing with the mere passage of time, because interest accrues over time. The money available to repay those debts, however, can be created only by the banks as they make additional loans."

The major religions of the world deplore, condemn and prohibit interest in all its forms. The Manu Smriti of Hinduism categorically expresses sentiments for contempt of usury in chapter 11: verse 62. The Buddhist Jatakas refers to the practitioners of interest as hypocritical ascetics. The Holy Bible speaks about the proscription of interest in the books of Deuteronomy 23: 19, Leviticus 25: 36, Exodus 22: 25, Ezekiel 18: 13, Ezekiel 22: 12, Psalms 15: 5 and Luke 6: 35. The forbidding of interest in Holy Koran is mentioned

in the Chapter of The Romans: verse 39, Chapter of The Family of Imran: verse 130, Chapter of The Women: verse 161 and Chapter of The Heifer: verses 275-281.

The Fractional Reserve Banking became a legalized form of economic sacerdotalism at national and international level after the establishment of Bank of England and the foundation of International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The era of this banking has affected the countries and humanity in form of interest payments on debts, business cycles, buying power, global imbalance of payments, increased taxation and positively skewed distribution of wealth. In the financial year of 2014-15, the UK government rewarded £34 billion overall interest on its national debt, which amounted to 4.6% of overall spending according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). Pakistan allocated Rs 1360 billion for debt service in fiscal year 2016-17 that would represent 37.56% of FBR's tax revenue. In Germany, the poor 80% pay one billion Euros in interest to the wealthy 10% per day which amounts to one seventh of German GDP.

Economists must keep on questing for an alternative of fractional reserve banking and a system of interest free credit. The Chicago Plan and Chicago Plan Revisited are the masterpieces for abolition of fractional reserve banking and imposition of Full Reserve Banking. The other variants of Full Reserve Banking include Kay's Narrow Banking, Kotlikoff's Limited Purpose Banking, Positive Money and New Economics Foundation's plans for monetary reform. The substitutes also comprise Islamic Banking, Mutual Credit and Constitutional Monetary System of Lincoln. The best example of interest-free Full Reserve Banking is Jord Arbete Kapital (JAK) bank in Sweden while in the arena of Islamic finance, Akhuwat Model of interest free loans in Pakistan is considered to be more pragmatic than JAK model.

Stephen Zarlenga in his book "The Lost Science of Money" shows that the question of usury is far from settled, and that monetary reform is more a matter of morality and law than of economics. Therefore, it is imperative to the leaders and legislators of various nations to initiate interest free off movement for their respective countries domestically and internationally and promulgate the acts for complete abolition of debt service because it is the interest which is feasting on the flesh and bones of developing world especially those nations that are dependent on others and in which corruption and embezzlement are rampant. As far as the recovery of loans from governments is concerned, it can be dwarfed by galvanizing the debt-equity swap method. Hence, it is concluded that the economic salvation depends on the total elimination of fractional reserve banking and interest based Margin Trading.

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