

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



February 16, 2017

Working for Self-Reliance

The concept of self-reliance is not new. It has consistently adorned official declarations and political statements to the morbid point of becoming a cliché. In theory, it always glittered as an inspiring slogan but in practical terms it hardly rose from its conceptual confines. In terms of self-reliance Afghanistan has been in the reverse gear and the nation as a whole should worry about it.

Afghanistan is an under-developed country. Foreign economic assistance has been an important source of the financing of country's development efforts. At the same time, all effort was made during the early years after the downfall of Taliban towards self-reliance but the success achieved in this direction has remained negligible.

Nevertheless, during this time we have become accustomed to a certain pattern of life. The continuous process of dependence on aid became an unalienable part of our system. It has suppressed the real spirit of self-reliance and adoption of austerity measures. To overcome this phenomenon and to achieve national self-reliance, there has to be a revolution in thought and behavior, which will require continuous motivation to create a national will of survival as an honorable independent state, setting aside the ill-effects of depending heavily on foreign support. But on the contrary, the challenges confronting the economy are formidable. It is not an exaggeration to state that economically the nation today stands at cross roads.

A host of monsters are at work to retard its march to progress, to stifle the development endeavors and quell its aspirations for attaining the coveted position of a really independent nation.

An alarming growth rate of population, with many people living on about one Dollar per person per day, abysmally low literacy levels, wide spread unemployment, deteriorating environment, one of the largest dependency ratio, poor physical infrastructure thwarting desirable levels or substantial growth, persistent energy crises, inadequate availability of social services and huge sums being squandered by corruption all contribute to the issues that hamper the progress to self-reliance or even to the starting point for such a journey.

Then there are serious hurdles such as lack of capital and technology, bureaucratic lethargy and foreign interference. Some strides have been made in agriculture but some of the agricultural products, which could be easily produced internally, are still imported. In addition, heavy imports are made of milk and its products. The growth of manufacturing sector has been too slow to bring about any fundamental change in the overall economic structure.

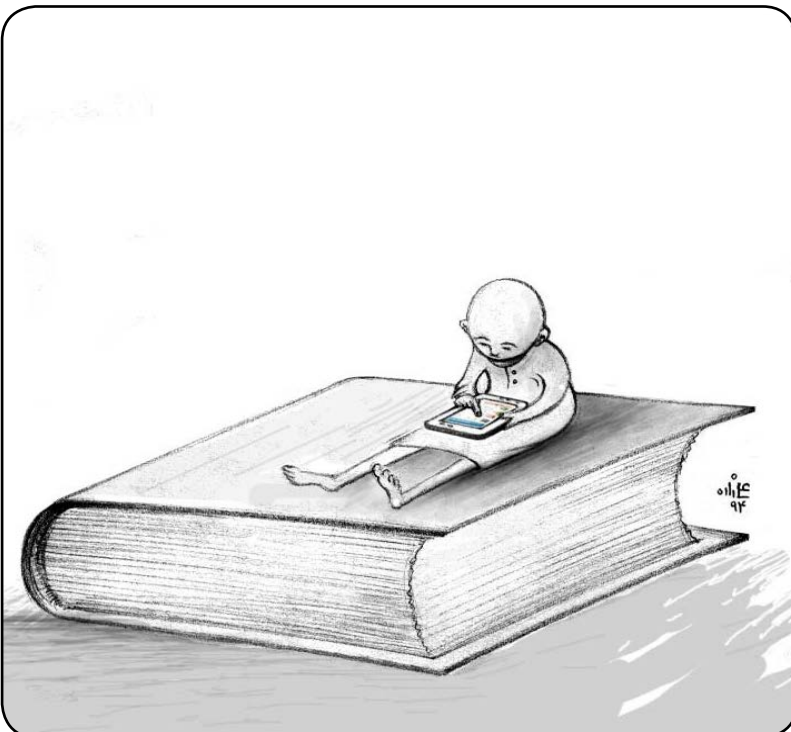
Another unfortunate aspect of the development is the under development of the mineral resources. Afghanistan is blessed with different types of mineral resources, unfortunately, the efforts made in the sector have disappointed everyone. Moreover, the lack of basic infrastructure of roads and communications has further incapacitated the sector to play any role in supporting the country economically.

While adopting necessary measures for self-reliance, we should not be oblivious of the serious aspect of exploitations by the elite of the country, such as landlords, warlords, military officials and political and religious leaders. If we want to achieve self-reliance, we will have to guard against the continuous exploitation by the rich and the influential. This calls for a national will to frustrate the designs of a formidable group having vested interests who will oppose every effort towards achieving self-reliance.

However, while appraising scope of actual implementation of the philosophy of self-reliance, it is to be pertinently remembered that there exists vast potential for harnessing domestic resources. On the other hand, a ruthless campaign to crush smuggling and proliferating drug abuse which have incalculably harmed country's primary interests; pushed corruption beyond all limits and imperiled social fabric of the nation, is directly needed. A mix of fiscal-administrative-moral crusade is required to be pressed into action.

We will have to educate and motivate our nation to release the ill effects of the policy of dependency. Taxation system of the country also needs improvement. The deficiencies in legislation have to be removed including any lacunas intentionally kept to avoid full implementation of outwardly good-looking laws. In policy planning, corruption is never considered as an integral part of the problem and thus its important facets have never been included in the analysis of the development problem. In the context of our efforts for self-reliance, suppression of corruption must play a crucial and important role.

Emphasizing the importance of education in relation to the country's development, human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and national resources are passive factors of production; human beings are the active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations, and carry forward national development. Clearly, a country which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its people and to utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else. So, our educational policy should be oriented towards the real requirement and aspirations of our people.



What is the key factor to economic development?

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

According to World Bank estimates, the economic outlook for the coming years are not very hopeful; The World Bank estimates that Afghanistan's growth rate is going to marginally increase to 1.8 percent in 2017 and to 3 and 3.6 percent in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Thus, the maximum would not surpass 5 percent till 2030. This shows huge differences from the average growth rate of 9.4 percent sustained between 2003 to 2012, when Afghanistan's economy was mainly driven by international troops and experienced relatively better security. For an economy with an average population growth rate of 3 percent and an estimated 400,000 individuals entering the labor market each year while the labor market would not be able to absorb more than 30%. The situation will be further aggravated when refugee overflow and insecurity crises.

Considering the above calculations, a series of very basic questions would come to everyone's mind such as what is the setback which is led to such dark economic outlook? Is there anything missing in Afghanistan's economic programs? And what is the key factor to economic development? The common answer is the insecurity major obstacle but in further thought Economic development is a complex process and economists have had a difficult time identifying the fundamental factors.

Few Centuries ago, Adam Smith identified, "the acquired abilities of all the inhabitants are a kind of capital," what is now called "human capital," as one of the four types of fixed capital that contribute to production in a national economy. Some economists began to wonder if poor countries might be poor because they lacked human capital.

They deduced that rich countries devastated in World War II were able to quickly employ massive amounts of new physical capital, while the poorest countries seemed unable to successfully utilize even small amounts.

They theorized that a nation's capability to productively use physical capital is a function of its level of human capital and that if human capital does not increase along with physical capital, then economic development cannot proceed. In addition, it is notified that human capital is more likely to be the constraint to development because foreign investors are eager to invest in physical capital, but not in human capital.

Economists now accept that investment in education, or human capital, is an important element in the economic development process. Econometric studies provide very strong and consistent evidence that more educated workers are more productive and that they earn higher salaries. There is also no doubt that average levels of education and national income rise simultaneously. So, this idea not only support Adam Smith's view that acquired abilities are a form of capital but also proves that education plays a large and critical role in the economic development process and that it most likely is the limiting factor in this process. The relationships between the two capitals (human capital and physical capital) are complementary. There is some variation in the relative amounts of the two types of capital, but

no countries have high levels of only one type. For example, the U.S. has more human than physical capital, while Japan has more physical than human capital, but both countries have high levels of both. Similarly studies show that economic development does not occur automatically.

If it did, there would not be such large differences in the magnitude of the capital stocks between countries. However, there are some other characteristic(s) which is not present in the less developed countries, facilitated historic investment in both types of capital. It is also evident that whatever these characteristics are, they vary widely across countries because levels of capital/adult vary widely. If human capital and physical capital are complementary, then historically either type of capital or both could have been the factor limiting investment in the other type of capital. Human capital is created initially by providing children with primary and secondary schooling. Private financing of this type of investment is not feasible for poor children. Countries that are highly developed today have a long history of providing free or highly-subsidized education to the poor. A review of their history suggests that the initial impetus for this schooling had a religious basis, but that as the public's level of education and income rose, their demand for schooling rose, and the financial support from private donors was replaced or greatly augmented with public funds.

If poor countries wish to achieve high levels of national income, they need to provide public funding for the universal education of the poor, at least at the primary and secondary levels of schooling.

The evidence on returns to education indicates that investment in schooling is subject to diminishing returns, but that the macro marginal return on all education is still considerable in highly-educated countries. In less-educated countries the marginal macro returns are much larger, in excess of 50 percent, but since most of this return is indirect, the magnitude of the marginal returns to education is not generally appreciated.

These very high macro marginal returns to education make it possible for poor countries to grow very rapidly if they make a major commitment to raising their average level of schooling. The evidence also indicates that educated workers raise the marginal productivity of physical capital and of other workers. In highly educated countries the spillover effect on other workers is very small, but in less-educated countries this effect appears to be much larger.

So, in all countries the positive effect of rising human capital on the productivity of physical capital is required to offset the diminishing returns to investment and make rising investment in physical capital financially viable in the development process. Ultimately, education has both direct and indirect effects on national income and the answer to mentioned would be no investment in human capital no economic boost.

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The Unmitigated Violation of Human Rights

By Hujjatullah Zia

Modern man has brought this whole world to an awe-inspiring threshold of the future. He has reached new and astonishing peaks of scientific success. He has produced machines that think and instruments that peer into the unfathomable ranges of interstellar space. He has built gigantic bridges to span the seas and gargantuan buildings to kiss the skies.... Yet, in spite of these spectacular strides in science and technology, and still unlimited ones to come, something basic is missing. There is a sort of poverty of the spirit which stands in glaring contrast to our scientific and technological abundance," these words were spoken by a Nobel laureate Martin Luther King.

The escalated violence and bloodshed, violation of human rights and extreme cruelty unfold man's megalomania and insatiable thirst for power. The collective life is void of virtue since atrocity and moral corruption prevail around the globe. A civil society, where people could exercise their rights and liberty, is no more than a dream. The headlines of newspapers are replete with bloodcurdling stories: killing innocent civilians, massacring ethnic minority groups, raping women, discriminating one on the grounds of their race and color, etc.

Lack of spiritual practice has left a deep vacuum in modern life. Our old literature which was full of divine love, virtue and sanctity has been changed into banality and the modern literature is replete with Hollywood love, licentious terms, immoral words, cinematic friendship and nakedness. Ethical code and cultural values are at stake.

Human dignity is underestimated. Love has been restricted within cinemas and fake stories. But the human dignity of women are violated both in theatrical and real life. Their charm and beauty are used in advertisement gimmicks and films with a view to making business.

The spirit of brotherhood is missing in modern world. People are segregated on the basis of their caste, color and creed. Radical ideology and frequent stereotypes have left no room for tolerance and acceptance. Fundamental groups have engendered horror and terror around the world. Public air is filled with chagrin and mistrust.

Ethnocentrism, selfishness and racial superiority created gaps among nations. Disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind.

We live in modern world but men's dream for a utopian world has not come true. Democratic discourse and civil society have been hotly debated but the true spirit of democracy is missing. Men's pains and sufferings continue unabated. That is to say, all individuals suffer in one way or another. According to reports, gruesome violations alleg-

edly carried out by members of Myanmar's security services or civilian fighters working alongside the army and the police. Of the 101 women interviewed, more than half said they had been raped or sexually assaulted. Several women told UN investigators how their young children, including a newborn, were trampled or cut to death. Security forces were also accused of opening fire at people fleeing and burning entire villages, as well as of "massive and systematic rape and sexual violence; deliberate destruction of food and sources of food".

No wonder, violence and bloodshed stem from lack of religious and racial tolerance. For instance, fundamental groups who practice upon harsh ideology are engaged in war in the Middle East and organize nationwide attacks. The self-styled Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) tramples upon the rights of men, women, and children in the worst possible way.

ISIL fighters spread Islamophobia around the Europe through carrying out deadly attacks. They feel no iota of mercy to the innocent civilians. In a nutshell, it is too hard to put their atrocity and inhumanity into words. They have blackened the history and put a stain on the collective conscience. They are always spreading fear and hatred via harsh practices.

Our modern world is void of humanity and spirituality. The empathic or sympathetic feelings towards the poor have declined. One will not realize the painful dystopia of those who burn in the hell of misery. Those who live in skyscrapers and eat sumptuous food will not feel the anguish of the people who have no roof over their heads. All individuals are engaged in their self-interests, be it at the cost of one's life or reputation. The humane feelings are moribund and the poor are given cold shoulder.

Our world, including Afghanistan, is full of heart-wrenching stories. In the tribal belt of Afghanistan, women's bodies are riddled with bullets for crossing the red line of traditional structure, children are harassed sexually and men are killed in cold blood. A single day does not pass without a tragic incident as if our nation is doomed to suffer. A number of people lose their lives in terrorist attacks or suicide bombings and some fear to fall in the same destiny. Therefore, there is a faint hope that one will not be left at the mercy of terrorism. After all, the tragedies are changing into part of life and can hardly touch one's heart.

We live in the world of indifferences and cruelty. Although technology has mitigated some of the challenges, the core of the problem which is instability and violence remain unsolved. The world has to enhance the spirit of brotherhood and promote tolerance so as to live in a peaceful society.

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