

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



February 21, 2017

World Day for Social Justice

February 20 was celebrated as World Day of Social Justice. The theme of the day was: "Preventing conflict and sustaining peace through decent work". The day emphasized that justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability.

The day was basically adopted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) through the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization on June 10, 2008. The Declaration is a powerful reaffirmation of ILO values. It is the outcome of tripartite consultations that started in the wake of the Report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. By adopting this text, the representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations from 182 member States emphasize the key role of ILO's tripartite Organization in helping to achieve progress and social justice in the context of globalization.

It is a crystal clear fact that no state in the world can maintain its integrity and order if it does not possess and guard justice. Justice is the requirement to maintain law and order and reduce crimes from a society. If a state fails to establish strong institutions that can practice and provide justice, it is bound to be filled with instability and corruption. Therefore, the states and the governments have the organ of judiciary. This organ makes sure that justice is done and people are not deprived of their due rights, while the criminals are punished appropriately. In fact, throughout most part of history, the states have this organ in some form or others. Today, in modern states of the world, they are well-established through the network of courts and judges and law enforcing agencies.

The judiciary is a coequal branch of government. It is the only branch that is supposed to be totally impartial and hence apolitical. The judiciary forms a system of courts which interprets the law in the name of the sovereign or state. It also provides a mechanism for the resolution of disputes. This branch of government is often tasked with ensuring equal justice under law. It usually consists of a court of final appeal (called the 'supreme court' or 'constitutional court'), together with lower courts.

The primary function of the judiciary in a constitutional democracy, therefore, is to protect the constitution - the sacred contract between the citizens and the government and between different branches of the government. It does so by elucidating and defining the content of the constitution while arbitrating between parties. In order to perform their function, the judiciary must logically be empowered with the authority to arbitrate future conflicts over the constitution and to overturn any actions of the government that violate it.

The courts' impartiality and independence from the other branches of the government also needs to be ensured so that the courts can perform their function effectively. Impartiality and independence of the judiciary is not easy to achieve because unlike legislature, court's authority is based directly in the supremacy of the constitution. And supremacy of the constitution is achieved in minds more than on paper. In order to achieve these characteristics of the judiciary, developed democracies have relied on 'the culture of the judiciary'.

If each judge swears upon taking office to uphold the constitution and the rights of all citizens, self-integrity, peer pressure, and public scrutiny might combine to induce judges, at least at the highest level, to abide by their oath.

By setting these standards for promotion, they can help foster the same behavior in their future peers and at all lower levels. Executive and other government branches also have to learn to accept the role of judiciary in constitutional democracy as the supreme arbitrator of the content of the constitution.

Countries like Afghanistan need to improve their judicial systems so as to strengthen the nurturing democracy in the country. Moreover, it would be also helpful in keeping the actions of members of the other organs of the government in check. It is very likely that they, without such accountability, may use their authorities recklessly, as is the case in present scenario. Since the judiciary lacks the essential capabilities, it is not able to ensure true justice within the society. That has given rise to a situation wherein an imbalance has crept within the country.

Moreover, the people finding the justice system not able to provide them timely and deserving justice, have lost their confidence in the system in general in the government in particular. This has also given rise to the issues of illegitimacy.

Therefore, it is really vital to strengthen judiciary in the country on urgent basis. In fact, the overall process of strengthening the judiciary in the country would benefit the common people of Afghanistan, who require justice to a large extent.



US-Russia Relations under President Trump

By Naser Koshan

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Continued from Yesterday

Both Russia and the US hold the world's largest nuclear stockpile, any mishaps in dealing with each other potentially alarms catastrophic consequences for the rest of the world. On the other hand, president Putin is all praises for Mr. Trump, openly applauding the American people for their choice to choose Mr. Trump. President Trump also recently thanked president Putin for calling him up to congratulate him on the elections win and once again prior to his inauguration as the 45th president of the US.

President Trump is certainly at no talking terms with the mainstream media that is constantly questioning his inner circle's dealings with Moscow. During the campaign trail the then candidate Mr. Trump had to ask for his campaign chairman Paul Manafort's resignation over his lobbying history, particularly in Ukraine, presenting pro-Russian interests. But president Trump voiced very clearly that he does not have any business interests in Russia, no loans in Russia, and reiterated that he has not even met president Putin personally.

He added that he certainly hopes to get along with the guy, like many other leaders of states, but could possibly go the other way round too.

President Trump did also brush-off the scandalous confessions of the former British spy citing Russian authorities having a dossier on Mr. Trump showing him in compromising situations. Prior to running for President, Mr. Trump had visited Russia several times as the owner of Miss Universe Pigeon. Apparently, the secret dossier is orchestrated by the FSB formerly known as KGB with the commonly practiced Russian technique of setting up honey traps to blackmail politicians and businessmen. But the whole chapter of allegations faded away when both leaders labeled it fake and untrue.

No doubt, both Kremlin and Washington have to look for common grounds when it comes to easing international tensions bilaterally. The US having national security concerns in the Middle East, Asia, and Eastern Europe is fully aware of the Russian counter measures in these regions to safeguard their own. As former ambassador Khalilzad puts in his recent book (The Envoy), "despite the collapse of the then Soviet Union and the US emerging as the triumphant superpower, the old adversary has always been a prominent national security concern and a strategic threat for policy makers in the US who had prudently predicted a likely Russian aggression towards its eastern neighbors particularly Ukraine long time ago".

The Russians on the other hand, are very sensitive to the increased NATO presence along their respective borders; they

have taken counter measures by deploying tens of thousands of extra troops and heavy weaponry. Last year, when the US installed the previously halted missile defense shield in Romania, Moscow reacted and subsequently took proactive measures alongside its borders. In response NATO's secretary general stated its defense essence, and subsequently rejected any claims of provocation by Moscow.

In the Middle East, Iran and Russia joined hands in Syria to save the falling Assad regime. From the very beginning they had sensed a western deception to shift the balance in the Middle East, and based on their assessment, the Syrian Assad would have been the last nail in the coffin.

They acted quickly to prevent a regime collapse in Syria and materialized the Syrian government with both mercenaries and weapons to eventually weaken the very strongholds of IS and Syrian free army closing on Damascus.

Prior to the start of the Russian air campaign against the IS militants in Syria, the US along with its regional and European allies were already targeting IS strongholds in Iraq and Syria, paving the way for the moderate rebels to gain grounds and acquire political recognition. Temporary and short-lived but the world certainly witnessed a semi cooperative front between the US and Russia pouring bombs on IS to preclude their advancement. In Asia, the Russians have strongly expressed their deepest concerns with the IS, gaining footholds in northern Afghanistan.

Russian special envoy to Af-Pak Mr. Zamir Kabulov has acknowledged the fact that Moscow is indeed in talks with the Taliban to prevent any possible IS infiltration to its former Soviet Union republics, especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, both bordering Afghanistan.

As a precaution Kremlin has indeed deployed its soldiers along the Afghan border to ensure the same. President Putin considers IS militants as a direct threat to Russia's national security and global interests, simultaneously; Moscow has initiated multilateral talks with regional powers to create a buffer zone against these militants outside its respective borders.

The U.S. on the other hand, under Trump administration is keen to extend a helping hand in this matter and open a unified front with Russia to wipe out IS and its royal affiliates in the region.

Last but not least, President Trump's foreign policy and national security team led by defense secretary Gen. Mattis, director Pompeo, and secretary Tillerson will hold the key for any drastic change in the US Russia relations; it is likely to change to a lesser confrontational and more cooperation mode, in contrast to the previously cold personal relations between former president Obama and Russian president Vladimir Putin.

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Breaking the Shackles of Interest and Usury

By Dr. Faisal Ali

Exclusive for the Daily Outlook

Continued from Yesterday

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 Old Testament 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, Amos 8: 4-6, Nehemiah 5: 7. The New Testament confirms the prohibition of interest in the Gospels of Luke 6: 35 and Matthew 5: 17. Jesus (Peace be Upon Him) says in the 95th verse of the Gospel of Thomas that if you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give (it) to one from whom you will not get it back.

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 prohibition of interest is also mentioned in the Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him). The Apostle (Peace be Upon Him) said.....

"No matter how much is the increment accrued through interest, the eventual outcome is scarcity."

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 according to Anthony Migchels of Real Currencies.

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, Constitutional Monetary System of Lincoln and Bradbury Pound initiative of His Majesty's Treasury in

1914. 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. The Peasant Land Bank of Russia in 1880 that provided interest-free loans to the liberated peasantry can also be utilized as an interest free model. The system of Rural Cooperative Foundations (RCFs) of Peoples Republic of China which played a pivotal role in the curtailment of rural usury during 1980s can also be employed in usury free arena. In the opinion of this writer, the interest free banking sector that operates on the motto of "no interest on deposits and no interest on loans" may put to use an entrance fee for catering the daily and monthly needs of the banks and employees.

In this manner, the banks shall become the places of public good and services where each and every individual would contribute to the common good and welfare of a society. The entrance fee may be considered as a service charge. Another way of catering the needs of interest free banks is by imposing bank tax on the public by governments. That can only happen when all interest free banks are nationalized.

Stephen Zarlenga in his book "The Lost Science of Money" shows that the monetary reform is more a matter of morality and law than of economics. He also advocates the evolution of monetary department into a fourth branch of government that should work for the common good and nationalization of money creation process which is a precondition for solving the usury problem and its wealth concentration effect. Therefore, it is imperative to the leaders and legislators of various nations to initiate interest write off movement for their respective countries domestically and internationally and promulgate the acts for complete abolition of debt service. Furthermore, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) like IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) should initiate interest write off programs for all the developing countries under special initiatives. In 1996, the IMF and World Bank sowed the seeds of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) for a group of 38 developing countries.

But the new initiatives should include the interest write off programs for all the developing countries 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. The newly founded IFI of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank can also make use of interest free models for channelizing prosperity and tranquility in underdeveloped nations. 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 interest and usury based fractional reserve banking.

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