

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



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Pros and Cons of Access to Information Law

Democracy ensures the rule of majority by preservation of its core value, keeping the masses informed about every single development in socio-political and economic affairs of the government. In this system of government, the 'say' of ordinary masses are given great weightage, who are kept known via unhindered exchange of information between government and masses. Thus the public representatives hence are left with least chance manipulation, but have to follow the due course of action because of being closely watched by their Electoral College. The worth of informed civilians is immense in democracy, having kept that in mind the Access to information Law was deeply felt to get ratified by legislative assembly. Finally the Afghanistan's president Ashraf Ghani signed an Access to Information Law for Afghanistan. It was indeed a great achievement by the war-torn country. By getting the law signed, Afghanistan turns to be 101st country to have an Access to information Law. The law approved by Afghan lawmakers consists of 6 chapters and 32 articles. For the first time in Afghan history, citizens and journalists get access to information through state institutions. Next step is the difficult task of realizing the law in practice. It earned a great win for media bodies and advocates working on rationalization of media laws. The supporters of free media and rights to freedom of speech had long been striving to make the government pass the Access to Information Law. It took the civil society organizations and media outlets long to introduce a draft regarding access to information and get that duly signed. The media functionaries warmly received the move and termed it a positive step for promoting transparency and accountability. The law revives up the international standards and will have major effects in limiting corruption, localizing democracy and strengthening the people's political and social participation in state building. People will gain access to state and public budgets, and official spokespeople will be inclined to share information with journalists and citizens. The law conveys the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and it respects the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. There is, however, still quite some way to go, given Afghanistan is worst plagued by widespread corruption, and having a great law on paper does not mean much if it is not implemented in practice. Implementation of the law is one of the biggest challenges. A joint working force was developed between presidential office and civil society to monitor the implementation of the law. Following that a nominal commission was constituted to monitor the aforesaid law.

According to this law, the Monitoring Commission on Access to Information can only recommend disciplinary actions against violators of the act and no fines are specified if information is not provided. It is feared in the dominant environment of favoritism and misuse of power the needed information might be concealed and kept out of the reach of media bodies. Consequently, the law should be amended to ensure the information holders are punished and fined. Imparting a degree of independence to the newly created Commission on Access to Information can be an encouraging step ahead. There is some underlining reservations pertaining the dispatch of certain sensitive information if shared could equally harm and reverse the developments achieved to the length of time, should be share, isn't obligatory. Nonetheless, the information dealing issues of human rights and use and misuse of public resources should inevitably be shared renders an uncompromising and appealing demand ever made by media bodies. The facts and figures on ground depicts a degree of restraint exercised by corresponding officials to dispatch information, complicates the work of journalists who find minimal application of the law. Earlier, officials in several provinces said they had been told by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) not to share information with media outlets. In contrary the sources of presidential palace states the Security Council should facilitate the responsible official from each province provide information to the journalists.

It was this officials' stance that enraged the journalists with the Afghanistan Independent Journalist Association (AIJA) in a statement said that Security Council barred provincial officials from sharing information. The statement said that the Ministry of Interior had been directed to issue media with information on security related issues in future. On the other hand, MoI Spokesman Sadique Sadiqui said: "We have public affairs officials in provinces are tasked to share information with media on regular basis." The state of affairs reflects a great degree of confusion on working mechanism of flow of information from concerned department to journalists, particularly in the provinces. However, it clearly manifests the toughened course to seek relevant information about governmental affairs. It is therefore; previously some civil society organizations and media-men demanded the president to help amend the relevant law to make access easy to information.

Hence it is suggested that a new draft should be introduced containing a degree of clarification on information flow mechanism, legal actions whether information aren't deliberately concealed and the regulatory principles barring the sensationalism and unfounded accusation against any citizen. The new draft must contain the formation of an independent and neutral commission to be assigned the task of investigating complaints, lodged against any public official. Moreover, the complaints investigation mechanism should be fair and transparent; to make it sure the complaints are heard and addressed properly devoid of keeping political, social and economical status of person in regard.



Economic Stability Precedes Political Stability

By Dilawar Sherzai

Economy plays a vital role in development and progress of a country. Without sound economy it is a figment of imagination to think about order and stability in other fields of life. It can be observed in today's world that the countries with stable economies are dominant in various areas, the most important of which is politics. The international political arena is basically overshadowed by giant economies. Just consider the level of influence that the developed countries, like USA, UK and China have in contemporary international politics.

Politics is the game of power and power erupts from money, while money is generated through a proper economic infrastructure. However, it must be understood that power is a vague term and it has different interpretation. In the international politics it may relate to different sorts of influences that may affect various decisions in international relations. Whether it is conflict or agreement, diplomacy or war, international organizations or national policies, power has a decisive role. And, that power rests with the countries that have large GDPs and great businesses. Therefore, it is easy to see the world powers having strong influence and say in different diplomatic undertakings and conflicts and wars in international political order. In fact, the current political order is designed by the most dominant economies among the developed nations of the world. The current political order, wherein capitalism and democracy have joined hands and reign most parts of the world is not very different from what the gigantic capitalist economies want them to be.

A thorough study of economy and politics will reveal that economy is the root of a political system. For example, when human societies mostly had agriculturalist economies, there were no democracies and the political systems were based on monarchy and landlordism. However, as the societies evolved to industrialized economies there was a shift towards democracy. Thus, economy to a great extent decides the form and nature of the political system and, therefore, instable economy gives rise to instable political order and stable ones gives birth to stable political systems.

It can also be observed that the societies where the people are mostly poor and do not have the facilities of life, there are more chances of political upheavals. The discontented people, suffering from destitution would ultimately strive to overthrow the political order and would never respect such a system. Resultantly, it can be said that the societies that are economically instable are more prone to revolutions, disturbances and chaos. The third world countries can be observed in this regard. As the people are poor, do not have basic requirements of life and suffer from unemployment,

they are more vulnerable to be the cause of instability. And, that is why we find them to be more attracted towards rebellions, crimes, terrorism and thus instability. Afghanistan is one of the countries where economic instability has given birth to political instability. As there is no stable economic infrastructure, the country's democratic structure has shaky foundations. In Afghanistan insecurity has been influencing the economic life to a large extent. Both national and international businessmen are not readily willing to invest in all the sectors and they do not see positive prospects of their businesses. As insecurity has been overwhelmingly influencing the country, the development in the basic infra-structure has been meager.

The doubts and uncertainties of the Afghan market have made the international investors to think thousand times before they take an initiative to start their businesses in the country. Though there are great opportunities in Afghanistan and the country is blessed with different types of mineral and other natural resources, the economic infra-structure has not been able to get enough attention. Apart from that there are other factors as well that have been influencing the economic system of Afghanistan. The insufficient and unfavorable business environment is also one of the issues affecting Afghan economy. There have to be strong business laws governing the society and controlling the business. The laws should not only safeguard the rights of investors and businessmen but also make sure that the competition within the system is maintained on strong and fair footings. The evils like monopoly based on unfair competition must be tackled with properly and there should be strong bodies that control the prices within the markets, which at the present are non-existent and the businessmen are fixing the rates on their own. This has given rise to a political system that, on the exterior, is called as democratic but in reality is an ad-hoc arrangement that has no strong foundation. Afghan economy, therefore, require structured development towards a capitalist society. And in this regard, businesses can play a vital role. If within a system there are consistent investments and different businesses, the system is on a track towards development and prosperity. Since the very inception of human society, human beings have required businesses so as to have their requirements fulfilled. Throughout human history, businesses have taken different forms and characteristics and today have reached to a very advanced form. From the barter system to today's advanced era when the businesses are taking place online, there has been a series of different practices, but the vitality of the business has never been lost. Having developed its economic infrastructure based on capitalism or free market economy marked with stability, Afghanistan's political system can continue its journey towards a truly democratic country dominated by stability.

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Boko Haram Pledges Allegiance to ISIS

By Hujjatullah Zia

The saga of atrocity and bloodshed permeates the region and people fall prey to religious extremists on the basis of their beliefs. The warped beliefs are foisted upon the individuals at the blade of knife or at the muzzle of gun. In the horrible pandemonium of war and terror, one is left between two choices: either to succumb to death or to embrace the fundamental frames of mind. The callous acts and moral turpitude of Islamic militants in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan make one recoil with unmitigated disgust. Violation of human rights and dignities has outraged men's conscience and led to deep anguish and bleeding wounds. Bismirching reputation of modest females add insult to injuries of the mothers saddened by the tragic death of their beloved children. The lugubrious story of war victims and grotesque violence of Islamic State (IS) bristle one's hair. The hirsute and monstrous faces of radical warlords trigger a sense of nightmare. Being devoid of moral values and humane characters, the Islamic militants, particularly the emerging group of ISIS, beheld the innocent people in the worst possible way without an iota of mercy. The fundamentalists' bogus claim regarding religious issues will result in Islam-phobia in Western countries - even though their practices are extraneous to Islamic law. Involving in moral turpitude and heinous crime under the veneer of religion is highly degrading - such exploitations of religion were practiced constantly throughout the history by despotic rulers. Through misinterpretations of religious texts, the militants vindicate their deadly acts and moral corruption. Their ideological rhetoric lacks the rationality and support of religion. In another item, although the radicals claim to carry out jihad on the grounds of religious order, yet their practices are against religion and ethical code. So, their false ideology has colored their mendacious claim.

After all, according to reports, Boko Haram is believed to be the largest jihadi group to pledge fidelity to the Islamic State. But terrorism experts say that the practical significance of the move announced Saturday is as yet unclear. Some experts say that the pledge, or "bayat," made by the leader of Boko Haram is a spiritually binding oath, which indicates that the Nigerian Islamist group has agreed to accept the authority of the Islamic State. A group's leaders swore allegiance in a public message posted online. Weeks later, the oath was formally accepted by the Islamic State, in a statement issued by the group's spokesman. "It's quite clear that since at least mid-January, the Islamic State has had some level of connection with Boko Haram," quoted Aaron Y. Zelin, a fellow at the Washington Institute who tracks propaganda by Islamic extremists. "The key question is whether the Islamic State dispatched individuals

from Syria or Iraq, or else from Libya, down to northern Nigeria to help out with operations on the ground, or else with methodology, or in terms of governance activities."

Boko Haram is estimated to have up to 6,000 fighters and at least some level of control over about 20,000 square kilometers, or about 8,000 square miles, of northeastern Nigeria, according to Ryan Cummings, chief Africa analyst for red24, a crisis management group based in Britain, who has been following the group since 2011. Mr. Cummings raised questions about the kind of command-and-control structure that could exist between the two groups. "It seems at the moment that this is a statement that is akin to saying, 'We are on the same page,'" he said. "But the biggest issue with Boko Haram is that it's not a homogeneous group and it behaves as different factions. So it's too early to tell for sure if Boko Haram will fall directly under ISIS command, and to what extent they will act as an ISIS proxy."

For roughly 18 months, there have been growing signs of at least links of solidarity between the organizations, as well as suggestions that the Islamic State has been grooming Boko Haram for entry into its network. Last year, Boko Haram's leader declared his support for the leader of the Islamic State, and began using the Islamic State battle hymn as the soundtrack for videos documenting his atrocities.

Both the internationally infamous groups follow the same ideology. Their political chicanery, inhuman practices and moral corruption all root in archaic beliefs and licentious dreams. It is believed that many members of religious extremists especially that of ISIS and Boko Haram are combined of those who had no chance to take the hand of beautiful girls rather than being ideologues. Hence, the lump in their throats, which originates in bereavement, has erupted. So, they satiate their evil desires at the barrel of gun via committing honor killings and tarnishing the reputation of modest women and girls - Jihad-Nikah, which is unprecedented phenomenon in history, is the worst example. The ferocity of ISIS and Boko Haram are rightly depicted via their acts of violence - such as serving son's meat to his mother, ISIS did, burning alive a man, raping women and girls, destroying the historical monuments of Iraq, violating the rights and dignity of war victims without a sense of guilt, etc. So what would happen if Boko Haram pledges allegiance to ISIS for wreaking more havoc?

A puissant international backlash is the crying need of the time to stop further bloodshed and destruction. The world has to seek a common ground and join forces to end this chaos. The international community is supposed to stop playing the role of spectator and open its eyes to the atrocities and violation of human rights.

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