

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



November 09, 2016

Science for Peace and Development

Science has penetrated so deeply within our societies that it is difficult to imagine life without it. Science has ushered an era of learning, discoveries and inventions. However, there is much discussion about science, its uses and its implication within our societies. There are certain people who believe that science has not been able to bring about true prosperity and contentment within human life while there are many others who believe that it is because of science that human beings are more satisfied and enjoy luxuries of life. Science, as a matter of fact, is neutral in the sense that it does not promulgate any code of ethics, religious teachings or belief system. It is a method of enquiry and learning and a body of knowledge that is generated through that method. It is the way science is used that matters not science itself. If today human societies use scientific knowledge and inventions to promote war, terrorism and violence, science cannot be blamed for that. That has to do with human intentions and their desires or belief systems.

Science can be best used for peace and development. Throughout its history, science has proved that and it can keep on doing that if human beings intend to do so, individually and collectively. However, the important point is that they should realize this fact that their survival and prosperity lie in the positive use of science and technology.

To emphasize the same fact, every year November 10 is celebrated as the World Science Day for Peace and Development around the world. The day was proclaimed by United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) General Conference (Resolution 31C/20) in 2001 to recall the commitment made at the UNESCO-ICSU World Conference on Science.

The purpose of celebrating the day is to renew the national, as well as the international commitment to science for peace and development and to stress the responsible use of science for the benefit of society. The World Science Day for Peace and Development also aims at raising public awareness of the importance of science and to bridge the gap between science and societies.

There is no doubt in the fact that one of the most crucial requirements for a society to develop is peace and tranquility. Without sustainable peace, thinking of prosperity is nothing more than a figment of one's imagination. With peace, a society would be on the track of a healthy evolution and it would be able to concentrate on many other issues that are hurdle in the way to bliss and contentment. In the journey from the first human societies to today's modern world, wherein human beings call themselves civilized and the best of all the creatures, there have always been fluctuations between peace and war. Unfortunately, no peace has been forever and fortunately, no war has lasted long.

Wars have always devastated human civilizations, killed millions of human beings, brought miseries and pains and yet they have not been rejected as unnecessary and this fact is really very painful.

It is difficult to believe that knowing the horrors of wars, human beings have always considered them necessary and almost all the nations in the world are really ready for wars.

There are many important requirements that are neglected in the society and science and technology are utilized to make a nation ready for launching war and strong militarily. It is weird to note that there are many countries on the face of earth that would not utilize blessings of science for improving the standard of the living of the people but would spend them magnanimously on acquiring modern weaponry. In fact, human beings are preparing for their own destruction and extinction consciously.

Just consider the amount and the characteristics of modern weaponry; they have the tendency to raze human beings from the surface of the earth completely. The magnitude of weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of world nations can even destroy the entire earth several times.

Unluckily, some of the human beings are of the view that peace can only be achieved through wars and therefore, wars are necessary in human societies. This is the biggest misconception human beings have ever had. War does not and cannot bring peace; it in its nature is destructive. Even if war brings peace that is only after the entire human civilization is erased. Would a peace, in a world without human beings, be required at all?

Some nations are, today, proud of their military achievements and their history of wars. And wars have become an educational subject that is taught within colleges, universities and military institutions. People get degrees and certificates in the science and art of killing one another. And, they malign science and art in this way.

Human beings really need to reconsider so many aspects of their lives, start knowing the true worth of science and technology and start using it to generate peace and development not strengthen armies and launch wars.



Importance of US Election for other Nations

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

American engagement in many countries has made the US elections important throughout the world. Media outlets virtually all over the world cover the contentious election, and its results seem to be pivotal to them, too. They want to know who will win the historic American election. And what will be the result for them? Likewise in Afghanistan, what will be its effect on the fragile condition of Afghanistan? In America, republican nominee Donald Trump's supporters are hopeful, and wildly optimistic as he rides a wave of improved polls into Election Day. The backers of his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton are nervous, and simply want it to be over, and won. Right now Mrs Clinton's poll numbers appear to be stabilising and perhaps slightly rising, but the national margin remains wafer thin at around 2.5 points according to polling averages. Mr Trump is challenging her in unusual places, like New Hampshire, a Democratic firewall state where the candidates are effectively tied. And he is pushing into predominantly white states like Michigan, where he sniffs vulnerability despite her almost five-point lead. At the same time she is reaping the benefits of the Clinton campaign ground game with a strong turnout among early voters, particularly among Latinos in key states like Florida and Nevada. In the last six election cycles, the Democratic Party has won 18 states totalling 242 Electoral College votes. That puts Mrs Clinton just a couple of states away from victory. Mr Trump has repeatedly promised to expand the electoral map — and his final days of campaigning could be read as bold or simply chaotic. However, Mr Trump is hoping to flip traditionally blue states made up of white, blue-collar workers, disaffected by the loss of manufacturing jobs in America. Both candidates have made last-minute trips to Michigan, suggesting the traditionally strong Democratic state is potentially in play.

Most of Afghan people predict Hillary Clinton will win this week's presidential election in the United States and that she will follow in current President Barack Obama's footsteps in terms of his policies. Meanwhile, it is said that Donald Trump will be dangerous for Afghanistan because he is an anti-Islam politician. Recently, Trump insulted Muslims; he believes that Muslims should not travel to the U.S. But some political experts believe that the results of election will not bring any changes to Washington's policies towards Afghanistan. What is more obvious is that this year's U.S elections are exceptional in history because these kinds of rivalry have not been seen in the United States previously. Clinton is the first lady in the U.S to be nominated as a presidential candidate in that country; so it might cause big changes particularly for U.S women. In regard to Afghanistan, Hillary Clinton was one of those democrat candidates who always tried to support the war against terrorism in Afghanistan whereas she was the one who voted YES back in October 2003 on \$86 billion bill for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and then in Janu-

ary 2008 she said that she would have never diverted attention from Afghanistan and in June 2012 Clinton-Gates combo won push for Afghan surge. She also expressed her support from the Afghan women back in January 2013 by saying that the Afghan women are better off, but we must prevent reversal.

But neither candidate has said, during their campaigns, what approach they will take to Afghanistan in the event of their winning while it was expected that they may have something in their pockets about Afghanistan and their longest involvement in a battle after the Vietnam War. Only the Democratic Party nominee Hillary Clinton did briefly touch on the NATO's commitment towards US in fight against terrorism in Afghanistan something which she praised but again no specific word on Afghanistan and their long term commitment towards the ANDSF (Afghan National Defense Security Forces).

The former Secretary of State and First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton and a New York billionaire, Donald Trump, played a blame game and often locked horns over key issues. Their finger-pointing reached an unprecedented level in the history of US presidential elections. But the United States, as a super power, has a long experience of meddling in the elections of many countries. One of the concrete, palpable proofs to support this claim was the American interference in two Afghan presidential elections, as a result of one of which an unconstitutional dispensation under the national unity government was imposed on Afghans against their will. Similarly, the global player has influenced the elections of other nations such as Iran, Indonesia and Vietnam over the last century. Meanwhile, the US itself was faced with such an intervention in its 2016 elections. Clinton has accused Donald Trump of enjoying Russian support in the election showdown, and claimed that Russians had hacked into her emails. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has also voiced its concern about the potential foreign interference in US election.

Anyway, the outcome of US presidential election may be more important for dependent countries like Afghanistan. While the US actions and policies in Afghanistan over the recent years have seriously damaged their reputation here. There are serious doubts about their intentions in various realms, from the fight against terrorism and narcotics to development and reconstruction affairs and to its interference in Afghan affairs. This scepticism now not limited to only Afghanistan will finally lead to the end of American unilateralism, which will be a great challenge for the future administration aside from other pressing issues. The new US administration should formulate its policies on global security, counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, justice for all, and respect for national sovereignty of countries in a way that leaves no room for doubt and bad thinking.

Mohammad Zahir Akbari is the newly emerging writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at mohammadzahirakbari@gmail.com

The Developing World's Health Innovators

By Mohammad Jobayer Chisti

We live in an age of tragic health paradoxes. Mass immunization campaigns have eliminated entire diseases, but children in countries like Haiti and Bangladesh continue to die of easily treatable diseases caused by common pathogens. Globalization has lifted millions of people out of extreme poverty, but has left them exposed to the non-communicable diseases of the post-industrial age — from diabetes to heart disease — in countries that lack the resources to treat them.

Underlying these paradoxes is yet another: the vast majority of health research is conducted in wealthy economies, but the vast majority of the global public-health burden falls on low- and middle-income countries. There is something grossly inefficient — even immoral — about this allocation of resources, which undermines the development of health solutions for those who need them most.

To be sure, it was possible to address the first generation of global development problems with straightforward transfers of capital and solutions from rich to poor countries. Examples include programs to boost primary-school enrollment and, in public health, mass immunization campaigns. But the new generation of development problems, from the quality of education to child deaths from treatable diseases, will not be so easy to resolve. They demand long-term capacity building and knowledge transfers from rich to poor countries, with the latter gaining far more agency in developing solutions.

In other words, the focus of global public-health strategies and investments should shift toward reducing the structural disparities between rich and poor countries, in terms of their capacity for medical research and public-health implementation. This mission — which, I would argue, should be the main goal of global public-health efforts today — would entail a central role for institutions like the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research (icddr), based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where I work as a scientist.

As it stands, most global public-health activities involve researchers from advanced countries leading local teams in developing countries. While this is better than imposing ready-made solutions on the developing world, as occurred during the Cold War, it is not good enough. Medical research and policy implementation in the developing world must be led by researchers and specialists from low- and middle-income countries — people who can combine cutting-edge scientific expertise with an intimate understanding of local contexts.

The value of developing-country-led innovation has been demonstrated time and again. Over the last 15 years, scientific innovations spearheaded by developing countries contributed significantly to progress on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly those related to global health.

The contributions of icddr alone are enough to prove the value of developing-country health innovation. The institute's researchers carry out innovative and complex science, from classic clinical trials and epidemiological studies to behavioral-modification trials aimed at reducing the spread of infectious disease — with remarkable results. An iconic example of icddr's work is oral rehydration solution

(ORS), a simple balanced solution of sugar and salt administered orally to people suffering from diarrheal diseases like cholera. That solution, which icddr played a central role in developing, has prevented an estimated 40 million deaths globally since the 1960s, and has been called one of the most important medical inventions of the twentieth century.

More recently, my team and I developed a new low-cost system for delivering "bubble CPAP" (continuous positive airway pressure), which keeps air flowing during the process of treating severe pneumonia. Trevor Duke, Director of the Centre for International Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital at the University of Melbourne, also participated in the project.

Our version of bubble CPAP, which uses cheap and readily available materials like plastic tubing and shampoo bottles, proved in trials to be more effective than the standard low-flow oxygen therapy recommended by the World Health Organization. Following the trial, the Dhaka Hospital of icddr implemented the new low-cost bubble CPAP, instead of the WHO-recommended therapy, as part of standard treatment of children with pneumonia. Since then, the death rate for bubble CPAP-treated patients has fallen from 21% to just 6%. These remarkable successes stem from the fact that icddr researchers — most of them Bangladeshis who trained abroad — are well acquainted with the problems they are trying to address. They understand what it means to face severe — and, to some extent, insurmountable — resource constraints.

The 15-year MDG experience made clear the indisputable potential of developing-country innovation to advance public health. Fortunately, world leaders seem to have taken that lesson to heart: the Sustainable Development Goals — the ambitious post-2015 development agenda adopted at the UN last September — are premised on the idea of local ownership.

But, despite vocal support for locally led research and development, severe constraints to developing-country innovation remain — and must urgently be removed. Unsurprisingly, the tightest constraint is the lack of resources, both human and financial. To ease it, developed and developing countries must now work together to ensure adequate investment to support local efforts reliably and sustainably. With adequate support from local and international financing mechanisms, more innovation hubs like icddr could emerge and flourish in poor countries. By advancing knowledge sharing and technology transfer, these hubs would enhance cooperation among developing countries, and help us finally overcome the persistent and tragic disparities that plague global health.

Health innovations developed in the world's poor countries have passed the test of scalability and applicability in the places that need them most. With the majority of the world's population living in resource-challenged settings, we must recognize — and invest in — the efforts of those who are pushing the frontiers of medical science in the developing world. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Mohammad Jobayer Chisti is Scientist and Head of Clinical Research, Hospitals, and Clinical Lead, ICU, Dhaka Hospital at icddr, Bangladesh.



Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa
Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari
Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com
Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019
www.outlookafghanistan.net



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