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Whither Pakistan? Can we be the Next Asian Economic Miracle?



Pakistan is one of the very poor countries in the world with per capita income of merely \$1200. In the midst of 1960's it was called a model developing economy, but faced with poor economic decisions of subsequent governments and as a result of Afghan war, overall growth of economy remained slow and it still remains a poor country. Several Asian countries that were poorer than Pakistan 25 years ago are far richer than Pakistan and cited as examples of economic miracles today.

Question is, 'Can Pakistan become another Asian economic miracle'? The answer as I see is in reserved affirmative. If we can show vision in choosing a path of our economic development and take the right decisions as demanded by our current situation, we can certainly build a modern and prosperous economy. On the other hand, if we do not take appropriate steps to spur growth and economic development, our future as a nation might become bleak forever. This might be the critical time for the people of Pakistan to take the right decisions, seize the moment and build a modern Pakistan that in coming times excels as a country and build a prosperous nation that its inhabitants love to call their homeland with sheer pride.

Such miracles are known to happen in recent human history and several nations that had the vision and acted in the right time became the symbol of economic might. Some examples of these miracles are Japan of Meiji era, postwar Germany, South Korea, and may be even Egypt at the times of Muhammad Ali Pasha.

Let me briefly describe how these nations showed vision and acted in ways that was unprecedented and built strong economies. For example, one of the tenets of Japanese revolution of Meiji era was exploration of knowledge, science and technology. Part of the oath of Meiji era said 'Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of Imperial rule.' Japan invited three thousand foreign scholars to teach modern sciences of that time to Japanese people. Thousands of Japanese students were sent to western countries to pursue higher education in scientific disciplines. Through fast import of western technology, Japan had already transformed itself from a rural economy into the only economically developed country in Asia by the end of 19th century. Second postwar economic miracle of Japan that built its war torn economy into great and mighty industrial country had its roots in the development it had seen in the Meiji era.

Similarly Postwar Germany also achieved a miracle by taking the right decisions at the proper time. Government restored faith in currency by introducing a new strong Deutsche Mark. It emphasized four pillars of economy that were strong economic growth, stability of currency, trade surplus and low unemployment rate. These were the four guiding principles for economic governance for a long time. As a result, average income of Germans increased by three times in a decade. Slowly Germany became a symbol of economic might that is hard to challenge by any other country.

We, as a country, can develop very fast as well if we can take the right steps and synchronize efforts in different areas that include good governance, right direction for the economy, proper trade policies, industrial stimulus, and acquiring modern technology in different areas. We have to know that any efforts and incentives to improve economy will work only if there is peace in the country, writ of law is maintained everywhere, property rights are respected and we avoid any internal or external conflicts. We also have to understand that economic miracles can happen only if we change the mindset of people, making them innovative, readily learning new things with zeal and implementing new technologies in a way that it benefits the society. It happens only when the society encourages a culture of excellence where every individual tries to excel in his sphere of influence. As a result, people as a whole become a progressive, modern and fast developing society. We really have to encourage and respect innovation and excellence in every domain of our society including industry, academia, governance and technological expertise.

Government has to target important areas of industry and technology for growth. For example, these areas could be public sector infrastructure projects, advanced agricultural technology, value added textiles, modern railways, large scale manufacturing, information technology, steel and heavy machinery, and semiconductors.

When thinking about growth strategy, the government has to divide the economy into two large areas. One that could be developed easily within a short period of time and where some infrastructure for growth and a developed domestic or export market already exists. These areas could be easily developed with right governance, good policies and proper incentives. Innovation and technological advances have to be encouraged by reduction of tax levy and trade benefits.

Second set of areas of economy should be identified looking and planning for fifteen years ahead in time. It should be decided which areas of industry and technology we want to see flourish in our country and a totally comprehensive program has to be implemented for growth of these designated areas. A decisive policy that would develop human capital and intellectual expertise in those areas, and ensure development of public and private sector entities that employ this human capital in innovative ways would be worked out. Industry experts and technocrats would identify hurdles for implementing these plans and foresee ways of overcoming problems in developing these areas of economy. They would also identify potential advantages Pakistani companies could have in these areas and how to leverage those advantages and what incentives have to be given to spur growth in these areas. Some of these might initially be built with state capital to overcome initial risk averseness that private sector investors could have to start into these sectors.

There is some false sense in our country that foreign capital will come, build industry and somehow rescue our economy. Instead of waiting for the time that foreign investors acting as messiahs will flock to rescue our economy, we have to put our house in order and leverage our own resources. Foreign investors will invest in our country only if our economy is relatively developed, economies of scale have been established, technologically developed human capital is abundant, good infrastructure is present in the country and right economic policies have been implemented. Only when we have prepared grounds for large scale economic development that foreign capital will come to our country and invest in any serious industry.

This is in tradition of Japan of Meiji era where they invited thousands of scholars to teach modern sciences of that time. In order to promote scientific and technological expertise in our country, create a culture of excellence and innovation, we have to lure back thousands of talented Pakistanis working in academia and high tech industries in foreign countries. They have to be paid by state grants at par with what they were earning abroad. They should be encouraged to make small technology companies in cooperation with Pakistani universities, seeded by public sector funding and employing university talent. These companies should be housed in technology parks built in each large city. Cooperation between large industrial groups and technology companies should also flourish so industry experts in universities can find capital and support for their innovative ideas and cutting-edge research. Again, every effort has to be made to repatriate the Pakistani talent working in advanced technological sectors in the developed world so they can train others and start work in parts of the economy where it is difficult to find talent in our own country. We would have to give huge incentives and extreme respect to talented Pakistanis working abroad so they choose to work in their own homeland.

I can definitely say if we can maintain strict law and order in our country, maintain fiscal discipline, low inflation, currency stability, and continue to work towards an excellence in appropriate areas of economy, sciences and technology, we can also be the Asian miracle that might surpass the miracles the world has yet seen.

APRIL 7, 2014 · 6:18 AM

The Need For A New Subject ‘Human Studies’ In Pakistan’s Schools.

There has been a long standing debate in our nation’s intelligentsia about changing the regular curriculum especially the way history and Islamic studies are taught in schools. Though there might be a need for changes in the above subjects, I see a far greater need for introducing a new subject called ‘human studies’.

The purpose of the new subject would be to teach the children about good customs of other nations, and also inform them of a well selected list of inhuman deeds done by several nations in the past. Apart from knowing the good and the bad in different societies, the children will learn what are the great practices that good nations have and would be more willing to follow them throughout their life as citizens of Pakistan.

In Pakistan, even the graduates of some of the good schools do not have the right training to appreciate the good customs of many other nations and sometimes they can be counted among the category of bigots. Many times the reasons behind this phenomenon is that most of us might not have a moment in their life to critically analyze and appreciate so many foreign practices and only consider them in the light of national, cultural or religious obsessive biases. It would be good to invite our children to think more critically and methodically about different practices of foreign nations.

And I am not asking for a huge syllabus, we can keep the volume of this new subject very light. Taking the evil of sectarianism, we can teach about how different Christian sects/different ethnicities fought each other to death, but later started living peacefully. We could give examples of Britain and Rwanda here. We can teach our children how slavery was practiced and how it ended forever in other nations. We can teach them true stories about horrors of holocaust and other massacres in the name of religion, or nationalism. Only when children see the lack of dignity in inhuman acts of people and nations, they would recoil from horror when faced with expression of similar acts and make right and dignified human choices. We could also teach them stories of some leaders like Mustafa Kemal whose bravery and wisdom saved his nation from defeat in difficult times.

And everything in the curriculum of the new subject need not be about extremes of human good and bad. We could teach our children about some foreign folk stories and some foreign festivals and their relevance. For example Iranians make the best use of the longest night in the year with the whole families celebrating it together all through the night.

We can also teach our children about the nations who keep their cities perfectly clean and how they manage to do that and which nations are most disciplined that they automatically start a line when they feel the need for it. What is a nation where people would stop at red traffic light even at two in the morning. And so many other similar light things.

The purpose of the subject would be to appreciate good things of other nations and learn them into children of our nation. And learn to loathe the undignified acts of humanity throughout the history and never have to learn to hate them after doing them.

MARCH 21, 2014 · 3:48 PM

Transforming Agriculture in Pakistan into a Dynamic Part of Our Economy

Agriculture in Pakistan employs about half of the population of Pakistan and contributes about a quarter to our GDP. One of the major reasons behind the slow growth in agriculture are low literacy level in the villages, employing backward and inefficient techniques in agriculture, very slow modernization and very little value addition in the raw agricultural produce. The purpose of this blog is to give suggestions towards a better, coherent and organized model of agriculture as opposed to current haphazard agricultural practices.

God has given our country a very fertile land. He also gave us a great weather — temperature, winds and rainfall pattern change quite dramatically across various parts of the country and along various seasons. And as we go from one corner of our country to the other corner, the varied mix of the weather parameters changes from one extreme to the other extreme. And we also have one of the best irrigation systems in the world.

All of the above factors decide what would be the optimal set of crops, vegetables, or fruit that would give maximum returns to the farmers and landowners. And if we want to make the best of our land and our enterprising people, we must take into account the benefits of value addition and processing of the raw agricultural produce.

Since most of our farmers are uneducated, in the world of information and technology, they usually cannot make the best decision about what to grow in their lands, and mostly just copy the more successful farmers in their area. This leads to inefficient haphazard agricultural practices that are mostly suboptimal when it comes to benefit to the farmer and rest of the community.

I am trying to give ideas about more organized agriculture. To describe the gist of my suggestions in a nutshell, I will try to give the following ideas and explain them later in the article.

1. The government must actively help the farmer with expert advice throughout the crop cycle including the choice of crop that the farmer would grow on his land.
2. The government will strongly encourage value addition and processed food preferably close to rural areas where the raw crop is grown.
3. The government will try to encourage microfinance banks and agricultural banks to work closely with the farmer.

4. The government will encourage formation of cooperative companies run by people with technical and industrial talent and business acumen who would work to add value and process the raw food grown in the villages. Farmers would also have a stake in these cooperatives.
5. There will be some form of insurance that would protect farmer from extreme crop damage from the calamities of the weather. The insurance would not cover man-inflicted losses.
6. The government will ask vocational institutes to impart skills related to food processing and value addition. They will also introduce programs related to culinary skills especially for women.
7. All of the above different but related operations must build on each other and work seamlessly together.

I would also suggest that large number of teams comprising three professionals would visit each farmer and his lands every week or two weeks. The members of the team would be

- a. Technical Advisor related to agriculture.
- b. Financial Advisor
- d. Agricultural/Microfinance bank advisor

The teams will periodically visit each farmer and discuss with him and among themselves the developments and progress related to his crops and the related financial and logistics matters.

I start by defining the role of the Technical advisor. He will inform the farmer and rest of the group regarding technical issues regarding farmer's crop. This would include everything from choice of crop, weather and temperature, pest control, optimal watering times and other factors to achieve a good yield.

Financial Advisor will help the farmer in financial decision making at the micro level. He will also discuss with the farmer the risks and rewards related to both his decisions and vagaries of the nature/weather. He will advise the farmer how to cope with financial problems and related difficulties keeping in mind the farmer's financial standing. He will also explain how loans or aid from the government and loans from the Microfinance bank can help him through the crop cycle and later. Financial Advisor will give possible projections of costs of input to the agriculture cycle of the crop and will also project most probable scenarios of how much his crop would fetch in the market. He would also help the farmer on practicalities of buying inputs for his crop and when to sell his harvest.

Microfinance Advisor will discuss with rest of the group how his bank can help in different scenarios and he will also try to protect the interests of his bank and will try to counter any possibility of deception and fraud.

All of the three categories of professionals mentioned above would be rigorously trained to help the farmer and would be taught through case studies of hundreds of possible and real world scenarios.

Since the success of the farmer rests on the successful working of the group, I will state again that the group will help the farmer in his choice of the crop/fruit/vegetable considering weather, nature of the land, availability of water, farmer's savings, and potential reward from the crop grown on his land while taking into account government's loans and aid and microfinance bank's loans. The group will also consider the benefits to the farmer from any possibility of value addition and food processing.

After working towards the optimal and successful harvest in a properly planned manner, the next step for the government is to work towards value addition by industrial processing and preservation of the agricultural produce.

There are several traditional and some other novel ways to achieve this objective. The traditional approach would be to make jams, pickle and ketchups etc. A slightly better way that complements the first approach would be to preserve the fruit and vegetable in cans. Since canning is both expensive and environment unfriendly, we could use tetra pack like boxes and pouches with several aluminium linings to preserve the fruit and vegetable while pasteurizing them in the industrial process of packing in the boxes/pouches. I am very confident that such aluminium lined boxes and pouches can easily be made that would preserve the freshness of processed fruit and vegetables. This approach will be cheaper than traditional canning of fruit and vegetables.

Even more novel and innovative approach to value addition would be to prepare great classis Baluchi, Pashtun, Punjabi and Sindhi meals under supervision of some of the best chefs, and package them in aluminium lined tetra pack boxes and sell them in both local and export markets. These specially prepared meals would be liked by Pakistani, Indian, Afghan, Iranian and Turkic diaspora abroad in western countries. I am very confident that this new line of business would become very successful quite soon if we could execute it with tact and competence. In Europe, there are a large number of very small family held companies that prepare high quality exotic food and this category makes significant enough part of trade within European nations. Though this would be misleading that we could come at par with those companies in a few years, we can certainly establish food brands that start to get noticed everywhere in the world and start gaining some popularity.

One could also suggest that several clusters of villages could make value addition cooperative companies with some help from the government. These cooperative companies would compete with other domestic privately held companies in the area of food processing. These cooperatives would run the industrial operations of preserving raw food and preparing processed food and later market them in national and international markets. Farmers, the farmers advisory group, industrial workers, technical staff and management would be given appropriate holding of shares in these cooperatives while some stock of shares will be floated on national stock exchanges. If the cooperatives become successful, they could help in social uplift of the areas by building good schools, and hospitals.

Once everybody in the cooperative enterprise works hard and they approach practical problems intelligently, the value of their shares in the stock markets will also increase, and hence there will be a very strong incentive for everyone to work hard together and make their enterprise very successful.

I also suggest that Vocational schools would be set up to teach skills related to food processing and preservation. This kind of training is virtually non-existent in current vocational schools and if the government takes steps to promote organized and value added agriculture, this line of training must be a special priority in the vocational schools. The schools might also teach culinary skills and encourage their students to learn and experiment with local and international cuisine at some special vocational centers located in larger cities.

Another suggestions is to do some sort of crop protection insurance for the farmer against extremem damage to crops by the weather.

I would like to end this article by saying that people of Pakistan have great hope for their future and they do think that both political parties must do whatever they can to eradicate poverty and take our country towards a better future. If the current governments systematically take action for better future of Pakistan, we will indeed emerge as a successful nation and we look towards these political parties for that.

To our leaders, I quote some lyrics from a Coke Studio Song by Alamgir.

Steer it most cautiously, boatman

This boat of mine with a broken rim
The river seems endless as if there were no shore
Whether rainclouds rumble
Take us across to the other end, boatman
However loud these river torrents roar
Help me get my boat to the shore, boatman
Take us across to the other end, boatman

FEBRUARY 17, 2014 · 9:41 AM

Brainstorming Ideas Towards Comprehensive Planning For The Future Of The Lahore City

Present Government has done a lot of good work to improve the state of public infrastructure in the Lahore city, and their sincerity to improve the city has won them strong political support among its residents. And the city continues to do more development work at different places causing temporary problems in transport and traffic that accompany such infrastructure projects so these projects get noticed by most residents. Since the city administration seems eager to honestly improve the city, I thought of giving some ideas and suggestions as all good residents of the city should, so the experts would know what the residents would like and how to take their wishes in account when working towards a better comprehensive planning for the future of the city.

A comprehensive planning for the city means that we look for ease of transport across the city, good and clean ambience of the city, a good water supply and sewerage system, good standards and code for the architecture of communities and markets, great public health system, good schools, and provision of different utilities. And we should make it certain that the city makes it easy for itself to retain its position as the regional trading centre for so many commodities, industrial goods and wholesale trade. And we also work with the consideration that the city remains the cultural centre of the region where everybody across the country would like to visit, and businesses would like to invest here from different places, and there is a great education system that trains the talent both inside the city and from other places. And the city could also look towards developing itself as a centre for businesses related to future technologies by providing facilities related to these businesses and attracting brains from elsewhere in the country and abroad to live here.

For Brainstorming by experts simplest way is to ask the question how do we like to see a great city in the future given the present arrangements of the city meaning what we like in the city and what we want to make better or change. I would start by saying that we want to get rid of many parts of the city with sub human living conditions while simultaneously and flawlessly preserving our rich cultural heritage. And we also want to remove many new slums that have developed around the city. Of course, we will have to encourage these residents to live in carefully planned new parts of the city as I will suggest later. The next thought I have is to divide the city in different areas related to the categories urban areas, shopping centres, industrial areas, regional Wholesale trading centres and markets, warehouses, wholesale fruit and vegetable markets, technology related business clusters, and finally the city government infrastructure. It will be interesting to ask how we would like to see these areas arranged so that everything works seamlessly in the city fifteen years later and after that. And the most important requirement is that in the new arrangement of the city, movement of people and goods and other things is as convenient and easy as possible given the category assigned to the new areas of the city. And there are other requirements that suggest that our cultural places and other areas we deliberately do not intend to change remain the same. And of course, the city dwellers get to live in as good and beautiful communities as they possibly can. And the economic activity in the city flourishes and it becomes a place where people from other cities and countries would like to live.

The roads in the city are good enough but we might have to see greater traffic problems after a few years. The railways infrastructure is poor at best. However it does have assets in the form of some property and railway line areas that could be probably better used for local city railways. Metro Bus is certainly an achievement to decrease the traffic problems and help the people easily go across some parts of the city. We need to have a proper transport system planning for the whole city. And we might have to take main train station for travel away from its current location to some other properly planned station with easy access from all areas of the city. And wherever we plan warehouses and Industrial areas, alternative railways system has to be provided for ease of transfer of goods to those areas. And if we want a city train system, we will have to take the above considerations into account. There seems to be a need for a new modern train station where those who intend to take the train to other cities could reach without any hassle.

Those who have seen all of the city know that some areas have very very poor living conditions and it is extremely hard to imagine how people there could ever live without reasonable amenities we all need. Some people might sneer at the thought of doing anything special to help the backward parts of the city, but they do not understand that benefits to our community that follow when we plan for better living conditions in lacking areas, might be far greater to those parts of the community who do not even care about these areas at all. Still this is just one thing we have to keep in mind when we plan for the better future for the city among many other actions that have to be taken that directly benefit every part of the city.

If we want to move people out of some areas, we will have to develop affordable, clean, and simple housing areas where all required basic facilities like schools, hospitals and public parks could be easily provided where residents of those parts of the city that have been declared “difficult to live” by the city. And they could be linked with the city through very easy transport system. If these areas are well planned and properly built, it would be a perfect motivation for most people to leave those areas determined ‘difficult to live’ by city administration and exchange their land and old property for new housing. I suggested something earlier in a different blog where I gave some proposals on how to develop new areas . To make several of these new areas beautiful at minimum possible cost, we have to do good planning. We could ask architects for making good and possibly free architectural designs for the public buildings and each building would have a plaque with the name of the architect prominently written on it. If we plan the future of the city properly and make some model housing areas on these lines, many many people would be willing to leave their houses and related property in those parts of the city that have to be converted into non-residential categories and their old land could be better used by the city after possible further development. We would have to make sure that these new areas are provided with every public service requirement so that their initial planning is not in any way a hindrance in these areas growing into far more successful areas meaning those becoming wealthy would still want to live there in the future.

Similarly we might want to take suggestions from the members of different wholesale and other regional market bodies about the best way to relocate their markets, or to improve access there in case the city decides to keep some of them at the present place, in a way that it does no harm to the right business interests, and make it very convenient for business owners, and local and regional customers to drive to these markets, park there and transfer goods in and out of these markets depending on the nature of business activity of every market, and also provide good hotel facilities close to these markets for regional customers. And of course, important factor in deciding where to take the market in the new arrangement would be the nature of the market activity. One question that can be asked, “Is the business activity related to markets in the city, or regional activity related to agricultural, consumer or other related items, or other related markets out of the city?.”

And industrial areas except those totally without use of non-friendly chemicals to humans would have to be away from most residential areas due to possible contamination and related pollution problems that damage the city environment. And big warehouses and godowns go to parts of the city where heavy traffic could easily come from other parts of the

country without going through any of the residential areas, and also possibly close to route of the cargo train.

Some parts of the city could also be allocated to technology oriented businesses taking into account related considerations that there could be relatively more international exchange in these areas, and these activities are related with good technical education and depend on cooperation with academic institutions.

One of the several reasons why we have failed to achieve the full potential of making our city beautiful place to live is that most of the new development is haphazard done according to the best understanding of the persons investing money in their house, shop or other new projects and mostly while we make this decision, we are not concerned with its effect on the area as a whole. It is the responsibility of the management of the area or the city to have some minimum standards and models and some simple basic rules that new buildings would not defy. Though building codes do exist, there has to be some more work on this aspect of the problem. And this philosophy also applies to the city management on a broader and larger level.

And the economic activity that would follow any of these improvements in the city will contribute to wealth of its residents because of large construction work, better use of land and related resources that are currently non productive, increased efficiency that would follow the right allocation of parts of the city to appropriate category due to convenient transport of goods, and due to ease of movement across the city. And great social benefits will follow better living standards and increased economic activity, and it will attract both investment and talent.

FEBRUARY 15, 2014 · 12:21 PM

Suggestions to Stimulate Pakistan's Real Estate Development Industry

Real estate development industry is probably some of the most important parts of any country's economic engine where strong activity can stimulate fast growth in the economy in a way that most related business activity directly benefits the country's indigeneous industries and there are huge social benefits that follow alongwith a better standard of living. It gives people who want to live in the housing projects a great incentive, many times once in a life time, to spend money on building homes, and to make their new houses a great place to live. To give the reader a layman's idea of related industries, I could think of banking and finceance, construction, labour, road and infrastructure developmet, health and education services, cement and related construction materials, steel, furniture and other woodworks, sanitary, marble, other floorings and related industries, home electronics, and many others. And most of these industries depend on local expertise and required materials are mostly locally maufactured.

One of the major problems that are associated with this industry is that there are few laws, not to speak of desired incentives, that would encourage proper growth of this industry. Whatever existing laws that are made relevant to this sector of economy, are poorly applied. Lack of good legal infrastructure hurts the interests of those landowners whose land later become part of real estate projects, stifles competition between developers, and breeds corruption and other similar ills that hurt our society forever. Had there been a good system that would actually eourage growth in this sector, and protect the right interests of various parties in the business dealings associated with this industry, we could have seen far greater growth in this sector than the relatively meager activity we witness today when compared with the large population of our country.

I could think of some simple ideas for the government that they could implement to stimulate fast and orderly activity in this sector that actually helps all stakeholders instead of allowing mostly haphazard work by many of the land developers.

First of all, there should be a right legal code that helps professional activity in this sector, protects right interests of landowners whose land is acquired, and guarantees that standard of related infrastructure development work is good, and also punishes fraud related with many of the land development schemes. The right legal code has to be worked out in consultation with the experts in the all of the related fields. We have to understand that when making these laws if we do not take into account right interests of various counterparties in these dealings, and give undue advantage to some party due to their influence or corruption by them, it will hurt our society in the longer run in many many anticipated and unanticipated ways.

To practically help land development, the government could identify various blocks of land close to most cities and make a plan to develop those blocks that makes it as easy for landowners as possible to make money by doing great professional work and using interesting ideas, and without resorting to any corrupt tactics. We have to give the developers incentive to do great work in innovative ways otherwise any such idea might not become practical and if we fail to do this properly, most plans to promote useful business activity will not succeed. The government has to start by setting up, at least, minimum parameters for the standard of development work and related infrastructure that has to be completed before house building can start, and ascertain costs associated with this minimum development activity. Of course, this has to be done in a professional way that takes into account how inflation and prices of various inputs including labour and materials might increase with time. The government has to also approximately project the costs associated with acquiring the land, other related expenses, and take into account possible uncertainties and scenarios. These costs could be paid by loans from the commercial banks at appropriate interest rates, considering the government might possibly guarantee the recovery of these loans from the proceeds that follow when these land development projects complete. The government could now decide on giving a percentage share of housing plots, equally and possibly randomly distributed in various categories of houses and areas in the proposed new housing society, to the developers which they could only gradually offload over an extended period of time into the market after the completion of the housing society. The government's share of houses could be bought by general public at reasonable cost while the developer will retain control of the matters related to running the affairs of the housing society, and providing the required amenities and utilities after completion of all the initial development work. If the housing scheme and related development work is planned and completed in a great professional way, and the housing society becomes very successful, it would greatly increase the value of plots and land assigned to the developer alongside the other plots sold to the general public by the government or by the developer himself in a predetermined fashion. This would encourage the developer to concentrate on using a professional approach and a great skill in design, development and running the affairs of the housing society. And it will help existing real estate developers and those businesses who want to strategically enter in housing estate development business make a long term professional commitment to this sector. Similarly provisions have to be made to make sure that landowners of these identified blocks of land acquired for these projects by the government, are given a fair compensation so that they willingly part with their land. This compensation could be in several forms that could include giving them a fair price of the land, some land in a different area, and/or some plots in the new housing estate after completion of the projects possibly close to where the original land was. Since the estate developer could offload his share of plots only in the future in a gradual fashion, they will have a great incentive to competently run all the related professional affairs that increase the value of the property in that housing society.

And some related thoughts that I had when I visited Bahria Town this morning where I started to think of this idea, there has to be very good standards that home builders would have to follow when they construct houses in these new housing societies. Instead of just defining standards and parameters, there could be interesting ways to promote good architecture in these housing societies. For example, each large housing society could have twenty or more basic designs or architectural templates for every category of houses, and people who intend to live in these new houses could play with these basic templates by adding several of the possibilities for each aspect that is added to the basic template. They could choose their own style for the front portion of the houses or the design of the windows and whatever they like for every

complexity on the initial design from large number of different possibilities for each detail. And a computer program could show them how their choice of details would finally show up when the house would be physically constructed. There might be some similar software already in the market, while some interested programmers might want think of making better software that takes into account our local architecture preferences, weather related matters and interesting trends in home architecture in foreign countries. Of course, the plot owners who want to build new homes would have to take advice of some professional engineer who would approve the design for strength of the building and other technical matters. This could in general promote good architecture for the housing places.

These are just very basic ideas and there could be several ways in which we could change some of these ideas or add many more details to these basic thoughts. But if we could devise a great legal code, a right system to implement this code and give generous incentives to professional groups while protecting rights of every counterparty involved in related business dealings, we can easily have a flourishing housing related industry.

FEBRUARY 10, 2014 · 9:09 PM

Some Thoughts On Pakistan's Foreign Policy Upon Saudi Prince's Visit to Lahore

As a Pakistani, I think we should maintain as cordial relationships with Saudi Arabia as possible, without sacrificing our interests as a country. A large number of Pakistanis work in SA, and it is a major source of remittances that help us maintain working level of foreign exchange reserves despite huge trade deficit in our international trade. We know, in the past, that Saudis might have also given us oil on credit. But it will be more advantageous to build on existing good relationship between two countries to invite their influential business people to invest in possible opportunities and projects in Pakistan. And explore possibilities of cooperation between large firms in Saudi Arabia and firms in Pakistan that have a good reputation and are going to be easily trusted by foreigners. Once a few joint projects become successful and profitable, far more investment will surely follow. We have seen investment by SA in some public enterprises in the past, but a pattern of successful joint investment on various projects will follow as a result of cooperation mostly between private sector firms of the two countries, so some sort of effort has to be made to initiate joint projects here. Really a phenomenon of foreign investment in our country's industry will result only if some industrial and manufacturing projects become very successful, and foreigners realize that investing in related industries is indeed very profitable and they can also run successful industrial ventures in Pakistan following the footsteps of those foreigners who have already invested here with success.

We also have to request Saudis to help us control the flow of money that helps people commit sectarian crimes, and should have some laws that charity and related donations into our country from foreigners are properly documented and there has to be some reasonable degree of accountability about how that money gets spent. A lot of foreign money in our poor country is a reason for many many problems most Pakistanis do not like in our country.

Another related issue is that we must not forget is that relations with Iran must be developed as it is natural for two neighboring countries. For example, In a little more than a decade, trade between Turkey and Iran has increased roughly by twenty five times. And benefits of trade between Pakistan and Iran would exceed, within a few years, the benefits from any foreign assistance we get from foreign countries opposed to good economic relationship between two neighbors. It is just that it is difficult for us to take the hard decisions that might result in a short time pain but far more benefit in the future. It would also be right to ask the foreign powers that Turkey can trade with Iran despite being a part of NATO, why can we not have good relations with Iran and others simultaneously. We do not want to part of any block or ally against any third country since being part of negative international politics will only hurt our country.

And I truly do not understand why the new government does not work on pipeline to import gas from Iran. Any delay in sourcing energy from Iran hurts our country's economy. If only we had completed this project five years ago, the benefit to our country might have exceeded any foreign aid, but we continue to shoot ourself in the foot, and do not even realize how we are damaging our country by not realizing our own potential, and fear that some foreign aid will be forfeited if we take the right steps for our country, and this general thinking of our nation continues to hurt us.

When it comes to international relations, we have to make sure we are not working against any third country due to our proximity to some other friend. And we have to realize that it could be possible only if we are economically strong but we still have to ask donor countries that we would honestly safeguard their right interests related to terrorism and other right human concerns, but we will not support them in alienating any third country at all or make alliance against that country, because being part of negative international politics will always hurt us in the future and this will be extremely short sighted of our leaders today, and we will unwittingly damage our country's economy and integrity. Only if we had learnt this a few decades ago, we might have been far more well off economically.

Since we had a discussion of foreign policy, I thought may be I could give some more ideas about foreign policy of our country and we could have some more discussion about it.

As I think, prosperity and better future of any country in today's world depends upon three most important and very basic requirements. These factors that can shape the good future of any country are peace and order, trade with rest of the world, and giving good and right skills to its citizens. How any country, culture or region can promote and succeed in implementing the fine details of the above of these factors in their country, determines the prosperity of that country or area.

So one thing we have to truly consider in making our foreign policy is that we have to promote peace, at least, in our part of the world and anything that takes any country in the region, our friends or countries we traditionally consider our foes, towards any conflict or instability, has to be avoided and rather actively discouraged by our foreign policy. And it also means that state tries to promote very good relations with all neighbors, and promotes stability and prosperity in all those countries including India, Iran and Afghanistan. And actively uses its foreign policy to prevent anything in these countries or rest of the world that could result in any conflict in the region.

Most natural trading partners of any country are those countries bordering it. Prosperity in neighboring countries, generally, means that there would be more chances and opportunities for trade with these countries, implying that it would generally result in more economic activity within our own country. Our largest trading partners are America, Europe and Gulf countries because of more prosperity in those countries, and of course, it would be natural to retain and increase the trade with these countries using existing linkages, but some emphasis has to be towards trade with our neighbors. Case of most East Asian countries was similar as they grew by exporting mostly to richer nations but now those countries are moving towards increasing trade within East Asian countries. We really do not realize the potential of trade with our neighbors, especially because current trade volumes are usually very small, but if we adopt right policies and foreign relations, our trade with our neighbors can increase to levels comparable to trade with our traditional export markets. This makes a valid case for promoting peace and stability in the region as one of the most important cornerstone of our foreign policy, and slowly and gradually opening to neighboring countries in terms of better trade relations, and ease of travel, at least, for those people whose travel could promote economic, cultural, or educational and scientific ties between the neighbors. And it also makes a case for using our foreign policy to try to discourage activities all over the world to destabilize, or economically hurt our neighbors, while of course simultaneously trying to prevent anything that could encourage our neighbors to enter into any conflict elsewhere.

Similarly promoting conflict or instabilities among our neighbors will damage us because of related fallout in our own

society in form of terrorism, sectarianism and lack of tolerance. And we will be target of antagonistic policies of our neighbors that will follow as a result of our unfriendly policies, and our resources will have to be spent in combating the threat from the hostile enemy as a result of our conflict promoting adverse policies. And we could also truly suffer as a country when some powerful neighbor could possibly damage us in some open or tacit conflict. And the resources we spend in preparing for possible combat would be better spent in educating and giving the right skills to our own population. So this gives us the idea that objective of our foreign policy should be towards truly decreasing hostilities with our neighbors that exist today and promoting better relationship with all of our neighbors so we could decrease the need for unproductive expenses associated with assuring security of our country in the atmosphere of conflict in our region.

It seems that all of the three factors I mentioned earlier that include peace, trade and right skills for citizens of our country converge and point towards a foreign policy that actively promotes stability and prosperity in the region and we should work with all our neighbors to ensure that we work as closely together as possible to achieve these common goals for the region and try to avoid and prevent any conflict and instability. And only then our geopolitical importance, that has remained geopolitical curse due to constant conflict and hostilities in the region, could result in trade with all other countries in the region and we could also provide trade corridors to Central Asian countries as they also grow richer reviving the memory of silk routes in modern times.

JANUARY 11, 2014 · 4:53 AM

Suggestions for PM's Youth Loan Scheme

We are a country where percentage of younger population far exceeds the older population which means larger number of youth enter the job market with each coming year. Since our economy is not growing fast enough to provide jobs to all of the new graduates, this creates all sort of economic and social problems and this hurts all of us.

PM's Youth Loan Scheme is a very good initiative in this direction. This initiative that has an honest intent, really has to succeed otherwise it will give political opponents a chance to portray it as a state bribery to the youth to woo their hearts. To achieve success, this initiative has to be implemented with great care and tact so as to really achieve the real objectives. Otherwise, nothing could be easier than simply doling out money when banks are the source backed by state guarantees.

My suggestion is that this scheme has to be implemented, at least partially, in cooperation with recognized colleges, universities and vocational institutes. Most good universities have career counselling centers that help their senior classes find work with different businesses after graduation. Career counselling centers also help them in their choice of courses when students are more inclined towards working in a particular field or profession. This concept is borrowed by our good universities from similar practices in foreign schools. I suggest that we also have entrepreneurship counselling centers managed by skilled staff in our academic institutions. The role of these centers would be to help those graduates who want to set up their own businesses or who cannot find work in private businesses due to slow economic activity in the country, inability of the existing industry to absorb a large influx of graduates in the job market, and due to several other reasons. These centers would help their students with guidance towards the process of starting a private business, understanding of various aspects including financial, managerial and technical knowledge required to make a small private business successful, and give advice on the business plans taking into account the economic and industry trends and competence of the student.

Our country's speed of economic growth, our unique population mix, and our different business practices require that government encourages all academic institutions to set up entrepreneurship counselling centers regardless of whether

this practice is universally established in foreign countries or not. The staff of these entrepreneurship counselling centers would be well educated and try to stay abreast of new developments in the respective professions and would continue to gain experience and professional acumen that would help in guiding their students. Every center would hire skilled professionals/advisors in all areas whose knowledge is required to run a small business. Many smaller institutions who could not afford to build these centers on their own, could pool resources with similar other institutions and have a well staffed and managed center that could help the graduates of all the schools in the group successfully.

The government might want to ask some good academic institution or some consulting company about research into how we could successfully start and manage these centres. Some countries might have similar centers and we could adapt their techniques to our country's business environment. If the effort succeeds initially, we could do larger scale research about how to channel our youth into new professions according to our country's needs and changing demands and trends of international trade.

Since the government has asked the banks to participate in these schemes, and they have a huge stake in its success, they might want to fund building of these centers and help the institutions in running them so that a systematic cooperation between the government, academic institutions, the banks and our youth could emerge. Close cooperation between these entrepreneurship centers and the banks will also allow the banks to get very good idea about the success of various business plans and where their money would be best invested. This would be far better than any haphazard way of allocating the loans to the youth and stop investment in business plans where it would be detrimental to both the banks and the young people. And if it turns out to be successful and profitable for the banks, government might slowly stop giving any guarantees to the banks and the banks might start such schemes on a commercial basis with huge success.

If entrepreneurship in our youth becomes a successful and commercial phenomenon, this will be akin to turning our disadvantage into a great advantage. And for fast growth in our economy, we need to create several successful self-sustained phenomena.

Many people would argue that giving large sums of money to a lot of young with little fiscal discipline will create more problems than it would solve. This criticism has quite a bit of truth in it but it should not deter us from following this path. We should rather intelligently try to modify the modalities of this scheme in a way that it does not encourage misuse of loans. For example when the loan is totally unsecured, it might be more prudent for the bank to not release all of the promised loan at the start of the venture, and rather monitor the progress of business and if the money is being spent in accordance with the business plans. Bank could possibly make payments for business those expenses directly to the business counterparties and keep track of fraudulent counterparties and might even have a list of approved counterparties. This could help the bank keep a record of honest businesses and blacklist the dishonest people in order to encourage future business with those entities who have remained honest in the past.

We also need some sort of a national credit rating scheme for our citizens and businesses. Some of us take pride in having a great database of our citizens but this database has to be augmented to keep an authentic record of those individuals who have swindled or defrauded any other institution or individual. This will help promote honesty in our business culture. We have seen examples of individuals in our country who continued to swindle others for decades only because there is no authentic place where people could know that they had already cheated a large number of people before entering into risky transactions.

Really there has to be a systematic study into the procedures of any such scheme which encourages hard work and determination to succeed, while discouraging the efforts to make money overnight by closing several loopholes that shortsighted people could take undue advantage of. And this would help make entrepreneurship a phenomenon in our society and its young people. If we cannot have a huge corporate business landscape overnight that would make

employment a certainty for most of the unemployed, we must make great systems that encourage them to work hard and give them enough resources to be able to succeed on their own something that is very difficult in the current system.

Entrepreneurship does not mean starting a big business, it can be anything like an effort to make money in a traditional profession or might have to do with something unconventional in our country's business environment. Mostly, people who are entrepreneurs are those who are quite wealthy and already have strong economic standing, or those who are relatively more impoverished or graduates who have been denied jobs in their profession for whatever reasons. Entrepreneurship here is rarely a 'mode of first choice' to make money.

One major problem is that we lack 'knowledge based' or 'innovative ideas based' entrepreneurship. And this should probably come from those people who are more educated with a good understanding of 'economy and culture' of our own country and foreign world and can use their skills and knowledge to make money in interesting ways.

Entrepreneurship has the connotations of being associated with success and entrepreneurship most cited, and analysed is mostly about those endeavors that become very successful, something which is not known ex ante. Since in the developed countries, most successful new ventures are highly knowledge based and in the areas of emerging technologies, the new connotations of entrepreneurship continue to have associations with businesses started in younger disciplines there. Since knowledge of most of the emerging technologies is rare in our country, this may not be the exact definition in our country.

I am confident that when our youth is guided in the right professions to work hard, they will certainly succeed and make this country a better place for all of us. And this will, among the other things, rid our country of so many social and economic evils that arise when many of us cannot even earn enough to get our basic needs.

OCTOBER 23, 2013 · 12:59 PM

Prosperity of Pakistan, Pakistan-India Relations, and Pakistan Army

The success and greatness of a nation is not measured by the strength of its army, its atomic arsenal or weaponry. It is measured by the prosperity of its people, the rule of law, tolerance and civility among the individuals of the society and the scholarship and strong work ethics of the people of the nation. These are characteristics of a good society in which every nation should take pride in. Immature nations and people take pride in weaponry and atomic arsenal of their nations, hatred for other nations/people/religions and righteously believe that hurting or damaging other nations somehow contributes to greatness of their own nations. Nations have to achieve greatness by working hard, imparting right skills and education to its individuals, choosing the right trades and industries in which to excel, giving a good legal code to its society, and providing social justice to individuals of its society. When some nation thinks that their success lies in damaging interests of other nations, it means that something has seriously gone wrong with the collective decision making and vision of that nation.

We, as Pakistanis, have to ask ourselves whether we can take pride in the above qualities of a great nation. We are one of the poorest country in the world. We do not spend much on education as compared to other nations of the world despite having very low literacy rates, and advanced sciences and technology are rarely known to the individuals of our society. However, we do take great pride in supporting one of the largest army in the world and a huge percentage of our GDP goes to serving the interests of this army. We are a nation with very limited resources and we have to make wise and thoughtful decisions about how to allocate our meager resources to different categories of state expenditure. When we do

not spend much on education and continue to spend huge amount of money on our army it means that something has seriously gone wrong with the decision making process in our society. We have to see the writing on the wall that no state can continue to spend huge sums on defence without expanding the economy which in turn is not possible without giving right skills and education to its people, an area where we are seriously faltering as a nation. Since we have made the same choice for decades, our state is close to bankruptcy and our finances have to be propped by loans from foreign nations and banks who fear that a complete breakdown of our state will create anarchy and promote terrorism.

It is up to the people of the nation, its universities and the intelligentsia to sense what has gone wrong with their nation and propose a recipe to cure the problem. I have tried to give qualities of nations that tread the path of success and excellence. We have to take the right and dramatic decisions now to take our nation away from the road to failure and destruction towards the path of success.

One thing we have to understand that prosperity for our nation will result only when we have total peace with our neighbors and we are sincere in creating an atmosphere of peace in the region. India is a much larger country with a huge economy that is growing at a faster pace than our country's economy. It will be impossible for Pakistan to stand against India for long without growing our economy which does not seem possible given the current state of affairs. It will be really wiser to seek total, true and real peace with India and divert our resources towards good education of our children, fostering an atmosphere where investment in right industries is hugely encouraged, imparting social justice to people in the society, and creating a true sense of security among the individuals when it comes to their life and property by curbing all crime.

Let me ask people of my nation this question. Do our ethics as a nation or our religion allow the kind of massacre that Pakistani religious fanatics did in Bombay in 2008. As far as I know my religion, killing innocent people of any other nation or religion is a great crime and when it is done in the name of my religion, it shows the extreme immaturity and childishness of the people doing that in the name of religion. I have studied the life of our prophet and I know how he showed extreme kindness towards other people all his life. I, as a common Pakistani, cannot be sure but a lot of evidence points that ISI encouraged training these people and the people responsible for these crimes walk free in Pakistan. We have to assume our responsibilities as a civilized nation. I strongly suggest that we really have a fair trial into this issue as possible and if any individual is found responsible for this, they must be punished according to laws of our country. And if any official institution is found responsible for this, let us try to rectify ethics of that institution. I, as a proud follower of Prophet Muhammad(PBUH), cannot see my country as a sanctuary for people who commit murder of innocent people of other nations or religions and walk free in my country with impunity.

One of the purposes behind mentioning the Bobmay massacre was that some institutions in our country have vested interest in never having peace with India. We have to look towards prosperity of our nation as a whole and if some vested interests come in the way, let us defeat those vested interests and take the right decisions with a collective wisdom that ensures that our nation is on the right track towards progress and prosperity.

So let us allocate the right amount of our GDP on educating the poor children of our nation, invest heavily on higher education and the research in the universities, promote the right industries by giving them generous incentives and maintain an atmosphere of law, security and order when it comes to life and property of the individuals but this could only be possible if we can divert resources from supporting one of the largest armies in the world and try to find peace with India.

I have written about ills of our society but I think some of the similar problems exist in Indian society as well. Just like the religious fanatics in my country, there are Hindu fundamentalists in India who are against the idea of any kind of peace with Pakistan. The only fear that stops me from suggesting a steep reduction in the Pakistan army is that some

Indian government may yield to the idea of gaining cheap popularity among a lot of Indian hardliners by choosing the path of military adventurism. How remote that scenario is, I cannot say. But if the people of two countries try to take truly sincere and concrete steps to promote peace, I am confident that we can help alleviate poverty among one of the most heavily populated countries in the world. The future of the two countries when measured in terms of the prosperity of their people will be far more secure, if we learn to live with total peace as good neighbors.

JUNE 14, 2013 · 1:55 PM

Proposal to New Government for Strategic Investment Initiatives Program

I am confident that new democratic government is capable of navigating the damaged ship of our nation from economic maelstrom to safety of a prosperous future. But with our nation engaged in a continuous struggle to cope with fundamental problems like, lack of basic amenities for its citizens and necessary infrastructure for industry; it is very difficult to keep our vision intact about what needs to be done when we emerge out of the energy crisis and the resulting deep industrial malaise and slump currently prevailing in our country.

We have to transform our country from an agricultural and primitive industrial economy to a knowledge based agricultural, manufacturing, and industrial powerhouse with foundations steeped in advanced sciences and technology. This should be the medium to long term vision of any government who has been assigned the solemn and sacred task to steer the destinies of the people of Pakistan towards a great future.

To open a similar page from history, Japan of Meiji era was the only industrial nation in second half of nineteenth century outside of Europe and a part of the Imperial Oath was, " Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule" Japanese extremely aggressively learnt European sciences and within a few decades transformed a backward agricultural country into an industrial powerhouse that rivaled and several times defeated strong European Imperial powers. Just Fifteen years after American ships anchored at the harbors of secluded Japan under command of Commodore Perry in 1853 and shocked rural Japanese people with their technological and industrial might, Japanese had built a rail system from Tokyo to Yokohama.

As I stated earlier that it is very difficult for the government to look beyond a few months when it is in a struggle to restore even the most basic infrastructure amid financial and power crises. But it is imperative for us to take some crucial steps and make relatively small but strategic investments in those areas of science, technology and industry that are generally vital for the growth of any country. The purpose of these strategic investments should be to train human capital in these areas, build enough industry and finally build knowledge excellence centers related to these industries so that there is enough critical mass for the private sector to fully take over and start investing aggressively in these areas. Though we have already delayed this vision for decades, relatively small investments made today, if managed competently, will bear great dividends for our nation in the future.

A ministry should be set up to manage the strategic investment initiatives program. Simultaneously an advisory body composed of prominent, brilliant, competent and above all patriotic professionals from academia and industry should advise this ministry, set the direction and scope of the program and point out the areas which have to be included in this investment program.

It would be the work of the advisory body to decide which areas have to be included in this program but as a start I would point out a few areas to give a flavor of the kind of work that needs to be done.

1. Semi-conductor design and manufacturing and its allied computer/electronics industry is a huge area that attracts constant innovations from technologically advanced nations of the world and its trade exceeds trillions of dollars across the world but it is a pity that we do not have even the basic expertise to manufacture semi-conductor devices that are even of basic/medium complexity. This area would continue to dominate technology and trade for decades to come and

we have not started to learn the basics of advanced fabrication technologies. This is what we want to see in our country 5-10 years in the future. This is one reason why revenue of Intel exceeds the entire exports of our country and revenue of Samsung is more than two third the GDP of entire Pakistan. If we do not understand the direction of wind in the future, we will keep making and exporting shoes and towels and keep whining why our exports do not increase and other nations will just set up a few technologically advanced factories that will earn more money than our entire GDP. We have to decisively make sure that we need to create an environment where semiconductor design , fabrication and allied industries would be an integral constituent of our industry and economy.

2. Due to availability of raw cotton and cheap labor, Pakistan has seen its textile sector grow just enough to contribute 13 billion dollars to exports. When seen from an international perspective, even this is not much of an achievement for a nation of 180 million people. A related strategic investment segment is manufacturing of textile and industrial machinery. If we can create enough critical mass in industrial machinery manufacturing technologies, we can hugely accelerate the pace of industrialization of our country. One of the reasons of fast industrialization of Europe about two centuries ago was their great craftsmanship of the industrial machinery of that time. Germany which is on the forefront of industrial machinery manufacturing technology is still one of the largest industrial powerhouses of Europe whose per capita exports are probably the largest in the world. If we want a fast industrialization of our country, this is a very crucial area in which we must work hard to establish a solid basic infrastructure. We have enough textiles manufacturing industry so it would be a great opportunity to make sure that, as a start, related textile machinery manufacturing is done in Pakistan.

3. Pakistan is traditionally an agricultural country but it is a pity we do not have any great scientific and technological achievements in this sector. Per hectare yield of all major crops is less when compared with India or other advanced agricultural countries. We have to work on science of superior plant breeding technologies. With increasing population all over the world, food prices are set to soar at least for a decade. If we cannot teach advanced skills to an average poorly educated farmer in villages of Pakistan, we can set some of the best brains to work on plant breeding technologies and give those poor people a possibility to grow new varieties of crops that yield much greater harvest. This would be a great way to increase per capita income and efficiency in parts of economy where it is most difficult to do so. Another strategic interest area related to agriculture is food storage and preservation of perishable vegetables/fruit. It is usual to observe a cruel cycle that when crop of some perishable food items hits the market, its price plummets and the average farmers gets just enough to make his ends meet. However those who have the resources to buy the fruit and vegetables at a throw away price, preserve and sell it relatively out of season and make great money. This is very unfair to a farmer who works hard during the season to care for the crops in harsh weathers and cannot get maximum benefit due to inability to store his crop and unload over a larger time period. Government should allocate each cluster of villages a perishable crops storage center where their crop is packed, sealed and frozen according to state of the art food storage technologies. These centers would be owned jointly by the community and the government.

Very important part of this strategic initiative program would be aggressive knowledge base creation in specific critical areas of science and technology. Centers of excellence would be set up in major universities to conduct research in these areas. Students who are most talented, determined to succeed and patriotic would be encouraged to pursue study in these strategic sciences by generous scholarships. They should be sent abroad to friendly countries to pursue higher studies in these disciplines that are strategically vital to fast development of our economy. Foreign firms would be encouraged to invest in these areas in our country with private or government partnership. Pakistanis working abroad in these areas of modern technologies would also be encouraged to come back to their homeland and work here.

A lot can be written and said about it and I have not gone into any specific details of the implementation of any such plan. The purpose of this note is to ask the new prime minister Mian Nawaz Sharif to take the lead and lay foundations for a modern and prosperous Pakistan. If he can show great vision today, we can transform our country into a great place whose inhabitants love to call it their homeland with sheer pride. Any leader who would show vision today and helm the destiny of our nation towards a great future would appropriately be called father of modern Pakistan.

I close this article by reiterating the words of late Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto,

“For long centuries, we have hoped for a turning point. That turning point has arrived. The break of a new dawn is not a forlorn hope. Poverty need no longer be our portion. Humiliation need no longer be our heritage. Ignorance need no longer be the emblem of our identity.”

APRIL 18, 2013 · 10:11 AM

Failure of Pakistan's Institutions? Who is Responsible?

We, as Pakistanis must take responsibility for our failure to establish strong institutions which are very important for development and fast growth in today's world. Still we have to find among ourselves who is the greatest culprit responsible for our weak and corrupt government, judiciary and bureaucracy.

One of the major culprits, I could point towards is Army of Pakistan. The role of Army should be confined to guarding the frontiers of the nation and help other law establishing forces when commanded to do so by the elected government. But Army overstepped its role again and again by deposing the elected governments and establishing its own illegal rule. Military dictators ruled Pakistan for most of the time and never allowed democracy to take deep roots in the fabric of society and culture.

I consider most armies as syndicates who thrive on creation of hatred and show their success by quashing the hatred they created. Similarly our army starts to take action against separatists by kidnapping and killing them where those problems can be resolved amicably by political settlement between appropriate civilian bodies. This creates bad blood between different ethnicities and provinces and usually punjab is held responsible for vagaries of Army's top brass. We have seen this happen before in Bangladesh where our army massacred about three hundred thousand people. This is a fact we are not taught in history books but this is one of the reasons an old part of our country celebrates the day of secession from Pakistan as their independence days. We really do not want history to repeat itself in Balochistan.

Every general of Army takes a sacred oath to safeguard the constitution and abide by it. This is a sacred oath that must be upheld even at the cost of the life of the oath-taker. The act of subverting a democratically elected government is an act of treason according to constitution. However Pakistan was still ruled by military for a longer period of time than it was managed by democracy. The generals who committed treason still walk free and are granted impunity from every punishment they should receive as traitors to the land and its people.

Every General who took control of the government and became “president of Pakistan” started to consider the government and judiciary as its private property. This did not allow any institution to become a strong bastion based on principled foundations. Everybody who resisted the generals was shown the door. We still remember how Pervez Musharraf retired almost all judges of Supreme Court of Pakistan overnight since they had defied his orders to consider him a legitimate President of the country. He tried to make esteemed institutions of justice his puppet by force of Army. This is characteristic of every General who comes sitting on the shoulders of boots and plays havoc with the institutions.

Today I read the News that Pervez Musharraf was not granted bail against charges for treason against the country. That news is the major motivation behind writing of this post. I really hope that he is given very harsh sentence so that he becomes an example for greedy Generals who want to usurp authority from democratically elected civilian governments and commit treason to the land and its people. His exploits include damaging the judiciary, putting fuel on fire in the insurgency in Balochistan which could have been dealt with politically, giving away natural resources of Balochistan like

Rikodik at throwaway prices, and privatising state industries to his friends. The army also started to kidnap and kill Balochis whose dismembered corpses were later found in remote areas, a practice earlier performed in East Pakistan.

Again it cannot be more emphasized that Army must be kept under total command of Ministry of Defence, and Generals must be prevented from meeting foreign ambassadors. It is simply not their business. If they have to meet Generals of foreign armies, it must be assured that those meetings are for defence and not about discussion of any regional conflict.

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