

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



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Everyone Has the Right to Freedom of Expression

There have always been efforts to restrict the freedom of expression and deprive the people of their right to have their own opinions. However, the fact is that there are as many opinions as there are human beings and might be even more, and it is an encouraging gesture that everyone wants to speak. Why is it so that someone always wants that he should be heard? Why should a person desire that everyone else should be all ears just to his opinions, neglecting everybody else? Nonetheless, it is not probable to confine what the people hear and what they say.

There is an inclination among the people that they want to give final opinion and they always want to draw a final decision regarding others and they desire that no one should stop them. Though this sort of inclination may be interesting, it has its own disadvantages, and this would only be possible if they were deities. Such proclivity has in fact brought troubles not only to the ones who have them but to the ones who have been influenced by them. Universal Declaration of Human Rights says, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

The greatest virtue of human is wisdom and the greatest act of wisdom is to share knowledge through conversation. Conversation, in its passive form, is a thought, while in its active form it is a voice. As a matter of fact it is difficult to recognize the being of a human without his voice in the infinite expanse of the universe. Our reach is to the extent where our voice can echo and without our voice we would disappear in the darkness of silence. So, it is important that we talk as long as we live. The ones who do not have the opportunity to talk they feel that the unspoken words spread throughout their bodies like poison and snatch their happiness.

However, those people would be controversial who, themselves, would always talk but not allow others to do so. Their conversation would really hurt and would be an agony even if they talk about eternal bliss and peace. It can be observed that the history has never witnessed a nation that might have acquired all the truth in the world; if such a miracle had happened the world would have been free of all sort of deprivations and sufferings. It is the reality of life that its truths are distributed among different times, places, languages and minds. It would be great if all the truths could be acquired from the old men who sit under the tree and tell different sorts of stories to the people; but the reality is different.

Therefore, everyone must be given a chance to speak their minds and let the words flow through their tongues and reach others, so that they can listen to them and analyze them; in this way the speaker would not feel that his words were not given the due respect. A very limited reservoir of knowledge has reached to us and if a major part of it remains untold and is victimized by silence, we would have a major loss - A loss that would be very difficult to compensate for. Here it is important to note that there are certain people, who, when talk, try to create conflicts and differences; however, it should not be forgotten that if such people remain silent, they would create even more divergences.

It is really important that human beings must keep the doors and windows of their inner selves open and let their expressions free like the winds in the deserts and the water flowing in the rivers. Indeed, the ones who speak are the real teachers and while those who are silent basically hide what they have. Therefore, it is necessary that the tradition and culture of speaking must be followed and pursued so as to spread what people know and let the listener judge as per his perceptions.

In our society, for many years there have been certain limitations which are imposed on the people and which hamper free thinking and free expression; however the people have not dared to stand against such limitations though these limitations influence them the most. Moreover, it can be observed that among the ruling elite there is a sort of reservation regarding freedom of expression and they try to practice it in some way or the other. They try to impose limitations on freedom of expression through certain ways - they strive to generate social pressure and they even design laws to acquire their objective. This clearly shows that they are afraid of the realities and they are not confident enough to face them. However, the people have to understand that only a limited number of people have their self-centered incentives behind such controlled silence; therefore, such efforts should never be supported and people must make efforts to shatter all such chains that strive to chain their thoughts and their talks.



The German New Aid Welcomed in the Fragile Condition of Afghanistan

By: Mohammad Zahir Akbari

According to media reports, Germany has agreed to provide additional financial assistance about AFN 5.4 billion to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) via KfW Development Bank. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the Geneva Conference on Afghanistan where the international community showed solidarity with the Afghan people and government in their efforts for peace and prosperity. From its creation in 2002 until 2017, ARTF, administered by the World Bank, has already benefitted about 11.5 million Afghans. The German government has contributed over AFN 62 billion to the fund till date, making Germany one of the largest bilateral donors.

During the Geneva Conference, the Afghan Minister of Finance, Prof Mohammad Qayoumi, and KfW's Director, Christian Krämer, celebrated the ARTF Financing Agreement's signing in the presence of German State Secretary, Martin Jäger. "The ARTF remains a highly relevant instrument for promoting good governance in Afghanistan by enhancing government's key reform processes and strengthening donor coordination. That is why the German Government, through BMZ (the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development), stays committed to its ARTF contributions, and acknowledges that the ARTF continues to evolve with the needs of the country to successfully master self-reliance by 2024," quoted from Jäger.

The ARTF provides a coordinated financing mechanism for the Afghan Government's budget and national priority projects. Additionally, the fund offers a platform for political dialogue between the international community and the Afghan Government. It aims at supporting the Afghan state's stabilization and contributing to the fight against poverty. The ARTF is active in key sectors such as education, health, agriculture, rural development, and governance.

Among others, the ARTF funds the Citizens' Charter, one of the Afghan National Priority Programmes. It aims at improving the provision of core infrastructure and social services to communities by strengthening Community Development Councils. Another component focuses on supporting refugees and internally displaced persons as well as communities that host them, benefitting up to 1.5 million Afghans. Until 2021, the Citizens' Charter shall benefit 8.5 million Afghans, half of them women. AFN 2.6 billion of the German contribution is to be utilized for the charter preferentially.

The Citizen's Charter is the successor of the National Solidarity Programme that has benefitted about 28.6 million Afghan citizens, half of them women, between 2003 and 2017. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the KfW manages the German contribution to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). The fund is administered by the World Bank and seeks to stabilize Afghanistan. The ARTF funds a wide range of development activities, carried out via the state budget and thus helps the

Afghan government to implement development policies transparently, to fight poverty, to enable greater revenues and to improve economic and social conditions.

Meanwhile, the government of Germany handed over one thousand body armor vests to the Afghan National Police (ANP) forces in Kabul. The Kabul Police Commandment in a statement said the body armor vests were handed over to Kabul Police during a ceremony organized in the Police Commandment of Kabul on Thursday. The statement further added that the body armor vests were handed over as part of Germany's ongoing support to the Afghan Police forces. The Deputy Ambassador of Germany to Kabul and a representative of Germany's police had also participated in the ceremony. Kabul Police Chief Gen. Syed Mohammad Roshandil welcomed the delivery of one thousand body armor vests to the police forces and said the new aid will further help in protection of police personnel. Gen. Roshandil further added that the Public Order and Quick Reaction units of the Afghan National Police (ANP) would use the new body armor vests.

Overall, more than 30 donor countries paid almost EUR 8.8 billion into the fund since 2002 but Germany alone has contributed more than EUR 725 million. German financial support for Afghanistan can be continued only provided the Afghan government scales up reforms to fight corruption and reduce poverty, Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said at the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan on Wednesday. Our taxpayers can only be asked to continue their contribution, if the Afghan government takes more action on reforms, especially in fighting corruption, reducing poverty and improving conditions for economic development, Maas said.

Afghan people are also concerned about the effectiveness, transparent implementation and fair distribution of international aid in Afghanistan. Some of these concerns originate from some disparities in the geographical distribution of aid due to military or political reasons while others are related to administrative corruption and poor implementation of the projects. The other common question in Afghanistan is why the large amount of international aid did not bring eye-catching changes in the country. The same question might be asked by the donating people, too. Finally, both government and friend donors should show their firm will in transparent spending of the aid or else it can be heavily affected by social and political environment in the context of Afghanistan. Given the critical condition of the country, the Afghan government should take the necessary measures to enhance its effectiveness, fairness and transparency of the international aid in Afghanistan. The new German aid is really useful in the current fragile condition provided that we take serious measures against the mentioned issues especially the widespread corruption. Otherwise, what challenged quality of aid in past 17 years, can effect in the future, too.

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Putting the Public Back in Public Health

By: Mariana Mazzucato

The United Kingdom's National Health Service marked its 70th birthday this year, so this is a good time to reflect on the NHS's past and consider its future. The NHS has long been a source of inspiration in health-care debates around the world. But if it is not put on a more sustainable footing, it could become a cautionary tale.

When the NHS was founded in 1948, its mission, to provide universal high-quality health care, was daringly radical. In time, though, it came to represent a fundamental pillar of the modern welfare state, alongside education and public provision for old age.

Today, however, the NHS faces mounting challenges, owing to the years of "austerity" after the 2008 financial crisis, as well as to larger changes in the pharmaceutical industry's business model. With corporate governance increasingly oriented around narrow financial indicators such as quarterly earnings, drug companies have hiked up medicine prices, and the NHS is bearing the costs. Making matters worse, many drugs would not even exist if not for public investment. Last year, the NHS in England spent £1 billion (\$1.28 billion) purchasing medicines that have received investments from the UK Medical Research Council and other public bodies. In the United States, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) spends more than \$37 billion on biomedical research every year, particularly in areas that are too risky for the private sector. And, worldwide, the public pays for an estimated two-thirds of all upfront costs for pharmaceutical research and development.

High drug prices can have ripple effects beyond public health around the whole world. It creates a huge barrier to access to medicines for two billion people and pushes 100 million people into extreme poverty every year. Beyond the human suffering, this imposes high economic costs. The lost human capital includes not only those who are forced out of the taxable workforce by personal illness, but also those who must drop out to care for them.

Most crucially, it is increasingly difficult to balance the goals of ensuring patient access to effective medicines, managing rising health-care expenditure, and incentivizing innovation. Even if access to health care were assured, and pricing well managed, there would still be a problem with the current direction of health innovation. Diseases that do not create potential growth markets are largely ignored. Between 2000 and 2011, only 4% of newly approved drugs were for neglected diseases that affect predominantly lower- and middle-income countries. Meanwhile, in the US, 78% of new medicine patents between 2005 and 2015 were related to drugs that are already on the market. And in Europe between 2000 and 2014, 51% of newly approved drugs were modified versions of existing medicines, and thus offered no additional health benefits.

With health-care systems often failing to provide patients with the treatment they need at a price they can afford, and with health innovation not addressing public health needs, the status quo is not sus-

tainable. But to restore public purpose to health-care provision and innovation will require the kind of transformation that the NHS's founders ushered in 70 years ago.

To that end, the first step is to acknowledge governments' vital role in the development of new treatments and drugs. Rather than simply funding innovation, governments need to start directing it with the same level of involvement that they bring to defense spending. That means aligning upstream research funding with downstream applications and public objectives.

The pharmaceutical industry will no doubt argue that government engagement stifles innovation. But it was a state-led, mission-oriented approach that put a man on the moon, created the Internet, and paved the way for self-driving cars. Governments and the societies they serve should be ambitious, while always asking themselves a practical question: What are we trying to achieve?

Once we know that, legislation and regulatory measures can be brought to bear to advance our collective goals, and to encourage bottom-up experimentation. For example, prizes might be better than prices for stimulating private investment. And government procurement processes could surely be better aligned to steer the direction of innovation.

Even more to the point, policymakers need to address the financialization of the pharmaceutical industry, which is focused solely on shareholder value, rather than on all stakeholders. Between 2007 and 2016, the 19 pharmaceutical companies in the S&P 500 as of January 2017 spent \$297 billion repurchasing their own shares to boost their stock price, and thus the value of their executives' stock options. That is 61% of their combined R&D expenditures over the same period.

As long as this business model prevails, price gouging will continue. As happened recently with one antibiotic, CEOs will say that they are serving shareholders by letting prices rise to whatever the market will bear and abusing intellectual-property rights to extract monopoly rents. Patents have become too difficult to license, and they are too often acquired for strategic reasons than for novelty, as was originally intended.

To bring health care back into line with the public interest, we can still find inspiration in the NHS. Its founders' mission was to create a system that serves everyone, is free at the point of delivery, and caters to patients' needs, not their ability to pay. Today's policymakers should reaffirm that basic mission. Only by aligning innovation with the priorities of a civilized society can we finally take health care to the next frontier.

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